

The Edinburgh Star

Journal of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

February 1998

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The Edinburgh Star

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The Board would also like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Harold Mendelssohn for kindly defraying the cost of sending *The Edinburgh Star* overseas.

Editorial

The fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel is clearly a time to celebrate and reflect upon what has been achieved since that day in 1948 which probably marked the most significant event in Jewish history for 2000 years. That our two feature articles on Israel are not uncritical of those achievements reflects a healthy maturity rather than a lack of support. Israel has earned and deserves our support and we unreservedly join in celebrating one of the greatest achievements of the 20th century.

Bill Simpson's robust criticism of the EDITORIAL in the last edition (see page 29) deserves comment. The Editorial in *The Edinburgh Star* has always been the personal opinion of the Editor which the Editorial Board respects but may or may not agree with. Mr Simpson's approach is that of an orthodox Jew. Our Jewish Community consists of people of wide ranging opinions religiously. If we have neglected the orthodox view recently, we have made it up in this issue by publishing two articles on the subject of the Mikvah. This is not a theoretical consideration because the plans for the provision of seven flats by Glasgow Jewish Housing Association in the grounds of our Synagogue (see page 17) contain provision for a new mikvah because one of the flats would be housed in the space currently occupied by the now defunct Mikvah. Ultimately the Trustees of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation will have to make a decision on the whole project which in turn will be based upon what the members want and what is in the best interests of the Congregation.

On a happy note we welcome the opening of the beautiful new Hillel House. The idea for this was first trawled in an EDITORIAL in *The Edinburgh Star* No 17 in January 1994. We will not claim any credit but we do wish it well.

J.A.C.

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FREDA RIFFKIN REPORTS....

WIZO LUNCH

Over 40 ladies of the community were entertained to lunch in the charming home of Mr and Mrs S Zoltie on 5th November 1997, the proceeds going to Edinburgh WIZO.

A lovely lunch catered by the ladies of the Committee was served. A Raffle was held, the prizes for which were kindly donated by Mrs Paula Zoltie and the sum of £200 was raised.

COMMUNAL HALL QUIZ EVENING

A particularly pleasant evening was had by the 113 participants in the Communal Hall Quiz. Once more Joyce and Norman Cram hosted a Quiz programme for which they are due much credit. A great deal of effort must have gone into their smooth presentation and it was much appreciated.

The prize was won by a table masterminded by Rabbi Sedley and including Alit Sedley, Jean and Richard Winetrobe, Lionel Levy, Julian Goodman, Michael Miller, Daniel Hyman, Janette Anderson and Fabien Borochnin. Michelle Winetrobe supervised.

The Ladies Committee as usual surpassed with their catering and a delicious salmon supper was served.

The sum of £773 was raised for the maintenance of the Hall.

CHARITY SHOP FOR ALYN HOSPITAL, JERUSALEM

The Alyn Committee opened a Charity shop for 2 days and raised the sum of over £500, a really miraculous result. Definitely a case of 'mony a mickle makes a muckle'. Thanks are due to Mr David Hyams who kindly gave the use of the shop and to the willing volunteers who staffed it.

LINE DANCING - LADIES COMMUNAL HALL COMMITTEE

A most successful evening was held on 26th October 1997. Over 65 eager members of the Community took part in Line Dancing instructed by Fiona Brown, whose energetic leading did much to enhance the occasion.

Thanks are due to Mrs Doreen Bowman who convened the evening and her helpers.

£236 was raised for the upkeep of the hall.

COMMUNAL HALL CHANUKAH DINNER

Once again the Ladies Committee came up trumps with the Chanukah Dinner. This hard working Committee under the capable guidance of Anita Mendelsohn produced an inviting meal to a capacity crowd of 130 and then proceeded to an ancient and revered Jewish custom - to make a Shidduch.

The shadchante in this case was Irene Hyams without a red handkerchief but dressed in cloth of silver.

The charming wannabe Caleh (Rachel Skop) was presented with a stunning choice of suitors. A Chassid (Berl Osborne) complete with streimel, kapote and tsites hanging down, a Barrow Boy (Norman Berger) with his case of wares, and a rather nice young man who loved his Mammy (our very own Rabbi). A brilliant script by Ian Shein kept the audience laughing until Rachel picked the man of her choice - the gentle Chassid.

The grand finale when the previous week's couple reappeared in the persons of Ian and Pearl Shein was uproarious. We all enjoyed Edinburgh's edition of Blind Date. An evening to remember.

WIZO LUNCHEON at SYLVIA DONNE'S HOME

Around 30 ladies were present at this lunch and over £100 was raised for WIZO.



The Winning Table, left to right: Michael Miller, Julian Goodman, Daniel Hyman, Janette Anderson, Fabian Borochnin, Jean and Richard Winetrobe, Alit and Rabbi David Sedley.

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COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS "AFTER AUSCHWITZ"

On 30th October 1997 Sister Margaret Shepherd, Deputy Director of the National Council of Christians and Jews, who had recently returned from attending the International C.C.J. Conference and a Symposium on "Good and Evil after Auschwitz" organized by the Sisters of Sion's Documentation Centre in Rome, in an hour long discourse described a frank condemnation of the Church in general and confessions of the French Bishops who had failed to support the Jews during the Nazi regime. Some Christians, including the Protestant theologian Karl Barth and Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, had realised the evils of Nazism but they were not listened to. In spite of the lack of leadership from the Church leaders many individuals, mainly Catholics, who did not consider themselves heroic, did risk their own lives and helped some Jews.

Professor Emil Fackenheim, in his opening address to the Conference, quoted the words of the Baal Shem Tov: "Forgetfulness leads to exile, but memory leads to redemption". There is no doubt that it is imperative to remember the Holocaust in order to learn for the future and to apply those memories to what is happening in the world today, for example the terrible events in Bosnia.

The audience, which included thirty-six members of Glasgow C.C.J., contributed to the discussion which took place following the talk, among those taking part being Mr Harry Criven, Dr Walter Sneader and Professor Thomas Torrance.

Any minority is likely to suffer from anti-Semitism and the Jews in Germany were a very small

minority - 95% of the population were registered as members of the Church and when the Nazis came into power Hitler's rhetoric turned into anti-Jewish legislation, which unchecked, developed into mass murder. If any good did come out of such evil it was the establishment of the State of Israel - the only country in which Jews are not a minority.

Blanche Mundy

REDEDICATION SERVICE PIERSHILL CEMETERY

November 2nd 1997.... A well attended gathering heard Rabbi David Sedley in his address at the reconsecration service praise the work of the Hon. Officers of the Congregation along with the officials of the Burial Society

Funding for the project had been raised through the generosity of the congregation and the many well-wishers who had joined in condemning the original vandalism. Rabbi Sedley continued by explaining that the mitzvah performed in this case was of the highest order in that no recompense could ever be sought or considered. To see that the damage had been repaired was indeed in its way returning the sanctified ground to its former dignity. The rabbi on behalf of all trusted that such an incident would never be repeated. The ceremony concluded with the reciting of Psalms and the Mincha service.

M. S. Cowen

CHANUKAH

Some communities slow down over the festive break so that families can take advantage of the long business shutdown to rest, travel and socialise. Not so Edinburgh, which had a very busy weekend in the run up to Hogmanay.

A Chanukah Malaveh Malkah was held on 27th December in the Community Centre. Thirty-five adults and 15 children enjoyed Havdalah and Chanukah songs, accompanied by Rabbi David Sedley

on the guitar, and with prompts via the cheder's new overhead projector for anyone who did not know the words.

The following afternoon the cheder children lit the candles on the shul's Chanukiah and sang Chanukah songs watched by their parents and other members of the community. This was followed by a special tea for the children. Games were organised by Mrs Susan Hyams, who deserves extra special thanks, as it was her own birthday that day!

THE FUTURE GENERATIONS COMMITTEE

In the last issue of The Edinburgh Star, David Kaplan of Jewish Continuity commented that he does not know much about the Future Generations Committee (FGC) of the Edinburgh congregation. As the aims of the FGC correspond in many ways to those of Jewish Continuity, the committee voted unanimously to produce an article in response explaining the work of the FGC, and I was the lucky volunteer to write it!

The FGC was formed in 1991 as a result of a perceived need to ensure that the Jewish community in Edinburgh would be vibrant and relevant to the next generation, and beyond. The committee meets approximately once a month in members' homes, to discuss a wide variety of issues that affect the durability of the community. However, we don't just talk! Below are some of the projects undertaken by the FGC.

On a regular basis, committee members produce the monthly calendar and other inserts in the shul mailing, to ensure that people in the community are aware of upcoming events.

The FGC, with the enthusiastic co-operation of the Rabbi (his wife, Alit, is a member of the committee), is involved in the establishment of educational and cultural programmes. We organised last spring's shabbaton, with a guest speaker, and Rav Yisroel Miller, the renowned

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author and speaker from America, is scheduled to give a talk on the evening of Thursday 22nd January 1998. Family events, such as malavot malkeh and a matzah ramble at Pesach, were the brainchild of committee members. A Rosh Chodesh women's group has just started meeting. As a result of the committee's commitment to making Shabbat and other services more accessible, parsha sheets and children's books are now placed in the shul. We have discussed and supported other educational projects, such as the explanatory minyan on Sunday mornings after Shacharit.

As well as doing what we can to ensure that the existing community is kept informed and educated, we also try to encourage visitors and new members to feel welcome. We produce the welcome guide that many of you will have seen in the shul (although copies are quickly snapped up!). As individuals, we try to make new faces feel at home by greeting them at services and inviting them to social events.

A long-term project has been the production of a brochure describing Edinburgh and its Jewish community to send out to individuals thinking of moving to Edinburgh, and to synagogues and Jewish movements throughout the world. The brochure is now available, not only in print, but also soon on the Internet! We see this as one of many ways of establishing contact with other Jewish communities.

Two projects in their early stages at present indicate the diversity of the activities of the FGC. Firstly, we are in the process of setting up a resource centre in the synagogue, with computer programs, videos, magazines, etc. Secondly, regular readers of the *Edinburgh Star* may have read an article by Maria Barrett of Cosgrove Care in Glasgow in the last issue. This resulted from an initiative by an FGC member to help families with children in need (either permanent or temporary). Future plans by Cosgrove Care in Edinburgh include a summer play

scheme and a befriending scheme.

The members of the committee never cease to be excited by the possibilities of our remit. We do our best to be innovative without being radical. We hope to improve the quality of life for the current Jewish community in Edinburgh, and to ensure that it continues to flourish well into the next millennium (we refer to the Jewish calendar of course!).

If anybody is interested in joining the Future Generations Committee or attending FGC meetings, please contact John Danzig on 229 3054.

Janet Mundy

SIMCHAT TORAH

This year at Simchat Torah, Gershon Mendick and Richard Rifkind were given the honour of being Chatan Torah and Chatan Bereishit respectively. That these were most popular choices was self evident by the Congregation's acclaim when it was announced in the customary manner by their being called up for Hagbah and Gelilah in the Minchah Service on Yom Kippur.

At the Kiddush on Simchat Torah the President paid tribute to the two Chatanim stating how happy the Executive was to have had the opportunity of acknowledging the contribution of these two congregants to the working and well being of the community - Gershon Mendick as the meticulous and conscientious Recorder of the Chevra Kadisha - a most responsible and important position; and one which he carried out both sympathetically and accurately. Richard Rifkind - an assiduous and enthusiastic teacher whose devotion to the children he helped to teach was open and apparent.

The President went on to say that this honour included their respective families who represented the best and most long-standing traditions of the Edinburgh Community - going back several generations in all aspects of this. The Mendicks and Rifkinds were and are the typical back-bone of the Community and the Executive were

happy to recognise this publicly in this way. The Congregation's enthusiastic response to the President's remarks underlined its agreement to his comments.

FRIENDSHIP CLUB

A meeting of the Friendship Club in October took a slightly different shape when, after an enjoyable tea, bingo and other activities were put aside for members to see a film show somewhat more original. The late Morris Brown was well known for his interest in cine-photography, taking many reels of Friendship Club picnics and teas dating back a quarter of a century. These recently found mementoes featured activities enjoyed by so many members. Due to the generosity of Mr Norman Cram, these films were transferred to video and shown at above-mentioned meeting. The excitement, inevitably tinged with sadness at seeing loved ones no longer with us, and laughter at antics of others, made the afternoon a memorable one. The Club had pleasure in presenting Mr. Cram with a gift in appreciation of his kindness.

On 21st December 1997 the Friendship Club celebrated its 41st Birthday, in the Communal Hall. Forty-two members and guests attended. Honoured guests were Dr and Mrs N A Oppenheim, Rabbi and Mrs D Sedley, Mr & Mrs D Mendelssohn and Mrs Rose Orgel. Also present were three of our retired members from their nursing homes and hospital - Mrs Nan Caplan, Mrs Etta Freedman and Mr Louis Pinto. Mrs Sylvia Kaye cut the Birthday cake and Dr Oppenheim proposed the toast to the Club.

Highlight of the afternoon was entertainment by Mr David Goldberg and Mr Ian Shein with their mouth organ duo and Mr Henry Mann sang a few songs. Mr Sam Latter recited a poem which was very well put over dramatically and got a great applause, as did all the entertainers.

Next meeting:- 15th February 1998

Betty Caplan

International Jewish Lawyers in Edinburgh



Left to right: Sheriff G.H. Gordon Q.C., Lady Cosgrove, Judge Myrella Cohen, Leslie Wolfson, Sir Alexander Stone and Lord Caplan.

It was a glorious sunny winter's day on Sunday 30th November, 1997 when a first-ever gathering of Scottish Jewish lawyers coached their way from Glasgow to Edinburgh to inaugurate there, in Parliament House, the home of the Scottish Supreme Court, a Scottish Branch of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers & Jurists.

On arrival in Edinburgh the group were met by two Scottish judges, Lord Caplan and Lady Cosgrove. Lady Cosgrove welcomed the participants and introduced Her Honour Judge Myrella Cohen, chairman of the UK branch who read a message from the Hon. President the Rt. Hon. Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls.

Lord Caplan then addressed the gathering and went on to say that too few Jewish lawyers were turning to the Bar for a career and he advised the younger participants present to consider this option. Lord Caplan was hopeful that the Scottish branch of the Association would flourish and he much looked forward to further meetings.

Leslie Wolfson

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PETER KASTNER and RACHEL RUBNER



The marriage took place on 23rd November 1997 at Luton Hoo, Bedfordshire, of Peter, eldest son of Liesel and Georg Kastner, and Rachel, younger daughter of Sandra Rubner and Leslie Rubner. Rabbi Shlomo Levin of South Hampstead Synagogue, London, officiated. Rachel's sister, Yolanda, was the Matron of

Honour and Peter's brothers, Robbie and Ernst were joint Best Men.

Although Peter's parents live in Vienna, where his father is a chartered accountant and his mother is a university lecturer, the family has maintained its links with Edinburgh, the city which offered refuge to Peter's grandparents, Dr Ernst Adler and Dr Regina Kapeller-Adler, when they fled from Nazi-occupied Vienna in January 1939. Peter and his brothers were all born in Edinburgh and celebrated their Barmitzvahs there. Peter's "Aufruf" was held in the synagogue last August.

Peter and Rachel presently live in Belsize Park, London. Peter is Import Manager with EMA Textiles Ltd and Rachel works in the Marketing Section of BUPA.

NICK COSGROVE and CAROLINE CHRISTIE

On 21st December 1997 at the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol Synagogue, Leeds, the marriage took place between Nick Cosgrove and Caroline Christie of Leeds. Taking part in the ceremony were



Rabbi Y. Shemaria and Cantor David Apfel from Leeds and Joel Korn, Nick's brother in law from London. The couple were addressed by their own Rabbi, Michael Harris from Hampstead Synagogue London. The best man was Elliot Cosgrove, Nick's cousin from New York.

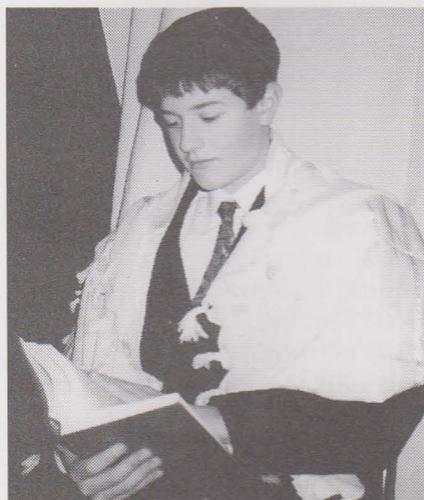
The bridesmaids were Caroline's sisters, Nicola and Michelle, assisted by Nick's niece Deborah Korn (14 months). The page boy was Nick's young cousin Benjamin Glasser from Glasgow.

Caroline and Nick met when they were both students at Hull University residing at the local Hillel House. Caroline is a producer at LBC Radio station in London and Nick is Director of Labour Friends of Israel. He is also chairman of his local Congregation, WHAM (West Hampstead Alternative Minyan) and was chairman of the Union of Jewish Students.

Congratulations to:-



Joshua Abramsky, who celebrated his Barmitzva on Saturday, 15th November. In his Droscha he demonstrated how faith and piety, expressed not merely by words but by actions, are rewarded by God's kindness and mercy.



David Brannan, who invited us to share the celebrations for his Barmitzva on Saturday, 22nd November. David discussed the theme of continuity and the influence of women in our history during his Dvar Torah.

Mr Myer S. Cowen JP was re-elected Chairman of the District Courts Association of Scotland.

Ian Caplan an Edinburgh Solicitor has become qualified in English Law and has taken a position with a law firm in London.

Andrew Caplan has been promoted to Manager of Boots the Chemist in Wimbledon.

Cassie Mendelssohn received a Diploma in Playwork with merit at Leeds Metropolitan University.

COMING EVENTS

February 1998

15 Sunday	Literary Society 'Antisemitism on the electronic frontier' Michael Whine (Board of Deputies of British Jews)	8.00pm 7.00pm
16 Monday	Lodge Solomon	
19 Thursday	Council of Christians and Jews 'The challenge of student chaplaincy' (Rev Ian Whyte and Rabbi Dovid Cohen)	7.30pm
21 Saturday	WIZO Social: Musical 'Taking Over'	7.30pm

March 1998

11 Wednesday	Fast of Esther	
12 Thursday	Purim	
15 Sunday	Literary Society 'Purim Party Pieces' (members of the Lit)	8.00pm
16 Monday	Lodge Solomon	7.00pm
19 Thursday	Council of Christians and Jews 'Jewish Festivals' (Rabbi David Sedley)	7.30pm

April 1998

11 Saturday	First Day of Pesach	
12 Sunday	Second Day of Pesach	
20 Monday	Lodge Solomon	7.00pm
26 Sunday	Literary Society 'Talk on Muriel Spark' Brian Cheyette (Reader in English and Judaic Studies Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London)	8.00pm

If you have e-mail, please give your address to Rabbi Sedley sedley@enterprise.net and he will add you to his list of people receiving updates of Coming Events.

The e-mail of the Honorary Secretary of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation is e.h.cong@virgin.net.

The Friendship Club meets every alternate Sunday at 3.00pm. For dates for the current period, contact Willie Caplan (667 7984).

Junior Maccabi meets on alternate Sundays from 1.00pm to 3.00pm. For further information, contact Judy Fransman (447 5861).

Senior Maccabi meets on Sunday evenings in members' homes. For further information, contact Howard Nicolsby (317 7563).

The Jewish Philosophical Society meets every month on a Sunday in members' homes.

The Luncheon Club meets every Tuesday and Thursday at 12.30pm.

The Parent and Toddler Group meets on Sunday mornings at 10.00am. Next meetings on 1st March, 29th March, 19th April, 3rd May, 24th May and 14th June

All meetings are subject to alteration.

All the above events, unless otherwise stated, take place in the Community Centre at 4 Salisbury Road.

Jonathan Adler and Susie Shenkin have become engaged and are planning a summer wedding in Edinburgh.

Alan Rubenstein joined the Morgan Stanley Group (Europe) to become a managing director in charge of marketing services to the European pension fund community.

Sally Cowen gained Tenancy in the Chambers of Geoffrey Hawker 46 Essex Street London.

Andrew Kay

Andrew, Sylvia and Sharon wish to thank everyone who kindly visited Andrew when he was in hospital, and also the many telephone calls, cards and gifts which he received.

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CONFESSIONS OF A TROUBLED MAN

Twenty months ago, crowds danced in the streets as Benjamin Netanyahu swept to power in Israel. Now, in the wake of numerous political crises and his wife's untimely revelations, is it just a question of time before his squabbling government collapses around him?

by SUZANNE GLASS¹

The bags under his eyes are startling. The lack of dynamism in his voice is uncharacteristic. "It's been a long night without sleep, as you know," says Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, leaning back in the swivel chair in his Jerusalem office.

The Prime Minister has spent the previous night, with the cabinet in chaos, arguing over how to deal with the resignation of Dan Meridor the Finance Minister who had held the post since Netanyahu came into power on 31st May 1996. On the morning of our meeting (which the beleaguered Netanyahu had cancelled on six previous occasions), the outgoing Finance Minister was asked on a radio show whether there were things he knew now about Netanyahu that he hadn't known a year ago. "I would rather not comment," he said. But what if he had? Would he have enough dirt on Netanyahu to bring down the Government? "That," says Netanyahu, with a dismissive wave of the hand, "is just the *bon ton* of the moment. It's not serious."

Above the Prime Minister's head hangs an over-powering close-up photograph of a beaming blonde - his third, current and much criticised wife Sara. The two met on a moving stairway at Amsterdam's Schipol airport in 1989, when Sara was a stewardess with the Israeli airline El AL. "We were going in opposite directions," she once said in an interview. "He looked at me until he had to turn his head backwards. Then on the plane he came to look for me."

But Sara has recently been so detrimental to Netanyahu's public image, that he may well wish he hadn't been quite as bold in his

pursuit. Last month, during the recording of an Israeli TV show, the First lady blew up when the interviewer Ilana Dayan, began to ask her about her husband's infidelity (in 1993 Netanyahu publicly admitted to an affair with Ruth Barr,



his image consultant, after an anonymous caller to his home claimed to be in possession of a video tape of the pair in a sexually compromising situation). Israeli papers reported that Sara yelled: "If you want me to say that anyone who cheats is scum, then anyone who cheats is scum." She then went on to say, "You know how many people tried to flirt with me from the Knesset [the parliament]," and to provide details of who is sleeping with whom in political circles.

The controversial recording is now under lock and key and the government-subsidised Israeli Broadcasting Authorities has promised not to release the un-edited version. In a country as small as Israel, however, it is just a question of time before the identities of the adulterous politicians are

leaked to the press: a development that could cause the Prime Minister untold embarrassment and throw several political careers into jeopardy.

Since Benjamin's affair was revealed four years ago, the Netanyahus have tried hard to present a united front in public. But their cooing and cuddling has not impressed Israelis. "They cannot believe we really love each other. Every time we hold hands it's supposed to be a show. You should see how often we hold hands when we're alone. It's unbelievable," said Sara. Asked whether he manages to spend any time with his family, the Prime Minister tells me that just the previous Friday he had tried to sneak some "rare moments of leisure" alone with his wife and two small sons in a secluded corner of a park. He smiles and says, "You see, I treasure those moments." But some Israelis think that his reasons for staying with Sara are rather more pragmatic: another divorce would seriously damage his political career.

Sitting there, beneath her picture, pasty-faced behind the foundation he has forgotten to remove after a television interview, in a crisp white shirt that doesn't quite hide his burgeoning paunch, it's clear Benjamin Netanyahu is not the dynamic man who was elected to power last year in the wake of the Labour prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. During his campaign Netanyahu cut a rather more svelte figure. He was an upright charmer who held his arms aloft at rallies and political gatherings shouting: "Shalom ve bitachon [peace and security]."

Netanyahu's election tactics were successful and, at 46, he became Israel's youngest ever Prime Minister. One year into his four-year

¹ This article was first published in the *Independent on Sunday*

term of office, however, he and Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestinian Authority are incommunicado, and Netanyahu is besieged by criticism at home and abroad.

"It's a well-known caprice," he says, "the capriciousness of public opinion and the er... er... slings public figures are often subjected to, I experience just as anyone else does, but perhaps more than most. But I didn't come into public life expecting fairness. I didn't come expecting to be loved."

As head of the right-wing Likud party, he had had much practice at being hated, even before he became Prime Minister. "Murderer, murderer" yelled the crowds of left-wing Rabin supporters, convinced that Netanyahu had played a part in inciting the hatred among right-wing Orthodox Jews that led to the lodging of the bullet in Rabin's back by Yigal Amir, an orthodox extremist.

At Rabin's funeral, when Netanyahu went to embrace Dalia Philoso of the murdered prime minister's daughter whom he knew from his student days, she turned away from him in disgust and said: "Not now. Please, not now."

But still Netanyahu refuses to shoulder any responsibility for the violent anti-Rabin movement. "It wasn't true," he says. "I spoke out against incitement time and time again... but this was lost in the wave of recrimination that swept society." However today there's a new and stronger wave of recrimination and this time it's directed against him.

A recent opinion poll conducted by the Israeli newspaper *Maariv* shows that far from being loved, "Bibi", as he is known both by his supporters and detractors, has lost the confidence of Israelis, even of those who elected him into power. According to the poll, if elections were to be held in Israel today, only a quarter of the way through his mandate, no more than 33 per cent of the population would vote to keep Netanyahu in the hot seat (compared to the 50.04 per cent who voted him in just over a year ago). Even former Israeli prime minister

Yitzhak Shamir a member of the Likud party, announced at the end of last month:

"I have no confidence in the man and his ways.

Netanyahu is not an instantly likeable character. He is polite to a fault, but his manner is stiff, his responses robotic and his small, dark eyes are cold and expressionless. His enemies accuse him of being soulless. His friends believe that the death of Yoni, his elder brother who led the Entebbe rescue operation in 1976 (to save Israeli hostages hijacked to Uganda by Arab terrorists) caused Netanyahu such agony that he blocks out all emotion.

He is usually a good talker but now, exhausted and challenged, he has lost his touch as a communicator: he talks at and through you. He also makes no attempt to disguise his loathing of the media which over the last year has tracked him from scandal to scandal and crisis to crisis. Asked what he would have done in another life he looks at me and says, somewhat scornfully: "I wouldn't exchange places with your profession."

Benjamin Netanyahu was born in Tel Aviv in 1949. His Polish refugee parents instilled in their three sons an adoration of Israel. Benzion, Benjamin's father was a Zionist, historian and prolific author, best known for his work on the Spanish inquisition, who put enormous pressure on his children to achieve both academically and professionally. Friends remember Benzion as an autocratic father who spent much of his time with his nose in a book and little of it with his children. As is prevalent in many Jewish families, the greatest pressure to succeed was placed on the shoulders of the first-born son, but when Yoni was killed that onus fell on Benjamin.

Benjamin spent large chunks of his childhood and early adulthood in the US. He attended high school in Philadelphia, studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and took an MBA at Harvard Business School. He

acquired a superb command of English and now when he speaks there is nothing of the heavy accent or the rolled r's common to Hebrew speakers.

Political analysts claim that his Americanised manner helped him into power, but Netanyahu is not convinced. "Some have used these things to attack me," he says, and adds in his usual evasive manner: "I don't know whether they have helped or hindered me. I do the things I have to do."

His years in the US perhaps also explain why, ironically, Netanyahu also has always remained something of a fish out of water in Israeli society, despite becoming the country's Prime Minister. At one time, he even had dual Israeli/American citizenship.

Courageous, but a loner is the way colleagues described Netanyahu during his time as a member of an elite unit of the Israeli defence forces in the early Seventies. After leaving the army he thought that he would follow in his father's footsteps and pursue an academic career, but after his time in America and his brother's death, his preoccupation with fighting terrorism led him into politics.

As Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations between 1984 and 1988, he appeared regularly on talk shows and acquired almost pop-star status among Zionists and Orthodox Jews. Talk-show host Larry King invited Netanyahu onto his programme time and again and said of the man:

"On a scale of one to 10, as a great guest he's an eight. If he had a sense of humour he'd be a 10."

Back in Israel, he was elected as a Likud MP and took office as Deputy Minister of foreign affairs. He remained an MP throughout the years of Rabin's left-wing government, speaking out against the contents of the Oslo Accords (part of the peace treaty confirmed by Rabin, Peres and Arafat with the famous Whitehouse-lawn handshake in 1993) and the trading of land for peace.

By 1993 he had made a meteoric

rise to become leader of the Likud party at the age of 43. It was at this time that, panicked by the potential damage to his reputation, he publicly confessed to having an extra-marital affair. This was not the first known case of infidelity for Netanyahu (his first wife left him after he fell for another woman), and it fortified his reputation as a womaniser. In Israel rumour has it that Sara agreed to stay with him only if he signed a contract stating that he would never leave the country without her. Since that time she has been at his side during overseas trips.

Shimon Peres governed for seven months after Rabin's murder before calling an election at a time when Netanyahu's ratings in the opinion polls were poor. But bus bomb after bus bomb convinced Israelis that security was their number one priority and they fell for Netanyahu's promise that he would make the country a safe place to live.

On the night of 31st May 1996, when Netanyahu became Prime Minister the streets were filled with singing, dancing right-wingers and weeping left-wingers fearful of the damage their new leader would cause to the peace process. Aware of the deep political divide between right and left, Netanyahu said that as leader of all Israelis, and not just of Likud supporters, he would use his period of office to unite the country to achieve peace.

As his popularity continues to fall he remains unrealistically optimistic about achieving his goals, saying just that: "It will take time."

On an international level the greatest crisis Netanyahu has faced this year followed his decision to build homes for Jewish people at Har Homa in East Jerusalem. The area was not covered by the Oslo Accords, which attempted to settle disputes over territories such as Hebron, Jericho and several small Arab villages – yet Israel's disputed capital city is at the very core of the instantly inflammable debate over Palestinian and Israeli rights to the Holy Land.

Netanyahu remains unrepentant

about the building programme at Har Homa, which set the flames alight both literally and figuratively to such an extent that in March 1997 all the countries of the United Nations – except the US, which abstained – voted against Netanyahu's decision.

Challenged as to his motives, a smug look crosses the Prime Minister's face: "Oslo gives full rights to Israel to build in Jerusalem."

"But you must have known it was going to be antagonistic to the Palestinians?" I ask.

Netanyahu's retort is instant, his tone arrogant. "Oh sure," he replies, stretching his arms out behind his head. "But if we say that we will accept Palestinian dictate in our capital, there are many more demands that would follow, for example the flooding of Israel with Palestinian refugees which effectively means the end of Israel ... I assume the people who are reading this paper would not take kindly to IRA demands on the partition of London and would take a very strong line on that."

Netanyahu also claims that he honoured the Israeli side of the Oslo Accords, despite the Palestinians' failure to renounce the old PLO commitment to destroy the State of Israel.

The Har Homa crisis came hot on the heels of the tunnel trauma that also ignited international fury against Netanyahu. The Prime Minister had decided to create a new entrance to a 4000-year-old tunnel that runs alongside the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem (the holiest of sites for Jews), and the Golden and Silver Domes (the holiest of sites for Arabs). Previously tourists had entered the tunnel in Jewish West Jerusalem, made a U-turn at the end and exited again through the same door. Netanyahu's decision to make a new opening in the Arab Quarter may well have been within his legal rights but many perceived it to be little more than muscle flexing on his part. Both Jews and Palestinians were injured in the ensuing riots.

Now, with a few months for reflection under his belt, doesn't Netanyahu feel that such actions make it impossible for Arafat to convince his people that Israel is serious about the peace process? And if Arafat is ousted as Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, isn't Netanyahu afraid of the extremists who might replace him?

"It is not my place to interfere in Palestinian domestic politics," says Netanyahu, "and, by the way, I have suggested to them that they adopt the same policy *vis-a-vis* Israel."

His aggression is thinly veiled, his manner supremely confident, but one detail gives the man away. He shakes his right leg, constantly. At times the movement is almost imperceptible but when he talks of peace the shaking grows violent.

And he refers constantly to peace, to "essential elements in the peace process", to the fact that "we are moving in the direction of peace", and to "what I can do for the Jewish State of Israel"; but whether he believes he can bring Israel closer to peace or not, the fact is that despite some domestic improvements in security, the Middle East is farther away from peace now than it was when he became Prime Minister.

Even though Netanyahu did adhere to the agreement in the Oslo Peace Accords to withdraw Israeli troops from Hebron in January of this year, to allow Palestinians to take control of the area, he is adamant that he will never hand over the occupied Golan Heights in the north of Israel to Syria. He is also determined, as all previous Israeli governments have been, that Jerusalem will never again become a divided city, as it was before the 1967 war and while he is prepared to offer the Palestinians a measure of autonomy in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, he says there will never be a Palestinian state.

"I have offered them a solution that lets them engage in self government but I do not want them to endanger Israel in any way and that means most powers would be held by them for their internal affairs ... but other powers relating

to security would be kept by Israel. For example, control of the air space for the prevention of military pacts between Palestinians and say Iran and Iraq ... such pacts could endanger the very survival of Israel."

At the moment, however it is the very survival of the peace process that is at stake. Netanyahu cannot boast of peace talks, because there are none. At the very best he can, and does, make references to the hypothesis of "when talks resume". But if Arafat and President Assad of Syria are furious with Netanyahu, how can he possibly hope to achieve peace when he has no one with whom to negotiate?

He interrupts me before I finish my question. His answer is reminiscent of his smooth-talking days as Israeli ambassador to the UN. "I don't think the problem is one of personal frustrations," he says. "I have frustrations too. That doesn't mean I say, well, we won't negotiate, or because you won't accept Israeli terms, I'm going to send in the tanks."

Protecting Israel against violence and terrorism is Bibi's baby. In 1991 he wrote a book entitled *Terrorism, How the West Can Win* and now, when pushed to answer questions on his government's successes, he talks of the reduction of terrorism in the country since he has been in power. "The first achievement is to change the climate of terror in the country" says Netanyahu. What he meant to say was: "The first achievement has been to change the climate of terror in the country." It is one of the few linguistic slips he makes during the interview.

"If you were here 18 months ago, you could not board a bus without the fear that it would explode.... 'Now what has changed?' as we Jews ask at Passover 'Why is this year different from all other years? The Hamas has changed? The Jihad has changed?' What has changed is that the government of Israel has changed and has made our insistence on security an essential element in the peace process.

It is true that under Netanyahu's

government, the number of terrorist attacks within Israel has decreased. Boarding a bus has become a slightly less hazardous activity than in the first half of 1996, when 58 Israeli passengers were blown up by Hamas suicide bombers. But Netanyahu omits to mention that sipping cappuccino at an outdoor café remains a life-threatening pastime in Israel: in March a Hamas suicide bomber blew up himself and four people in a Tel Aviv café.

If the past year has been a bad one for Netanyahu internationally, it has been a disastrous one at home. Domestic scandals have followed party scandals. Party scandals have followed blackmail scandals.

What does the Prime Minister think was his greatest mistake this year?

"Oh, I've made quite a few. The only government that doesn't make mistakes is the government that doesn't do anything."

Yes, but if he had to put his finger on one, what would he say it was?

"Rating the mistakes would be one of my greatest mistakes, so I'm going to avoid it."

Netanyahu, the artful dodger, looks at his watch. His communications director David Bar Illan, who has been with us throughout the interview, is clearly uncomfortable with the line of questioning, but the subject is too crucial to let it drop. So what were his mistakes?

"Oh, I have made quite a few on a number of appointment procedures and I have said so quite forthrightly..."

Netanyahu is no doubt alluding to the Bar On blackmail scandal that provoked headlines like "Intrigue and Distrust" at the beginning of the year and that came close to toppling him from power.

In January Netanyahu approved the appointment of Roni Bar On as Attorney General. He took office on a Sunday and resigned the following Monday after a leak hinted that his appointment had been the consequence of "threats". Ariel Derie, the leader of Shas, a right-wing religious party that forms part of the multi-party government

coalition, had proposed the appointment of Bar On as Attorney General. Derie had a fraud trial hanging over his head and was a close friend of Bar On's.

Netanyahu's Likud party desperately needed the support of the Shas party for a vote supporting the withdrawal of troops from Hebron; Derie knew this and was therefore able to convince the Minister of Justice that Bar On, despite a lack of exceptional credentials, was the man for the job.

When at first the word "blackmail" was uttered in Israeli political circles, Netanyahu appeared on Israeli TV, waved his hands and said: "*Kishkush, kishkush* [rubbish, rubbish]".

But the story was taken seriously enough for the police to start an investigation and for them to allegedly recommend that Derie, the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister be taken to court on charges of misconduct.

The Prime Minister has now been cleared without the scandal of any court proceedings but there was a nail-biting period when Netanyahu could not be sure he would escape trial.

"You feel," says the Prime Minister of the many people who believed him to be guilty, "a number of times, that there are great injustices in public life where many things are unfair."

Netanyahu has the habit of saying "you", or "one", when he means "I". Though the Royal "we" is common to people in power, with Netanyahu his avoidance of "I" seems inherent to his personality. He is a man who loathes to talk of feelings.

Surely though the constant criticism, not only of his politics but of his style of governing, must hurt him personally?

"No," he says.

So he is thick-skinned?

"No," he says.

He doesn't think he is?

"I do," says his communications director, before he can stop himself.

"I don't think I am," says Netanyahu "I find it peculiar that

other people get hurt so easily." He is hurt he says, "not by attacks on me, but by attacks on my wife and children."

Attacks on his wife Sara are rife and her recent comments on the antics of her husband's colleagues have further exacerbated increasingly putrid relations within the government. Netanyahu complains that: "There is still a lingering effort to delegitimise the government ... it has nothing to do with policies."

The truth is that in a country known for its fragmented governments, Netanyahu is being attacked from so many different angles from within in his own coalition, that it is becoming impossible for him to present a united front to Israelis, let alone to the rest of the world. The ultra-right-wing Jewish parties within his coalition, for example, have put enormous pressure on him not to accept Reform and Liberal converts to Judaism as authentic Jews, thereby depriving them of the right to live in Israel ... a right currently automatically afforded to all Jews. If he doesn't succumb, he loses at least some of their support. If he does, he loses both the moral and the financial support of Reform and Liberal American Jewry.

The political plots thicken. Natan Sharansky a one-time Russian *refusenick* and now head of Israel Be'Aliya, a party within the government coalition, recently threatened to withdraw his support from Netanyahu if the Prime Minister fails to fork out several million dollars for the housing of Russian immigrants. Netanyahu's Foreign Minister David Levy, leader of yet another coalition party, was said to be walking around with a resignation letter in his pocket, ready to produce it at any moment if the Prime Minister didn't agree to exclude the outspoken extreme right-winger Ariel Sharon from his inner cabinet. Ariel Sharon, meanwhile, threatened to leave if he was excluded from the inner cabinet (neither has happened).

Netanyahu is trapped at the centre of a dark swarm of demands

and doesn't know which way to turn. As the Israeli political journalist Joel Marcus put it: "He is weakened, because he has promised too many things to too many people."

Last month he barely survived a parliamentary no-confidence vote; his press officer admitted in despair: "Some members of the Likud didn't turn up to vote. It wasn't a pleasant experience."

If politically he is in the corner of the boxing ring, the situation mirrors his physical predicament. Security surrounding prominent Israeli politicians has always been tight but since the assassination of Rabin it has become suffocating. Throngs of guards wait outside the doors of his office. His every move is followed. Tall and strong as he is, he is not allowed to sit alone in a room with a journalist who has been thoroughly searched lest she should attack him. A few weeks ago, when he went to the cinema, he was accompanied by so many security guards that he had to buy 60 tickets: one for himself, one for his wife and 58 for his entourage. Often when he attends a meeting his car is driven right into the building, to avoid him having to walk in the street. With these constant reminders of his vulnerability does Netanyahu fear for his life?

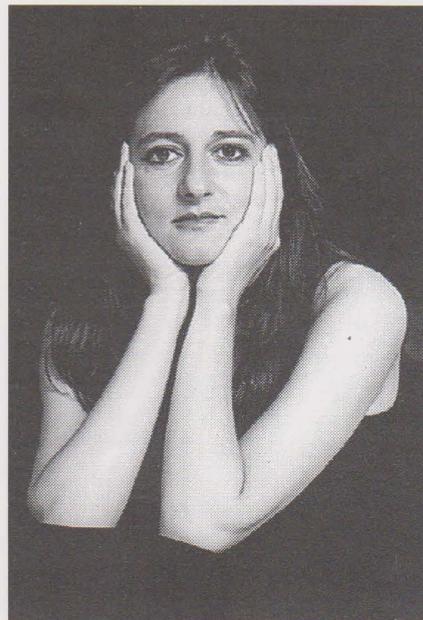
"Others are charged with that concern," he says and then adds: "Occasionally the thought does cross my mind ... I am more concerned with my family than myself."

So is the Israeli Prime Minister happy? Can he possibly be happy, almost immobilised, like a lion, injured but still roaring, surrounded by the prey that await

his demise?

"Yes, of course I'm happy," says Netanyahu. "First of all it's a wonderful job, but it doesn't pay very well. Although it has got its side benefits ... for example, the gentility of Israeli politics."

(For my grandmother, Bessie Glass, who at the tender age of 92, helped me with the research for this article.)



Suzanne Glass was born in Edinburgh in 1962, the daughter of Alick and Ruth Glass and the granddaughter of Bessie and the late Harry Glass. Her family moved to London in 1968. A Cambridge graduate, she is a freelance journalist who writes regularly for the Independent, the Independent on Sunday and the Guardian. Her first article as a professional journalist was published in the Scotsman in 1992. She has just written her first novel called *The Interpreter* to be published by Random House in February 1999.

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ISRAEL AT 50

by DAVID CAPITANCHIK¹

August 1997 marked the centenary of the first Zionist Congress, the aim of which was comprehensive yet simple: "Zionism aims at the creation of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine to be secured by public law."

It was an anodyne phrase for what were essentially complex revolutionary ideas. The Jewish problem, as it was newly posited by the Congress, lay not in the concerns of the non-Jewish populations amongst whom European Jewry lived, but in the low moral condition of the Jews engendered by their constant fear of physical annihilation and the daily degradation of their cultural and psychological environment. The solution prescribed was for political and social autonomy in a territory in which Jews could attain majority status and hence self-government. In short to be as other people.

Zionism though new to its Jewish audience was heir to the revolutionary ideas of the nineteenth century. Nothing in the 20th century has captured the collective imagination like the beliefs encapsulated in socialism, or the compelling imperatives of nationalism or the seeming logic of Marxist theoretical analysis. Although particularistic in its aim and therefore more circumscribed in its appeal, Zionism, at least that system of ideas influential until the foundation and early years of the State of Israel, reflected the great and often competing ideologies of the nineteenth Century.

Like its Marxist precursor, the leadership of the Zionist movement was drawn not from the traditional sources of influence, in this case business and synagogue, but from a class of intellectuals. Open to hitherto alien ideas, it was a class able to both formulate and transmit the need for far-reaching changes in

community belief and action. Like socialism, Zionism eschewed the remote otherworldly future espoused by orthodox religion. Deliverance from persecution and poverty was to be found in the material world of men and work. The nationalistic, territorial element of Zionism, that strand of belief that has persisted long after the demise of socialism and the demonstrable irrelevance of Marx, initially sought to give firm foundation to a group identity hitherto based on somewhat tenuous ideas of a shared culture.

The realisation of the Zionist dream seems to have solved some problems, only to raise others. In many respects, Zionism, as a political/cultural movement, has been one of the great success stories of the twentieth century and the joining of people and land has diminished, if not entirely eliminated, certain fundamental Jewish characteristics, such as a sense of inferiority and dependence. Within fifty years of its inception its main goal was achieved. A relatively small number of committed settlers, reinforced by survivors of the holocaust, proclaimed the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, survived the initial onslaught of the armies of its hostile neighbours and then proceeded to absorb millions of penniless immigrants. Fifty years on, Israel is both militarily and economically a regional power, no longer seriously threatened by its immediate neighbours, although other states in the area still threaten its annihilation, albeit as part of their more general challenge to the regional status quo.

What are significant, however, are the changes in interpretation and understanding that the simple resolution enunciated at Basel has undergone. Like all great belief systems, its very simplicity has

encouraged not only exegesis but also confrontation and dispute between those who see themselves as the true believers and those who are considered wayward if not downright heretical.

The existential circumstances of the Jewish Diaspora have greatly influenced the development of the original concept so that its core purpose – the unification and preservation of Jewish existence has been adapted to suit the circumstances of different audiences. There is a major distinction to be drawn between Zionism as a political movement leading to the realisation of clear-cut political goals, namely the ingathering and settlement of Jews in a Jewish State, and Zionism as an expression of Jewish life in the Diaspora. Paradoxically, in the United States, if not in Britain, Zionism has served to reaffirm and reinforce Jewish identity in a pluralistic multi-ethnic society.

In the Sovereign State of Israel, different interpretations of Zionism lie at the root of the many cleavages that divide its society and characterise its domestic political life as well as its external relations with both the Jewish and non-Jewish world. It is, of course, possible to argue, as many do, that Zionism ceased to have any meaning or relevance once its main aim had been achieved. Indeed, it is doubtful whether it ever had any meaning at all for those who nowadays make up the majority of the citizens of the Jewish State. If it is true that Zionism is essentially a European concept rooted in the ideologies and values of nineteenth century Europe, then what meaning could it have for people originating from the very different, much more traditional world of the Arab Middle East and North Africa? For them, the return to Zion was based upon religious rather than secular values and a desire to be differentiated from their non-Jewish environment. In sum, not to be as other people. For them, the universalistic values of Zionism had no appeal, but rather its particularistic nationalist and Jewish dimensions.

¹ David Capitanchik addressed the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society on 23rd November 1997 on this theme

The evolving nature of Israeli society has had a profound impact on its political complexion. From the point of view of Israel's domestic politics, the history of the past 50 years falls into two distinct phases. The first, the period of the *Yishuv* and the two decades following the founding of the State in 1948; and the second, the last thirty years from roughly the Six-Day War to the present day.

Possibly the difference between these two periods can best be summed up by the lifestyles of the country's political elites. For Israel's founding fathers a frugal lifestyle was more than a necessity imposed by economic and political constraints. They turned frugality into an ideal in itself, establishing educational institutions that inculcated these values; youth movements that implemented them; and a network of cultural institutions that elevated them into a national ethos. Thus Prime Minister Ben Gurion and his wife Paula lived in a modest flat in Tel-Aviv with no servants. Guests at their dinner table would report on the Prime Minister's impatience that they should finish eating quickly so that he could get on with the washing up.

In stark contrast, the Israeli media now reports ad nauseam on the lifestyle of the Netanyahus, with their much-abused Nannies and the Prime Minister's shoe-polisher, recently dismissed by the First Lady because in her view the shine on the Prime Ministerial shoes was not up to standard.

It is important to realise that Netanyahu and his Likud predecessors were not responsible for the abandonment of frugality in favour of the current hedonistic Israeli lifestyle. The lifestyle of the Begin Family differed little from that of the Ben Gurions. Pioneers in all things, it was those who established the original norms and their successors who led the way and thereby sowed the seeds of the country's current social, ideological and national crisis.

The changing norms coincided

with a major demographic change that had taken place in Israeli society as a result of the mass immigration of the 1950s. This resulted in the so-called 'ethnic divide' becoming one of the main features of Israeli politics, certainly from the elections to the 7th Knesset in 1969, and it has been a main determinant of voting behaviour in all the elections since 1977.

Increasingly, Labour became the party of the older, more conservative and better-off voters, while the Likud appealed to the less well to do and, importantly, the young. In Israel, paradoxically, it has been the middle class with something to lose that has supported the left, while the base of the right-wing parties is among the lower social strata.

It is worth recalling some of the reasons for this phenomenon. First, it was the Labour movement that was the 'establishment' for the first three decades after the founding of the state and for at least twenty years previously. During that time, as the single dominant party, it came to be identified as virtually synonymous with the state and its institutions. In particular, the Labour movement (the *Histradrut*) also dominated the economy and the system of social welfare. Thus those who regarded themselves as disadvantaged vis-à-vis the better off elements in society, namely the recent immigrants of African-Asian origin, saw Labour as the party of the establishment and, as such, responsible for their condition.

As the traditional opposition party, by contrast, the Likud appealed to those who regarded themselves as 'outsiders' in Israeli society. It was able to offer opportunities for upward social mobility for new generations of young Sephardi activists in the development towns and newly established urban and rural settlements. Upwardly mobile and politically ambitious youngsters of Moroccan origin, for example, first sought careers in the Labour Party, but earlier generations of Sephardi immigrants from Iraq and Yemen

already occupied such vacancies as there were in the top positions. They turned instead to the Herut component of the Likud where they came to be regarded among the majority of Sephardi voters, especially in the Moroccan community, as more authentic and legitimate leaders than the senior Sephardim in top Labour posts.

The younger Sephardi voters have seemed to prefer the more individualistic, free market economy favoured by the Likud over Labour's socialist-inspired collectivism. On the cultural-ideological level, the Likud's particularistic nationalism, with its heavy emphasis on patriotism and strong Jewish identity, has reinforced this appeal.

In general then, the policies of the Likud, both domestic and foreign, have done much to enhance the Sephardi self-image and sense of security. In recent elections, it might be argued, support for the Likud and the other right-of-centre parties among young Sephardi voters has been strong. In part this has been due to the fear that a return to Labour dominance might see a return to the old order with its alien values and consequent inferior status for the Sephardi community. The challenge for Labour is whether it can loosen the right-wing hold over this community which now makes up well over half the Israeli electorate.

From the very beginning of the Jewish renaissance in Israel the political life of the growing community encompassed a wide variety of political parties, each with its own ideology and many with affiliated parties among the Jews abroad. Many of the parties became involved in functions not usually associated with political activity. They founded their own schools and economic enterprises, developed housing projects, published daily newspapers and even provided health and other welfare services for their members. In the *Yishuv* elections were held regularly to determine the composition of the governing bodies of the community;

this included the trade union movement as well as the more formal political institutions. Established political traditions and institutions of the pre-state parties therefore made the transition to an orderly and democratic parliamentary system relatively smooth when the state was founded in 1948.

In view of the above, the country's 'founding fathers' agreed that in order to ensure full representation of the myriad of interests in the Knesset it would be elected in the first instance under a system of pure proportional representation. Later, as the population became more integrated, it was intended to go over to a 'first-past-the-post' system, similar to that in the UK. However, with the advent of mass immigration from the Islamic countries and from Eastern Europe, the society became even more diversified in terms of origin, outlook, tradition and customs. All of these elements have contributed to the political landscape and Israeli politics have reflected, through the party system and through the system of proportional representation, the numerous shades of opinion.

Proportional representation, albeit modified by the introduction of a percentage threshold, itself encouraged the proliferation of political parties. Neither the cash deposit, nor the number of signatures, nor, indeed, the raising of the threshold, discouraged new parties and factions from forming and attempting to win representation in the Knesset.

In 1996, Israelis voted for the first time under a new electoral law. This reform has to be seen against the background of a series of elections in which the two major party blocs won an almost equal share of Knesset seats, making the process of coalition-forming extraordinarily difficult. The religious parties in particular, who had usually been prepared to enter a coalition with either bloc, were able to exploit the situation to their advantage and their extortionate demands were widely resented. Thus the move to

the direct election of the Prime Minister grew out of frustration at what was perceived to be the inordinate strength of the religious parties relative to their actual share of the popular vote. Those who advocated the reform assumed that a directly elected Prime Minister would be able to resist extortionate demands and at the same time restore a degree of integrity to what had become a sordid, unprincipled and undignified process of bazaar-style haggling.

Under the new Electoral Law, Israel retains its parliamentary system of government, but with a presidential style Prime Minister confirmed in office not by the Knesset, but by direct popular vote. However, this unique system, unparalleled anywhere else in the world, has demonstrably exacerbated rather than relieved the

defects it was intended to remedy. For one thing, in contrast to the past, the Prime Minister is no longer the leader of the largest faction in the Knesset.

David Capitanchik is a member of the Management Executive of Aberdeen College and is Honorary Senior Lecturer in Politics at Aberdeen University. He is a member of the research board of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research and the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies. He is an acknowledged expert in Middle East politics and Israeli elections and is in much demand as a broadcaster on this and other subjects.

With Compliments from

Jess Franklin

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In Spring 1996 we visited friends in Denmark and they took us to the village of Gilleleje where during the war the loft of the Lutheran church had sheltered Jews before they were transported across the straits to Sweden by local fishermen. Many hundreds escaped the Holocaust this way but there came a final betrayal and a loft full of Jews found themselves taken to a death camp instead of freedom.

When we arrived it was a glorious, sunny day and the pastor wearing the traditional cassock and white goffered ruffled us up the narrow winding stairs to show us the loft space and the commemorative plaque in memory of both saved and slaughtered. It was difficult to speak for the noise of the rooks nesting in the trees outside yet the loft was full of the silence of its past and those who had sheltered there.

Nests

Heralded by rooks in open trees,
their invented nests a crown of noise and fierce intent,
I entered a neat loft
well tiled, accessible, where others nested.
The pastor bore his smile on a tray,
curling up the narrow stair
to show betrayal's shining face was
now a polished plaque; a smooth surface
levelling suffering to acceptance.
A bitter fragrance.
A squeak in the eaves.
I heard the waiting boats creak in the bay
and pull at the restraining ropes.
In darkness they had carried frightened cargo
across grey waters.
Grey freedom that turns bread to roses
that returning will infuse memory's sour incense
with promises.

Joyce Caplan

MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS: A VIEW FROM THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Report of a Meeting of the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society by Micheline Brannan

The Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind's lustre has been in no way dimmed by the events of 1st May. He was in sparkling form when addressing the Lit at its opening meeting of 1998-99 on 2nd November. To a packed house (an unprecedented attendance of over 100) he delivered a most interesting and well-informed address on a subject of perennial concern to members – the politics of the Middle East.

Sir Malcolm of course had the opportunity to meet everyone who mattered when he travelled the region as Foreign Secretary. During an audience with King Fahd at 1.00am, the King's habit being to keep people waiting and then summon them at unpredictable times, the King commented: "There are three great world religions – Christianity, Islam and Judaism. One day there will be only one, but we don't know which it will be."

Religion may be a reason for conflict in the Middle East but the region's importance on the world scene is because it is now the area at most risk of War not just involving Israel and her neighbours but more significantly with Iraq and its volatile leader.

In addition, the Kurds were a destabilising influence in Iraq, Iran and Syria owing to the root and branch opposition of those countries to a Kurdish state.

Iran was the only country in the region with submarines and could pose a danger to its neighbours. Libya had ballistic missile technology which could reach South Italy and Spain and Iraq had similar weapons which could reach Israel.

Not only was there the physical proximity of these dangers to Europe but also these countries inspired terrorist acts in Britain, France and Italy. Fundamentalist Islam too could be a threat if, for

example, Algeria collapsed and millions of refugees poured into France.

Alongside the implications for security, movement of people and terrorism was the fact that the Middle East was the most important source of oil in the world. Very few countries were self-sufficient and even the USA was importing oil. The fears of the 70s and 80s that oil would run out had proved groundless as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had sufficient oil to continue extraction for at least 100 years, but even so this dependence made the West vulnerable. The military world-wide relied on oil.

As Adam said to Eve on leaving the Garden of Eden, "My dear, we live in a time of transition", so the position regarding the Middle East was in transition and the end of the Cold War was the most important factor. At one time it had been possible to draw up a list of Soviet aligned and Western aligned states of the Middle East, with oil producers on both sides. Whichever superpower had domination would have had a source of wealth and a way to suppress the other side.

The collapse of Communism and the Soviet empire had however brought 15 separate countries into being and 5 of these, situated around the Caspian Sea, had turned out to have great oil reserves. These were Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. These states, although Moslem, were very secular, and their oil reserves could meet USA requirements in full for the next 30 years. During the 70 years of Communism they had been unable to sell independently to the West. Their pipelines all went north to Russia. Even now the Russians were trying to prevent them from finding new markets.

If it was impossible to export through the north, then the obvious alternative was to export southwards through Iran but this was difficult while the USA maintained sanctions against Iran. This reflected the age-old problem of USA extra-territoriality whereby it tried to impose its law on other countries, by, for example, telling French or German businesses that they would be penalised for doing business with Iran. (The Scottish firm John Brown had suffered from similar problems during the Cold War over supplying equipment for the Soviet gas pipeline and these had been sorted out when Sir Malcolm had been Minister of State at the Foreign Office, through the Rifkind-Dam, or as some would have it, the Dam Rifkind, agreement, Mr Dam being the American Deputy Secretary of State!)

There was now some controversy, however, as the oil company Total was in partnership with the Russian Gas Production Company over the extraction and export of oil from Iran and the USA would not want to sanction Russia with whom it now had friendly relations. There were some signs of political progress in Iran. The recent presidential election had resulted in the defeat of the "official" candidate and the election of an alternative candidate by 70% of the vote, mainly representing women and the young. While the Mullahs might not let the new President run the country at least there was some sign of participatory democracy and a possible fading of the revolutionary fervour although it was early days.

Having set the scene, Sir Malcolm went on to discuss the position of Israel which was really only one part of the picture. The alliance of states against Iran during the Gulf War

which included Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the USA and Britain, had shown the tremendous opportunities which existed for Israel to form new alliances and relationships in the area, should it manage to regularise relations with the Palestinians.

There was room for optimism. Some amazing things had happened in recent years – the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan and the continued negotiations with the Palestinians. King Hussein had attended a reception given by the President, Ezer Weizman, for visiting dignitaries at the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin and even Mr Arafat had made a point of visiting Leah Rabin in Israel at that time. While there was still an official attitude of non-recognition of Israel in the Gulf states, only perfunctory observance was expected.

But there was also a pessimistic side. Netanyahu had to take the blame for the current impasse. He was a tactician not a strategist and had no long term vision. A vacuum existed during which the settlements policy was destroying the trust that had been painfully coming into existence between Israel, Palestinians and Jordanians, and this was undermining the relationship with Jordan, since Jordan felt the Israelis could not make the necessary conceptual leap.

It was a matter for the countries of the region to sort out and they would have to agree solutions amongst themselves. It would be difficult for the Israelis not to concede a Palestinian state given the values of democracy and self-determination on which Israel itself was founded. The other options of permanent military occupation or absorption were simply not viable. To paraphrase Sherlock Holmes "When you rule out all the other possibilities, whatever is left, however disagreeable, must be the only course of action." Thus a Palestinian state would have to come in the end.

How could Britain help? Firstly by providing opportunities for

better dialogue between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Secondly, by opening Commonwealth membership to any Middle Eastern countries which met the requirements in the Harare declaration for members to have an open and free society. On these criteria Israel and Palestine could qualify. Thirdly, by supporting the setting up in the Middle East of an Organisation for Security and Co-operation in the Middle East, as proposed by Sir Malcolm when in office and supported by Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan.

In conclusion, Sir Malcolm said "The Future is not what it used to be." The countries of the Middle East all shared: amazing resources; geopolitical importance; the source of three great religions; and massive instability. There was great potential if they could resolve these problems.

Sir Malcolm's address, giving, unusually for the Lit, a non-Israel centred view of the Middle East, provoked considerable discussion. Subjects covered in questions from the floor included the prospects of democracy in any future Palestinian state; the religious/secular divide in Israel; fundamentalism; the future status of Jerusalem; and Lebanon. Sir Malcolm stressed that the Palestinians must be accepted as a nation because they felt that they were one and that they had learned this from the Israelis. Just as with the secular and religious Jews, this sense of one identity was a unifying force despite their differences of background and situation. Jerusalem was important to both peoples and perhaps an arrangement along the lines of the Vatican city could be developed for it.

Among the most interesting questions were about whether Sir Malcolm had found pro-Arab bias in the Foreign Office and how the Arabs had reacted to a Jewish Foreign Secretary.

Sir Malcolm explained that the only bias in the Foreign Office was a pro-British one! However with so many Arab states and only one

Israel it was inevitable that more diplomats had served in Arab countries than in Israel and so were more familiar with Arab ways. The Arab countries had been well aware that Sir Malcolm was Jewish and he had been well aware that they were not! He was reminded of a conversation in which Nixon had said to Golda Meir (of Henry Kissinger and Abba Eban), "Isn't it a coincidence that both our Foreign Ministers are Jews." Golda replied, "Yes, but ours speaks better English."

Giving a vote of thanks, Michelle Brannan complimented Sir Malcolm on his fluent delivery without aid of notes and his excellent analysis of such a complex and highly charged subject. We are grateful to him for launching the season so successfully.

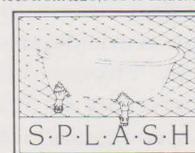
BATHTIME TALES NO 1



Nigel stags a bull

It had been a long day. The money market was up but Nigel's mood was anything but. He closed the bathroom door and turned the tap, noticing the satisfying touch of antique gold plated fittings. He lay back, the water gently lapping round the beautiful porcelain bath. It felt like a very expensive haven, designed with utmost style and taste. Life looked better already. And to think Nirvana could be gained just by visiting Scotland's premier bathroom specialist. Upwardly mobile? Right now Nigel felt wonderfully horizontal – and with his complete suite costing a mere trifle who could question his watertight business position?

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JOAN & IAN LEIFER

Ian Leifer, the second of three sons, was born in the London Borough of Hackney where he attended Hackney Down School, also known by the quaint name of Grocers Company by virtue of its formation as a public school by the Worshipful Company of Grocers.

He thereafter studied at Imperial College, London University, where he graduated Honours BSc in Physics. He ultimately secured his Ph.D. in this field, specialising in applied optics. In 1958 Ian met Joan Freedman, the eldest of three girls of a London family, at a Youth Club in Clapton and subsequently on an organised trip to Israel. Joan, after attending Dalston County School, was employed as secretary to the local raincoat manufacturing firm of Burberry before she moved to the post of secretary of the JNF. The young couple married in 1961.

In 1963 Joan and Ian, with newly arrived Andrew, came to Dundee where Ian worked as Assistant Lecturer in Physics at Queens College, University of St Andrews. The Jewish community of the city did not exceed 20 families but regular Shabbat Services were held every Friday evening. The Minister

was Rev Segal, a brother of Edinburgh's Mrs Packter. Ian was greatly bemused to hear for the first time Hebrew spoken with a Scottish accent. The family resided in Dundee for three years, then with an increase in family numbers of 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % due to the advent of Dina, moved to Birmingham where Ian secured a Research Fellowship at the University of Aston. Joan went to Teacher Training College in that city. In 1972 the family moved further afield when Ian received a temporary research position in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Joan at the same time secured a post as Library Assistant in the British Council Library.

At the end of 1974 the Leifers came to Edinburgh for Ian to take up his present position of Lecturer in Physics at Napier College, now Napier University. Joan worked in Edinburgh mainly in the social services field and then in 1987 she was appointed Director in charge of residential homes and sheltered housing in London. This occasioned weekly commuting between the two capital cities. She thereafter became Assistant Director and Company Secretary of Viewpoint Housing Association in Edinburgh and was responsible for creating ventures involving new facilities for residential care. London beckoned again as Chief Executive for providing catering for elderly Orthodox Jewish people. She was involved in the foundation of a 50-bedded nursing home in Golders Green.

In 1994 Joan was appointed Glasgow Director of the Jewish Housing Association. She has been involved in the raising of funds, the development and organisation of a newly opened 24-hour care and residential facility for 28 residents at Barrland Court in Giffnock, Glasgow. In Edinburgh she has applied for planning permission to build seven amenity flats at the back of the Synagogue and to totally upgrade the caretaker's house. Decision is awaited on the approach to Scottish Homes, a Government body, for financing.

Joan leads an extremely busy and rewarding life providing a necessary caring service for many. Ian's interest in music often has to take a back seat due to his many communal activities which he describes as 'pre-occupation'. He was on the committee of the now defunct B'nai B'rith. In the early 1980's he was successively Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-president and President of the hugely successful Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society, now in its 110th year. He has been a very active member of the Synagogue Council for many years and is now in his fourth year as Hon Treasurer. His humorous quips at meetings provide welcome relief during the many long hours of serious debate and the sessions where he skillfully balances the books. Ian is also a member of the Synagogue Choir when duties permit and often assists the Rabbi during Yomtov Services. Recently he has shown formidable talent in musical comedy, taking star parts in Lenny Berger's colourful productions, the next one – get a ticket at any price – to be presented to an eagerly awaiting audience on 21st February.

Joan and Ian's children, Andrew and Dina, both live and work in London. Andrew is an Actuary and when in Edinburgh is much in demand at Yomtov for his expertise in Shofar blowing. Dina married Glasgow-born Robin Blass in 1995 and will be making their respective parents very happy grandparents in Spring 1998. She has a Diploma in Journalism and initially worked as Health Correspondent for the Blackpool Evening Gazette. She currently is News Editor of the *Nursing Standard*.

Since arriving in Edinburgh almost 24 years ago Joan and Ian have left their mark within the community and beyond. Their name is synonymous with good nature, good humour and good deeds. They are exceedingly considerate, kind and caring and the Edinburgh Jewish community is indeed very fortunate to have such members in their midst.

IAN SHEIN

A DAY IN THE LIFE

MILLENNIUM EXHIBITION

As a source for Jewish history the University Library's Genizah archive stands second only to the Dead Sea Scrolls. Stefan Reif is the director.

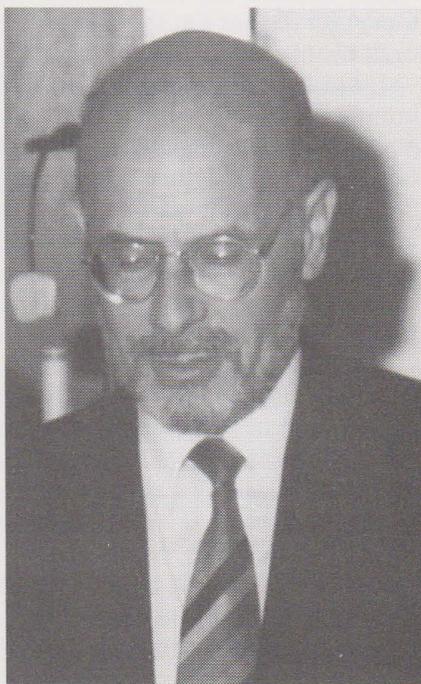
Interview by PAULINE HUNT¹

'My day starts early, at 5.30 or 5.45. I try to get a good bit done before breakfast and certainly before coffee time as these are my best hours. Each morning I pray for about 15 minutes and do a whole programme of 20 minutes hard exercise.

When my son was young, I spent almost an hour with him on Jewish Hebrew study before breakfast each morning. Just before he got married I asked him whether he resented it. 'No,' he said. 'I knew I had you to myself 100 per cent...' He enjoyed it. My wife, Shulie, and I took a lot of care to educate our children in Jewish culture. I also taught my daughter, Tanya: we had Hebrew classes at home from nine to one on Sunday mornings.

Breakfast is only about ten minutes. I cycle to work at the University Library and home again so that is another half an hour of exercise each day. What I really enjoy about my job is what they call in Yiddish 'dancing at every wedding': you don't just dance at one wedding, you dance at everybody's wedding. In other words, I love the great variety. Above all, there is the scholarly side: working on the Genizah manuscripts, describing them, deciphering them, identifying and analysing them. You come across an exciting fragment, perhaps a thousand years old, that nobody has ever published. Nobody knows where it was written, why it was written or who wrote it ... so you work on it, wring out every drop of meaning you can and publish it.

The manuscripts came here exactly one hundred years ago. Two Scots women living in Cambridge, twins called Margaret Gibson and Agnes Lewis, visited Cairo and



bought some Hebrew fragments which they brought home. They showed them to Solomon Schechter, then the University's Reader in Talmudic and Rabbinic Literature, who got very excited. One fragment proved one of his theories – disputed by a professor in Oxford at the time – that there had been a Hebrew version of Ecclesiasticus.

As a result, Schechter went to Cairo and persuaded the Chief Rabbi to let him have the remainder of the Genizah fragments – all 140,000 of them – to take to Cambridge for scholarly study. The money for the trip was put up by Charles Taylor, the Master of St John's: a mathematician and philosopher who was a pious Anglican but also had a great love for Judaism.

The Taylor-Schechter Genizah fragments are the world's most important collection of medieval

Hebrew and Jewish documents. There are something like 210,000 items from this period in the world and 140,000 of them are here in the University Library. Yet when I came to Cambridge no more than 30,000 fragments had been examined in detail. There were 32 huge crates of material still unconserved.

The documents were stored in the Genizah, or sacred archive, of the Ben Ezra synagogue in Cairo for a thousand years by officials who were concerned that nothing Hebrew, nothing from the Bible, nothing that was sacred or related in any way to Jewish life, should be destroyed. Though much crumbled away over the centuries, Egypt's dry heat preserved the vellum and paper remarkably. The fragments that survive illustrate every aspect of Jewish life, from the Bible to Rabbinic literature, to poetry, to philosophy, to recipes and to medical prescriptions for headaches, stomach aches – even impotence.

Much of the collection is medieval, but it stretches in date from the sixth to the nineteenth century. Among the treasures is the original version of the Wisdom of Ben Sira – Ecclesiasticus in the Greek and Latin Bible – written in the second century BC. Jewish doubt about just how sacred this book was led to its exclusion from the Hebrew Bible – and eventually to the loss of its Hebrew text – but the Cairo Genizah ensured that it was not lost for ever by preserving a tenth-century copy.

Legal papers and business letters are well represented among the fragments but a surprising amount is personal: marriage contracts, music, children's school books, illuminated pages and family letters.

¹ This interview appeared recently in CAM magazine and is reproduced with the editor's permission.

Life and people don't change much. When husbands and wives correspond or parents write to their children you find exactly the same warmth of human relations as today.

Running the research unit involves me in many other activities too. Our research team needs funding so that means going out and raising money, convincing people that the scholarly work we do is valuable and has relevance to the world today. I really enjoy the challenge of fund raising. When I came to Cambridge 24 years ago I think it was looked down upon, but I'm pleased to say that this has changed. Scholarship is important and I've never found any difficulty convincing men and women in the street how exciting it is to know what was going on a millennium ago in the Middle East. Someone once referred to me as an 'academic entrepreneur'. I think it was meant insultingly but I took it as a compliment: if 'entrepreneur' means being willing to sell the importance of something scholarly to non-academics, then, yes, I'm an entrepreneur.

I often lecture – in London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester, anywhere the community want me to speak about the Genizah. Last week in Jerusalem 300 people came to a lecture I gave in English and another 300 turned up on a different day to hear me in Hebrew.

Having conserved all 140,000 fragments, we are now publishing them. Right now we are trying to finish a volume on *Rabbinica*: everything relating to Jewish religious law and tradition that is not the Talmud. A few weeks ago we published another on Palestinian Jewish poetry of a thousand years ago. In the course of the year, I've managed to write five or six articles and finish seven chapters of a general book on the collection.

At the moment we have a visiting scholar from Jerusalem preparing a catalogue of all the dated manuscripts we possess; this will give us a key to dating other items that are not dated. Another research

assistant is preparing publication indexes so today we have also had a computer expert in to discuss this. I droop a little in the early afternoon so try to make sure that the early afternoon is the time I do administrative chores that don't require me to be terribly sharp. I pick up again at three or four o'clock and except for dinner I'm then off again until about nine.

I tend only to break for ten minutes' coffee, ten minutes' tea, maybe twenty minutes at lunchtime for a sandwich. Otherwise I keep fairly busy. I might be taking classes in medieval Hebrew literature at the Oriental Faculty during term time or teaching something related to Judaism in the Divinity Faculty.

Why I work so hard is difficult to say, but I think it has to do with my upbringing in Edinburgh. Everybody knows that Jews are obsessed by education, by getting on and by working hard; my Jewish education was at home and in Hebrew classes run by the synagogue. But Scots Calvinists are just as obsessed. I went to a senior secondary school, the non fee-paying equivalent of a grammar school. It might have been free but God help you if you didn't work. The Church of Scotland atmosphere was such that wasting time was a criminal offence. So I'm stuck with it. If I stop for long to read the newspaper I tend to feel guilty.

My whole family says I should relax more. They say: 'a few hours less won't make any difference'. But I don't think I am capable of it: I have this crazy desire to be achieving things. That's how it has been all my life. I read the occasional novel and watch television, usually documentaries or news programmes. But I would regard it as self-indulgence to listen to a radio play or watch television just for fun.

Shulie works in the same room at the Library and this year has been very much involved – more than I have – in preparing an exhibition for the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. She has been working on the translations and the captions and planning all the exhibits. We both

have our heads down during the day. It is very strange but at that time we rarely discuss anything but professional matters. Some institutions are reluctant to let husbands and wives work together because they think they won't get anything done, but we actually encourage each other. As you might imagine, I'm not tolerant of people who don't work hard; neither is Shulie. We both like to get on with things. We met at university – London – when we were both doing Hebrew studies and have been involved in that ever since.

Both my children, Tanya and Aryeh, are now married and living in Israel. Their lives would have been more comfortable in Britain, and they would have earned more money. They know that, but Jewish identity and commitment to the Jewish state loomed so large in their education and background, as well as in our lives and those of our parents and grandparents, that they chose to go to Israel. If you go back one hundred years, all my grandparents and Shulie's, were living in Poland and Russia. Those that survived the Holocaust – many perished – made their way to this country, in my case to Edinburgh, in Shulie's to London.

Our lives, our education and our culture are therefore all bound up with the history of the Jewish people. For us it is not just an intellectual exercise working on these documents; it is life itself. But you don't need to be a Jew to respond. When you look at what people felt, wrote and said a thousand years ago you respond simply as a human being.

This year has been one of the highlights of my career because of our exhibition in Jerusalem: 50 fragments in an excellent museum, beautifully presented. It was the first time so many Genizah fragments had been on show anywhere in the world and the University Librarian, Peter Fox, came over for the opening. The Israeli president, Ezra Weizman also came to see the collection in Cambridge during his state visit to Britain in February.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

STAR TREK INTO THE PAST

Answers to PhotoQuiz in Edition Number 28 Page 10. **Top picture:** June 1959 Edinburgh Maccabi Cricket Team. *Top Row:* Louis Mendelssohn; David Mendelssohn; Jack Cowan; Norman Berger; Mervyn Smith; Mickey Cowen; Walter Jacob; Raymond Cowan. *Bottom Row:* Lennie Berger; Malcolm Cowan; Harold Levey. **Bottom picture:** Band: The Jay Hopper band. Drummer: Henry Mann, who was also vocalist. Locus: Eldorado Ballroom, Edinburgh. Year: 1934.



FEET UP FOR THE MOMENT

◀ The year is 1960 and these two girls who were then aged 7 and 4 have probably not had time to put their feet up since then. Who are they?

NIMBY

The year is 1952. These are the families of four sisters. Name as many people as you can. Hint: only one of them has been knighted and the photograph was not taken in his back yard. In whose back yard was it taken?



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The Food Column

By Shirley Bennett



John Cosgrove has asked me to write a cookery column for the **Star**. Why me I'll never know. I'm no gourmet cook but I do love food. I buy food, I talk about food, I

even eat food. I enjoy cooking but inevitably have my share of disasters. Fortunately my husband likes food as much as me although he seems to handle the calories better.

I plan to include some recipes, both old and new from here and there.

My first recollection of an interest in food was going to my grandparents home for my lunch when at school. My grandpa Zoltie used to make huge meatballs cooked slowly in an enamel casserole with potatoes, onions, carrots and turnip. What a lunch! I think that is where I developed the huge appetite that I now have. I am especially aware of this when eating with some of my rather slim friends (they know who they are!). These dimpled enamelled casseroles have come back into fashion in bright colours rather than the cream trimmed with green or red that some of us will remember.

The recipe for grandpa's meatballs is rather basic but at the Lunch Club where I was taking my turn as cook recently, I made a variation by adding rice to the mixture. When served this concoction, some of the Lunch Club 'customers' asked what the white things were!

I intend to invest in one of these casseroles when I find room in a cupboard. I have a weakness for adding to my collection of kitchen gadgets and accessories. Some of my past acquisitions range from an ice cream maker to a saucier and even include a square egg maker! I must now confess to purchasing an espresso coffee machine with my winnings from the draw at the Chanukah Dinner.

On the subject of the Chanukah Dinner, I thought that the catering this year was exceptionally good. The Communal Hall Committee certainly know their food. The

minestrone soup, was well flavoured and the Chicken a l'Orange with roast potatoes and my favourite red cabbage was cooked to perfection.

The sticky toffee pudding, made by Sandra Caplan and Susan Hyams was excellent and I shall publish the recipe for that in my next column. I also hope to have a recipe for courgette latkies, but my recent attempt to make them produced a rather uninteresting mush. I shall need to get them right before suggesting how others should try. I might even experiment at the lunch club first.

Recipe 1

Grandpa's Meatballs

Enough for 4 hungry people

- 1 lb minced beef
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 or 2 shakes of pepper
- A few drops of Lea and Perrins' sauce
- 1 beaten egg
- 2 oz of matzo meal
- 4 oz cooked rice (optional)
- 4 lbs of tomato puree
- 1 tin of tomatoes

Mix all ingredients then shape into large balls

Add 8 oz of water to the casserole
Add partly cooked large chunks of potato, onion, carrots

Add tinned tomatoes

Cover and cook in a slow to moderate oven for 2½ - 3 hours (180°C/350°F/gas 4)

My next recipe came about by accident as I was standing outside one of the fruit shops in Argyle Place (locally known as Covent Garden). The red peppers were looking good and I thought of making pepper soup that night. I am not sure why,

With Compliments

from

JOHN AND HAZEL

COSGROVE

but I got chatting to a blonde girl who was also collecting a basket of vegetables. Seeing me pick up peppers, she said that she makes red pepper soup and adds beetroot to it. I thought 'why not' and that is how it was created.

Recipe 2

Red Pepper and Beetroot Soup

- 4 large red peppers cut into thick slices
- 1 large onion chopped
- 1 large cooked beetroot
- + tube of tomato puree
- Salt and pepper
- Oil or butter to fry
- 2 pints of parve chicken stock

Chop onion and fry in a little oil.

Add the peppers and fry until soft.

Add the sliced beetroot, salt, pepper and stock.

Boil for 15 minutes.

Liquidize until smooth.

Serve with chopped parsley and a swirl of cream.

When I was married in the 60's, the cookery book for a Jewish wife was Florence Greenberg's. I still refer to my old Florie book with its stained dog-eared pages. Avocados and Courgettes are not even mentioned but I still find her basic recipes useful. My copy was published in 1963. It was first published back in 1947. I wonder if it has been updated?

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A CHALLENGING TRIP REVEALS A SILVER LINING

by *ELLI GURFINKEL*

For the first two weeks of September, my wife and I were overseas visiting our mothers. My mother lives in Israel and my mother-in-law in London.

I arrived in London on the second day of Britain's mourning for Princess Diana. The first person I spoke to, my taxi driver, reflected the national mood when, upon hearing that I was a photographer, he chuckled as if implying that he wouldn't want to be in my shoes. Then, without missing a beat, he came up with an outrageous conspiracy theory, saying that probably the Queen organized the whole thing to get rid of Diana.

Later that day, still jet lagged, I joined the line bearing flowers, teddy-bears and photos in front of Buckingham Palace. Surrounded by somber faces, I saw teary-eyed middle-aged men, people in business suits and jeans, teenagers and older people, all united by the same grief, yet bearing their own, private pain.

A day before, while still in Midland, I was surprised to feel tears in my eyes when I heard the tragic news. I never paid much attention to the royal family, but Diana's death shocked and saddened me. As a photojournalist, I also felt some guilt for the behavior of the photographers who pursued her. I was somewhat relieved by my knowledge that I would never endanger someone to get their picture.

During that week Diana's death was the main topic of conversation at gatherings with family and friends. In the daily newspapers, the analysis of the events surrounding the accident and new revelations pushed all other news to the back pages. It was a strange time to be in London, when everyone seemed to be affected by Diana's death. Everywhere I looked, in suburban shopping malls, and in other public places, impromptu altars were covered with bouquets and personal

farewells, and people stood patiently in long lines to sign books of condolences.

Two days later, Mother Teresa died. It was not an unexpected death, yet it deepened the gloom of that black week. Under the circumstances, the death of that extraordinary person captured less attention than it would on any other week.

As if the weekly quota of death wasn't full, on Thursday came the news of the massacre at a pedestrian mall in Jerusalem, where three suicide bombers blew themselves up, killing five innocent people and injuring more than a hundred.

The barrage of terrible news didn't stop there. The next day came more grim news from Israel, when I read about the death of 11 Israeli soldiers on a mission in South Lebanon. After spending four years in the Israeli military, when I hear about such deaths, I imagine my friends among the dead, people I spent time with hanging out in Tel Aviv pubs and on the beaches 15 years ago. I imagine boys in dusty uniforms, who hitchhike from Haifa to Tel Aviv and when I pick them up, politely squeeze into the back seat and use the ride to catch up on much needed sleep.

Not surprisingly, when on the following week we arrived in Tel Aviv, we encountered a country in gloom. The fear of the new suicide bombings permeated the air. As the security forces announced preparations for an all-out war, we decided not to visit Jerusalem, which became the focal point of confrontations. We love that elegant and ancient city, and wouldn't have dreamed of not visiting it, but relatives discouraged us from making the short trip from Tel Aviv. I was, as usual, outraged by the policies of Netanyahu's government, which seemed to be doing all in its power to stop the peace process. A radio commentator remarked that the country is in no mood to celebrate its 50th anniversary

next year and suggested calling it off.

In spite of all this gloom and doom, there were many bright moments on this trip. It was wonderful to be welcomed back to London by my wife's family and spend time with her elderly grandparents eating fish and chips in a local store and laughing at their jokes. A trip to Brighton, a beach resort in southern England, to visit my wife's old college friends was full of laughter, sun and good Indian food.

In Israel, friends and family brought some sense of normalcy to our visit. One of the highlights was a visit to a kibbutz (communal farm) in northern Israel with a former mentor of my wife from England, whom she hasn't seen in 20 years. As we sat sipping tea in his room, the howling of jackals wafted in from the surrounding hills, and the lights of a nearby Arab village spread below us.

It was a bewildering trip, one which my wife and I will remember forever for its combination of sad and joyous moments. We were part of national grief in one country and general gloom in another, yet on a personal level we reaffirmed our deep connection to both places.

After two weeks, we headed back to Midland. When our plane flew over Michigan I saw with joy the neat rectangles of fields below us. Then, on the van heading from the airport, I marveled at the beauty of a pond and a wooded area right next to the road, made golden by the setting sun.

With a sense of relief I realized that we were finally home. *Elli Gurfinkel is a Daily News staff photographer. He is married to Deborah, daughter of Frances Gordon and the late Louis Gordon who were both brought up in Edinburgh. Mrs Gurfinkel's grandparents Ethel and Bert Hallside now live in London. Her other grandmother was the late Flora Gordon (see Edinburgh Star No 14)*

THE USE AND SYMBOLISM OF THE MIKVAH

A Man's View

by BILL SIMPSON

In view of recent discussion on the subject of the Mikvah the following is a synopsis of a talk given to the Edinburgh Jewish Philosophy Society by myself in 1996, which may be of interest to readers.

In the Book of Exodus chapter 29, verse 4, we read 'and Aaron and his sons, thou shalt bring unto the door of the Tent of Meeting and shall wash them with water'. According to the Rabbis and Rashi (Leviticus 11.36) washing means 'total immersion'. Immersion of the body always means in a Mikvah or in water flowing from a natural spring.

The word 'Mikvah' first appears in the Tanach in Genesis 1.10 in the form of Mikvah hamayim – a gathering of waters. This is in relation to the works of creation on the third day. The phrase appears three times in the Torah. The use of the phrase in Leviticus 11.36 is perhaps the most interesting 'nevertheless a fountain or cistern wherein is a gathering of water (Mikvah hamayim) shall be clean.' Rashi comments on this passage – 'that are attached to the ground do not receive uncleanness and furthermore you may learn that he shall become clean who immerses himself in them from his uncleanness.

The word 'Mikvah' by itself only appears once in the Tanach. In Isaiah 22.11 where it states 'ye made also a basin (Mikvah) between the two walls of the water of the old pool'.

From the foregoing we can see that immersion of the body may only be in a natural flow of spring water or in a Mikvah. The construction of a Mikvah is complicated and is covered in Mishnah Tohoroth – ten chapters on the requirements of baths for ritual purification.

It should be noted that a Mikvah is regarded as more important than a synagogue. Jewish law maintains

that a congregation without the Mikvah does not have the status of a community.

The use of a Mikvah is not for cleansing as in washing. It is for purification or a change of status – the one who enters the Mikvah is as one reborn.

Its main uses are:-

1 For women, after a state of niddah or childbirth.

2 Conversion – without immersion conversion is invalid.

3 Immersion of vessels.

The Mikvah is also used by Orthodox Jews before Yom Kippur and often prior to other Festivals and Shabbat.

The use of a Mikvah is a *chok* – a decree which may not be understood. However, Jews are required to observe the mitzvah of the Mikvah, as upon their acceptance of the Torah, they said "We will do and we will hear."

The quantity of water in a Mikvah must be at least 40 se'ah, which is equivalent to approximately 200 gallons. The Talmud teaches that when something is mixed with twice its volume it is considered as being nullified. The volume of a large man is considered to be approximately 20 se'ah. Therefore, when a person immerses themselves in a Mikvah, the person is nullified i.e. His ego is destroyed. When one emerges from a Mikvah, it is as if he is spiritually purified, or as one reborn.

The ideal state for a man is to be free but impurity binds a person and causes him to be a slave to his thoughts and circumstances. The Mikvah effectively creates a spiritually reborn person, in a state of freedom. This is in effect a change of status.

The Hebrew word 'mayim', means 'water' and the first letter *mem* has the numerical value of 40, and this number has

significance in relation to the Mikvah and to purification.

Consider:

1 The volume of water in a Mikvah is 40 se'ah.

2 The Flood, which was a purification of the world, lasted forty days and forty nights.

3 Moses, in receiving the Torah, spent forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai.

4 The spies spent forty days in the land which resulted in–

5 The Israelites spending forty years in the wilderness to prepare them for entering the land.

6 A woman is unclean after childbirth for 7 days, then again for a further 33 days i.e. a total of 40 days.

7 The Rabbis consider a human embryo to have no status as a human being until forty days, this being the period for an embryo to develop human form.

8 The 39 categories of work prohibited on the Sabbath are referred to as 40 minus 1, the 1 being the creation ex nihilo.

As stated above, the letter '*mem*' being the first letter of the word for 'water', is also the mid letter of the *aleph bet* and has a numerical value of forty. The Midrash asks 'What is God's Seal – God's Seal is truth. The Hebrew word for truth '*emet*' is spelled *aleph, mem, tav* with the *mem* being the mid letter i.e. the transition between beginning and end. The first two letters spell the word for 'mother' ie beginning of life and the last two letters spell the word for 'death' ie end of life. The letter *mem* lies in the middle and represents a transition or change between birth and death, ie an elevation to a new status or rebirth.

The Mikvah is therefore required to enable a Jew to participate fully in the Jewish way of life ensuring constant spiritual renewal throughout his or her life.

MIKVAH - A WOMAN'S VIEW

by ALIT SEDLEY

If one could have such a thing as a "favourite Mitzvah", mine would be *Taharat Hamishpacha*. This is translated into English as "family purity", but this doesn't do it justice. *Taharat Hamishpacha* encompasses the entire relationship between husband and wife, especially from the onset of the wife's menstruation until her immersion in the Mikvah.

The concept of Mikvah has been much maligned in recent times, and has even been branded as outdated, sexist or irrelevant. However, when one learns more about the Mitzvah, and understands the reasons and philosophy behind it, the Mikvah speaks to this generation more than any other. Moreover, it is one of the few areas of Jewish Law given solely to women – we are given the opportunity to preserve our femininity in what can otherwise appear a "male-dominated" world.

There is one word in most English translations of the Bible which is totally inaccurate, and which continually frustrates me. The Hebrew word *Tumah*, is mistranslated as "unclean". *Tumah* actually has absolutely nothing to do with hygiene, rather it refers to "ritual impurity". *Tumah* and *Tahara* ("ritual purity") are not terms which apply only to women in relation to their menstrual cycle. Any act which causes someone to confront his or her own mortality results in a state of *Tumah*. Thus, one who comes into contact with a corpse, confronted with the stark realisation that life in this world is temporary, becomes *Tamei* ("impure"). So too, a man who experiences a seminal emission, which is a loss of potential life, becomes *Tamei*.

Similarly, a woman's menstrual cycle is a transition between life and death. Each month, the onset of menstruation marks the loss of a potential life. We will never know what life was contained within that ovum, who could have been born

had that egg been fertilised. Women who have to wait a few years before becoming pregnant experience a sense of loss each month with the onset of their period. For them, this is a frustrating and depressing time, aggravated by the hormonal changes happening within their bodies.

The Mikvah is the antidote to this loss. Spiritually and physically the Mikvah is like a womb. It is a small space filled with water, much like the uterus filled with amniotic fluid. A Mikvah must contain a minimum of 40 Se'ah of water (about 200 gallons). This amount symbolises the volume of space occupied by an adult. Just as the womb is exactly the size of the developing baby, so too the Mikvah contains the measure of a person.

The number 40 is also symbolic of birth and rebirth. During the flood in Noah's time, which represented a new beginning of the world, the rain lasted for 40 days and 40 nights. Furthermore, in Jewish Law a foetus becomes a separate entity 40 days after conception. From this point on, it is no longer considered a group of cells but a developing human being.

Someone who enters the Mikvah emerges "reborn", as a different entity. One enters the waters *Tamei* and emerges as a new, *Tahor* person. The past ceases to exist, and a new future is about to begin. When a woman enters the Mikvah she says a blessing; the only other person who makes this blessing is a convert. This too is a rebirth; the non-Jew disappears, and a new Jew is born.

Each month, with the onset of menstruation the husband and wife cease having marital relations for the duration of the period and a further seven days after that. This physical separation creates an emotional change in the relationship. During this time the couple remember how to treat each other as friends, partners, confidants, but not

lovers. This makes for a fuller, more meaningful marriage.

This is a vital part of a relationship which is so often overlooked in today's society. The world around us places so much emphasis on the physical, particularly in terms of interaction with others. The result of this is that couples can be married for years, without ever truly coming to know one another. This is one reason that some marriages begin to crumble with the first crisis. The husband and wife are simply unable to relate to one another as anything other than a sexual partner.

Through having two phases of the relationship between husband and wife each month, the couple are able to relate to each other in many different ways. When the wife prepares herself and enters into the regenerative waters of the Mikvah she experiences a spiritual rebirth. This, in turn, leads to the possibility of a fuller relationship with the husband. There is also the knowledge that once again there exists the potential for a child to be conceived. The days before immersion are a time of spiritual renewal, and the physical preparations before immersion are also a personal time for reflection and prayer.

The night of going to the Mikvah, marks a new phase of physical intimacy, and is almost like reliving the wedding night. It is a special and personal time, involving preparation and planning, culminating in the reuniting of husband and wife.

Taharat Hamishpacha is a very private and personal Mitzvah, and as such is often overlooked or disregarded. This Mitzvah is the life force of any community, governing as it does all aspects of family life. It would be a terrible shame if it became classed as merely an ancient, outdated Jewish ritual because of a lack of proper understanding.

TWO WORLDS REVISITED

by MICHELINE BRANNAN

Some years ago I was invited to present a programme in a Radio Scotland series about Scotland's minority communities. The main message was that there is no conflict between being Scottish and being Jewish. It was the mission of the late Rabbi Salis Daiches (may his memory be for a blessing) to prove this thesis.

The memoir "Two Worlds", published in 1956, gives David Daiches's account, based on memories of childhood, of how his father reconciled the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. In a new paperback edition¹ David Daiches has added an essay "Promised Lands" which attempts a direct portrait of his father.

I reread "Two Worlds" before embarking on "Promised Lands". I was struck by the freshness of the former. Writing in his 40s, David Daiches remembered his childhood with poignant intensity, down to the very smells of cigar smoke and Jewish cooking that characterised his grandfather's home in Leeds, the particular rows he had with his brother Lionel, the sound of the taxi chugging outside to take the family to the station for their summer holidays, his father's awkwardness in presenting his mother with an expensive handbag for her birthday. His father is the acknowledged hero, but the story is told from the son's point of view.

"Promised Lands" distils the portrait of Rabbi Daiches into a single essay. This gives David Daiches freedom to expand on the details of his father's life which he did not directly witness, although he is very careful to ensure that all events mentioned had some foundation in fact. But more importantly, the author puts thoughts into his father's mind in a way which would not have fitted the style of "Two Worlds".

Each section of the essay starts with an event at Waverley station, beginning with the Daiches family's arrival in Edinburgh. The Rabbi reflects on the stages which brought him to Edinburgh – how his life started in the Eastern European ghetto, pouring over the Talmud by rush candles, how his two worlds started to develop when his own father sent him, defying tradition, to the Konigsberg Gymnasium, and how he subsequently attended, at the same time, the Hildersheimer Rabbinical Seminary and university in Berlin where he studied Kant and Hume. The Rabbi is made to reflect "It was a weary business sometimes, trying to fit Jewish orthodoxy into a scheme of rational humane ethics."

The next section begins with a photocall on the station platform when Rabbi Daiches set off for Palestine to participate in the opening of the Hebrew University in 1925. The photocall, with attendant dignitaries, shows how the Rabbi had become in the six years of his time in Edinburgh an establishment figure. The opening of the Hebrew University vindicates his dream of a Jewish people freed from the ghetto.

The family holidays are a major theme of "Two Worlds" and in section 3 the Rabbi is again to be found at Waverley station setting off for Crail with his wife, children and voluminous luggage. It was particularly during these holidays that the secular world seemed to exert a more than purely intellectual attraction for the Rabbi. The change from his habitual morning dress and bow tie to blue blazer and grey flannels is a symbol for the extent to which he merged with the Scottish bourgeoisie during these visits to Fife, and later the West Highlands.

In section 4 the Rabbi is welcoming refugee children to Edinburgh in the knowledge that they may never see their parents in

Germany again. The rise of Hitler shattered his world and destroyed his confidence in enlightened German culture on which he had first founded his fragile synthesis. Rabbi Daiches died, ironically, the day after Hitler on 2nd May 1945.

This essay is a moving testimonial but given that it goes over so much of the same ground as the original book, some readers might wonder what the point of the addition has been. There is almost no reassessment of Rabbi Daiches's career or beliefs. Even his contempt for Yiddish, now very dated in view of the Yiddish renaissance, is reproduced uncritically. The rationale of the essay may lie more in what it leaves out than what it includes. By the time the Second World War had brought disillusionment, Rabbi Daiches had also realised that he was not to be entirely successful in transmitting his synthesis to his own children, some of whom more or less rejected their heritage – is this an area where it would be too agonising for David Daiches to speculate on his father's personal feelings?

The only new material lies in the post-script which relates to the naming of a street in a new housing estate in North East Edinburgh "Daiches Braes". The Rabbi has been commemorated by the Council's decision to give his name to a cul de sac where ordinary Edinburgh people will live their ordinary lives. The name combines the Jewish and the Scottish but not in any way he could have anticipated. Was the life of Rabbi Daiches a cul de sac?

I for one would like to think not. Admiration for Rabbi Daiches still ran high when I came to Edinburgh in 1976 and his memorial plaque graces the lobby of the Shul. We do not need to visit Daiches Braes to remember him. Rabbi Daiches was not alone in trying to achieve the synthesis between the religious and secular – even our Chief Rabbi

¹ David Daiches (1997) *Two Worlds* pp. 214 UK: Canongate Classics £5.99

OUR ORDERED TABLE

by JONATHAN BARD

Older members of the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society will remember the visit of Claudia Roden a decade or so ago to talk to us about Jewish food. As I recall, she started in a proper academic way by saying that there were four basic traditions of Jewish cooking that she wished to review and the first and main one was Sephardi. She then went on to talk about a lady in Cairo whom she had visited to discuss some of the old books on Sephardi cooking, and that led onto how the basic ingredients had changed over the centuries, which led on to a meal she had with a Jewish family in Aleppo and the ingredients that you could buy there in the local market and the local specialty that only the old baker next door produced, and that led on to.... After an hour and a half of magic, we realised that time was running out, that we still needed two hours for questions and that we had never even begun to get near that second tradition. This was someone with a lot to say about Jewish food and a wonderful way of saying it.

I don't suppose that the long and weighty treatise on Jewish food that Claudia Roden has now written was an attempt to complete her talk to us, but the book¹ clearly reflects a wish to archive anything any Jew has ever cooked, anywhere. Now, and as all academics know, heavy and distinguished research tomes fall into two distinct categories, those that include everything and close the door on a subject, and those that say "I have discovered a door, go through it and you will find wonderful new things". The former tend to get lost in libraries, while the latter win Nobel prizes for their authors. Claudia Roden has, most unusually, bridged the divide by writing a book that has everything in it, but one that will be read again and again for pleasure, for discovery

and even for recipes.

A quick glance will immediately show that this is actually not so much a recipe book as a cultural history of the Jews as reflected in what they put on the table. This is not an easy thing to do as our history goes back deeply into time and spreads very widely over the surface of the globe, and the real joy of this book lies in Claudia Roden's exploration of this arborisation. Her knowledge is as broad and deep as her subject and her writing is easy to read, so much so that one can almost miss, as one dips into the chapter, say, on the Sephardi vegetable tradition, the extent to which one is being educated.

It should also be said that this is an important book as the author has collected a great deal of our oral culinary tradition – and just in time. Many of the communities that she talks about are disappearing, and, as this generation is more interested in convenience food than in learning the technical skills of their grandmothers, so are their cooking traditions. One does not wish to look for a downside to the establishment of the State of Israel, but it has to be said that the culture of many of those small Jewish communities that escaped being broken by the Tsars or destroyed by the forces unleashed by Hitler is being lost through assimilation or, following their emigration to Israel, their integration into the mainstream of Jewish life. In a generation or so, little will remain of their ways except what has been collected by dedicated cultural historians, and our debt to them is very great.

It is clear that Claudia Roden is one of their number, albeit that she has chosen to research us by researching our food. She is not, however, the first to do so: others, documented in her bibliography, have written wonderful books about

the lost traditions that they were brought up in, and how their communities measured out the Jewish year with recipes (Edda Machlin's *The Classic Cuisine of the Italian Jews*, and Nicholas Stavroulakis' book on the cooking of the lost Jewish communities of Greece [every island had its own recipe for charoseth!]) are two of my favourites), but none has spread their net as widely as Ms Roden.

The author has assiduously talked to those last grandmothers of innumerable cultures across the Jewish world and studied many, many books (behind the stories and the recipes in this book really does lie serious scholarship, albeit worn lightly) so that, as we turn her pages, we appreciate the story of the Diaspora and understand how these migrants lived and coped when, over the centuries, they sought to marry the culinary knowledge that they grew up with to the foods and cooking styles of their new lands. Indeed, every town seems to have had its own variants of dishes and the author mentions her regret that so much of the material that she has collected has had to be left out of the book for reasons of space. It is therefore to be hoped that what remains in her notebooks will soon be made available (perhaps at some internet-accessible web site).

This sheer diversity of times, places and ingredients that define the culinary Diaspora actually poses severe organisational problems to the author of what is still, at heart, a cook book and it is worth noting the skill with which Claudia Roden balances history, geography, culture and recipe organisation to produce a structure which flows so easily that one might never notice the care that clearly went into ordering such an enormous amount of material (the index alone is 33 pages each with three columns of entries).

The solution that she has taken is to start with a comfortable introduc-

¹ Claudia Roden (1997). *The Book of Jewish Food*. pp. 580. UK: Viking Press. £29

tion – a little history, something of our roots, a summary of kashrut, a flavouring of biblical food and a reminder of the circle of festivals – and then to give two virtually separate cookery books, the one on the Ashkenazi and the other on the Sephardi tradition, with the cooking of particular communities being introduced where their recipes are most apposite. Each is complete, but it is clear where her heart lies: the former, which is really about what Jews eat in cold weather, has 140 pages, the latter has 360 pages of food to enjoy in sunshine – and Claudia Roden was brought up in Egypt.

Her book has hundreds and hundreds of recipes that are clear and easy to follow and look wonderful (although I suspect that her latkes will fall apart in the hot oil!), but it does seem just a bit mean merely to call them recipes: it is rather like talking about a sandwich without mentioning the bread. The filling can be tasty and generous, but, if the wrapping is only slices of ready-sliced supermarket loaf rather than, say, a fresh, crispy baguette, the pleasure is severely diminished. So it is with cook books, and it is the personal stories and cultural background with which CR surrounds her recipes that adds so much to the pleasure of reading it. People who use the book in the kitchen will just have to discipline themselves not to keep turning over the pages for just another anecdote or variant when they are meant to be following a particular recipe.

The author also has a nice lightness of touch, and this is not just in the business of providing jokes, although aficionados of Jewish humour will recognise some old friends, but more a matter of pro-

viding the odd unexpected delight – it is surely no coincidence that the very first recipe in the tome is for schmaltz [and she reminds you to include a little onion as it will turn golden just when the fat is properly rendered].

Wherever you open the book, there are pleasures to be found, whether it is what is clearly the author's favourite snack of bourekas (small pies – 35 recipes plus variants, with a couple of Pesach ones for emergencies), the separate chicken dishes of the three Jewish communities of India, the variants of dafina (the North African version of cholent), Yemeni wedding soup, or even, to stretch a point, Chinese taiglach. Almost every one of our communities has a brief description of its history and culture together with something on its culinary tradition. And each will feel that it has been well-served by the author.

Scottish readers will of course turn to the index to see if we get a mention. They will note with approval that the Jewish culinary tradition of England deserves three pages out of the 577, although they will, I suspect, feel that, given the interest of the most important recipes associated with this part of the Diaspora (cakes), an allocation of two pages is a little generous. I am however afraid to report that Scotland does not merit a proper entry, other than as a source of quality salmon, and that, while the salmon may be Scottish, the various techniques of cold smoking that result in that staple of Jewish affairs were actually brought from Russia by Ashkenazi immigrants at around the turn of the century. Its importance then as now lies in the fact that, because the salmon is preserved and not "cooked", it is kosher

even when prepared by non-Jews. Here, I have to admit to being disappointed that Joe Lurie's innovative kosher haggis does not get a mention, but it is hard to find many more sins of omission.

You will by now have realised that I, like every other reviewer that I have read, loved this book. Although non-Jews can praise it for its arcane interests, elegant prose and for being an introduction to such a wide and international set of dishes, I think that Jews must go beyond such detachment and just revel in something that lies at the secular heart of our traditions, history and culture. We therefore need to express our gratitude to Claudia Roden for collecting so many wonderful recipes and stories and presenting them so well to us and to everyone else.

If there is a problem with this book, and you will appreciate that I am looking for problems, it is the fact that it is really two books, each wonderful value, that are closely integrated into one, the first is a lovely read about Jewish culture as a reflection of our culinary life (or is it the other way round?), and the second is an archived collection of our recipes that would take a lifetime to work through and enjoy. The first is for the bedside table, the second for the kitchen table. But there is a simple solution to this problem, the inverse of that given by Solomon is his famous judgment, we simply need to have two copies.

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TWO WORLDS REVISITED – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

is, I think, still trying to do this. Rabbi Daiches's exact philosophy may have dated, but I believe his mission was a worthy one and I can see around me many success stories of how traditional observance

of Judaism can be combined with a healthy secular education and participation in national life (Torah Im Derech Eretz). David Daiches should not feel despondent. His portrait tells us not just about

one man, but about an era of British Jewry whose influence is still very strong despite the polarisation in much of our community today.



BARNET ADELMAN
(died 2nd Nov 1997
3 Cheshvan 5758)

Barnet Adelman was born 90 years ago in Zitomir in the Ukraine then part of Tsarist Russia, but came to Glasgow as a small baby. He grew up in the Gorbals, and left school at 14 to earn his keep, graduating as he put it, from the University of the Gorbals.

He established his shoe shop in Edinburgh, which is still trading as Barnet and Son, and moved to Edinburgh at the age of 15 and lived there for 73 years.

He married Esther Gaya when he was 29, and was blessed first with a daughter (he was quite cross at first that she was not a son, but eventually got over it!) and later with a son. He worked very hard to make a sound and secure base for his family,

and saw both his children under the Chupah. He was a proud grandparent, being presented with three grandsons by his daughter and two granddaughters by his son. He was even prouder to become a great-grandfather, twice over!

After Esther died in 1983, he was lucky to meet Norma Benjamin, herself recently widowed. They kept each other company for eleven happy and active years. During this time he attended both the Edinburgh Lunch Club and the Friendship Club regularly, and was at one time an officer of the Friendship Club, and contributed his ideas to the programme of social activities. I want to commend the Edinburgh Community for the wonderful facility that they provide for their elderly in running the twice weekly lunch club.

Eventually Barney became frail, and his sight started to fade, and when his sight became very poor he went to live at Newark Lodge in Glasgow, not far from the place where he spent his childhood.

There he was very well and very kindly looked after, and was made especially happy by the many visits from his family, especially his son and daughter who were devoted in their attention to him and care for him, whose attention to their father was exemplary.

This June he had a party to celebrate his 90th Birthday at which almost all of his closest relatives were present, including the great grandchildren, which was an occasion which he enjoyed very much.

Sadly we said goodbye to him, Rosalind was at his side as he went.

Barney passed away with his life complete – like Isaac he was “Zaken U’Sevah Yamim” – “Old, and full of days” and we must be grateful for his long life and the many good things in it.

It is right to thank God for this long and full life in the words of Job: “Hashem natan v’Hashem Lakach, y’hi shem Hashem mevorach” – “The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be blessed”.

Barney was a loving husband and father; a good friend to many, and as can be seen from the numbers attending the funeral, he inspired friendship in those he met. He was scrupulously fair and honest and kind to all; he encouraged and respected learning and hard work; he was proud of the achievements of his family; he was satisfied with what he had; and finally and above all, he was simply nice, and we will miss him.

He is mourned by his daughter Rosalind, his son Michael, his three surviving sisters, his five grandchildren, his two great grandchildren, and all his family and friends.

We thank God that Barney had a good and long life and a peaceful end, we will miss him.

Barry Landy

We note the passing of Mrs Leah Lurie and Mr Sidney Solomon. Obituaries will appear in the next issue.

MILLENNIUM EXHIBITION – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

I’ve never met anybody who did not get excited about the Genizah collection. It is not just a Jewish phenomenon. It is as if we had a video of life a thousand years ago. It gives us so many insights into a world which has gone but which, in respect of the things that really matter in life, was not so very different from our own.’

Dr Stefan Reif was born in Edinburgh in 1944, the first child (Cynthia and Sharron came later) of Jewish working-class parents. His father, Peter (Pinkas)

born in Poland, was a mining mechanic who had served as a non-commissioned officer in the Polish army, and his mother, Annie, a tailoress, was from the local Rapstoff family. Stefan, who will be remembered by many in the community for the prizes he carried of at the Edinburgh Cheder during the rabbinate of Isaac Cohen, was educated at Jews’ College and the University of London. He is currently Director of the Genizah Research Unit and Head of the Oriental Division at Cambridge University Library. He also teaches various aspects of

Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the University’s Oriental and Divinity Faculties. His major fields of research are Jewish Liturgy and the Cairo Genizah and he is the author of six books and of over 200 scholarly articles. His most recent two volumes, both published by Cambridge University Press, are Judaism and Hebrew Prayer and Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library. He has just completed a year in Israel as a Professorial Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,
 Rabbi Sedley in his article on the Mechizah (*The Edinburgh Star* No. 27) refers to the separation of men and women in the Second Temple during the Intermediate Days of Sukkot. In view of my research on the Temples of Jerusalem (see *The Edinburgh Star* No. 23), I had thought of writing an article for *The Star* on Women in the Temple. However, I was forestalled by an excellent article on the subject which I warmly recommend and it avoids repetition on my part. The article is entitled *Women and the Jerusalem Temple* by Susan Grossman. It appears in the book *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue* edited by Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut, 5752/1992, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America. Basing herself on the ancient literary record, Susan Grossman shows that men and women mixed freely in the Women's Court of the Second Temple, except during the Intermediate Days of Sukkot as stated above.

In the same book there is an article on the *Mechizah* and another entitled *Women and the Ancient Synagogue* by Hannah Safrai in which she claims that there is no evidence for separation in ancient times. I should mention that Professor Safrai's orthodoxy is above reproach.

Rabbi Sedley refers to the height of the *Mechizah* as 3 cubits. The cubit in question is the normal standard of 6 handbreadths (the medium cubit). The lengths of the cubit and handbreadth are taken from the average human body. I have shown that from archaeological evidence in the Temple area in Jerusalem the length of the medium cubit was 44.7 centimetres¹. Thus, 3 cubits is 134 cm. The length 44.7 cm agrees completely with other evidence for the length of the cubit as mentioned in the article.

Yours faithfully,
 Asher S. Kaufman

54 Rehov Hehaluz
 Jerusalem 96269

¹Determining the length of the medium cubit. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 116, 120-132 (1984).

Dear Sir

I should like to make some comments concerning the Editorial which appeared in the October edition of the *The Edinburgh Star*.

As I understand it, an Editorial, whilst it may raise issues of a controversial nature, should generally reflect the views of the community which it represents. The Editorial in question reflected views of a personal nature and should, I would have thought, be better as a personal feature. I would ask whether the Editorial Board were in full agreement with the views expressed in the Editorial.

The Editorial contained a significant number of inaccuracies and misunderstandings concerning the Halachah and the Sabbath.

It was stated that 'many of the practices which our biblical ancestors adhered to are no longer followed today. Thus for example we no longer make sacrifices of burnt offerings or enforce the Draconian penalties which used to be applied to those who broke the law or otherwise offended against religious authority or public morality'. With the destruction of the Temple new conditions arose as sacrifices could no longer be performed at the Sanctuary. The study of Torah took the place of the rites of the Altar and was designated as *avodah* (Service). The study of Torah is more valuable as a religious duty than the daily burnt offerings (Talmud Megillah 3b). As for Draconian penalties, the Editor should refer to Talmud Makkos page 7a, when it is stated that a Sanhedrin that executes once in every seven years is called a Destroyer. The penalties referred to were rarely, if ever, applied.

The comments regarding the observance of the Sabbath attempted to show that the meaning of 'work' had changed out of all recognition – 'Thus, lighting an oil lamp or yoking up oxen may well have been work in a way that turning on a light switch or driving a car are not.' The prohibition in both cases concerns the creation or kindling of fire (creating a spark) and putting on a light is no different to lighting an oil lamp in that both create a spark. The prohibition of driving a car has no relation to the yoking of an ox. The prohibition is once again the creation of a spark.

I would draw readers' attention to an excellent book by Dayan Dr I Grunfeld entitled 'The Sabbath' which gives a complete guide to the understanding and observance of the Sabbath.

Yours sincerely

Bill Simpson
 3 Hallhead Road
 EDINBURGH
 EH16 5QJ

Dear Sir

On behalf of Alfred and myself I should like to express our appreciation for the warm welcome we received when we attended the Synagogue in July this year.

This was our first visit there since we left Edinburgh in 1973. It was a great pleasure to meet old friends. We were very impressed too, by the beautiful way in which the synagogue had been converted.

We receive the *The Edinburgh Star* regularly and enjoy both the literary articles and the more parochial items, which enable us to keep up with the community.

With all good wishes

Yours sincerely

Sheila Yarrow
 9/4 Nof Harim
 JERUSALEM
 96910
 Israel

NEW HILLEL HOUSE IN EDINBURGH

by DEBORAH DONNE

Edinburgh Hillel celebrated the new year in style with the purchase of new premises – a five bedroom town house at 8 East Parkside, Newington.

A large gathering of students and Friends of Hillel attended the official opening on Sunday 25th January 1998. The "house" was formally declared open by Scotland's first woman Judge, Lady Cosgrove who expressed her delight with high standard of facility offered.

The Guest of Honour was Jeffrey Green, deputy Chairman of the Hillel Foundation in the United Kingdom who was accompanied by his wife. John Cosgrove, chairman of Edinburgh Hillel paid tribute to Jeffrey Green and the Hillel Foundation for their support and to the generosity of the Charles Wolfson Trust which had financed the purchase.

Morris Kaplan vice chairman fixed the first *Mezuzah* followed by Rabbi David Sedley and the residents.

The town house is arranged over three levels and features gas central heating, double glazing and carpeting throughout and is currently occupied by four students.



Corner of the lounge.

The first floor features a large living room/dining room which has been newly furnished by Hillel and includes a sofa bed for visitors use. The fully fitted kitchen faces the back of the building and incorporates electric hob and oven, dishwasher and microwave.

A master bedroom with en suite bathroom, a double bedroom, two singles, bathroom and laundry cupboard are located at the top of the house. Each bedroom (including another double bedroom on the ground floor) has been furnished by Hillel with a bed, bookcase, desk and chair and chest of drawers where appropriate in addition to the fitted wardrobes.

All bedrooms are fitted with individual locks and television and telephone points are located on each floor.

The house itself faces in the direction of Arthurs Seat and is within walking distance of Edinburgh City Centre and the University. The area offers excellent local amenities including the City of Edinburgh Council Sports Centre, the Commonwealth Pool and a variety of shops, restaurants and bars.

John Cosgrove commented: "The new Hillel House offers luxurious and spacious accommodation right next to Pollock Halls (the main University Halls of Residence) and within a short walking distance of the synagogue. The existing students have settled in and we are receiving calls from undergraduates, potential students and post graduate students looking for accommodation for the next academic session. The Edinburgh Jewish Students Society (JSOC) is delighted with the acquisition and is planning to hold regular meetings in the new Hillel House. All this has been brought about in a short space of time due to the boundless enthusiasm of our small Committee. In particular, I would like to thank our Vice Chairmen Morris Kaplan and Hilary Rifkind and the Honorary Secretary Myrna Kaplan who together with property manager John Donne have created a student home worthy of our capital city."

Hillel is a national organisation dedicated to the welfare of Jewish students and has been running in Edinburgh since 1994. The Hillel House was previously located in rented accommodation, a three bedroomed flat in Mayfield Road owned by Mr Joshua Lurie.

At the time of writing, one single room is available and all enquiries and requests for application forms for this term, next term and the next academic session should be directed to Myrna Kaplan on 0131 339 8201.

The house will also be available to rent on a complete or room-by-room basis throughout the summer period between the 1st August and mid September. Enquiries and summer application forms are available through Myrna.



Bedroom Study.



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