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Cover Picture
Pesach Semaich by Judy Gilbert

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From the Editor
It is not possible to ignore the Israel/Palestine conflict that took place some months ago, Israel makes every effort to keep the agreed cease-fire despite the ever-present provocation.

Sadly, and now it seems almost inevitably, Israel continues to be criticised no matter what she does. In their recent sit down demonstration, Edinburgh University students suggested the boycotting of goods ‘they believe’ enable the conflict or occupation. Their belief that Eden Springs, the company particularly in their focus, takes the water for the product from Israel is founded on sheer ignorance. The concern was taken over by the Swiss company Danone, Eden Springs UK uses UK sources. In this age of falling over oneself to be seen as politically correct and to give students their much sought-after voice, the University has decided not to penalise the students for their demonstration while at the same time giving advice on how best to influence policies that will affect Israel. They have further condoned the student’s behaviour by agreeing to fund five one-year masters degrees for students from Gaza. Similar offers have already been made in several other parts of the world; in the meanwhile visiting Israeli and also Jewish students feel distinctly threatened by such actions; will universities show any similar understanding to students who find themselves at the receiving end of such campaigns? Who will come in sympathy with the innocent Israeli students?

We acknowledge a number of anniversaries and memorials which have taken place between the last issue and this one. This hundred years have passed since first the Edinburgh Students Union was conceived and there is an archival record given by Harvey Kaplan to add nostaliga to this edition.

Kristolnacht, seventy years on, was much in focus at the end of last year. Ever mindful, we have married up the period of time in which this terrible episode took place with our international contributions. Michelle Brannan describes her mother’s autobiography (Halina Moss) and presents a gripping story of escape from Poland to Russia at this time. Her story will be continued in the next edition. This is followed by Liesel Kastner who gives an equally fascinating biographical account, of her parents, and describes what life was like for them in Vienna from 1939 onwards.

Our community has much to be proud of. A number of people have made great contributions in the public sector and one who has made exceptional contribution and Judy has recently been nominated for, and will soon be awarded, an OBE for services to Education and to the Voluntary Sector. She clearly demonstrates that there are better ways to deal with conflicts than boycotts, via the organisation ‘Windows for Peace’ which brings together Israeli and Palestinian children of all faiths.

Judy is by nature a very modest person, so we were fortunate that she agreed to be interviewed by Eve Oppenheim and Anthony Gilbert, and to tell us something about her background and what influences guided her towards a life of public service. Judy’s success is one that, we as a community, can all take pride in.

Sadly we have had to include four obituaries. But even so, we can observe how interesting our community is. They include a legal luminary, an artist, a dearly loved, missed and highly involved community member, and a Zionist and aspiring actress.

Pesach is a time to remember that the Jews, despite all the hardships, were given the opportunity for a brighter future. We have tried to reflect this in our popular Reviews, views and community news, which I trust will add colour and optimism in this particularly highly illustrated edition.

The Edinburgh Star Board wishes you all a happy and kosher Pesach.

Judy Gilbert
An Edinburgh Milestone

100 Years of Edinburgh Jewish Student Society, 1909-2009

Harvey L. Kaplan

The year was 1909 – a hundred years ago. King Edward VII was on the throne and Herbert Asquith was the Prime Minister. Rev Jacob Furst led the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation at its synagogue in Graham Street, assisted by Chazan Jacob Mendel Teitelman. There were also other shuls in town – the ‘Blecheneh Shul’ in Dalry, the ‘Greener Shul’ in Richmond Street and the ‘Bolshie Shul’ in South Clerk Street. Scotland’s oldest Jewish community was thriving, with nearly 2,000 Jews in the city.

‘On the evening of Saturday 9 January, a group of Jewish students in the city came together to form an Edinburgh University Jewish Society. Mr H Levy was elected President and Hon. Secretary, with Mr M Teitelman as treasurer.’

Thus was created the first Jewish student society in Scotland, now perhaps one of the oldest in Europe. This year, Edinburgh’s Jewish students are celebrating their centenary year in a world far removed from that of 1909.

Jewish students had studied in Edinburgh as early as the 18th century, including Solomon de Leon who studied medicine in the 1790s, Heyman Lion in the 1790s and Louis Ashenheim in the 1830s. However there is no record of any organised Jewish activity in the city.

The most important lesson of Pesach for today is that this will also pass and redemption is assured. For the Jews in Egypt it must have seemed that G-d had forgotten them. Yet nothing was further from the truth. G-d was waiting for the Egyptians to condemn themselves so He could justify punishing them and redeem Israel. So it is today. Behind the scenes G-d is allowing our enemies to further unravel the rope that will hang them. Let them show everyone, that, despite the Holocaust, they still have learnt nothing and come out with the same old lies and canards. Let every Jew, and every nation, show everyone, that, despite the Holocaust, they still have learnt nothing and come out with the same old lies and canards.

Happily, we are not alone. Because of the loud voices and violent action of our enemies, it is easy to think that we are isolated. Yet if we look at the Egyptian persecution we see that many Egyptians did not want to persecute the Jews, he first needed to denigrate and demonise them. The Rabbis in the Haggadah thus understood the statement that the Egyptians ‘did evil to us’ as meaning that we were made to seem evil in their eyes. Knowing this, however, means we can do something about it. We know the danger of such propaganda, but we also have the ability to counteract it.

This brings us to the second lesson of the Exodus: we are not alone. Because of the loud voices and violent action of our enemies, it is easy to think that we are isolated. Yet if we look at the Egyptian persecution we see that many Egyptians did not agree with Pharaoh’s policy. They protected Jewish children and willingly gave the Jews presents when they left. Indeed, some even went so far as to join them. What was true then, is true today. We have many friends and more potential allies. We need to make more use of them.

The new society involved a number of students from local Jewish families from the outset:

‘A meeting of the University Jewish Society was held last Saturday evening in the Livingstone Halls, Mr MC Turiansky, President, in the chair. Mr Cohen read a paper on policy. Messrs Mendelssohn, M Levy, Balkin, Elban, Teitelman, Wadecleffeyt, Rifkind and Golgot took part in the discussion. Mr Cohen was thanked on the motion of Mr Rifkind.’

The first meetings were held in members’ homes and later in the Achei Brith hall. There were dances and even an EUJS Male Choir! Later, the society affiliated to the university SRC and meetings were held on campus. Early speakers included Dr Chaim Weitzmann, Dr Max Nordau, Chief Rabbi Hertz and Rabbi Dr Salis Dachès. Money was raised for charity and books were collected for the library of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Many of the early members were foreign students, often from South Africa and an early complaint was that local students were often not joining the society. Another complaint in the 1920s was that lectures were held on Sundays, despite Jewish students’ protests, meaning that EUJS members could not attend synagogue. However, if one of the members was saying kiddush, the society arranged to hold minyanim on weekdays.

Rabbi Dachès acted as Hon. President of the society and extended hospitality to Jewish students. He also arranged for community hospitality on festivals such as Pesach.

In the 1920s, the society had a strong sense of camaraderie:

‘Members of the EUJS, ours is a glorious tradition! Let us be loyal to it. Today we are all together. Tomorrow we will again be scattered to the four corners of the earth. Let the EUJS be the bond of eternal union.’

Politics played a big part in the programme. On 2 December 1922, there was a debate ‘that the Jews of today are incapable of self-government’. The
Memories of Halina Moss 1939 to 1945

Extract one – my mother goes back to Poland to ‘fetch her things’

Micheline Brannan

My mother Halina Moss (née Lewiner) celebrated her 80th birthday on 15 January 2009. Her family owed their survival to their decision to join the refugee trail from Poland to Russia at the outbreak of War.

An irony of my mother’s story is that my grandmother had taken her to Glasgow for a stay of several months just prior to the outbreak of war. Despite knowing war was imminent, the pair returned via Paris, where my grandmother, an accomplished dressmaker, gathered ideas and material for bringing haute couture to her town. This was not to be, as the War broke out a few weeks after their return. My mother’s memoirs start with the landing of 4 stray bombs on her native town Owczek.

The first extract I have selected relates to when the family were lodging in Bialystok, hoping to get to Varna.

“Meanwhile, it became obvious that material goods and supplies were becoming scarcer at the time. My father began trading in watches, using his contacts and Russian language, acquired when he had been deported during Tsarist times. But my mother, as usual, did not trust father’s ability to support us. She preferred to rely on her own skills as a dressmaker. She began regretting that she hadn’t brought her sewing machine and other dressmaking equipment with us.

She now remembered all those young men and women who travelled in the opposite direction to ours when we were fleeing. They found a family who were prepared to store some of her less essential goods. She continued her journey but soon one of the carts broke down owing to the late autumn weather turning the tracks to rivers of mud. The luggage had to be reloaded onto one cart. Again, mother discarded less essential items and left them with a peasant family. Both parties understood that the day when she returned to collect them was unlikely to arrive.

She took with her the bed linen, the sewing machine, and also her British ball gowns, shoes, some lengths of French silk and a fox fur. The latter items she hoped to sell to some Russian high officers’ wives or to someone on the stage.

The cart driver brought her to the home of a man with the reputation of being a guide across the border over to the Soviet side. The border was the river Bug and it was necessary to row across it in a boat. The man had contacts with boatmen and knew the ways of the German border guards.

It now transpired that the border, far from being “soft”, had hardened up considerably. The refugees were constantly harassed by the German border patrols, and if they made it across, the refugees who stumbled into a Soviet patrol were sent back to the German side.

The guide kept asking for extra money and mother was worried that soon she would run out. She now understood that the people whom the
It was near midnight when Kazik appeared again, and told her she abandoned her sewing machine and most of the bed linen. Two days later the night was as dark as the bottom of a disused river to await the boatman. Suddenly, there was the roar of a truck. The passengers jumped onto the truck. A twig snapped. Suddenly, lights shone, dogs yapped, voices shouted, “Stoy, kto idet?” The other passengers wereRussians. The boatman, who had somehow avoided the torches of the German border patrol, but once across the Bug, the challenge of evading the Soviet border guards remained. Silence was essential.

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She was descended from the
Regina Kapeller was born on June
28th 1900 in Stanislaw, Galicia.
was descended from the distinguished Sadagaba rabbinc family.  Her father was shipping
agent for both the Canadian Pacific, and
Royal Mail Lines, based mainly in
Bucharest; he had served in the
Austrian army in the 1st World War. My mother excelled at Gymnasium
Grammar School) in Vienna and
then overcame her parents' initial
resistance to her entering University to
study chemistry. After graduating as
PhD in 1923 she was appointed to the Medical Chemistry
Department of Vienna University, becoming Assistent (lecturer) in
1926, a rare distinction for a woman. She was a passionate teacher and
produced a prodigious output of research on a variety of topics.

Her discovery of a chemical pregnancy test in 1933/4, which was simple and economical to use

Her discovery of a chemical pregnancy test in 1933/4, which was simple and economical to use and detected pregnancy at a much earlier stage than the standard biological methods of the time, laid the foundation for her subsequent international scientific reputation and, most importantly, proved life-saving for us after the Anschluss. However, despite the fact that British chief, Professor Otto von Fürth, said that 6 men would have become Dozent (Reader) with Regina Kapeller-Adler’s published work, he advised against her applying, due to the double handicap of being female and Jewish. Indeed, in 1933 solely three
women had achieved the status of Dozent in the Vienna Medical Faculty, whereby only one was Jewish. The result of this discriminatory ruling was that my mother lost the paid position of ‘Assistent’, which was limited to 6 years’ tenure (and had been exceptionally extended to 8 years in her case). Nonetheless, she continued research and teaching in the department, without remuneration, until 1938 and, moreover, commenced studying medicine after I was born in 1934, because her voice, my father was an accomplished violinist in the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra subscription concerts (and others), the opera and theatre. In addition to possessing a fine baritone

A sterner challenge arose on Yom Kippur 1938. The Society for the Protection of Science and Learning had been formed in 1933 by some very distinguished, enlightened British academics to try and obtain positions for dismissed German Jewish refugees at British universities and other institutions. In 1938 Austrian, then later Czech academics were added to their list. This remarkable Society rescued altogether about 1000 scientists and scholars, my mother miraculously being amongst them, because the professor of Genetics at Edinburgh University, F.A.E. Crew, who had established the first - and at that time only - Pregnancy Diagnosis Laboratory in Britain, offered my mother a workplace in his department, due to his interest in her pregnancy test and related research. The second miracle was that my father was chosen as one of the 50 Austrian doctors permitted to practise in Britain after re-qualification. The final hurdle for my parents, apart from the race to conquer horrendous red tape, was to find a British guarantor. They knew nobody, but fortunately Napoleon and Henrietta Ryder, daughter of Haham Moses Gaster, showed interest in my parents’ story and graciously offered to vouch for us, although total strangers. This generous act of trust, accepted with deepest gratitude, allowed us finally to board the train from Vienna in January 1939 and cross the Channel - which had protected Britain from conquest for centuries - to safety.
Peres decided to call for general forming a coalition government. On October 26, 2008, newly forming a coalition government. Peres that she did not succeed in forming a coalition government. Peres that she did not succeed in forming a coalition government. The number and order of members entering the new Knesset for the election. There are no by-elections in Israel. Should an MK resign the designated Knesset member has not succeeded in forming a government, the President may then assign the task of forming a government to another Knesset member. This Knesset member has a period of 28 days for the fulfillment of the task. If a government still has not been formed, an absolute majority of Knesset members (61) has the option of applying in writing to the President, asking him to assign the task to a particular Knesset member. Such a precedent has yet to occur.

Jack Coutts was born in Edinburgh and later moved to Glasgow where he was a printer until he moved to Israel in his retirement serving on Israeli ships and in Israeli embassies and consulates abroad.

February 10, 2008, Election Day: The clear loser in these elections was the “Labour Party” led by Ehud Barak, disintegrating to only 13 seats and becoming Israel’s fourth biggest party, a long way from the days of continuous labour rule in Israel from Ben-Gurion’s day at the establishment of the state until 1977.

This election’s winner is surely “Yisrael Beiteinu” and its leader, Avigdor Lieberman, Russia-born immigrant, who has managed to ensure that his party to be Israel’s third biggest Party, within 10 years. A word of caution is needed though, because third and fourth positions in Israeli politics is very fluid and only time will tell if his party is here to stay or not. In the meantime this position grants Lieberman enough power to negotiate a senior position in the next government if he plays his political cards right.

The runners up then, surprisingly, are Israel’s biggest parties; “Likud” lead by Benjamin Netanyahu and “Kadima” led by Tzipi Livni. Receiving 27 and 28 seats respectively, both are claiming victory. This is explained by, “Kadima” winning the most seats but “Likud” having the most likely chances of forming a government. Although unlikely, there is the slight possibility that they will both agree on a rotating government each taking the premiership for 2 years.

The real losers though are the Israeli people. They never really get a government that they voted for due to the ultra-democratic system of proportional representation mixed with the mentioned low 2% threshold resulting in a wide spread of political parties entering the Knesset. In their post election speech Barak, Netanyahu and Livni all expressed their concern for the crippling election system in Israel and vowed to act towards changing this before the next General Election, which on average takes place every two years here. It would be my guess that if they succeed in changing the system, the Likud will be the new party of government, with the mentioned mixture of the plurality (first-past-the-post) and proportional representation systems will be adopted although my preference would be a full blown British first-past-the-post version where once and for all a party will be able to gain a majority and carry out its policies without all the undemocratic wheeling and dealing that goes on with coalitions.

Whoever the task is assigned to, be it Livni or Netanyahu, will have a period of 28 days to form a government. The President may extend the term by an additional period of time, not exceeding 14 days. If this period (up to 42 days) has passed and the designated Knesset member has not succeeded in forming a government, the President may then assign the task of forming a government to another Knesset member. This Knesset member has a period of 28 days for the fulfilment of the task. If a government still has not been formed, an absolute majority of Knesset members (61) has the option of applying in writing to the President, asking him to assign the task to a particular Knesset member. Such a precedent has yet to occur. Little did Litvin know at that time that the election campaign would be marred by two major events: a world economical crisis and “Operation Cast Lead” in Gaza.

Israel law does not provide for absentee ballots, and voting takes place only on Israeli soil. The sole exceptions are Israeli citizens living abroad. On October 26, 2008, newly elected “Kadima” Chair Tzipi Livni informed President Shimon Peres that she did not succeed in forming a coalition government. Peres decided to call for general elections to the Knesset.

Remarks... Mark Kirk
Richard A Goldberg
The following message was sent during the not so distant events between Israel and Gaza. Though things have moved on since then, this will one day become an important source for the archives.

As you may have seen on TV or read in the newspaper, Congressman Kirk returned on January 6th, from three weeks of active military service in southern Afghanistan – the first Representative-reservist to deploy to an impromptu danger zone since 1942. Upon his return, Congressman Kirk issued the following statement in support of Israel’s actions to root out the Hamas terror infrastructure in Gaza.


As we gather here today, thousands of brave young men and women of the Israel Defence Forces are putting their lives on the line to preserve democracy and defeat a radical ideology of terror and destruction.

Some will not come home – parents will never see their children again – sons and daughters will grow up without a mother or father. As a Navy combat veteran – just returned from the front lines of the Global War on Terror – my thoughts and prayers remain with those who sacrificed their lives for the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom, liberty and peace.

No democracy wants a war – any government beheld to its people has a natural inclination toward diplomacy and reconciliation. Just a few hours ago, the Israeli government reiterated its support for a ceasefire if Hamas stops firing rockets and the international community stops the flow of arms into Gaza. The Hamas response was loud and clear – there will be no permanent ceasefire until Israel is destroyed. Now, after years of patience – after gestures of peace and reconciliation – after compromising over and over again – the democratically elected Government of Israel is doing what any other democracy in the world would do: fighting back.

The current operation by Israel is working. Hamas turned to Egypt for help – denied. Jordan – denied. Arab states have a message for Iranian agents in the region – get out now. Hamas’ own Iranian-backed supporters – Hezbollah – sit impotent, too far to help.

There is a clear path to a ceasefire for Hamas – stop the rockets, renounce terror and recognize the State of Israel. Until then, Hamas remains a terrorist organization that purposefully murders civilians – and it should be treated as such.

Democracies are strongest when they stick together. That is why you came here today – to deliver a strong message to the sons and daughters of Israel: the great democracy across the ocean stands by your side.

Richard A Goldberg, grandson of David Goldberg, lives both in Chicago and Washington. He is the Senior Appropriations Associate in America (Press Officer) and is a sub-lieutenant in the American Navy in the Intelligence Corps.
Coffee Morning
The Community Centre Committee organised another successful pre-Yomtov coffee morning on 21 September when over 50 turned up to savour the delights of gossip, books, bargains, plants and the inevitable members’ home baking. An innovative idea was introduced by several of the past Barmittzvah and Batmitzvah youth of the community who recorded interviews of their elders who had been resident in the city for many years. The DVD highlighted their nostalgia in growing up in the then predominantly Jewish sector of Edinburgh’s South Side and how life had changed out of all recognition over the past few decades. Joyce Sperber welcomed and thanked all who came, including the willing band of helpers for all their efforts.

Friday Night Dinner
On 26 September, after the Friday evening Service in the Synagogue, Hilary Rifkind welcomed a large number to the Community Centre to participate in another Shabbas evening dinner. Among those present were field workers from the Jewish Chaplaincy Centre in Glasgow. A very pleasant evening followed with a most appetising meal, singing and dancing led by Rabbi Rose.

Quiz
The annual quiz organised by Arnold Rifkind and Betsy Dorfman turned up to savour the delights of gossip, books, bargains, plants and the inevitable members’ home baking. An innovative idea was introduced by several of the past Barmittzvah and Batmitzvah youth of the community who recorded interviews of their elders who had been resident in the city for many years. The DVD highlighted their nostalgia in growing up in the then predominantly Jewish sector of Edinburgh’s South Side and how life had changed out of all recognition over the past few decades. Joyce Sperber welcomed and thanked all who came, including the willing band of helpers for all their efforts.

Armitice Service
On the morning of 8 November, Armitice Sunday, Lenny Berger attended the City Chambers where, at the Canofith, he laid a wreath in the shape of a Magen Dovid. In the afternoon, Rabbi Rose conducted the Annual Remembrance Service in the Synagogue to commemorate the members of the Congregation who gave their lives in the two World Wars and the Sinai Campaign. The Service as usual was enhanced by the choir under the leadership of David Mendelsohn and the poignant playing of the Last Post and Reveille by British Legion bugler Archie Swan. Alec Kleinberg and Lenny Berger carried the banners of AJEX and the Edinburgh Jewish Branch of the British Legion.

Remembrance Sunday
Rose Orgel
The 9th November 1938 is a date that David Goldberg, then only 14 years old, will always remember. - Kristallnacht - the night when the Nazis created a Pogrom, destroying Synagogues and Jewish owned shops, and also killing many Jews.

This year Kristallnacht was commemorated in St. Andrews and St Georges Church, Edinburgh, where David recounted some of his experiences of that fateful evening. He read a portion from Isaiah in Hebrew; Pastor Michael Mehl followed with an English version.

David then recited the prayer, El Mol Rachamim, (in memory of those who perished) with such emotion that it greatly affected even non-Jews in the congregation.
The excellent Church Choir, sang the Hebrew melody, Eli Haderech.

Pastor Mehl and Mrs. Hannelore Gormley from the German-speaking Congregation also took part in the service, as did the Minister of the Church Rev. R Russell and the outreach minister Rev. Dorothy Anderson.

Following this most impressive and tasteful service, tea and biscuits were served where David could answer the many questions posed by a great number of interested people.

Kristallnacht
To mark the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of Kristallnacht, a service was held and young members of the community participated for the first time. Freddie Green recited a poem of his own composition entitled “The Poppy” ending with the ever emotive “we will remember them”. Jessica Spencer read of the horrors of Kristallnacht and its aftermath. A poem “Homesick”, written by a child in a concentration camp, was read by Sarah Levy. Her sister Claire chose a poem entitled “In Flanders Field” by John McRae. David Goldberg recited the Memorial Prayer for the Holocaust victims.

After the Service, tea was served in the Community Centre where Hilary Rifkind, Chair of the Congregation, welcomed all and thanked those who had participated and helped with the organisation. She emphasised the significance of the occasion, the anniversary of Kristallnacht and the 90 years since the Armistice of 1918. John Danzig reminded everyone of the Synagogues and Jewish buildings which had been destroyed in Germany during Kristallnacht and how his father like so many more had his life so tragically disrupted by such events.

Luncheon Club
A larger than usual turn out at the pre Chanukah Luncheon Club on 16 December was delighted to welcome Edinburgh’s Lord and Lady Provost. Norman Berger took great pleasure in introducing the distinguished guests due to his long association with the Lord Provost dating back to boyhood days and their continuing friendship. After an excellent lunch for the forty members, the Right Honourable Lord Provost George Gubb spoke of his delight at attending with his wife. He commented on the many varied duties of his office, and the pleasure of meeting so many people. He thanked the Luncheon Club for inviting him and his wife and stated that in the darkness of winter, it was so wonderful to be shortly celebrating a Festival of Light. Rabbi Rose was warm in his praise for the Lord Provost and the Edinburgh City Council for all the support given to the Jewish community. He also thanked the helpers under Avi Berger for the work undertaken to make the afternoon such a success. Norman Berger echoed everyone’s thoughts when he said he would look forward to seeing the Lord and Lady Provost at next years Chanukah Luncheon Club.

Chanukah Dinner
A very warm happy atmosphere was experienced as one entered the Community Centre on 20 December for the annual Chanukah dinner. Committee member Lesley Danzig welcomed the 90 dinner guests with appropriate thanks to Rose Orgel, Irene Mason and Norman Dorfman who were celebrating their birthdays. After dinner, which ended with traditional doughnuts, Hilary Rifkind, deputising for Community Committee Secretary Joyce Sperber who unfortunately was unwell, introduced the entertainment, the Danzig Jazz Trio. Ben Danzig was most disappointed that he was unable to attend as a strained arm prevented his playing the guitar. Music by Jewish composers, including Gershwin and Bernstein, were played by Sean Pentland on the bass, Tom Gibbs on piano and Sam Danzig on the saxophone. Vocalist Jess Abrams even managed to introduce some Chanukah lyrics into her numbers and concluded the evening with the ever popular “Over the Rainbow”, Hilary extended thanks to all who attended and especially to the willing band of helpers.

Chanukah in St Andrew Square Edinburgh
Rabbi Weinman and Rabbi David Rose, Edinburgh’s community rabbis, both spoke about the meaning of Chanukah. The specially invited guest, former Lord Provost, Councillor Eric Milligan, spoke eloquently of the concept of a festival of light during the dark winter months, which is common to so many other faiths.

This was given poignancy by the surrounding trees bathed in Christmas lights. The blessings over the lighting of the candles were led by Mr David Goldberg, after which there was a musical accompaniment to Maoz Tsur. The scaling of the ladder in the windy conditions to place all nine lanterns proved to be an event in itself. Dr Josh Brickman and Mr Yanky Hecht performed this with great athleticism. We even had our own minor miracle during the lighting. After the Shamash and then the first couple of lanterns were lit, the taper used began to die down and looked to have become extinguished. Rabbi Weinman’s hand went to his pocket as though to bring out a lighter or matches. However, he held back for a moment, as if he had some inside information. A few seconds later the taper glowed again by itself and was used to complete the job of lighting the remaining lanterns. Nothing was said. Did anyone else even notice?

And then of course we ate, doughnuts and latkes, traditional Chanukah fare, provided by Gitty with music playing in the background. The Chanukah lighting is intended to be an annual event with The City of Edinburgh Council granting the use of the site as a permanent reusable base for the Chanukah.

Tu B’Shevat
On Sunday 8th February, the Cheeder children got down on their hands and knees to paint a large mural of the bare branches of a tree. Handprints were then attached to produce an innovative and colourful poster in celebration of this happy occasion, the ‘birthday of trees’. The appropriate Seder was led by Rabbi Rose, which was accompanied by the requisite bonanza of fruits and consumed with relish. The event was organised by Elaine Levy and the teenagers.
After graduation Judy went to Toronto with her husband, who was also a work placement student by the Rotary Club if she would join them; initially she declined, but, pressed further, she eventually agreed. She was rather amused to discover later that she was one of the first three women ever to be admitted… after much earnest debate in the dusty corridors of the Rotary Club. But she must have taken something of a broom to that dust as she became President ten years after her admission. She remains with the Rotary, but it plays a smaller role in her life now. As President she had been very pleased to be invited to join the charities to which the Rotary would direct its support, and she had chosen ones focusing on children: Richmond’s Hope in Craigmillar; the Big Project for disaffected youth, based in Broomhouse; and the Roundabout project for children of different faiths in Leith.

When asked whether being Jewish had affected her attitude to the various facets of life, Judy replied that it was ‘a huge strand of identity’. It had been a large factor in her schooling, but less so at university where she encountered fewer Jewish people, though she did associate with the small Jewish community in Bristol. She had Jewish friends whilst in Bristol who had come mainly from North Africa. In her present work, it is not a major factor, but it is always there in the background, particularly when dealing with matters such as equal rights, discrimination, gender and disability issues, identifying with being part of a minority (being Jewish and a woman).

Most recently, Judy has become associated with the organisation Windows for Peace. She was introduced to this by her close Newcastle friend, Brenda Beecham, who showed her letters written to one another by young Palestinians and Israelis. Inspired by this, they visited the Windows HQ in Israel, and while there, Judy found herself listening to a there, Judy found herself listening to a there, Judy found herself listening to a three-month sabbatical in Bordeaux which she attended with her Jewish friends whilst in Bordeaux who taught her the importance of being with people: 5 Jewish Israelis; 5 Palestinian Israelis and 5 Palestinians from occupied territories. On her own initiative she had brought a couple of other matters sprang to mind. When asked about The Star, she recalls encouraging and supporting Rabbi Shalom Shapira’s efforts to set up the publication and she later became chair of the Board. She feels that the Star plays a major role in our community. Her years in all sorts of organisational capacities have taught her that communication is vital, and this is precisely what the Star does; it informs our own community about itself, but just as importantly, it is also our shop window to the world, and this is what comes through."
A Professional Tribute to the Late Honourable Lord Caplan

Lady Hazel Cogrove

Philip Caplan studied law at Glasgow University and began his legal career as a solicitor in Glasgow.

He was called to the Scottish Bar in 1957 and enjoyed a successful and varied practice as an advocate. In 1979 he was appointed a sheriff of Lothians and Borders at Edinburgh and was subsequently Sheriff Principal of North Strathclyde, a post in which his judicial reputation was firmly established. In 1989 his exceptional abilities were recognised when he became the first sheriff in modern times to become a Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland. Between then and his retirement in 2000 he served that office with distinction and the quality of his contribution was recognised when he was promoted to the Inner House of the Court of Session. Following his retirement he continued to sit at the invitation of the court until he reached the age of 75. Throughout his career on the bench, Philip was highly respected and warmly regarded by his colleagues and all those who appeared before him, both in the civil and the criminal courts for his legal acumen, keen intellect, good judgement and sound common sense. He was wise and humane and was unfailingly courteous and considerate. He was universally admired and respected throughout the profession in Scotland. His contribution over many years to the work of the Scottish Association for the Study of Judaism was recognised when he was made a Life Patron of the Association.

Philip presided over one of Scotland’s most celebrated civil litigations, the damages action arising out of the Piper Alpha oil disaster in the North Sea in which 167 people lost their lives. The case lasted for three and a half years (then a record in Scottish legal history). The judgement ran to almost 1000 pages and dealt not only with difficult and technical factual issues but also with many important and novel points of law. The oil companies were ordered to pay more than £100 million in damages and the judgement was upheld on appeal. I well remember how his colleagues admired Philip for the fortitude, patience and dedication with which he approached the mammoth task of listening to and then summarising the 13 million words of evidence.

By coincidence, I was appointed sheriff at Edinburgh to fill the vacancy created when Philip became a Sheriff Principal. In 1996 I became a Senator and will never forget Philip's kindness and support in what was, for the first female judge, an undoubtedly challenging environment. Philip was my mentor and role model, and I benefited hugely from his wisdom and guidance. He set high standards as a conscientious judge whose careful consideration of judgements were delivered promptly, and were rarely disturbed on appeal.

Although not a practising Jew, Philip was proud of his Jewish roots and was a loyal supporter and friend of Israel. His outstanding contribution to the Jewish community in Scotland. Sadly, there are now no Jewish Senators in Scotland, and moreover, none in prospect. But the name of The Honourable Lord Caplan will forever be a proud element in the history of Scotland’s Jews.

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Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

Suzannah Heschel – Aryan Theology

Sunday 9 November 2008

Professor Suzannah Heschel combines grace, charm and erudition and we are lucky to have her back in Edinburgh for a second visit. She holds the A. Black Chair in Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College, in the United States, and is an expert on German-Jewish history. Her topic, on which she has just published a book, “The Aryan Jesus: Christians and the Bible in Nazi Germany” (published by Princeton University Press), was selected to fit with the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht on 9 November 1938.

As is well known, Nazism grew in the fertile soil of German anti-Semitism. In her talk, Professor Heschel illustrated how the history of the Lutheran church to illustrate just how far “theologians” were prepared to pervert their subject in order to conform to growing Nazi party expectations. This history is not widely known, as only Lutheran pastors who had opposed Hitler felt motivated after WW2 to write their memoirs. The others went through the motions of being defaunited, and, while presumably not giving up their prejudices, stopped publicising them.

There was a long lead up to Kristallnacht, from the election of the Nazi party in 1933, which saw the start of legislation depriving Jews of their rights. However Kristallnacht backfired on the Nazi party to some extent as it was the first incidence of widespread open street violence and it clashed with the party presenting itself as bringing social order to Germany. Therefore Hitler decided that thereafter the war against the Jews should be pursued through propaganda, legislation and social engineering and not by street violence.

This suited certain theologians within Lutheran church. They wanted to de-Judaize Christianity, for example, by declaring the betrayer, the Judas, to be, the notion of the evil within each one of us, which they equated to the ‘Jew’ inside. Getting rid of the real Jews was symbolically equivalent to getting rid of those four elements from German society.

This led to efforts to remove the Old Testament from the Christian Bible, to eliminate mention of Jesus of Nazareth, to deport Jews to the New Testament and to Aryanize Jesus. The Lutheran church founded an Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life. This Institute issued various statements ‘refuting’ Christ’s Jewish origins. It was argued that Galilee was not a Jewish area, that Jesus was born in a different Bethlehem which was actually in the Galilee, that his father was a Roman soldier, and that when he went to Jerusalem he was rejected by Jews because he was not one of them. In 1943 the Institute went further, trying to reject St Paul from the New Testament because he had proclaimed the personhood in origin. The response from the Bishop of Mecklenburg, a staunch Nazi, actually stated that for 1500 years the church had been duped by a sinking Jew – Paul.

The content of this lecture was quite shocking even to an audience hardened to tales of German antisemitism, as it showed just how far a Christian denomination was prepared to go to advocate for the murderous, racist tyranny that was Nazi Germany. We might have expected to hear of appeasement, churchmen keeping their heads down and passing over the crimes of communism, but the brazen use of ‘theology’ to support Nazism was a very unpleasant revelation.

Suzannah Heschel hinted that this history is not much studied and that she is trawling new ground and studying original documents that many would rather were forgotten or suppressed.

There was a lively discussion session after the talk. The vote of thanks was given by Micheline Brannan, the Treasurer. The meeting was expertly chaired by Rabbi DavidRose.

Micheline Brannan

Stem Cell Research Debate

30th November 2009

Stem cell research is among the most promising and controversial technological breakthroughs of our time. It was therefore not surprising to see a ‘lit meeting which set out to discuss the ethical issues of stem cell research attracting a lot of attention. The scene was set by Dr. Josh Brickman, Group Leader at Edinburgh University’s Institute of Stem Cell Research. We heard how the whole area had attracted a lot of hype. However the issue was not with adult stem cells but embryonic stem cells. Josh Brickman started with a biological insight into what stem cells were, how they were formed and what the implications were for the future. Many members’ minds were put at rest when they heard that while embryonic stem cells had been isolated in the past from other sources, including aborted foetuses it was now the norm for most embryonic stem cells to come from recently fertilized embryos – often referred to as ‘pre-embryos’. This was exciting news as we then heard from Josh Brickman that while most adult stem cells don’t have the potential to develop into other types of human tissue, embryonic stem cells do – and are thus seen as a virtual panacea for many of mans ills. In fact the development of pluripotent stem cells now gives us heard the real possibility in the future of customized cell therapy. But what ethical issues do such developments raise.

We heard From Rabbi David Rose of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation that as far as Jewish Law was concerned one of the overarching principles was the mandate to heal through the development of effective cures. Nevertheless, Rabbi Rose then went on to indicate that some religious authorities felt that in vitro fertilization of embryos and their use in stem cell research was covered by the prohibition of abortion – and hence should not be allowed. However, the paradigm of the permissibility of abortion within ‘halacha’ are subtle and complex. As a consequence we heard that many authorities felt that the use of pre-embryos for stem cell research should be allowed – at least early on after fertilization and well before 40 days after gestation – as these sources suggest that a foetus prior to forty days gestation is not considered to be an actual person with a potential for life. Presenting the Christian view on human embryology, Dr. Murdo MacDonald of the Church of Scotland’s Society, Religion and Technology project recognized that wide differences of view also existed within the Church – especially on the moral status of the embryo and the acceptability of embryonic research on stem cells. The most conservative view stemmed from the Roman Catholic Church, which felt that the embryo should be protected from the point of conception – and hence research on embryos was not acceptable. In contrast, the mainstream Church of Scotland view was that some research on embryos should be allowed – even if treading new ground and studying original documents that many would rather were forgotten or suppressed.

Kate Goodwin

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Society Reports

British Wizo Quiz Evening

On Saturday 31st January, two Edinburgh Wizo teams joined 168 teams throughout the country to compete in the quiz. The event was conducted within a system of high technology. The teams assemble in volunteer’s homes. A quiz pack is received from London. Each team opens their pack at 8.00 precisely and has to be completed by 10.30 and answers emailed directly to London Head Office.

All 168 are contacted by 11pm with their results. Sylvia and John Done hosted one team and Carol and Tom Giffen, the other. The halfway through the evening, supper was served while the teams relaxed and gathered their strength.

Our two Edinburgh teams came joint 89th place and all agreed that that they had a most enjoyable and testing evening.

S345 was made towards the target. We all mean to work hard to improve this year’s result for next year’s quiz.

Kate Goodwin
the drawing up of an ethical framework, which identified a set of guidelines, which enabled the whole Church to move forward together.

Philip Mason

Margaret Brearley – Nazism and Nature: Some Roots of the Holocaust
1 February 2009

Following Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January, the Lit was delighted to welcome Dr Margaret Brearley to address us on some aspects of the ideology that made Nazism possible in the 20th Century. Dr Brearley is an academic by background, who lectured at Birmingham University in the German Department for many years. In Birmingham she lectured at the Centre for Judaism and Jewish Christian Relations, and was a research fellow in the Institute of Jewish Affairs. She is now an honorary fellow of University College, London. She is a strong supporter of Israel, and chairs the Daphna Branch of WIZO, as well as regularly attending Muswell Hill Synagogue, whose Rabbi David Mason is the son of Philip and Irene Mason, of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation.

Dr Brearley gave an erudite talk on how the Nazis used the writings of certain 19th century thinkers to support their doctrines, particularly theorists who advocated instinct over rationality and closeness to nature over Judaeo-Christian morality. These writings supported the antisemitism of Nazism. They gave a foundation for the mysticism and ritual that helped to promote the Nazi ideology, and encouraged Germans to discard ordinary ideas of right and wrong.

There was a lively discussion session after the talk. The vote of thanks was given by Rabbi David Rose. The meeting was chaired by Micheline Brannan, the Treasurer.

Given that the next day was the start of the February snow that afflicted the country for another 10 days we are very grateful to Dr Brearley for braving the journey to the north, and particularly the return journey on a Monday when London was snow and ice-bound.

The talk that was delivered to EJLS was taken from a chapter in Margaret Brearley’s book ‘The Holocaust and Nature’, edited by Didier Pollefeyt, published 2009, either by Eerdmans or University of Washington Press.

Micheline Brannan

Concert performed by Caritas Strings (George Watson’s College)
22 February 2009

A number of EHC members are members of the Collinton Amateur Orchestra, which counts itself fortunate to have as its present conductor, Hector Scott, head of Strings at Watson’s and a highly accomplished violinist. Hector also conducts the Watson’s string orchestra, a talented group of young string players, sometimes augmented by some outside players, playing under the name of Caritas Strings. Having heard the quality of their music-making, we approached Hector last summer to see if they would be interested to mount a concert for the Lit, and Hector, in his customary style, agreed with enthusiasm.

On the evening of the concert, as the players were just giving their pieces the final polish, the Chair for the Evening, Secretary Tony Gilbert, was rather alarmed to see the orchestra conducted by someone, who certainly was not Hector, while Hector himself was manfully contributing to the viola section; this was not at all the scene according to the Chair’s carefully scripted notes. Enquiries revealed that the viola section could be found in Geneva, visiting the CERN underground particle accelerator (how could that possibly come before the Lit?) as a result of which, Hector was adding weight to the violas, while the conducting was taken on by Watson’s Director of Music, David Elliott.

After a now somewhat improvised introduction by the Chair, Caritas treated the near-capacity audience, augmented by the Caritas support team and also visitors to Edinburgh participating in the Middle East Festival of Spirituality, to a fine and varied programme of music, with David Elliott introducing and describing the pieces as the evening evolved. Jewish music was represented by an early work by Mendelssohn and a movement from the Swiss Composer, Ernest Bloch’s Prayer for Jewish Life, the solo cello played movingly by Fergus Todd. The orchestra then played a movement from the popular Mozart Serenade K.136. In addition to works by the whole orchestra, a quartet comprising Polly Bartlett, Ruanind Hoill and Ashwini Arvind on violins with William Brown on viola played the first movement of Mazas’ Symphonette, which was followed by Karel Sodomka’s delightful Sonatina op. 8 for 3 violins played by Megan Bruce, Christina Arthur and Faith Waddell. Fergus Todd returned later with Anna Gorzkowska as the cellists in the first movement of the Vivaldi Concerto in G minor for two cellos. The performance came to a close with comparatively local pieces by the Scottish composer, Edward McGuire, the final piece being Broderick’s Southian, dramatically piped in by Valerie Cronshaw before the whole orchestra joined in to bring the music to an exciting finale.

Gifts were given to Hector and to the Caritas Strings to express our gratitude for a fine evening of accomplished music making.

Anthony Gilbert

Continually Supporting Israel

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the various themes she explored at different stages in her life. In the 1930s, she turned to Biblical themes — including Job and the Song of Songs, the latter once again giving her the opportunity to explore her love of words and poetry through her art. The 1940s may have been a dark period in Jewish history, but it was clearly an optimistic time in Hannah's life (she married in 1939) and her themes are more personal — showing young women, flowers and birds. Interestingly, some of her last drawings in the early 1950s show intertwined heads, similar to the intertwined bodies of many of her later sculptures. Once she started to sculpt in 1952, it seems she stopped drawing. She then worked in many different media — plaster, terracotta, bronze — and experimented with different figurative styles. She was working throughout the second half of the 20th century, at an exciting time for British sculpture, when Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth and her own tutor, Benno Schotz, were active, and her work both reflects and contributes towards the vibrancy of the era. It is obviously difficult in a two-dimensional medium to get a real sense of the quality of her sculpture — I hope we have an opportunity one day to see the originals.

At the end of the book, there are some more personal works — sketches of herself and her family, works commissioned by the Glasgow Jewish community and other organisations that she was involved with and, most fascinating of all, samples from her illustrated diary — for her eyes only and one can imagine her looking back over the pages with very amusement.

As fascinating as this volume is, it regretted a lack of biographical detail — there were so many questions I would like to have answered. This is addressed to some extent in the second book, published as part of her 100th birthday celebrations and showing some of the works that were only discovered after the first book was published. It is interesting to learn, for example, that she received numerous rejection letters from publishers for her illustrated version of “Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam”. We also learn that she studied Latin, English and French at Glasgow University, reflecting and enhancing her love of words and language demonstrated by her illustrative work. This volume is, indeed, a “Gallimaufry”, defined as a “ragbag” or “hotchpotch”, and a suitable companion to the earlier book. It includes more family sketches and self-portraits, including a delightful watercolour of the backyard of her family home painted in 1826 when she was 18 and copies of pastel drawings she made as exercises at Glasgow School of Art — the originals were in vibrant colours, very different from her usual black and white work, and it is a shame that the reproductions in the book give no indication of this unusual element. The whole of Keats’ poem “Isabella and the Pot of Basil”, but also her own, written under the pseudonym of Al Aaraaf. Working with poems also enabled her to experiment with calligraphy styles. This links Hannah Frank in with another important British tradition of artist/poets such as Blake and Rossetti. The decorative nature of her work also lent itself to wood engraving, at which Hannah became sufficiently skilled to win the James McBey prize for woodcuts while studying part time at Glasgow School of Art, and there is a short section of her wood engravings toward the end of the book.
The City of
A very moving musical introduction from
soaked overnight, skinned (no one ever tries skinning chickpeas – we tried spinach with chickpeas, a simple and tasty example of the problems created when translating a cookery book from another culture without editing it for the local market. iodine and phosphorus”. Many of the other fish recipes were for cod being “a non-fatty fish providing B group vitamins as well as rice, which the recipe assures us is 350 calories per person, fresh when our Christian neighbours are celebrating some festival! We order for delivery on a Friday, but not over this particular week, in inability to source fish in Dunkeld – the local deli usually takes they tasted good, without using too much Chanukah oil! – not effective, so I went back to my usual method, using a dish – Latkes (of course!). Once again, a simple recipe, using includes peas and garlic, but it tasted fine without!

Day 1 – Egg and Mushroom Pâté – a very simple to follow veggie – Latkes (of course!). Once again, a simple recipe, using flour (the other book suggests matzah meal – I suppose it depends what you have left over from Pesach). Its suggestion for wringing liquid out of the grated potatoes through a sieve was not effective, so I went back to my usual method, using a dish towel. However, shallow frying instead of deep was effective and they tasted good, without using too much Chanukah oil

Day 3 – our plans to try out a fish recipe were thwarted by our inability to source fish in Dunkeld – the local deli usually takes order for delivery on a Friday, but not over this particular week, when our Christian neighbours are celebrating some festival! We had wanted to try “sea God”, a fish curry to be served with rice, which the recipe assures us is 350 calories per person, fresh cod being “a non-fatty fish providing B group vitamins as well as iodine and phosphorus”. Many of the other fish recipes were for fish for fish widely available in the UK, such as carp and pike – an example of the problems created when translating a cookery book from another culture without editing it for the local market.

Day 4 – we tried spinach with chickpeas, a simple and tasty recipe. However, the recipe required the use of dried chickpeas, soaked overnight, skinned (no one ever tries skinning chickpeas more than once in their lives) then cooked for an hour. Surely it would have been worth mentioning that tinned chickpeas could be used instead, meaning that the dish could be prepared and cooked in a few minutes.

Day 5 – I’m afraid we cheated. Although there were lots of very interesting looking desserts in the Light Jewish Cookbook, we lost our hearts (in more senses than one!) to the bread and butter pudding recipe in “Ingredients for a Jewish Life” with our own home-made clotted cream (I was consulted by the cheesecake recipe using fromage frais and low-fat cream cheese and Philadelphia cheese, but it didn’t seem to have any sort of biscuit base, and I’m not sure what the size of a serving is to limit the calories to 160 per person! The pear and apple compote sounded a more realistic proposition to anyone seriously trying to lose weight, at 70 calories per serving.

Day 6 – I adapted the Carrot Velouté recipe, using ingredients we had available and without blending, mainly so that we could also include knaidlach. I don’t really need a recipe for the latter, but the one in the book corresponded closely to what I have been doing for several decades. The ingredients included 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil, which was never mentioned in the recipe itself (thus reducing the calorie count!).

Day 7 – not being a meat eater, I was unable to experiment with any of the meat recipes. Once again, the availability of some of the meats mentioned could be an issue in the UK (kasher goat, anyone?). However, there was a variety of recipes from different countries, some primarily Ashkenazi (cholent, latkes and kreploch) and other more Mediterranean/ Sephardi in origin, for example Mosk (Pesach Lamb from Turkey), chicken pastilla from Morocco and spicy Cochin chicken was amused to find that the beef with spinach recipe from Algeria included a tin of chick peas, rather than dried (see day 4 above).

Day 8 – we had to leave the apartment shortly after breakfast, so we were delighted to find we could use up two of the fridge leftovers by making smoked salmon with eggs, as the author tells you “contrary to popular belief, smoked salmon is suitable for a weight-loss diet”. Hurrah!

There are some good basic recipes in this book, with useful information on nutritional values. The Sephardi recipes are more inventive, but it is also more likely that some of the ingredients will be difficult to source in the UK. This lack of local editing, and what seem to be numerous rigging errors, led the book down badly. Personally, I would be loath to pay £18 for a recipe book with few illustrations and peppered with mistakes. Use your usual recipe books (or look at the sumptuous ingredients for a Jewish Life and substitute fromage frais for cheese or cream, and other low-calorie alternatives. Or just eat less!

The Lord Provost, Councillor George Grubb stressed was unfortunately still with us – and hence a major challenge for today’s society. In fact the Leader of the Edinburgh Council, Councillor Jenny Dawe reported that 1236 hate crimes had been recorded by the Lothian and Edinburgh Police in the past 9 months alone. Following stirring poetry readings and a ‘Song of Defiance’ from the Loud and Proud Choir, we then heard personal testimonies from two senior pupils of St Thomas of Aquin’s who had in September 2008 visited Auschwitz. Both fully described all the emotions they had felt as they passed through the ruined gas chambers and saw the piles of spectacles and mounds of human hair from the past 9 million who had perished in Auschwitz – Birkenau. This was then followed by a powerful keynote presentation by Rabbi Avraham Soetendorp who was born during the war, in the Netherlands in May 1943 and had only survived by being sent to work in a labor camp for a few months. For the future was one Earth community of different peoples reaching out together and giving a sign of hope and beginning. The very intense and dramatic evening finished with all present including a large group of local schoolchildren coming forward and lighting a candle. There just remained a very sincere ‘thank you’ to everyone who took part from the President of the Edinburgh Interfaith Association, Professor Frank Whaling.

Why does faith survive
University of Edinburgh – Gifford Lectures 2008

17th November 2008 – Playfair Library
Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

Philip Mason

In mid-November 2008, against the marvellous backdrop of the University of Edinburgh’s Playfair Library, the Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, delivered one of the 2008 Gifford Lectures - lectures aimed at contributing to the advancement of philosophical and theological thought. And that the Chief Rabbi achieved through his selected talk, “Why Does Faith Survive?” We heard the Chief Rabbi declare his firm belief that religion would survive and make a positive contribution to the 21st century – even though we are now living in an increasingly secular and materialistic world. He developed his ideas to a riveted audience.

A start at understanding the impact faith has on society and why its survival is so important could, he declared, be gauged from an awareness of the brain’s functions. The left side of the brain we now know is analytical, linear and logical whereas the right side of the brain is holistic and good at handling personal relationships. The latter thus plays a big part in emotional intelligence. It was thus not surprising to learn from the Chief Rabbi that the Ancient Greeks gave not only to the world its first science and philosophy - two supremely left-brain activities – but also the world’s first full alphabet with vowels, written from left to right and as a result another left brain controlled activity. In contrast at the same time, the Children of Israel spoke Hebrew with its very different alphabet, without vowels and read as we know from right to left – a clear right brain activity. Thus, we can now see why the world of the Ancient Greeks adopted its integrative vision of monothemism. The Hebrew Bible, with its emphasis on personal relationships – or more precisely on G-d, neighbour and stranger — was right-brain work. And so in ancient times we saw very different civilizations arise with different modes of thought and personality dysfunction. We need both: the analytical left brain that allows us to take things apart to see how they work, and the integrative right brain that puts things together to see what they mean. This is why religion has to survive. The two great traditions of that world, the state and the market, are not the best of human values can be found. However religion can only do this if it avoids the great conflicts of the past. This is why its survival is so important as now it has always been to ensuring society survives and does not become increasingly fragile and divided. It is thus true faith with its respect for all and sense of mutual loyalty that needs to always be present to pick up the pieces and put things back together. At the end of the day, nevertheless, it is probable that science needs religion and religion needs science; just like the twin hemispheres of the brain. Only then, perhaps, will we see a society of which we will be truly proud.

What was certain, however, at the end of the Chief Rabbi’s enlightening presentation was how proud we were of him. And so perhaps we have all been strengthened that evening in the Playfair Library – as the well-deserved rapturous applause that followed the vote of thanks continued for some considerable time.

Stand Up To Hatred
St Thomas of Aquin’s RC High School. 26th January 2009

Philip Mason

A very moving musical introduction from the Celmer Schmittler Quartet set just the appropriate mood for The City of Edinburgh’s Holocaust Memorial Day Civic Commemoration in the magnificent buildings of St Thomas of Aquin’s School. There then followed an evening of music, art, photography and story-telling – all directed towards the evening’s central focus of standing up to hatred. This the Lord Provost, Councillor George Grubb stressed was unfortunately still with us – and hence a major challenge for today’s society. In fact the Leader of the Edinburgh Council, Councillor Jenny Dawe reported that 1236
Hannah Frank
23 August 1908 – 18 December 2008

Hannah Frank was born in 1908, the oldest of four children, to Charles and Miriam Frank. Charles had come to Glasgow in 1895 from Lithuania. Miriam’s parents, John and Rebecca Lipetz (nee Chersarks), had come to Edinburgh at the end of the 1800s, but moved to Glasgow in the early 1900s where they kept a kiosk oil shop in Hospital Street in the Gorbals.

Hannah’s father, Charles, opened a camera shop in the Saltmarket, Glasgow, which became one of Glasgow’s best known camera retail outlets. The family lived at first in the Gorbals – Abbotsford Place and South Portland Street, opposite the Synagogue. When Hannah was 11 they moved to Dismore Avenue in the Govanhill area of Glasgow, where she lived until she married.

Hannah attended Abbotsford School, Strathbungo School, and Albert Road Academy. She studied English and Latin at Glasgow University and then went to Jordanhill Teacher Training College. She became a primary school teacher until her marriage, to Lionel Levy, oliv ha shalom, in 1939. When she married she and Lionel moved to First Avenue in Netherlee, where they lived for 64 years till they moved to Westaces Care Home in Newton Mearns, Glasgow, in late 2001. Lionel died in 2003 and Hannah remained in Westaces up to her death on 18 December. She celebrated her 100th birthday last August with many friends and family. On the day of her birthday she was visited by the local MSP, Jim Macintosh, and her MP, Jim Murphy, then Minister for Europe, and by Miriam Margolyes, the actress, long an admirer of Hannah’s work.

She lived a Jewish life, attending services first at South Portland Street and then Queen’s Park Synagogues. She was a founder member of the Glasgow Friends of the Hebrew University, and she and Lionel were among the first members of the Glasgow Jewish community to visit Israel after independence in 1948. As a young woman she had a wide circle of Jewish friends, studied Hebrew at Glasgow Yarmouk Torah, and was an active member of Glasgow Zionist Literary Society and Glasgow University Student Student Society. It was on a Glasgow University Jewish Student Ramble that she met Lionel, a meeting that led to their long and happy marriage.

But it is as an artist and sculptor that Hannah Frank made her name. After a slow start, she gained top marks for art at school, and after being noticed by her father’s friend, John Quinton Pringle, the Royal Academician, she began to attend evening classes at the Glasgow School of Art. She won the James McBay prize for oil painting and the Evening Students’ Prize for her drawing ‘Scorancy’: the prize was one guinea, with which she purchased a poetry book that took pride of place on her bookshelves. Her striking black and white drawings, with a hint of Aubrey Beardsley and resonant of the Glasgow girls Jessie King and Margaret MacDonald, were published in the Glasgow University Magazine and exhibited in the Royal Glasgow Institute, Royal Scottish Academy and Royal Academy. As a young 21 year old student, very unusually, she had a solo exhibition in the McLellan Galleries in Sauchiehall Street, which was acclaimed in the Glasgow and the Jewish press of the time.

Hannah turned to sculpture in the 1950s, after a 25 year drawing career, and produced two or three sculptures a year right up to the 1990s. Andy Scott, the Glasgow sculptor who spoke at her centenary exhibition at Glasgow University in August 2008, said that Hannah Frank ‘raised the bar for younger artists with her perfectly formed sculptures.’

Her work was shown by her brother, Arthur Frank, in the 1960s, in his camera shops in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and prints were made at the time to satisfy the demand for them from all over the world. Interest in her work then went quiet, but in the five years before her death, Hannah Frank has enjoyed resurgence, with her drawings and sculpture touring Scotland, England and America, and with press, TV and radio appearances. She was very aware of the interest in her work, and was proud of the effort that her niece Fiona had put into making her name known. She was modest and quiet in many ways, but she knew her own worth, saying in an interview for BBC radio: “I always knew I was going to be a good artist: if they tell me that, it’s only what I knew before.” She has certainly been recognised latterly.

To coincide with her 100th birthday, the St Mungo’s Mirrorsball group of Glasgow poets awarded her a Lifetime Achievement award in the form of a specially commissioned poem by Glasgow-born David Kinnerk, ‘The Mocking Fay’, about her favourite drawing. A reception was held in her honour at the Scottish Parliament in September last year, at which Linda Fabiani, Minister for Culture, spoke of her awe at this artist’s work. An international symposium on Art, Religion and Identity was held to mark her centenary; and the day before she died – too late for her to know – a letter was sent to her from Glasgow University offering her an Honorary Doctorate.

Peter Trowles of the Glasgow School of Art said recently about her: “As one of the School’s most illustrious and successful female artists ever, her work will feature alongside that of her mentor, Benno Schotz, as a record of Glasgow’s important contribution to 20th century sculpture.”

Hannah Frank was a poet as well as an artist, and was very much influenced by romantic poetry. One of her drawings, which hung on many Glasgow and Edinburgh students’ walls in the 1960s after her brother Arthur exhibited her work at the Edinburgh Festival, was an illustration of a Walt Whitman poem: “Come lovely and soothing death, Undulate around the world, Soberly arming, arming, arming. In the day, in the night, to all, to each, Sooner or later, dedicate death.”

In Hannah’s case it arrived later than most.


Fiona Frank
for there were matters which could, in the WWII sense, cause it to ‘go over the top’: defamation of Scotland or Israel, cruelty to children, old people, or animals were sure to rouse Fanny. She was always ready to stand up and be counted; in the Ridley Road as a young girl, she chased off a gang of boys attacking her very much younger brother, and in later life she picketed the Usher Hall in aid of Russian Jewry.

Vicky kept a traditional Jewish home and joined in community and religious life, and was happy mixing with all adherents, irrespective of their level of commitment.

Her charity list was long and grew every year and while there were supposed to be parameters in that they had to be Jewish, Scottish, Israeli, for children, the old, animal welfare, these were very elastic and expanded to take in any that had succeeded in any way anybody that she knew. Her various festive card lists stretched almost to infinity.

Her circle of friends was wide and ever-expanding, to illustrate: the staff at both Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Astley Ainslie said that they had never seen such numbers and variety of visitors, or so many repeat visits. She drew great strength from her friends, and was very comforted by visits of her many friends and the various “characters” in her childhood. She told us about visiting her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. In her middle nineties, in her last years, and delighted to be near her beloved sister and Rangers F.C and his old regiment, The Royal Scots, while an old Pteil Street Glasgow friend, Celtic F.C. and the HJL asked if a mass might be said for Vicky. Maybe those appointing negotiators in the Middle East were looking in the wrong place; anybody who can get the same respect from Edinburgh and Glasgow would find the Middle East problem a dodge to solve.

If this sounds frivolous, then all that can be said is, remember her sense of humour and perhaps the last word on this will be with the medical staff at the Astley Ainslie. It should be here remembered that Vicky thought that everybody involved in her care, paramedics, ERI, and Astley Ainslie staff were superb.

One afternoon, late in Vicky’s stay at Astley Ainslie, the duty staff could be found dissolving into laughter, for it seems that while they were trying to keep Vicky awake to give her exercises, she wanted to sleep, until finally she was very short and succinctly, in five pithy words, enquired of the ward sister as to her continued presence and its not being removed forthwith from Vicky’s proximity. The manner and phrasing in which this request was made, reduced the entire team to helpless laughter; as the ward sister said, “From other patients this would have brought a sharp reprimand, but from Vicity! None of us could do anything for about ten minutes, we were so helpless with laughter!”

Humorous, funny, direct and ever-ready to fight her corner.

That was Vicky.

Fanny Levinson (née Nathan) 1912 – 2008

Who was Fanny Levinson, that quiet, dignified little lady? To us she was, above all, our beloved Mum – caring, devoted, patient and encouraging. As kids, we probably took it all for granted. Later, we grew to appreciate her quiet strength, her kindness, her ability to navigate through life coping with its difficulties with a gentle smile and no fuss. But Fanny Levinson was more than a Mum – much more.

Fanny Levinson was a person who spread goodwill wherever she went, not consciously, but just by being who she was. She never fought with people, or spoke unkindly of them. She was totally unselfish, enormously tolerant of others and of human weakness. She was always there, quietly offering help and support in her undramatic way. It was typical of her and Dad that during the Second World War they took in Marietta, a 16-year-old refugee girl, to live with them. She stayed a year till an aunt was discovered in England, but for years Mum continued to send her birthday presents.

Fanny’s caring attitude is reflected in the feelings she inspired in others. Friends and relatives of all ages, from Israel and abroad, found time to visit her in Netanya, often going to a lot of trouble to do so. She loved talking to them and reminiscing about the old days in Edinburgh.

Like Simmy, our Dad, Fanny was a fervent Zionist. She worked for WIZO for years. She not only encouraged her children to go to Zionist youth movements, but also supported the wish of all three to live in Israel. Never did she breathe a word of criticism or complaint that they were denying her and Dad the “nachas” of children or grandchildren nearby.

In September 1932, Fanny and Simmy Levinson, our parents, were married – the first wedding in the new Shul. They lived in Edinburgh till they made aliyah about 12 years ago. By that time, Dad wasn’t well and Mum bravely made the decision for both of them. She never regretted it. She was happy with the care Dad got in his last years, and delighted to be near the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. In her middle nineties, in wheelchair and special transportation, she traveled the country to be at family weddings, having first sent me out to buy her “something to wear.”

Not that Mum was vain about her appearance, but she liked to look neat and trim. The one thing she did like were good hats – probably a consequence of working as a milliner in Darlings when she left school at 16.

Mum was born in Edinburgh, the youngest child in an Orthodox, Zionist family. She loved to talk about her family, her friends and the various characters in her childhood. She told us about visiting summer school we organized our own gear, packet and made travel bookings etc on our own. When I was 16, she let me go to Nachshara, a mini kibbutz in Essex, for eight months. When I asked her how she agreed to such a bold step (in those days), she said “You can’t encourage a child to be independent, and to believe in Zionism, and then object if they become Zionists – and behave independently.”

“Years ahead of his time, Zeide, Fanny’s father, taught her the importance of eating fresh vegetables when they were available, and of getting fresh air and exercise. In the coldest weather she would send us out for a “brisk walk” to warm up. We were all very healthy kids.”  

Piershill Cemetery

Mickey Cowen has supplied the following photographs to demonstrate how successfully the restoration of the Piershill Cemetery has been.

Golf

Despite the bad weather, the Edinburgh Shul held a very successful Golf Handicap Tournament at the Braids Princess 9 Hole Course.

The winning team was Syd Zoltie, Brian Caine, John Danzig and Steven Levey. Steven also scored a notable double with the best individual score of 39 strokes.

The teenage team consisting of Benjamin Griffin, Isaac Ansell and Emilie Fauveau, played with remarkable skill and showed promise for the future.

The next Handicap Tournament will take place at the same venue on Sunday 6th September 2009.

Leonard Berger

Announcement

Following our request for renewal donations in the last edition of the Edinburgh Star, a number of people were uncertain about the amount to give which might have been the reason for the poor response.

We are asking for a minimum donation of £20, which will cover a year’s worth of publications.

Many thanks once again to all those people who continue to support the publication.

We would welcome comments on any of the articles you have read, or if you would like to submit an article that you feel would be of interest to our readers, please put pen to paper or preferably send a typed version or email to: judyemmi.gilbert@gmail.com

Please note that inclusion will be at the discretion of the Editorial Board and articles may be subject to editing.

You can send ‘snailmail’ to: Judy Gilbert (The Editor) Edinburgh Star Edinburgh Synagogue Chambers, 4 Salisbury Rd, EH16 5AB

Answers to: ‘Do you remember...?’ from last edition:

Front row left to right: John Lipetz, Manuel Lyons, Morris Dorfman, ??, Harold Isenberg, Bernard Dorfman, Clarice Osborne, Elma Rifkind, Beryl Nathan

Back row left to right: Manuel Levitt, Norman Berger, Edward Gordon, Zev Fluss, Louis Gordon, Mervyn Warner
Congratulations

We are delighted to learn that Judith Sischy, Director of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, has been made an OBE in the New Year’s Honours list, for services to Education and to the Voluntary Sector. We send her our sincere congratulations.

At the Scottish Health Awards, Anne Lurie and her team received the Therapists’ Award for setting up social communications groups in the Lothians for children with Asperger’s Syndrome.

Pearl and Ian Shein have become Great Grandparents to Mai born in Manchester on 7th February 2009.

Congratulations to grandparents Doreen and Laurence Bowman on the birth of Ryan (top) and Rachel.

Forthcoming Events

April

5 Sunday
Literary Society Joachim Hemmerle: Yiddush puppet theatre ‘Hak Baki’. (tea) 7.00 for 7.30pm

9 Thursday
First Day Pesach

20 Monday
Lodge Solomon 7.00pm

May

17 Sunday
Harvey Kaplan will give a presentation on Archives and Edinburgh Jews 100 years ago.

There are no meetings of Lodge Solomon or the Literary Society during the summer months. They resume during the winter.

Senior Maccabi meets on Sunday evenings in members’ homes. For further information contact James Hyams or Maurice Griffin.

The Luncheon Club meet every Tuesday and Thursday at 12.30pm

All meetings take place in the Community Centre, Salisbury Road, unless otherwise stated. All are subject to alteration.