

THE EDINBURGH

# STAR

No.44  
February 2003  
Adar 5763



**The future of Edinburgh's community**  
We open the debate with contributions from:  
Arnold Rifkind  
Jesmond Blumenfeld  
Marlena Schmool and  
Malcolm Weisman

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY



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One of the Edinburgh Synagogue windows by William Wilson

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The Editorial Board wish to thank the advertisers and the following for their support since the last edition:

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

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# Editorial

How big is the Edinburgh Jewish Community? It was the interval during a jazz concert held at the Pleasance as part of last year's Festival. I was chatting to some strangers and the subject of the Jewish Community was raised by one of them as we had been talking about Jewish musicians. I was asked how many Jewish people there were in Edinburgh. My response was to enquire of my questioner how big he thought it was and the reply from this young Edinburgh man was "oh, thirty or forty thousand?" He was stunned by the truth. In some ways, this vast over-estimate was not surprising as our small community has integrated well and has been very influential in our city. Individually, our members have been influential in many fields and we have produced some very prominent people.

Regrettably, the opinions of others and the achievements of our community over the years cannot hide the demographic time bomb that has taken our number to under 300 souls and falling. So how do we respond to that? How do we make the best of the way we are and the way we shall certainly be over the next decade? It is the clear responsibility of our community leaders to give thought to the issues and of the members of the community to realise that we will never again be as we were. How do we run our community facilities? How do we deal with religious leadership and the Jewish education of our children?

In this issue, we have invited various writers to contribute on this theme and while neither myself nor the authors of these articles can offer a definitive solution, I believe there is a need to open the debate on the issues. It is clear from authoritative sources such as Rev. Malcolm Weisman, who is on the court of the Chief Rabbi, charged with responsibility for small communities and Marlena Schmool from the Board of Deputies, that history is against us. There is a trail of small communities which have collapsed under the pressure of falling numbers and it seems that the best we can do is to constructively manage the diminution of our community rather than vainly hope for a rebirth. If you have a view, why not write to the Star and let us publish your ideas?

I am particularly pleased to see an increase in the number of letters on various subjects being sent to me by our readers and several are published in this issue. There are however some points made in a letter submitted by Myrna Kaplan which raise some interesting issues regarding an article written by Edgar Prais and published in The Edinburgh Star in issue number 42. Mrs Kaplan refers to a speech by a certain Mr Chesterman, which criticised that article and I have no problem with that. There is absolutely no reason to suppose that our readers should agree with the views expressed by the author of any article or indeed that I should agree with such views.

What I found interesting was the suggestion that because the article was not aligned with current right wing Israeli thinking, it should either be suppressed or that there should be an article specially commissioned to give an opposing view. The Edinburgh Star has carried many articles giving all manner of views and I believe that overall these average out to a fair balance. I cannot accept that within each issue there should be carefully crafted counter views to each and every opinion expressed by our writers.

There are also some interesting allegations in the same letter suggesting that the Star sponsors some political agenda or the views of 'radical left wing academics'. Really? Well perhaps I need to clarify some things. Firstly, the views and opinions of our contributors whether in articles or letters are their own views and provided that the content is not, in my opinion likely to offend a reasonable person, I am happy to publish. Secondly, I do not believe that the Star exists to promote any political view. I believe that the content should be about or directly relevant to the Edinburgh community and should contain the views of people who are or have been part of our community. If you as a reader, feel that a view expressed is counter to your own, please feel free to submit a contribution. You never know, I might just publish it!

Peter A Bennett

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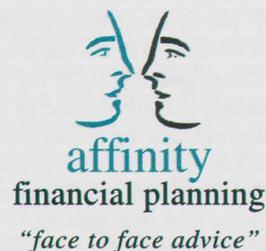
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# Where Next Edinburgh?

Arnold Rifkind

Last year was the 70th anniversary of the opening of the Synagogue in Salisbury Road Edinburgh, which was consecrated on the 11th of September 1932. At the time of this consecration there were about 1600 Jews living in Edinburgh and the majority of them had either arrived in Edinburgh from Eastern Europe between the years of 1890 and 1910 or had been born in Edinburgh during the early years of the 20th century. During those years up to the 1930's the great majority of families all lived in the Buccleuch, Nicolson Street and St. Leonards areas of Central/South Edinburgh and, also within this area, many of the small Jewish businesses that catered for all these families were established. This "ghetto mentality" was a result of hundreds of years of discriminatory legislation which kept Jews cocooned in their own world.

Gradually, however, many families began to realise that there were no ghetto walls in Edinburgh and they soon began to disperse, in the main throughout the Southside of Edinburgh and beyond. Could this move to

'If Judaism is taught as a kind of dogmatic creed, formalistic and utterly disciplined, then surely it just becomes a habit and not a living faith, meaningful to contemporary people.'

live among the non-Jewish citizens of Edinburgh perhaps have been the start of the long slow decline of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation (E.H.C)? For some Jews suddenly to be confronted by modern society was perhaps too overwhelming, others went on to the University of Edinburgh to study law, medicine, philosophy and so on, and many went into business to cater for all the citizens of Edinburgh. These were opportunities that previous generations of Jews, especially in Eastern Europe, would not have been able to fulfil. For many this new freedom of expression and movement and increasing affluence, which their parents and grandparents had not enjoyed, was becoming the new way of life, and the strict observance and commitment of their parents towards Orthodox Judaism was not for them.

After the establishment of the State of Israel many young members of the Jewish community went on Aliyah. This was particularly evident during the 1950's when the Habonim and Bnei Akiva movements were very active in Edinburgh. Some others moved to the larger Jewish communities in the U.K. and North America, which offered far better facilities for those wishing a full and active Orthodox life.

Although there has been a steady flow of families coming to live and work in Edinburgh over the years, their numbers have never been great enough to make up for all the families that left Edinburgh. Consequently by the 1970's membership of the E.H.C. was down to about 600 and the Synagogue, built in 1932 to seat a 1000 worshippers, was now far too large. The congregation decided to reduce the size of the Synagogue by building a new floor within the existing structure, at the previous ladies gallery level, to house the Synagogue on this first floor level. The new ground floor became the new Community Centre. Since this restructuring of the Synagogue in 1980 the membership of the E.H.C. has more than halved, this steady decline in the membership being a trend that is certainly not unique to Edinburgh. However membership numbers in themselves can be very misleading and what is critical is how many of these members are willing firstly to regularly support the services and secondly to help in the administration of the E.H.C.

There are therefore two approaches that have to be considered to enable us to maintain the Orthodox tradition here in Edinburgh. Firstly a change to the administration of the E.H.C. has to be looked at, in order to encourage more members to become involved. Secondly, I believe it is essential to update the format of our services but doing so within the Orthodox tradition.

The management structure of the E.H.C. was set up in 1932 following the opening of the present Synagogue and has remained almost the same to the present day, with the positions of President and Parnas (senior warden) held by the same person, as are the positions of Treasurer and Gabbai (junior warden). However it became apparent in the summer of 2002 that maintaining this long-established arrangement was no longer viable, and an important step was taken at the A.G.M. of the E.H.C. in June, to separate

the roles of Parnas and Gabbai from those of President and Treasurer. This was one of the main proposals of a sub-committee, in an earlier submission to Council, regarding a change in the way the Congregation's affairs were administered. Consequently the current two wardens took on the roles of Parnas and Gabbai and are now responsible for the running of services in the Synagogue, in conjunction with the Rabbi. Alongside, but distinct from these respected positions of Parnas and Gabbai, would be a Board of Management/Executive and they would be responsible for all the other aspects of synagogue administration. As it is essential to utilise the various talents and expertise of our members as fully as possible, all the management positions would be open to both men and women. This management team, or executive, would be responsible for a number of portfolios and this team would be headed by a Chairman who would also be the Congregation's lay leader. It is hoped that these changes will introduce a modern system of management which in turn improves decision-making and provides strategic leadership but at the same time maintains a traditional Orthodox congregation.

The second challenge is much more difficult, and without doubt controversial, but, as was said earlier, the current format of our Orthodox services has to be looked at to see if it is possible to make them more meaningful, spiritually uplifting and relevant to our congregation.

The issue of change is one that challenges all faiths, and central to this is acknowledging which parts of the faith are core values, and cannot be changed, and which are social

'In addition to people coming to the services to observe their loved one's *Jahrzeits*, we would like to encourage members to attend on birthdays, anniversaries and other happy events, which would be acknowledged during the service, so that the congregation celebrates such occasions together.'

custom and influenced by the times in which we live. Over the last century many have blamed philosophy, science and other modern disciplines for the gradual demise of Judaism, however others argue that the way Judaism has been presented and taught in modern times has made it appear irrelevant to the needs and problems of modern society. If Judaism is taught as a kind of dogmatic creed, formalistic and utterly disciplined, then surely it just becomes a habit and not a living faith, meaningful to contemporary people. Religious teaching should spend more time devoted to the study of Jewish texts which deal with the sanctity of life, moral conduct and ethics. Orthodoxy tends to highlight the mitzvot between man and God more prominently than those between man and man, and yet when you study the 613 commandments only about 20 deal with man's relationship with God and the rest deal with man's interaction with fellow human beings, the animal kingdom, ecology and the environment.

There is also a similar difficulty with prayer and the liturgy recited during the synagogue services. There has been little attempt made to explain the concept and meaning of the prayers. The liturgy has mainly been taught as a matter of rote and to many read in a "foreign language". Recalling my own cheder days I remember my Rabbi having a class competition to see who could read the Aleinu prayer the quickest in Hebrew! Hardly a great insight to the meaning of this beautiful prayer! A start has been made in the Artscroll Siddur, which often has commentary at the foot of the page of certain sections and verses, but in the U.K. we mostly use the Singer's Prayer Book which contains none.

The Jewish concept of prayer, Tephilah, comes from the word "hitpalel", literally "judge oneself". Prayer is intended to change man, not God. Its purpose is for man to gain moral strength and to increase the desire for spirituality. Once again the challenge must be to find ways of encouraging those who come to services not to come merely as spectators but to try and become worshippers and to leave, hopefully, with a spark of spirituality.

Some of the difficulties that contemporary Jews have with their understanding of Judaism is possibly due to the Orthodox world's preoccupation with practical Halacha, almost to the exclusion of any other branch of Judaism. Now obviously Halacha is the most authentic expression of traditional Judaism, but there are also many other aspects of Judaism. Non-religious Jews are hardly going to be attracted to Judaism merely on the basis of

laws and especially when some of the Orthodox interpret the laws in such minute detail as to almost ridicule Judaism.

For some time now there has been a steady shift or polarisation towards the "right" and "left" throughout the Jewish world. Jews are either becoming more religious, for example the Lubavitch, Charedi and the growing Modern Orthodox congregations, or moving to the less religious Reform and Liberal congregations. While most Jewish people today are secular, the vast majority are not secular by conviction, but rather out of inertia. Consequently "middle of the road" traditional congregations such as ours are declining and the challenge is how to slow, or even stop, this process. It is thought that the majority of our members wish to maintain a traditional Orthodox congregation, but would like to explore, if it is possible, to find a format that a contemporary congregation like ours would feel is more relevant,

'...the current format of our Orthodox services have to be looked at to see if it is possible to make them more meaningful, spiritually uplifting and relevant to our congregation.'

meaningful and even spiritually uplifting. Most Rabbis would suggest Teshuva, a programme of learning and study, as the only solution and no doubt they are right, but at a practical level that is not solution here. Religion has now to compete with many other attractions. Our modern society wishes instant results and anyway who needs to ask a Rabbi when the Internet can give you all the answers at the touch of a button from the comfort of your home!

One challenge here in Edinburgh is to find a way of attracting people to the Shabbat service on a Saturday morning and hopefully encouraging them to learn how to use this day as a good opportunity to have a respite from the working week. It has been the tradition over many years for congregants to arrive for the Service from about 10:30 and later, and no amount of persuasion has managed to entice them to come earlier. A suggested format that might be attractive would be for the Reading of the Law to commence at 10:30. This would be preceded by the Morning Service, which would finish at 10:15, whether or not there was a minyan. Between 10:10 and 10:25 tea/coffee and biscuits would be served, both for those who were at the Morning Service and also to welcome congregants and visitors. The Service would finish between 12:00 and 12:15 followed by Kiddush. It is proposed that all the congregants would use the same editions of the Siddur and Chumash, so that page numbers can be regularly announced, and a booklet would be produced to give explanatory notes to the readings and prayers, enabling congregants to find the Service more meaningful. In addition to people coming to the services to observe their loved one's Jahrzeits, we would like to encourage members to attend on birthdays, anniversaries and other happy events, which would be acknowledged during the service, so that the congregation celebrates such occasions together. We would also strive to encourage the youth of the community to take an active part in the Service.

It is hoped that this article, together with the others in this edition of "The Edinburgh Star", will encourage a debate within the E.H.C. to search for ways for us to remain a viable and vibrant traditional Orthodox congregation. However what is certain is that there has to be a far greater commitment by all the members to become more involved in all aspects of Synagogue and communal life here in Edinburgh.

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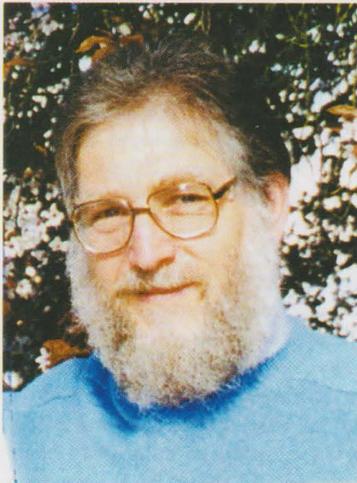
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# The Oxford Story

Jesmond Blumenfeld

The Oxford Jewish Congregation (OJC) is a rare, if not unique, community of Jews.



Jesmond Blumenfeld

For several decades, as the wider UK synagogal community has become increasingly polarised between 'orthodox' and 'non-orthodox', the OJC has enjoyed and cultivated a sense of unity and common Jewish identity, based on mutual respect for, and collaboration between, the different strands of Judaism. In a nutshell, the OJC operates as a single 'umbrella' organisation to which Jews of any denomination can belong, while permitting – indeed encouraging and funding – sub-groups of members to organise different services.

The 'default' services on shabbat, the chagim and on the High Holydays are orthodox. On many shabbatot, however, 'alternative' services are held simultaneously with the orthodox service. At present, Liberal services and Masorti services (the latter fully egalitarian) each take place on one shabbat each month. There are also regular 'non-denominational' children's services and occasional women-only services (in the orthodox tradition). (A Reform group also used to run monthly services, but has been in abeyance for some years.) Progressive services are also held on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

**How did this unusual organisational setup evolve? How does it work in practice? And what are its advantages and disadvantages?**

To answer the first question it is necessary to provide some historical background. Prior to the 1960s, despite Oxford's status as a major university centre, the size, strength and stability of the resident Jewish community waxed and waned as a result of external developments beyond its control. The reluctance of Oxford Colleges to employ Jews in senior academic positions, and the relative absence of economic and industrial development in the Oxford area, inhibited the growth of the resident Jewish population. This was reflected in the synagogue's normal seating capacity of 50 persons.

The late 1930s and the onset of the Second World War brought an influx of some 500 refugees from Germany, and at least a similar number of evacuees from London. However, most of the latter subsequently drifted back to London and some (though

"How does all this work in practice? The short answer is that it works because everyone wants it to work."

not all) of the former moved on to other destinations, thereby causing the community to shrink dramatically again. For much of the time, therefore, the undergraduate Jewish student community – present for only 24 weeks of each year – was the dominant group. Significantly, the rapid post-1945 growth in student numbers meant (in the words of the OJC's chronicler) that 'the undergraduate element was a far more substantial proportion of the Anglo-Jewish student body than the resident community was of Anglo-Jewry as a whole, both in size and resources.'

Although 'town-gown' relations were often strained, the mutual dependency between the two small communities also encouraged cooperative behaviour. Two aspects of these cooperative relations are particularly relevant. First, a tradition of cross-denominational usage of the synagogue building was established early in the 20th Century. Whether because of lengthy periods without a minister, the very small number of residents,

the eclectic background of the Jewish undergraduate community, or the presence of particular individuals with strong Liberal leanings – perhaps all were relevant – the forms of service used in the synagogue were varied. Moreover, the synagogue building – originally leased by the OJC on part of the current site – appears to have been acquired subsequently by an independent trust, whose members comprised residents, dons and undergraduates representing both orthodox and non-orthodox traditions.

Second, after the Second World War, despite its dwindling numbers, the resident community became involved in the provision of kosher meals for the expanding cohorts of students. A related, though subsequent, development – connected to the 'national responsibility' issue – was the purchase by the London-based B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation of a site next to the synagogue for the provision of kosher meals for students (although it was still the local residents who provided the service).

By the 1960s, the old synagogue building was in a state of serious disrepair. Although the 'permanent' resident population had now begun to grow, it was a London-based committee, including several prominent Oxford alumni, which took on primary responsibility for raising funds for a new Jewish Centre. Although not the original intention, it was eventually decided to build the Centre on the site of the existing building, augmented by several adjacent sites. However, the underlying properties were not owned by the Congregation: apart from the Hillel-owned site, some of the properties were registered in the names of individual OJC members, and the rest were vested in the aforementioned independent trust. An additional consideration was that, while the Congregation had become more orthodox in its orientation by the 1940s, some of (the successors to) the trustees of the original synagogue building were concerned to protect the interests of Progressive Jews.

The solution to the problems posed by this plethora of interests was found in the creation of a non-profit charitable 'Company Limited by Guarantee'. The Company's purpose

was to hold the new building and all the underlying properties, and to give the OJC, the Oxford University Jewish Society (OUJS) and the kosher meals service assured use of the building in perpetuity. The OJC, the Hillel Foundation and the (successors to) the original trustees were all accorded rights of appointment to the directorate of the Company, with special provisions to protect student and Progressive interests. A crucial additional decision was to insert an unalterable clause in the Memorandum of Association of the Company stating that the building must be made available for 'all forms of Jewish worship'.

The import of this complex organisational structure is that the Company stands as the ultimate guarantor of the right of access to

‘There are drawbacks, however, the greatest of which is that the setup does not readily accommodate the provision of spiritual leadership.’

the Centre. In particular, it ensures that if the OJC (or the OUJS) were ever to be ‘taken over’ by one or other religious tendency, they would not be able to preclude other denominational groups within the Oxford community from holding services in the Centre. In practice, however, there has been no case to date in which the Company has had to exercise this ultimate power because, in the 27 years since the Centre was built (in 1974), the Congregation has become increasingly ‘pluralistic’ in outlook and character.

The OJC itself is a complex institution, which is difficult to describe, mainly because of the relative ‘informality’ of its own structures. Although the OJC describes itself as an ‘independent orthodox’ congregation, its constitution merely lays down that its objects include the ‘advancement of the Jewish religion’ and the provision of religious and welfare services for the ‘Jews of Oxford’. Membership of the Congregation is open to ‘all persons of the Jewish faith’, albeit with the crucial rider that any individual’s access to religious rites (including bar/batmitzvah, marriage, burial etc) depends on his/her halachic status. Both men and women are counted as full members, with non-Jewish spouses/partners of members offered non-voting associate status). Significantly, the community does not have a rabbi or other formal spiritual leader. Except on the High Holydays, when outside assistance is obtained for some or all of the



The Oxford Synagogue

orthodox services, and for part of the summer when absences create the need for some assistance with lehening, all the services are run by lay volunteers.

As noted above, the ‘default’ services are Orthodox, run by a ‘religious services committee’ in accordance with halachic principles and long-standing local custom. However, there are also semi-autonomous informal groups that organise Progressive, Masorti, children’s and women’s services, all in accordance with their own traditions, but all also in the name of the OJC. Each group is entitled and expected to protect the integrity of its form of service; but each group also understands and accepts that it is part of a wider and unified community. The activities are co-ordinated (loosely) by the Shul Council. There are no ‘bloc interests’ on Council and no formal representation on Council for the non-orthodox groups (the convenor of the Orthodox religious services committee is a member of Council, ex-officio). Instead, all elected Council members are encouraged to regard themselves as representatives of the whole community, and – if necessary – a satisfactory spread of interests is secured by co-option of individuals.

How does all this work in practice? The short answer is that it works because everyone wants it to work. The slightly longer answer is that it works through a combination of mutual respect, tolerance, inclusiveness, negotiation, common sense and avoidance of rigid structures. Some very practical examples:

- the OJC’s stock of Sifrei Torah is available for use by all denominations without qualification (other than a mutual under-

standing that every Torah scroll must be accorded utmost respect);

- out of respect for orthodox sensitivities, the Progressive group would not hold a service with music in the Centre on shabbat (if they wanted to do so on a particular shabbat they would move off-site for that occasion);

- there have been occasions (e.g during the early part of the shacharit service) when the orthodox service has been short of a minyan, and has temporarily ‘borrowed’ attendees from the alternative service;

- although there are some individuals who, through principle or preference, will attend only their ‘own’ services, there is a significant degree of fluidity in attendance

‘The OJC, the Hillel Foundation and the (successors to) the original trustees were all accorded rights of appointment to the directorate of the Company, with special provisions to protect student and Progressive interests. A crucial additional decision was to insert an unalterable clause in the Memorandum of Association of the Company stating that the building must be made available for ‘all forms of Jewish worship’.’

(a number of Liberal and Masorti adherents, for example, attend the orthodox services on the shabbatot when their preferred service is not available); and

- the post-service kiddush never starts until both services have finished, even though – on occasions – congregants from one service have to wait 20 or even 30 minutes for the other service to finish.

The location of services is determined in an equally civilised and sensible manner. Formally, the Centre is run on a day-to-day basis by a Management Committee, whose chairman is appointed by the company, but whose other members are appointed by the OJC and the OUJS. The Management Committee's responsibilities include ensuring that the principle of equal access for 'all forms of Jewish worship' is upheld. In practice, the arrangements are usually settled between the respective service convenors. Orthodox services are normally held in the 'main' shul, and any alternative service in an adjacent multi-purpose room – but this is only because the orthodox services generally attract larger numbers. If, on a particular shabbat, either the Liberal or

Masorti group wants to use the main shul (e.g. for a family simcha such as a bar/batmitvah) the locations are switched.

The Jews of Oxford take great pride in the inclusiveness of their institutional structures – a pride that is reinforced by the favourable feedback received from the continuous streams of short- and long-term visitors that pass through the city. They are also proud of the fact that their Congregation is vibrant and growing (the Jewish Centre is currently undergoing a major programme of extensions and refurbishment to meet the needs of the next generation).

There are drawbacks, however, the greatest of which is that the setup does not readily accommodate the provision of spiritual leadership. The Oxford community had no resident rabbi between 1908 and 1940, and has had none since 1948. The explanation is partly financial – although the resident community has now grown to encompass nearly 300 member households. The costs of running the Centre (which includes student usage is defrayed exclusively from local resources) and the Hebrew classes (which currently cater for

nearly 100 children), preclude any realistic hope of employing a minister. But it is also because finding a spiritual leader who would not – intentionally or otherwise – cause a degree of unwanted polarisation within the community, would constitute a major challenge. A related consequence is the absence of a focused – and non-doctrinaire – Jewish education programme. Notwithstanding the valiant efforts by occasional volunteers to fill the gap, this is a major shortcoming. For the time being, however, the majority of the community appear to view these lacunae as an acceptable price to pay for maintaining the unity of the community.

Jesmond Blumenfeld  
(Oxford, January 2003)

(The author is a former President of the Oxford Jewish Congregation, and a former Chairman of the Management Committee of the Oxford Synagogue and Jewish Centre. However, the views expressed in this article reflect his personal opinion, and should not necessarily be taken to represent the official views of the Oxford Jewish Congregation or any other institutional body.)

## Star Trek into the Past

Do you recognise anyone here? Answers on page 16.

### Congratulations!



To **Hilary and Arnold Rifkind** on the birth of their grandson Natan, pictured with his brother Eli.



To **Miss Goldberg** on her 100th Birthday.

To **Mr. Sammy Latter** on his 99th Birthday.

To **David Goldberg** on the birth of his 3rd great grandson.

To **Rabbi Shapira** on his engagement and forthcoming marriage.

To **Lady Cosgrove** on her elevation to the Appellate Court and appointment to the Privy Council.



**Edith Rifkind** received an Honorary Doctorate from Napier University on 21st November 2002 in recognition of her connection with the University over a period of 33 years. Edith was a teacher of Biology at the University in the 1970s and had been a member of the University Court for 11 years until July 2002.

# Small Communities Survey

The Board of Deputies recently carried out an update to their on-going monitoring of trends in the UK's Jewish communities. The research was carried out by Marlena Schmool of the BoD who kindly agreed to be interviewed on the subject by Peter Bennett.

**I understand that you have recently compiled a report in respect of smaller Jewish Communities. How do you define 'small'?**

Any community that had a population estimated at less than 1500 in 1989. The current study is the third in a series and we have now been able to track changes. All the communities are now smaller than 10 years ago but there are some new ones.

**So that I understand the scale of the issue, roughly how many Jews are in the UK and of these, how many would be in your defined category of small communities?**

Current core population for British Jewry is approximately 285,000. About 10,000 persons live in these small communities.

**What have you found to be the structures that make a Jewish Community and how have you found these to change over the last 50 years?**

We take as a starting point that communities traditionally need a place for prayer (which may or may not be a dedicated synagogue), and then the facilities for education, burial, brit milah and kosher food. It is also worth noting that out of 84 small congregations, 32 were founded before 1914 which means that they were by definition 'orthodox'. The main change over 50 years has been that communities which once had all the expected ritual and communal services may now only have a synagogue – and may even then have difficulty finding people to run services. Most of the communities are aged and so there are only a few children, and education is possibly problematic. Kosher food stores have been overtaken by general changes in retailing patterns. Where a community/demand is large enough, supermarkets often have kosher counters. The communities also have welfare and social groups, which are the fabric of a close-knit community.

**It is clear that a Community needs a framework to bring it together as an entity. What do you believe are the basic components of that entity?**

Personally, I feel a community needs to meet regularly to maintain personal contacts. Strictly speaking this should be at least weekly, round a Shabbat or Friday night service. But I recognise that smaller communities that may be geographically widespread, could find this difficult. In that case a monthly gathering may help preserve a sense of identity and community. Above all, a critical factor is having people who will take responsibility for the community – after all, communities are voluntary organisations and require volunteer leaders.

**From the statistics that you have accumulated, can you indicate any key numbers in respect of the number of small communities? Particularly, how they split between orthodox and other and how has that changed over time?**

The major distinction is between small communities with only one congregation and those with two. 46 have only one congregation and are for the main part, following their history, mainly orthodox. There are 10 communities that have two congregations – an orthodox and a progressive, and a further 7 that have a Representative Council and two congregations. Nevertheless, between 1989 and 2001 the number of Orthodox congregations fell from 57 to 52 while the others rose from 24 to 32. Of the newly established congregations 5 are Liberal, one is Reform, two are Masorti and one is Orthodox. Membership numbers have fallen overall: in 1989 there were 9257 households affiliated to the small Regional congregations, by 2001, this had fallen to 7493, a decrease of 19%.

**What proportion of small communities employ the services of a rabbi and has that proportion changed much over recent years?**

In 2001 only 15 (18%) of the congregations we surveyed had a full-time rabbi; neither this number nor proportion had changed since 1989. 31 (36%) congregations had a part-time rabbi or minister indicating a

marked increase in this practice over the decade compared with twelve congregations, which had such support in 1989.

**Do you see Britain's small Jewish Communities existing in 10-20 years and if so, what characteristics will sustain them?**

Our recent paper poses the question of whether, through time, the small (and by extension perhaps some slightly larger) communities are having to reinvent themselves. For the most part they are getting older and smaller. They are having to keep themselves going without the services of a regular rabbi or minister, education may be 'distance learning' and kosher meat may be delivered to a shul freezer once a month.

The newer communities may have different requirements. If they have not had a 'historic past' to remember, they may not feel so much at a loss without a rabbi. As adherence to kashrut falls away, the lack of the local kosher corner shop may not seem so terrible.

Some of the small communities will certainly be around in 10 years time; others will have fallen away – as did Dover, Falmouth, Penzance and similar places in the 18th and 19th centuries. Those that remain will be there because there are enough local people who feel the need to gather and express their Jewishness regularly. And don't dismiss the possibility that some smaller communities may grow. Historically in Britain, Jewish communities have followed job opportunities, and we do not know where these may be in the future.

Marlena Schmool is currently Director, Community Issues Division, Board of Deputies of British Jews, with special reference to Community Research. As researcher, she conducts social surveys and statistical studies of British Jewry and advises community organisations on research. Marlena has published many books, reports and studies in her field.

# Being Jewish

Judy Sischy

Perhaps it is coincidence, or perhaps it is because of changes in practice that I have not been confronted for some time with a form asking me to state religion. I would have no hesitation in denoting Jewish.

Perhaps it is coincidence, or perhaps it is because of changes in practice that I have not been confronted for some time with a form asking me to state religion. I would have no hesitation in denoting Jewish, although I might pose several questions in so doing. Was the question necessary? If so, why was it required? Would the Jewish denomination affect me in any way, either positively or negatively? Was the question a sign of prejudice, institutional or otherwise? Regardless of the answers, I would state Jewish, without too much soul searching.

In a secular society there will be a myriad collection of Jews who might answer the question in the same way, ranging from orthodox through to liberal, from practising to agnostic Jews. Would it be possible, I wonder, to gather all such Jews together in Edinburgh? How many would there be? As my imagination plays with this kind of scenario, I have visions of a hall filling up from the sides, as a motley collection of Jews emerges from the woodwork. Identifiable and non-identifiable, identifying and non-identifying.

As a liberal, tolerant human being, I like to think that all Jews would be welcome in this hall and that the labelling would be irrelevant. Although a member of the Edinburgh Jewish community, I am not sure how I would identify myself, if I were required to do so. I was drawn to pondering on this during the Kol Nidre service this year, which I attended in a reform synagogue in North London. The shul was packed with around 1200 people and as the Rabbi welcomed them, he mused on how his normal congregation of 200 swelled so dramatically on these high holy days. His musings were not without inbuilt jibe and I felt the sting even though I was not of his congregation, especially when he suggested that some of us might recognise ourselves as 'irreligious Jews'. This seemed unfair when we had after all made the effort to attend but on reflection, perhaps he was right. Filling in the form certainly does not require any religious or even spiritual affiliation.

A consultation paper on religious

observance has just been circulated to schools in Scotland, a tortuous issue if ever there was one for this small nation. The paper is seeking views on how religious observance can take place in schools in a meaningful way in the modern multi-cultural society of today. It draws, or tries to draw, an interesting distinction between religious observance and worship, on the basis that the former can offer a spiritual, uplifting experience without the belief and commitment which worship implies.

Fine distinctions, perhaps, to those who would identify as Jews? Thousands of learned tomes have been devoted to this subject and the debate will no doubt continue in a similar vein for thousands more years. Since we moved to Edinburgh in the early 1970's, the future of the Edinburgh Jewish community has been similarly debated, with passion, with spirit, with heartfelt commitment, but probably in ever decreasing circles. With the passing of generations, many of us have become less orthodox, more modern and more assimilated, remaining nonetheless Jewish. Still we identify with the community and still we are concerned about how best to preserve and indeed to develop the community for future generations. We would discuss these matters, sometimes with our spiritual leaders and often into the wee small hours, but with no obvious conclusions.

Whilst the debate raged or lumbered on with no direction, the community round about us was heading in one direction only and that was steadily downwards, if quantitative measures are used. Whilst we were good at debating, we seemed unable to arrive at solutions. Perhaps there are none. Perhaps these matters are beyond our control. Perhaps not. The general population of Edinburgh does not seem to be on the decline, nor do the professional, academic and business communities seem to be waning. Should the Jewish community be reaching outwards and redefining its constituency? For a small community, there is an impressive amount of high quality, vibrant and stimulating activity but if the day

came when a minyan could not be summoned for Shabbat, if the finances of the shul were such that it was no longer viable, if the building could no longer be maintained, would the rest of the community fall apart? If the core of the apple is removed, will the pieces hold together?

Sitting in shul on Kol Nidre, sharing the guilt of other 'irreligious Jews', I wondered what we could learn from other communities. Despite the twinge of conscience awoken by the rabbi, I felt comfortable that evening. I had a similar experience the following day in another London shul on Yom Kippur, as part of a reform congregation, participating in a service which was different from the one to which we are accustomed in Edinburgh yet wholly recognisable. Families sat together and we followed the service from beginning to end. Certain passages were read in English, a custom with which some may feel uneasy, whilst others were chanted or sung to familiar tunes, enhanced by the clarity of a choir in which men and women's voices united in harmony. Despite the large attendance and the presence of many children, the decorum was immaculate, lending a dignity to the service. On both occasions I felt that I had had a meaningful, spiritual experience linking me to my ancestors and to future generations.

I would like to hope that the debate about the future of the Edinburgh Jewish community can continue but not in ever decreasing circles; perhaps the lines need to be redrawn and stretched out, to welcome all those who would enter Jewish on the form. To have the courage to think laterally and to reach out to fellow Jews is surely a mitzvah.

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# Small Jewish Communities

Rev. Malcolm Weisman



Rev. Weisman on a Military Jewish Course holding the RAF Jewish Chaplaincy Badge.

In my capacity as religious advisor and visiting Minister to small UK & Commonwealth communities, national Hillel Counsellor to Oxford and isolated universities and Senior Jewish Chaplain to Her Majesty's Forces and many others overseas, I spend an awful lot of time travelling around isolated areas, mainly in the British Isles but elsewhere too.

As far as the North of the British Isles is concerned, my main "hunting ground", if that is the right word, tends to be in the vicinity of the small communities in Yorkshire, the West Coast, the Western Highlands and the Lancaster area. The only established small communities in Scotland that I deal with are those at Dundee and Aberdeen. Dundee possesses one of the most beautiful small synagogues anywhere in the world but sadly has a very tiny community. Use is also made of the synagogue by the students from nearby Dundee or St. Andrews universities. The actual membership of the Dundee community is now in single figures. The late Harold Gillis supported most ably by his wife Ann, were crucial leaders for many years but with the untimely death of Harold and the departure of his wife for the South, effective activity in Dundee is very haphazard and the future is uncertain.

As far as Aberdeen is concerned the small community maintains regular activity on a limited scale led by an enthusiastic committee and from time to time newcomers do arrive either because they have jobs at the

university or because of other employment.

What is clear from this is that there is a significant movement of Jews out of the larger into the smaller communities. The latest statistics from the Board of Deputies confirm my own experience, namely that there is a noticeable and significant decline in the membership of the smaller communities in the North and particularly the North-East of England. There is on the other hand, an interesting increase in Jews, among them young families moving to the communities in the West and particularly the South-West for example to Devon and Cornwall. More traditionally committed Jews who are not prepared to settle in an area without a viable community are tending to move to places like Bournemouth but, where there is not such a commitment, people are choosing to retire for example to their idyllic part of the country which currently seems to be the South-West of England.

What is my role in relation to these communities? My role is to assist all these groups and there are well over a 100 at the moment which by themselves are neither financially or spiritually viable. Perhaps I ought to qualify that statement. They may be financially viable. If they are, then they can sometimes afford to obtain assistance from suitable officiants whenever necessary. If they are not spiritually viable, then it would be my function to try and achieve some success in this particular dimension. Having said that, because of the make up of the average small community, it is usually not

possible to ask a conventional rabbi who is used to a normal traditional synagogue to officiate or to try and develop Jewish activities in such a community. In a congregation in the middle of nowhere for example with perhaps 35 or 40 members, you will find a very wide variation in practice, belief and in ritual observance. You may well find that one quarter comes from an orthodox background, another quarter from a Masorti background and the others from either a Reform or a Liberal or even no Jewish background at all.

It is simply not sensible for a community of 30 to 40 souls to try and run parallel services; there could in fact possibly be more synagogues than members to go round! In this sort of situation, it is therefore necessary to try and develop the middle ground in order to accommodate all, regardless of their practices and beliefs, without at the same time asking people to compromise their consciences; that is something you simply cannot do.

As far as Scotland is concerned, there has been a noticeable amount of immigration to the Highlands. Some of the families coming North are Israeli or South-African. The Israelis sadly very often tend not to identify with the community except on holidays which have a quasi-secular dimension by these standards, e.g. Purim, Chanukah and even Tu B'Shevat. South-Africans tend to be found in all parts of the country but overall they are normally more supportive of a local community.

Aberdeen, because of its smallness of numbers, has its ups-and-downs but at the moment seems to be operating on a regular basis, with or without a minyan. The membership is drawn from a very broad section of the Jewish community and it is important for whoever visits such a congregation to recognise that fact.

Many of the communities that I visit are brand-new, having been developed from a membership which frequently, initially was very hostile to any ideas of organised religion or indeed in the belief in G-d. Other congregations that I deal with are very historic and are proud possessors of very important ancient buildings. In relation to new synagogue buildings, I think of such places as Norwich (an ancient community) and Colchester whose synagogues are just

over 30 years old. Jersey in the Channel Islands is another example. I also think of other communities such as Chelmsford which still does not have a building but uses either member's houses or the local Friends Meeting House. Friends Meeting Houses are also used in other communities which are very new, such as the present Hereford congregation.

Of the other side of the historic spectrum, you have communities like Plymouth and Exeter which are both proud possessors of historic late-18th Century Synagogues, complete with much of their historic furnishings. The Cheltenham Synagogue, although a regency building erected in 1839 contains pews, an ark and a Bimah which come from a synagogue in the city of London which was in existence prior to 1730. Cheltenham can therefore claim that outside Bevis Marks, it has the oldest synagogue furniture of any community in the British Isles.

An interesting feature of the Exeter Synagogue is the prayer for the Royal Family on the wall which still invokes divine blessings on "our Sovereign Lord King George the Third". A similar plaque this time with gold leaf on an oil canvas in the Cheltenham Synagogue invokes divine blessings on "our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria". It turns out however that the actual canvas on which this prayer is painted has on its back an identical prayer which originally invoked divine blessings on "our Sovereign Lord King George the First". This was then over-painted to George the Second, then George the Third; at which point no more alterations were made.

From this and from a maker's name on it which indicated that the canvas on which this prayer is painted was sold by a canvas maker who went out of business in the city of London in 1730 means that this prayer is from a very old pre-1730 synagogue, and we know that the pews in the Cheltenham Synagogue date to the same period. Other communities have worshipped in garden huts or still worship today in member's sitting rooms. In the Bognor Regis congregation on the South coast for example, the chairman will adapt his sitting room whenever there is a service by hanging an old fashioned television set cabinet on the East wall which contains a small Sefer Torah. Above it he plugs in a temporary Ner Tamid, turns all the chairs round in the room and hey presto you have an instant synagogue.

The problem with many of these congregations is preserving such magnificent edifices, and the responsibility both in terms of preserving the historical heritage and finding funds to do so, is a serious

one. For example the magnificent mid-Victorian synagogue in Chatham suffered a major blow recently when the portico at the front entrance collapsed. Putting right and reinstating the arch which consisted of many tons of masonry cost over £50,000. Fortunately the insurance paid for it.

'...it is therefore necessary to try and develop the middle ground in order to accommodate all regardless of their practices and beliefs without at the same time asking people to compromise their consciences;'

Frequently, when one goes to a community, one has to enquire from the persons present whether they actually have been to a synagogue service before, because many of these congregations do not have regular services. Indeed some of them do not see, until I come into the picture, the point in prayer. It has to be realised that outside the conventional centres of Judaism, and I include Edinburgh in this respect, very many Jews do not have a real sort of enthusiasm or appreciation of the religious nature of their Jewish heritage.

This is very hard to believe when you say this to persons living in the heart of a strong Jewish area in Manchester or North London for example, or even in the South of Glasgow. It is difficult I can imagine for the Jews of 3 or 4 generations standing in Edinburgh to

'It may well be that 65% of Anglo-Jewry identifies with a traditional or orthodox synagogue but the majority of these members identify in that respect in name only and not in practice.'

appreciate this, bearing in mind, the zealous commitment and the enthusiastic dedication of the leading members of the Edinburgh community over so many years.

What I think has to be understood is that while it may be that the ultra orthodox community on the extreme right wing is expanding significantly, that significance must still be measured as a very tiny percentage and as a result that influence currently pervades no more than 5 or 10% of Anglo-

Jewry. The great majority of Anglo-Jewry is not committed at all in that respect. It may well be that 65% of Anglo-Jewry identifies with a traditional or orthodox synagogue but the majority of these members identify in that respect in name only and not in practice. There has also been an increase in the membership of progressive synagogue too but many of these members, particularly when they get to the outlying area where I first meet them, do not overall have a great sense of dedication towards regular prayers.

The result is that many of the 100 or so congregations that I deal with are very good at cultural and social activities but prayer and regular synagogue services seem to come well down their priority list. Not infrequently such services are held on a monthly basis, sometimes on a quarterly basis. Many of these services have to be conducted almost exclusively in English because of the illiteracy and ignorance of many of the members. But having said that, if in fact, you can persuade people that Judaism does have relevance to their secular lives, you can begin to achieve some remarkable results.

The good news therefore is that many of these smaller congregations which now hold regular services are doing so with an enthusiasm which has resulted in members of the congregation who perhaps a few years back were unable to read Hebrew or take a service becoming not merely leaders of the community but the lay-readers of the community. Interestingly enough in this respect, I note that an increasing number of the very tiny communities are even training their own members to take the High Holydays Services, thereby dispensing with the need to find an officiant from a large community frequently at an expense which swallows up most of the annual budget of that congregation. But curiously, I have noted that often the more regular the services, the more regular are the other activities.

The disadvantages of a small community are obvious. The advantages are that paradoxically a newcomer to a small community may have taken it for granted that there was a synagogue around the corner which he could use whenever it suited him (namely for hatches, matches or dispatches for example!). When however he gets to an isolated area and there are no such facilities around the corner, he suddenly decides that he has got to do something himself. Therein lie the awakenings and the first understandings of what can be the relevance of Judaism to his or her life and that of the family. Therefore, not unusually one finds some intensely committed families living frequently in splendid isolation. I know

for example of a sheep farmer who is ultra-orthodox living in the middle of Wales, miles from his nearest neighbours. He is nowhere near a Jewish facility of any kind, but maintains a positive Jewish way of life.

On the downside however, I have to admit that if in fact one tries to bring up children in such an atmosphere and does not take advantage of Jewish facilities such as summer schools or does not make a point of dedicating the Shabbat to Jewish activity, then almost as certain as night follows day, your children will drift out of the community and assimilate all too quickly and enthusiastically into the local general community. The result therefore is that in these circumstances frequently the intermarriage rate amongst young people in these congregations can be as high as 75%.

In this respect I am very fortunate to have the support of my educational advisor Elia Meghnagi, through the Jewish Memorial Council who does help me in advising small communities and we are making some quite positive steps in that direction using local talent because we cannot find teachers to travel long distances to these communities. So what is the overall impression that I am trying to give you? First of all, I want to stress that the committed Anglo-Jewish community is diminishing in size. There is no doubt about that. But there is definitely a movement to

the outer regions of the country. I say to you that wherever I go in the British Isles, – anywhere in Scotland, Wales or England, I am not more than 10 minutes drive from a Jewish house, I am simply not exaggerating. Whether that Jewish house is prepared to admit that it is Jewish is another matter. My

‘These days, I think it is not so much discrimination and persecution which may be diminishing the Jewish community. It is assimilation, disinterest and apathy and that is what we all have to fight.’

own impression on this basis is that if the Board of Deputies now says that the British Jewish community is 280,000 strong my guess is that it could be at least one million strong in size.

What hopes do I have for the future of these congregations? Many of these congregations have gone through rough periods over the many centuries that many of them have lasted and still survive. Some will go down, some will disappear, new ones will develop. I have lost quite a few during the years that

I have been involved in this work and I have gained quite a few. Even in big cities, the average life of a major congregation is sometimes measured in no more than the period of 50 or 60 years, so I am not going to be too depressed about the situation. If in fact we Jews do not have an optimistic approach then we would not survive.

Looking at our history, an objective observer may conclude that it may be an absolute miracle that we have survived in the way that we have in spite of persecutions and discrimination. These days, I think it is not so much discrimination and persecution which may be diminishing the Jewish community. It is assimilation, disinterest and apathy and that is what we all have to fight. In my own way, I hope that the contribution that I am making in terms of working in small communities is of some significance in this respect.

Reverend Malcolm Weisman, OBE  
Malcolm Weisman OBE, MA(Oxon) OCF is, amongst numerous other awards and posts, a Barrister at Law, a member of the Chief Rabbi's Cabinet, Chaplain to Oxford University and new universities, senior Jewish Councillor to the HM Forces. He has been Lord Mayor of Westminster (1992-93) and Mayor of Barnet (1994-95), is a member of the national executive of the Council of Christians and Jews.

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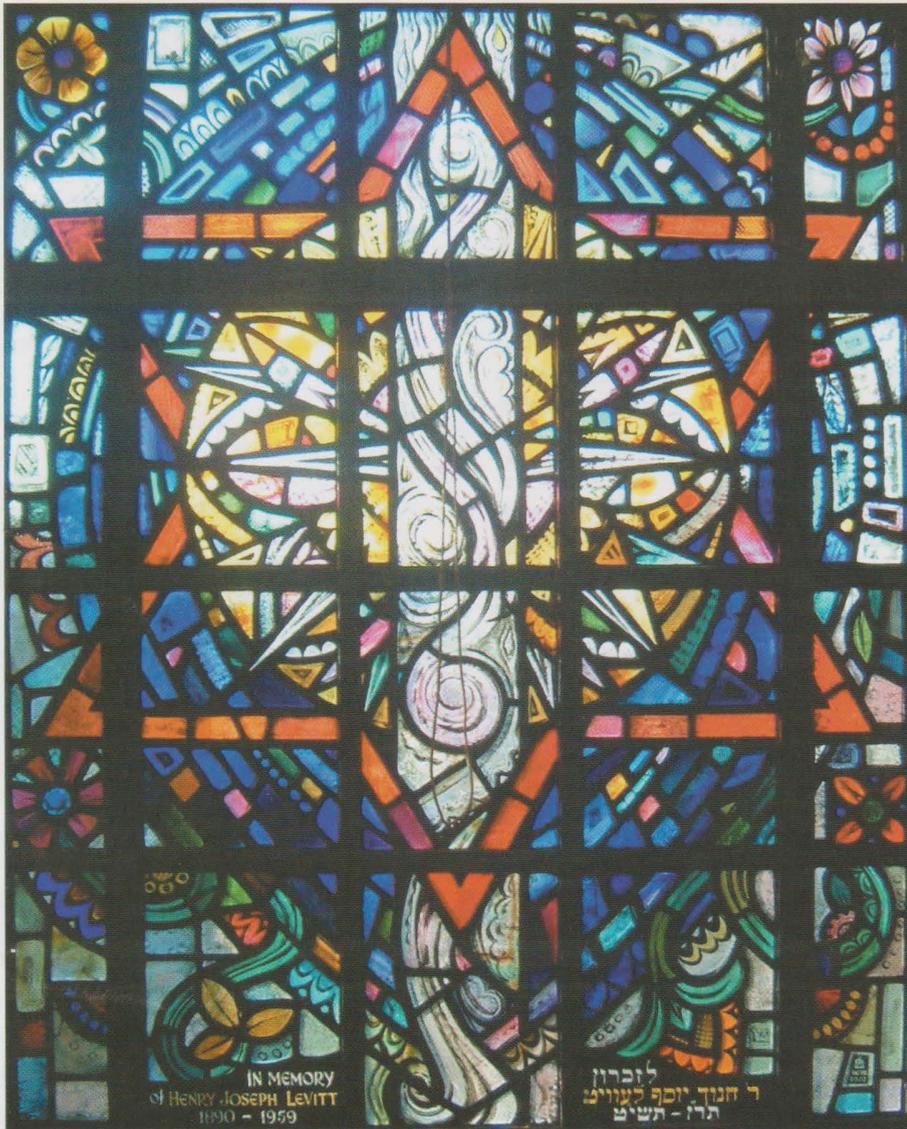
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# The Stained Glass of William Wilson OBE, RSA

Born Edinburgh 1905 - died Bury, Lancashire 1972.

William W Bentley



William Wilson is acknowledged to be the leading British stained glass artist of the post-war years and one of the finest Scottish artists of his generation. He set up his first studio in 1937 in Frederick Street and had completed several important windows in and around Edinburgh by the outbreak of war. The war years saw him take up a teaching post at Fettes College and, later, serve in the Auxiliary Fire Service. It was in 1945 that he really got into his stride, first in the old studio, before moving to more suitable premises in Belford Mews.

It was in this relatively short period between the end of the war and 1960-61 that the bulk

of his work was produced. In all, over three hundred actual stained glass windows were created and installed, in addition to numerous designs for windows and specially produced panels.

Wilson's commissions ranged between the sacred and the secular and he executed these with equal facility from tiny country churches to vast cathedrals. In the religious field his works covered the major Christian denominations, Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian; though I think the Edinburgh Synagogue windows are the only example he produced for the Jewish faith.

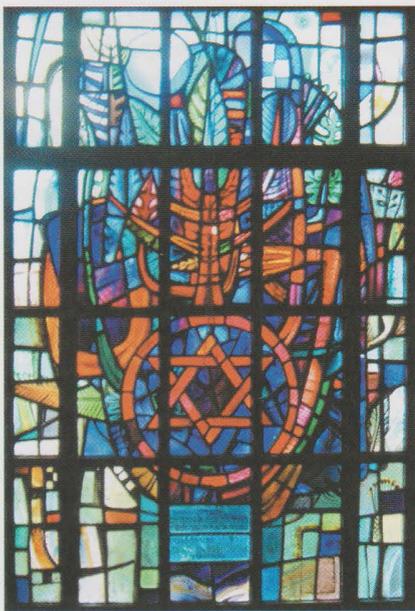
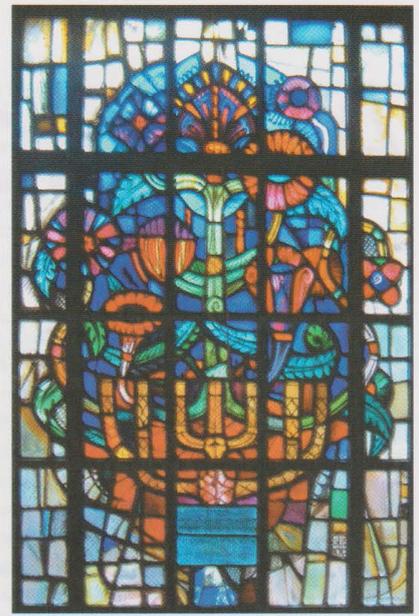
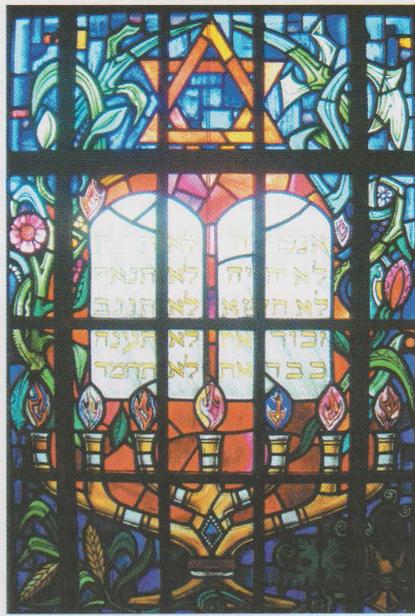
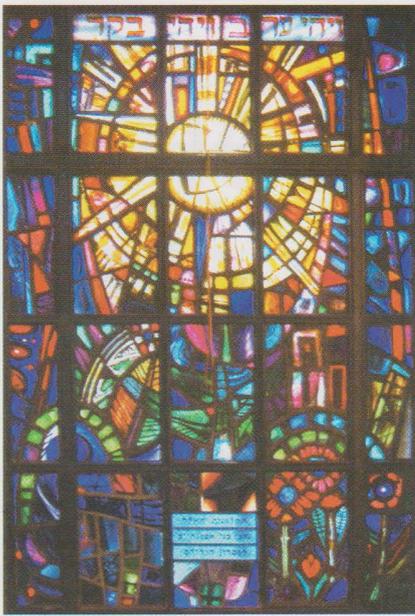
Most of his stained glass windows are in Scotland, many of them in Edinburgh. Wilson's reputation must have rapidly spread, however, and commissions came in from further afield. In London there are St Andrew's, Stoke Newington (1957), Sts Mary and Joseph's Catholic Church, Poplar (1954) and three windows in the Dutch Church (1954, 1957). Larger works in England must include the Warrior's Chapel Memorial Window (1957) in Canterbury Cathedral and the forty-five foot Bishop's Window in Liverpool Cathedral (completed 1960). Further afield still, commissions came in from Ottawa, Canada for Knox Parish Church (1955), from Princeton New Jersey, USA, and from New Zealand for five windows in Dunedin and Christchurch (1948, 1961).

Notably, nearer home there was the magnificent series of five windows in Glasgow Cathedral and his largest series, the sixteen windows for Brechin Cathedral (1951 - 1959).

Fine examples of secular work are the staircase window in the former Caledonian Insurance Company building in St Andrew's Square completed in 1939, depicting with characteristic touches of humour the various Edinburgh trades, and the three windows in the Royal High School, Edinburgh, commemorating Scottish worthies.

Wilson's accomplishments were not confined to stained glass. As an apprentice at Ballantyne's stained glass studio he attended evening classes at Edinburgh College of Art and at the age of eighteen made the first of





France. His studio was a treasure-house of dusty portfolios, each containing wonderfully vigorous sketches done in situ and often bearing evidence of a sudden downpour splattering the paper!

In 1960 tragedy struck and he was never again to see any of the beautiful works he had created. As a result of diabetes he lost his eye-sight. In 1961 he was honoured with the OBE for his services to art in Scotland where he had not only produced a vast range and quantity of work but also served with distinction as an active Officer of the RSA and Governor of Edinburgh College of Art.

In the 1960's when he was forced to close owing to ill-health and other difficulties. Throughout his life Wilson had remained a bachelor, living with his youngest sister in

Edinburgh. It was the event of her death which precipitated the closure of his studio. The unenviable task of winding up his affairs fell to my parents, and Willie moved to their home in Bury, Lancashire, to be cared for by them until his death in March 1972.

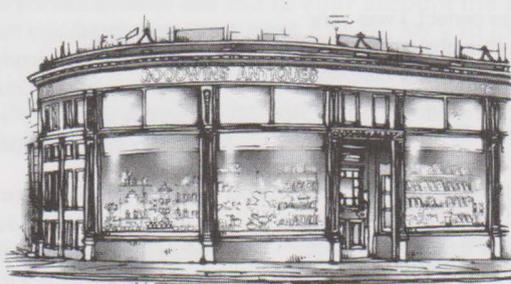
In 1994 the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art mounted a major exhibition of his work celebrating his contribution in the fields of painting, printmaking and stained glass. His work, in places of worship, galleries and private collections in Britain and overseas, remains as a lasting testimony to his masterly craftsmanship and artistic genius.

William W Bentley is the nephew of William Wilson and kindly offered this article on his uncle for which we are very grateful.

many visits to France. Throughout the 1920's he continued to work, study in the evenings and manage to find time to travel extensively in Europe, recording his travels in many fine drawings and winning several bursaries. During this period he developed a strong interest in printmaking and in 1932 he won the Carnegie Traveling Scholarship, enabling him to study extensively in Europe, particularly in Germany, Spain and Italy. The fruits of his studies were a series of prize-winning drawings, engravings and etchings which ranged in subject from "The Alcazar" to "St Monance" and "Adam and Eve" to "The Harrow".

In 1939 Wilson was elected an Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy, becoming a full Academician after the war. With the rapid build-up of stained glass commissions after 1945, the time-consuming printmaking gave way to water-colours which were produced in great numbers on his frequent trips around the Scottish coast and continuing visits to

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# A Soldier in Israel

Sid Knopp, Jerusalem Israel

I've been living in Jerusalem on and off since July 1981. Here are six events that have been part of my life in Israel.

By virtue of studying for 2 degrees over 6 years, and by traveling overseas extensively, I wasn't called up for military service for 9 years. As a "mature" soldier I finally set out for basic training in December 1990, and fate would have it that my 4 months service encompassed the entire Gulf War. I kept a daily journal of my experiences. Some extracts:

1

## Thursday January 17th 1991

For 2 days now we had been sleeping in full uniform, boots, gas-mask kit strapped to our legs, and gun by our sides. We were ready for attacks, and at 2:00 a.m. it happened. We were ordered to get up, and about 300 of us charged to the dining room, which had been prepared as a sealed room. We placed our gas masks and kept them on for about 20 minutes. Some people were having real trouble coping with the pressure. I managed to stay calm, but I did have terrible thoughts that it might be the last time I see my family, and that these attacks might leave our country in a perilous state.

The officers were listening to an army communications unit, which was squeaking and making all kinds of eerie noises between instructions. News eventually came through that 9 scud missiles had landed in the Tel-Aviv area. We stayed up all night in a state of shock. Eventually we all ate breakfast outside.

## Saturday January 19th 1991

At 7:20 a.m. we were alerted again, and this time our procedure was perfect. I was very calm this time, and my breathing with a mask on was getting better as my cold was clearing. I actually felt pretty good, as I had managed to sleep from 2:30 until 7:20 – a real lie in!

This time we actually heard the missiles overhead, and learned that 3 scud missiles had hit the country. Once again Tel-Aviv was the target area. This time we wore the mask for 40 minutes. So far, none of the missiles that had invaded Israel had contained chemical warheads.

We went back to sleep until 11am, and after lunch we were granted a long break. Half

of the troops wandered around, and some people slept. I elected to play guitar and sing with some of the regular soldiers for 3 hours. It was a good way to clear some of the tension. Although people were relatively calm and in good spirits under the circumstances, every sound made people uptight. For example, if someone threw something heavy into the garbage making a clanging sound, everyone would jump up.

How can I describe what it really felt like the first few days of the war? Not to know if or when we would be the victims of chemical or biological warfare, to be far away from our loved ones and not to help them cope. Indeed, we did not even know where our families were throughout each day. It



Sid Knopp (second from left) on a recent business trip to Taiwan

crossed my mind that I could actually die without seeing my wife or family again. It was possible that the whole country could be endangered, and that things could escalate into full-blooded war, including nuclear weapons. I could feasibly be personally involved in some kind of combat with neighboring Arabs.

## Monday January 28th 1991

At 9:00 there was a siren a full 30 seconds before there was the alarm on the radio. We put on the masks (for the 12th time), and we had to run outside to make sure that the prisoners (Palestinians) didn't take the opportunity to go wild. I saw the scud missiles overhead and in the distance. They looked like fireworks and it was kind of surreal. (In fact the whole atmosphere of the

prison camp was surreal). I heard the missiles landing, making a thunderous sound. The ground vibrated and I suspected that we were quite near. In fact, the bombs had landed in an Arab village in the West Bank. There were no injured.

2

In April 1994 I was sent for my monthly reserve duty to Allenby Bridge Port near Jericho. The bridge itself is short and narrow, providing a link (once unofficial) between Israel and Jordan. The Oslo peace process was in full flow, and I was involved in historical moments as I personally helped absorb the new Palestinian Police Force, freshly imported by buses from Iraq. There we were, providing hundreds of Saddam look-alikes with guns, bullets and new I.D. cards. One night we were on the news. I was interviewed and photographed for various international papers including Beijing's biggest daily.

Many of my fellow soldiers and policemen were strongly against this whole policy. More than half of my comrades were convinced that the whole peace thing was a scam, and that only we Israelis and Jews are crazy enough to provide weapons to our biggest enemies. I myself was fairly skeptical concerning the Palestinian's true commitment to peace, but I reasoned that we simply had to try this. How long can a country live in a constant state of war?

3

There's a famous open air shopping market in central Jerusalem called "Mahane Yehuda". It's the best place to get fruit and vegetables. I only manage to get there once or twice a year, and in July 1997 I picked the day of a double suicide bombing to be around.

I was in Jerusalem that morning (I commute to Tel-Aviv for work), as I was to attend a Brit Mila. I decided to utilize some spare time before the happy event to buy some stuff for a party my kids were having.

A while later I was socializing at the nearby event when someone mentioned to me the suicide bombing in Mahane Yehuda with 9

killed and many injured. It took me over an hour to get through to my wife Vee Vee on the mobile phone to tell her I was o.k. After any "pigua" here, the cellular phones in the vicinity are rendered inactive for a while. This is partly because the lines become saturated after such an event, and also because the emergency services hold lines for their communications. Another issue is that there is always concern that after a suicide bomber has struck, then a second bomber will wait until a crowd has gathered in order to detonate a second bomb. A cellular phone may trigger this.

Vee Vee, knowing I intended to go to the market that morning had spent almost 3 hours trying to get hold of me once she had heard of the attack.

4

In early October 2000 we were planning our annual party. I went to pick up loudspeakers from my friend (the DJ) the night before the big event. He lives in the Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood on the other side of town, and I joked with him whether it was safe to go there because there had been a shooting incident the night before.

As I got back to our house, I got out of the car to the sound of rapid gunfire. The following night at the party, dozens of our guests were mingling in the back garden when the sound of automatic gunfire rattled again, to be followed by the sound of military helicopters buzzing directly above.

The scenario of neighborhood shooting and the presence of tanks and aircraft were to be a constant for over a year. The shooting was from the nearby Christian village of Bet Jala. As it transpired that our house was not in the line of fire (we live only half a mile away, but behind a mountain), we turned back to as normal a life as possible. Picture this though: You're having dinner with the family when suddenly you hear shooting and booming in the background. What do you do? Turn the volume up on the stereo!

We featured in several international newspapers, including a front-page story in the Chicago Tribune. Extracts from Canada's "The Globe and the Mail":

*Just 500 meters from Gilo, across a valley of olive trees and on the outskirts of Bethlehem, is the Palestinian town of Beit Jala. Gunmen have positioned themselves in Beit Jala's windows and roofs to spray automatic-rifle fire at Gilo homes. In response, the Israeli military sent tanks to defend Gilo and deployed helicopter gunships to blast houses in Beit Jala, where snipers were believed to be positioned.*

*On a street at the frontline of Gilo's war, Simha Oren's bedroom window is filled with sandbags and her window frame is dented*

*with a bullet hole. Her husband, a retired policeman, suffered an arm wound when he was hit by shrapnel during gunfire in October.*

*Not everybody is so certain that Mr. Sharon is the solution. In another Gilo apartment, Vee Vee Merlin-Knopp is planning to vote for Mr. Barak, despite the fear she has felt*



Sid Knopp with wife Vee Vee and children Talia, Eitan and Shira.

*since the Palestinian uprising began. Even within her own home, this is a controversial decision. Her husband, Sid is a former Barak supporter who will vote for Mr. Sharon on Tuesday.*

*"I'm not saying that Barak is so wonderful, but I think he is giving peace a chance," Mrs. Merlin-Knopp said. "I think we owe it to our kids to keep trying for peace. If you vote for Sharon, it's a step towards war. I'm voting for the peace process."*

*Her husband strongly disagrees. Less than two years after voting for Mr. Barak, he has abandoned hope in the peace process. "I don't even like Sharon, and yet I'm voting for him," Mr. Knopp said. "Peace isn't going to happen. Even when you try to make peace with the Palestinians, they preach war."*

*Although their home is beyond range of gunfire from Beit Jala, they were profoundly shocked by the shooting that erupted in their once-safe neighbourhood. The Palestinian uprising has directly affected their lives. They don't allow their children to go outside alone. Mr. Knopp was called up for emergency military duty to guard shopping malls and bus stations in November. And just two weeks ago, they learned that a Gilo woman had been stabbed by a Palestinian who came into their neighbourhood.*

5

On September 11th 2001 I was once again on military reserve duty. This time I was serving in Megido prison (not far from Jenin). My duty was to oversee Palestinian prisoners from my vantage point of the prison roof. Through the wire mesh over the courtyard I watched them celebrating the news of the carnage in Manhattan. These are the people we're supposed to make peace with. It's hard to see how.

6

In June 2002 I left for work a little before 6:00 a.m. (I like to avoid the rush hour) I was in my office by about 7:00 and had been working quietly for almost an hour when Vee Vee called me with the news that at 7:55 there had been a bus bombing at nearby Pat Intersection, and she couldn't get hold of the kids. I myself had passed the very explosion spot just after 6:00. Our oldest two, Talia and Eitan were on the way to school with our neighbor Amos that morning, and were only 200 meters behind the bus when it exploded. This is something that will stay with them for life.

So ridiculous is the situation that we are used to helicopters buzzing around our area at nights, and used to hearing of dreadful tragedies on a daily basis. When it's your kids who are on the scene, and the fact it took 15 or 20 minutes until Talia was able to get hold of us on Amos' mobile phone, then you can imagine how unbearable the situation has become.

In spite of everything we really make a decent effort to lead normal lives. We strive in our careers, lead healthy social lives, worry about the mortgage and make sure the kids go to the best schools. Our oldest child Talia (11) dances in a Jazz troupe, our son Eitan (9) is in a competitive national gymnastics team, and our younger daughter Shira (5) is in a junior ballet group. I work in marketing for a hi-tech company, and freelance as a musician for a company producing book/cassette packages for teaching English. Vee Vee (social worker) is head of a division of a movement that provides services for the elderly, aiming to keep them independent and at home, and also provides pet assisted therapy for problem children.

Sid Knopp moved with his family from Leeds to Edinburgh in 1972 when he was 10 years old. His late parents Rev. Sam and Judith Knopp served the Edinburgh community for a decade. Sid moved to Israel as a teenager, and has lived there most of the time since 1981. He studied International Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and later completed an electronics engineering degree. He lived in New York in the late '80's with his wife before they had children. He works in marketing for a hi-tech company in Tel Aviv specializing in Industrial Computing.

With Compliments  
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Mark & Judith  
Sischy

# Freda Riffkin Reports



## CHANUKAH DINNER

The Communal Hall Management Committee once again excelled themselves with a wonderful Chanukah Dinner which was very well attended and supported by a wide cross section of the Community. The Ladies provided a beautifully catered meal and this was followed by a really fun evening. A Ceilidh Band supplied the music and was enthusiastically received by the company who performed Scottish Country dances with vim and vigour interspersed with the occasional Hora. All ages were represented on the dance floor. Definitely one of the most successful evenings held by this hard working committee. Over £1000 was raised for the Hall.



## Star Trek in to the past Answers

The little girls facing Anita Mendelssohn are, from left to right: Suzanne Rose, Elaine Mendelssohn, Rosalind Brysh, Gillian Oppenheim, Yetta Riffkin, Joyce Dorfman, Hillary Cram, Helen Brysh, Caroline Rhodes, Lynn Beirman.

## SIMCHAS TORAH LUNCH

The Congregation was entertained to lunch on Simchas Torah by the Chatan Torah, Rabbi Katanka, and the Chatan Beraishes, Dr. Berl Osborne and their wives. A most delicious meal was served and much enjoyed and appreciated by all present. There was a wonderful feeling of joyousness enhanced by witty and interesting speeches from both celebrants who were thanked by the EHC President, Dr. P. Mason.

## WIZO LUNCH.

The Ladies of the WIZO Committee held another of their successful lunches at the home of Mrs Sylvia Donne on 11th December 2002. £180 was raised towards their target.

## LUCKY DIP EVENING

A small but dedicated band of bargain hunters assembled in the community centre one October evening to participate in a Lucky Dip extravaganza. After some much-needed tuition from organizer John Danzig on the complexities of the event, the company, suitably seated for a seance, chose from a large assortment of parcels, a gift of unknown delight. When unravelled, this could be exchanged for another if so desired with the ever-present danger of another predator removing same from beneath their noses. Unbearable tension and nail-biting indecision built up as participants manipulated the situation in attempts to secure the dust-buster, radio, rug, crockery and many other desirable offerings. Jonny Sperber finally acknowledged defeat in his robust attempts to gain the food-mixer after concentrated attacks by Jackie Taylor. Pearl Shein, securing her life-long ambition of acquiring a fish plate, later realised that it really was a fish and chip plate due to the small piece missing from the rim. Whilst other worthies gnashed their teeth or smiled benignly at their misfortunes, Vicky Lowry, failing desperately in her longing for the shoe-rack, was amply compensated when she went home clutching her travelling grip, with enough room for shoes ad infinitum.

Thanks have to be offered to Doreen and Lawrence Bowman for finding sufficient wrapping paper and to them and the Ladies' Committee for organising what turned out to be a most enjoyable and a hilarious evening.

# Society Reports

Avery Meikson

## Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

The Lit was delighted to open its 114th year with Clive Lawton, the director of Limmud. In his talk, "What's the big deal about Abraham?" Mr Lawton, clad in a distinctive turquoise American Indian style shirt, gave new insight into the story of Abraham. Presenting Abraham's various encounters as a detective story, he pointed out that there is an apparent inconsistency in the first patriarch's behaviour. Having received the Divine promise that he would be the father of a nation, his subsequent behaviour reveals anything but a deep faith that the promise would be fulfilled. On entering Egypt, does Abraham (still Abram) proudly travel with Sarah (still Sarai) as the prospective mother of a new nation? No! He conceals their identity as a married couple, fearful that he would be killed by the Pharaoh to take the beautiful Sarah as wife. The Pharaoh, once he learns of the ruse (after indeed taking Sarah as wife), berates Abraham for the deception and returns her promptly to Abraham. Surely, Mr Lawton argued, if Abraham had believed in the Divine promise, he never would have felt the need to resort to the ruse. Abraham's resistance to belief in a Divine being who isn't remote and indifferent to humanity, but one who is deeply concerned with people's welfare is new and mind-boggling which slowly seeps in. Perhaps this is the reason Abraham is in a hurry to perform the most contradictory act of all: the sacrifice of Isaac. So much is he in a rush, he can't even wait for a servant to mount his donkey but does it himself. Perhaps the grandest lesson of the Akeida is that Abraham saw it as a test, and that he had finally 'got it': the Lord cares.

The Lit's second speaker of the season was David Capitanchik. A frequent speaker at the Lit, this was the 25th anniversary of Mr Capitanchik's first address to the Lit. Mr Capitanchik gave an update of the current peace process in the Middle East, placing the process in the broader context of terrorism and the current crisis over Iraq. Sadly, the news he had to tell was all but encouraging. In his assessment, Arafat's business is not the business of nation building. He appears instead to be hoping to achieve international intervention to build a Palestinian nation, possibly one stretching from Gaza to the West Bank. Under the present leaderships, both Palestinian and Israeli, there seems little prospects for a peaceful settlement. The situation may even

worsen should Netanyahu win the upcoming elections, a real prospect as he is favoured within Likud over Sharon, who has always been viewed as an 'outsider', having defected (many years ago) from Labour. We can only hope that the next time Mr Capitanchik addresses the Lit the news will be brighter, and that it won't be too long before Mr Capitanchik returns.

Who is a Jew? The Lit's third speaker, Dr Seth Kunin, revealed yet a new facet to this age-old question in his talk on "The Secret Jews of the American Southwest." The heirs to the Jewish communities of Spain who were forced to go 'underground' to practise Judaism in the 14th century, Jewish families found they could live a less-threatened life in the Americas. Settling in the area of New Mexico, they established secret communities known only to themselves. Lighting Sabbath candles and Chanukiah in windowless rooms, and eating extra-cooked tortillas (that don't rise) for Pesach, they were able to keep aspects of Jewishness in their lives and pass on their identity to their children. Amazingly, the communities still exist today, and except for those willing only recently to speak to academics like Dr Kunin, they are still a well-kept secret. When you've held a secret in your family for hundreds of years, Dr Kunin explained, you don't easily let it go! An incredible new chapter in the tenacity of the Jewish people, only in the past several years are these heirs to a courageous legacy slowly returning to the practices of mainstream Judaism.

If you haven't yet joined the Lit for this season, there are still many excellent talks to come. On behalf of the Lit committee, we're looking forward to seeing you there!

## Edinburgh Council of Christians and Jews

Micheline Brannan

The CCJ has had 2 excellent meetings so far this year.

On 17 October, Mrs Judith Tankel addressed us on Women in the Jewish Community today. She talked about the huge changes that have already taken place in the Orthodox attitude to women. For example, women's prayer meetings are now allowed (though not within synagogues) where women can perform the whole service on their own account. There are still some difficulties for

women, for example, the issue of Agunot, but the Rabbis have been skilful in using all the resources at their disposal, including changes in the civil law of England and Wales, to assist those trapped in a Jewish marriage which continues despite a civil divorce. Similar changes are hoped for in Scotland in due course. Mrs Tankel's address was followed by a lively discussion which illustrated some of the difficulties of changing gender roles not just within Judaism but also Christianity.

On 21 November, the Episcopal Bishop of Edinburgh, the Rt Rev Brian Smith, spoke about the late Isaiah Berlin, drawing on many sources to describe the early life of this notable scholar and thinker, and the influence that his Jewishness had on his development. Isaiah Berlin was an early Zionist and a supporter of the State of Israel, as well as one of the most noteworthy public voices of the 20th Century. Isaiah Berlin was noted for distinguishing 'hedgehogs' and 'foxes'. 'Hedgehogs' know one big thing, but 'foxes' know lots of things. Isaiah Berlin sided with the foxes since he recognized 'value pluralism' in our modern approach to right and wrong. Different groups in society are pursuing quite different but equally legitimate goals and it is not possible to satisfy everyone, which is a challenge for politicians and policymakers. This was an absolutely fascinating address by someone who is a major public figure in his own right. It is a pity it was not better attended but those who were there found it a most worthwhile evening.

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to all who have  
generously supported  
the Star and responded  
to my appeals.

# Chief Rabbi's visit to Edinburgh.



The Chief Rabbi with Dr. Philip Mason, President of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation.

## Dignity of Difference - Presentation

Scotland's communities were honoured by a visit from the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks on 29th October 2002. A reception was held in the Signet Library, Parliament House and was well attended by representatives from the Edinburgh and Glasgow communities. Dr. Philip Mason, in the Chair, introduced first the representative from the Publishers of Dr. Sacks' book, *The Dignity of Difference*, who gave a short presentation on the background to the book and then introduced the Chief Rabbi.

Dr. Sacks gave a witty address outlining the principles of his book and appealed for tolerance of all faiths. He welcomed members of other faiths and mentioned in particular how pleased he was to see a representative of the Buddhists.

For the Glasgow delegation, Dr Kenneth Collins of thanked the Chief Rabbi who was then pleased to autograph copies of his book.

Earlier that evening the Jewish Students Society had dinner with the Chief Rabbi and the following day he was going to address the Scottish Executive and Parliament.

Freda Riffkin

## Visit to respect Scotland

"It is a very simple, beautiful idea," began Dr Jonathan Sacks, as he launched the project "respect" in Scotland from the Signet Library in Edinburgh. "It is about how to make society more tolerant and gracious place."

"respect" as the invitation describes it, is a

campaign which seeks to inspire people of different faiths to give time to each other to improve, or become involved in, their local community. The project was launched in the UK by the Prince of Wales and the Chief Rabbi earlier this year, with the support of the leaders of many faiths in Britain. Already several projects are under way in Scotland to demonstrate the effect of "respect".

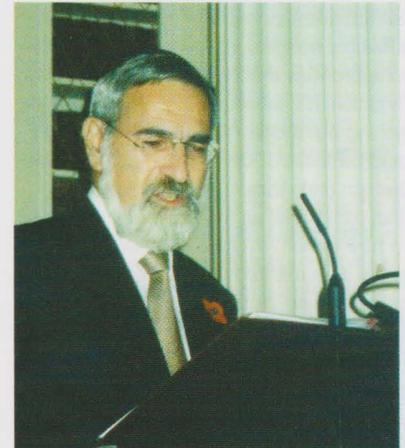
There were many children present - a choir of forty from Ancrum Road Primary School in Dundee sang invitingly, "We want to say, We want to tell the world, We want it to know that they are loved. We thank you for saying, We can make the world a better place for everyone." Preston Street Primary in Edinburgh described their work to make the school a home for their children from nearly thirty nations, and how they link their life in the playground with the other side of the world. All Saint's Secondary School in Glasgow showed how they have made children of asylum seekers welcome in their school, and of the very positive impact the different nationalities, cultures and faiths have on the whole school. Dr Sacks took great care to include all the young people present.

"Often conflicts in society are very difficult to resolve", Dr Sacks continued. "But we have got to break through where it really counts. Schools are so important, but religious communities are too. Religion is wonderful news, but sometimes it is difficult news - why? Because every great religion turns an 'I' into a 'we'. A religion creates communities, and for every 'us' there is also a 'them', people not like us. It can sometimes create conflict between communities. The idea of "respect" is to see if each school or community could do one act of kindness, one project, to help people across the boundaries, people who are not like 'us'."

Dr Sacks was delighted that nine different faith communities had been present at the UK launch in Birmingham. Almost as many were represented here in Edinburgh, together with delegates from the interfaith bodies, different Christian denominations, the City Council, Nicol Stephen MSP Deputy Minister for Children and Young People, and of course from education, for "respect" is much about the initiatives that young people are taking.

He illustrated his points with stories. Steven Carter, who became the first black

law professor in Yale University, was welcomed by one person when his family moved into a very white district. This act of friendliness changed his life. He found he could belong. "Each of your great religious traditions has such an idea - showing kindness to strangers. "respect" means showing that we respect the people who are different. The people who are not in 'my' image are still in God's image."



The Chief Rabbi addresses the respect meeting.

Dr Sacks described several projects in the spirit of "respect", whether it was building houses for the homeless, or running a Jewish/Muslim football team. He told of Moses's encounter with three angels in the desert, and how by reaching a hand out to the stranger, we too can entertain angels!

He expressed his hope that, "This project will do just that - from faith communities and schools, we will do that most beautiful of all good deeds, of turning strangers into friends."

Ian Scein

The Signet Library in Edinburgh witnessed a potentially significant event in the life of Scotland - the will to reach across religious and cultural boundaries and to create an infrastructure of trust and friendship. Time will tell if sufficient numbers of people are committed to this concept.

I have an idea! Are there a few ladies from the Jewish community in Edinburgh willing to join me and to try turning strangers into friends?

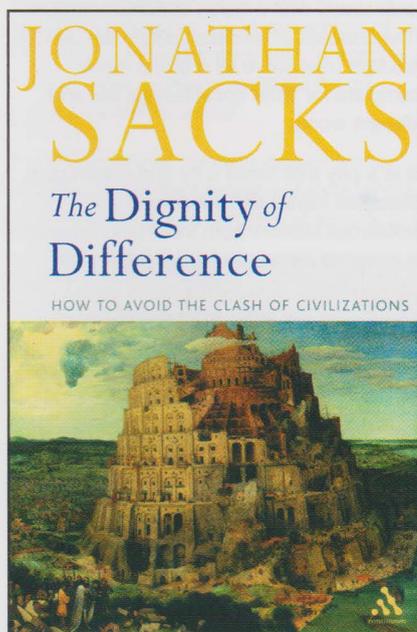
"respect" is not exclusive to children!

Monica Spooner  
Nicolson Square Methodist Church,

# Reviews

## The Dignity of Difference by Jonathan Sacks

A Review by Berl Osbourne



This scholarly book is not for the faint-hearted; after a few dozen pages I began to regret the lack of a degree in either Rabbinics or PPE. However, diligent application will reap its reward in the later chapters, where the Chief Rabbi gives a penetrating and informative analysis of the human condition as we enter the 21st Century. The impact of globalisation and information technology is examined, particularly with regard to their interface with Jewish religion and philosophy.

Unfortunately this aspect of the book has been overshadowed by the furore that has arisen as a result of his rather unfortunate use of words and phrases that could be open to misinterpretation, and which have evoked sometimes intemperate accusation of heresy. The Chief Rabbi accepts this and has undertaken to rectify and clarify the situation in future editions. Apparently, however, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashev, the leading Torah sage has stated that it is forbidden to have the book in the home. I fear that I shall have to answer for this transgression, at the appropriate time before the great sage above. One of the passages that has given rise to the turmoil is 'Judaism, Christianity and Islam are religions of revelation; faiths in which G-d speaks and

we attempt to listen'.

The Chief Rabbi's critics - and it seems to me they have a point - find that this is incompatible with the notion of 'a Chosen People'. The first blessing that a bar mitzvah boy utters, contains the words 'who has chosen us from all peoples and hast given us thy law'. This is surely a claim to exclusivity; we are not always completely comfortable with this. It will be recalled that in Fiddler on the Roof in the aftermath of a pogrom, Tevyah addresses G-d and says 'Dear G-d, we are your Chosen People; please, next time around, choose someone else'. Nevertheless, however we may feel about it, this claim to exclusivity is at the core of orthodox Judaism. This does not mean that we are intolerant of other faiths. We may not accept their beliefs, but as long as they are tolerant we respect them.

He goes on to discuss globalisation and to postulate that its relentless spread affords no hiding place. It means that more than ever, in the words of John Donne four hundred years ago, 'No man is an Island, intire of it selfe; any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind; and therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee'.

Whatever we do, it affects our non-Jewish neighbours. For example, when we seek to erect an eruv (for reasons that will not be immediately apparent to others) we must be prepared to explain and minimise the impact. Similarly many of our neighbours are genuinely troubled by shechita (though in this area we are cushioned by the fact that the country's very large Muslim population has a similar practice). Once again we have to explain.

A by-product of globalisation has been the resurgence of religion as a significant factor in many parts of the world - why has this happened? Jonathan Sacks' view is that because globalisation is profoundly disturbing many have sought in religion a source of stability - an expression of the things that do not change 'I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me'. He views the great faiths as providing meaning and purpose for their adherents. The question is, can they make space for

those who are not its adherents, who sing a different song, hear a different music, tell a different story. In my humble view as far as Judaism is concerned the answer is 'yes'. We may not accept, but we respect. If we do not, if we say that those who do not share our faith do not share our humanity, then we are subscribing to the equation from which flowed the Crusades, the Inquisitions the Jihads, the Pogroms and ultimately, substituting race for faith, the Holocaust.

He examines the feeling of insecurity that threatens the tranquillity and serenity for which mankind is searching, because it is this insecurity that favours the spread of political and religious extremism and the kind of authoritarian populism that threatens free societies.

The sheer pace of technological, cultural and economic transformation through which we are living, contributes to this insecurity which provides a fertile soil for the growth of authoritarian claims for a political and/or political panacea that has a monopoly of truth. As Isaiah Berlin said, 'it is a terrible and dangerous arrogance to believe that you alone are right; that you have a magical eye which sees THE TRUTH and that others cannot be right if they disagree. This makes one certain that there is one goal and only one for one's nation or Church or the whole of humanity. From this it follows that it is worth any amount of suffering (particularly on the part of other people) if only this goal is attained. Robespierre said 'Through an ocean of blood to the Kingdom of love'.

This cry was taken up by Hitler, Stalin, Lenin and, I dare say, by leaders in the religious wars of Christian v Muslim, Catholics v Protestants. They were sincere in their belief that there is one, and only one, true answer to the central questions which have agonised Mankind and that they had it. This belief has been responsible for oceans of blood. But no Kingdom of love has sprung from it.'

The Chief Rabbi draws on his experience as a practising Rabbi to give him insight into what makes a life worth living. When officiating at a funeral he had to paint a portrait of the deceased whom he may not

have known personally. He would then speak to family and friends to try to understand what he or she meant to them. They almost always spoke of similar things - the person who had died had been a caring parent, a supportive partner, a loyal friend ready to help when help was needed. No-one ever mentioned what they earned or what they bought, what car they drove or where they spent their holidays. The people most mourned were not the most rich or the most successful - rather were they those who enhanced the lives of others. They were kind and reliable and had a sense of communal responsibility. This, he says, was me being educated into what makes a life well lived.

In one of the most fascinating and original sections of the book he examines the concept of compassion and the idea of tzedakah particularly in relation to the inequalities and injustices of the present world order. He describes the gross disparities between the enormously wealthy and those who have a struggle (not always successful) to survive: between those who have champagne for breakfast and those

(1.5 billion in the developing world) who have never had a clean glass of water. G-d has given us the world but not on a freehold - rather on a full-repairing lease. Television has brought the world of the rich and famous into the most remote villages, while bringing images of hunger, famine war and disease into our living rooms. We can no longer claim that we did not know.

**What then is the moral basis of global economic responsibility?**

The concept of tzedakah is a difficult one to translate because it combines in a single word two notions normally opposed to one another, namely charity and justice. What tzedakah signifies therefore is what is often called 'social justice' which implies that no one should be without the basic requirements of existence and that those who have more than they need must share some of that surplus with those who have less. The fifteenth chapter of Deuteronomy and the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus lay down in considerable detail how this was to be achieved in a predominantly agrarian

society. They were elements in an unashamedly 'redistributive budget'. In our present world no religion can propose precise policies for the alleviation of hunger and disease. What it can do is to inspire us collectively with a vision of human solidarity. The concept of tzedakah within the Jewish tradition can serve as a broad moral template for what constitutes a fair and decent world.

It is a pity that these lofty and challenging thoughts have been subsumed in a vociferous clamour from those who perceived a possible departure from fundamental Jewish belief. The points could have been raised and the arguments discussed in a civilised manner without resorting to terms such as 'banning and heresy'. In the words of Isaiah, 'Take council together and it shall come to naught'.

I most certainly recommend this book. Not perhaps as a Bar mitzvah present, nor yet for light reading on the beach at Eilat. It might however be a useful component of a Yom Kippur survival kit.



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*Harvey*

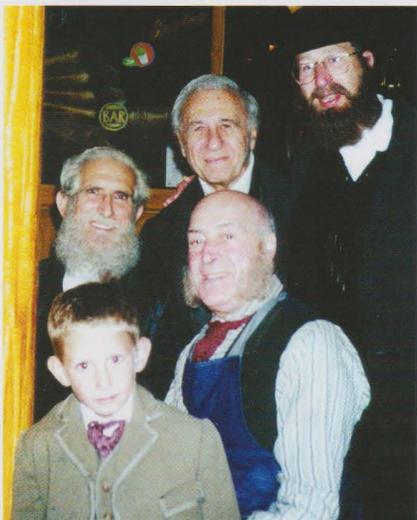
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## Daniel Deronda; Book versus Drama

Judy Gilbert



Edinburgh's 'stars' of the TV production (from the front), Michael Taylor, Norman Berger, Ian Shein, Lenny Berger and Howard Kahn.

The most intriguing aspect of watching the period drama, which most of the Edinburgh Jewish Community had been waiting for with bated breath, was how on earth a 700 page book was going to be condensed into anything meaningful, or even bordering on relevancy, in just three episodes.

The how is still a mystery, but miraculously it was achieved. Andrew Davies (the script writer) is to be congratulated on his skill in compressing this lengthy tome without trivialising the content.

A few chapters into reading the book, it was possible to feel confused about the chronological order of some of the situations. We are introduced to Gwendolen and Deronda at the gaming house in Leubronn and somehow we are transported to the events that are gathering momentum in the home counties, and then just as mysteriously back again to Leubronn. The reason for the confusion might be rationalised by the excess of seemingly unrelated description, which Eliot may have given to add substance to the normality of diverse family life, thus the loss of concentration in which it resulted. The dramatisation could not be accused of causing the same distraction, particularly to those who are acquainted with the written version.

Having been primed, so to speak, all was made crystal clear and it was therefore easier to explain to the uninitiated, the flashbacks; a procedure so admirably perfected in film techniques.

Once we had begun to settle into the plot, which according to some viewers was a little slow in taking off (not nearly as slow

as Ms Eliot's version I hasten to add) it was possible to analyse the characters with greater concentration.

It has often been said that the pictures that one sees on the radio are far clearer than those one sees on television, and it is also true of the pictures you form in your mind when reading a book. You tend to get so wrapped up in your own casting, that it can be difficult to undo what is so firmly a part of your own interpretation.

I can only, of course, speak personally, but I was not at all disappointed by the majority of the characters. This is not to say that I was completely convinced by Henleigh Grandcourt, who according to George Eliot, was substantially older than Gwendolen, though debonair, and with a slightly receding hairline. Hugh Boneville was by no manner of means the slightly worn looking gentleman I had anticipated, but the sudden revelation as to his truly unscrupulous character, was consolingly true to expectation.

Gwendolen might have been cast by the author herself; strikingly attractive though not beautiful, and a petulant, immature, young lady who did not disappoint. Many an actor might have shied from the unflattering picture she made in her distress at not wanting to wear the sullied diamonds, first given to another. It was easy to understand how she must have felt, and the dislike that one couldn't refrain from feeling about the spoilt young woman, momentarily turned to pity.

Daniel Deronda is sadly lacking in the characteristics one might expect of a Jew, but that is really not so surprising given the circumstances of his up-bringing. Though I am aware that not all are in agreement with me, I felt that the young man satisfied my own interpretation of the highly presentable ward of an aristocratic family. But it was the observation that was made to me following episode two, with regards to the question of why Sir Hugo had not already revealed the parentage of his young ward, that made me realise that an important piece of information had so far been omitted. Why had Deronda not just come out and asked Sir Hugo about his background? The answer is that Daniel was in fact tortured by his own theory, that he might have been an illegitimate son. He was far too embarrassed to ask the question, and fearful of what he really did not want confirmed. It was only made clear in the final episode when Daniel did indeed voice his speculations.

Klesmer, as the slightly disdainful impresario, was thoroughly believable. But the lead up to his attachment to Miss Arrowpoint was

glossed over. Was this a deliberate attempt to diffuse the overtly anti-Semitic attitudes of the time, cleverly implied at this juncture, by George Eliot? There were certainly inflammatory remarks to this end.

The first glimpse of the Jewess Mirah, with whom Deronda becomes inextricably involved, is when he snatches her from the jaws of a suicide attempt by drowning. Bedraggled, she is brought to his family friends, where she is comforted and dried out. In her recovered state her dark tragic looks could best be described as comely and at worst 'heimisch' whereas her paperback counterpart gives the distinct impression that she is vulnerable and waif-like with 'the delicate face of a Spanish girl'. Her accent is a little difficult to identify, neither quite Jewish nor English, but her singing voice is as delightful as her person might have been pretty.

Most surprising, was that by the final episode Andrew Davies had chosen not to reveal Mirah's unpleasant and recalcitrant father who was in part responsible for hastening his son's death. This omission was replaced instead by a wedding which was only anticipated in the novel. The regrets which Gwendolyn knew she would bear for the rest of her life were somehow translated into optimism and therefore the requisite happy ending.

Despite the few inevitable differences brought about by such an ambitious reduction of the text, the drama was truly impressive, and totally enjoyable. Many viewers have been inspired to read the original novel which can only be a good thing and speaks volumes in favour of a well created and in general, faithfully produced, drama.

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# Dear Editor

## Dear Editor

### Comments on 'A Capital View'

I first want to express my appreciation of The Edinburgh Star and always look forward to receiving it. I also wish to express my personal thanks to Ian Shein as I was in Edinburgh some time ago attempting to trace some family history and Mr. Shein graciously gave me access to some records available at the Shul.

I note that the article made no mention of Rabbi Jacob Rabinowitz who officiated at the Board of Shechita and Richmond Street Shul from about 1900 to 1917. While I am aware that his stay in Edinburgh was controversial, he was the only rabbi in the community at that time and as far as I know, Edinburgh had never employed a resident rabbi previously. He was more representative of the 'newly' arrived immigrants having previously officiated as rabbi in Radvilisk (in Kovno Gubernia). He was the scion of a long line of rabbis stretching back over 500 years.

Most of his children were born and educated in Edinburgh. Two of his sons became rabbis who were well known in Anglo Jewry; Rabbi Dr. Louis Isaac Rabinowitz and Rabbi Eliezer Simcha Rabinowitz. Two of his daughters married rabbis; Rabbi Judah Newman and Rabbi David Hillman (Rabbi Hillman was the brother-in-law of Rabbi Isaac Halevy Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Ireland and Israel and uncle of Chaim Herzog, the former President of Israel).

Elsewhere in this edition there is 'Interviewing the Interviewer' where Ian Shein is interviewed and comments on his time in Dundee. I understand that Rabbi Jacob Rabinowitz made a number of journeys to Dundee, during his stay in Edinburgh at the request of the small community there.

With reference to Dundee, the Member of Parliament for Dundee (1929-1931) was a lawyer from the Edinburgh Jewish Community; Michael Marcus. Michael Marcus had previously served on Edinburgh City Council.

Thank you again for your great work.

Jack Rabinowitz

## Dear Editor

### Palestinian dispute

I do not share the opinions expressed by Eva Erdelyi on a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

As we all know, Israel was recreated in 1948, as a result of a series of fortuitous circumstances, the Dreyfus affair and Herzog's Zionistic vision, programs in Russia and resulting emigration, the Balfour Declaration, the split up of the Ottoman Empire, the British mandate, and the post Holocaust pressure of finding a Jewish homeland. Most importantly, the will of the Jews to set up their independent state. The indigenous Arab population was always opposed to a Jewish state on Muslim land and tried unsuccessfully to eliminate it through military force, but the feeling of hopelessness from having lost has focussed their frustration on terrorism.

Madame Erdelyi suggests:

1. Israeli guarantee of withdrawal from the 'Occupied Territories', after the Palestinian terror activities and anti-Israel incitement have stopped.

**Answer:** The latter is unlikely to happen, with or without such a guarantee.

2. Formation of a Palestinian State with a provisional government committed to peaceful coexistence with Israel.

**Answer:** Such a government is inconceivable in the Arab and Muslim world.

3. Evacuation of Jewish Settlements and unconditional withdrawal to 1967 border with a special status for Jerusalem.

**Answer:** This would be the first stage in the Arab view of the destruction of the State of Israel.

4. The mistake we made by occupying the conquered territories would at last be acknowledged and corrected by a voluntary withdrawal. Such a mood should entail recognition by all our neighbouring Arab states, and might hopefully also turn the tide of worldwide anti-Semitism.

**Answer:** The territories were conquered as a result of an aggressive war to eliminate

the State of Israel. Recognition of the Jewish State by Egypt and Jordan is the result of their assessment that they are unable to destroy it militarily, that the USA provides substantial financial support to their rulers so as to maintain the peace, and the fear that should they attack Israel again, they would suffer greater losses than before. It is also clear that anti-Semitism will continue, even if the Jews would cease to exist.

So what solution is there, if any? I humbly propose autonomy for the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip within the State of Israel. Massive investment in Palestinian projects, end of military rule and equality of citizenship for Arab and Jew with the constitutional proviso that Israel remains a Jewish State with the guaranteed right of return for Jews anywhere in the world. The possibility should be extended to Palestinians to emigrate to Arab States or elsewhere with commensurate financial compensation. At the same time, acts of terrorism should be severely punished, and support for such acts should engender loss of citizenship and summary expulsion from the State of Israel.

Henry J. Meyerhoff, Geneva, Switzerland

## Dear Editor

### Seudah 10th August

"How old were you when you first visited a shiva house?" This was the question posed to the people present at the Seudah, by Mr Harvey Chesterman who was representing BIG - the newly formed British Israel Group. He reported that children in Israel were going to Houses of Mourning as young as 8 or 9. Every day they were burying their friends, siblings and parents. Mr Chesterman explained that BIG was a new grass roots organisation formed in Israel comprised entirely of immigrants from Britain whose "raison d'être" is to address the increasingly worrying perceptions about the State of Israel as a whole and with the British Jewish World in particular. He continued to address the audience in the Community Centre which comprised of three Rabbonim; Rabbi Shalom Shapira, who was visiting from Israel, Rabbi Geoffrey Shisler and Mrs Shisler and Rabbi and Mrs Katanka. Also present were several Israeli students who

greatly enhanced the Zemirov and Grace after meals.

Mr Chesterman attacked the article by Mr Edgar Prais in the Edinburgh Star (edition 42, June 2002), which condemned the Israeli government's policy towards the Palestinians. He explained that the latest wave of violence was not started by the Israeli Government but by the militant Palestinians. During Mr Barak's term of office the PLO were offered the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Their reply was to start the Intifada. He continued by saying that the PLO did not only want the West Bank or Gaza but also wanted Tel Aviv, Haifa and the whole of Jerusalem. BIG feels that the reporting by the British press and media is very biased towards the Palestinian cause (in particular the BBC). They insist on reporting on the tit for tat strikes by the Israeli soldiers and the PLO. The truth is that the Israeli army is only defending its people from suicide bombers, who are killing and maiming innocent Israeli citizens. Mr Chesterman also took exception to the name of "suicide bombers" he said that they are just murderers. Apparently Israel is the only democracy in the world where children are escorted to and from school by an armed guard, Mr Chesterman argued that in any true democracy people are

entitled to criticise governments, be it their own or others. However, while Israel is fighting for its very existence and innocent lives are being lost, this is not the time to publicly chastise the Israeli government. Moreover the article in the Edinburgh Star should not have been published without a counter argument in favour of Israeli Government policy.

A lively discussion followed where Rabbi Shapira, a founder member of the Edinburgh Star, said that "The Star no longer represented the grass roots of the Edinburgh Jewish Community but was leaning towards the opinions of radical left wing academics."

Dr Berl Osborne informed Mr Chesterman of his correspondence with the minister of Polwarth Church. Apparently the minister was hanging anti-Israeli posters outside his church advising his congregation not to buy Israeli goods. Mr Chesterman replied that if people did not buy Israeli goods, he hoped that the same people would not make use of the Salk vaccine for Polio or apply Einstein's Theory of Relativity to their everyday lives.

As I sat listening to Mr Cheslerman's eloquent speech and heard the reaction of

the audience, which was mainly comprised of visitors from England, the U.S.A and Israel, I realised that the audience felt that as The Edinburgh Star printed Mr Prais's article without printing an article in favour of Israeli Government policy, hence Mr Prais's article must reflect the opinion of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. We must remember that as The Star is distributed world wide, the assumption is that it represents the views of the Jewish Community in Edinburgh, who identify with The Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation whereas the opposite is often the case with articles being written by people who do not identify with or contribute to the Edinburgh Community in any way whatsoever.

While innocent Jewish lives, including children, are being lost, I feel that this is not the time to publicly criticise the Israeli government in our local magazine.

As Morris and I left the Hall, we heard the beautiful, youthful voices of the Israeli students singing Israeli songs. I admired their courage and hoped and prayed that their young lives would not be cut short by a Palestinian assassin.

By Myrna R Kaplan A.L.C.M



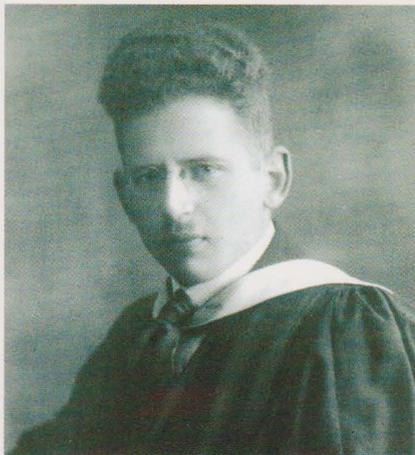
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# Obituaries

## Sidney Oswald Spark

1904 - 2002



My father, Sydney Oswald Spark, was born in Kovno, Lithuania, on December 31, 1904, and arrived in Scotland at the age of five with his mother, Rachel, to join his father, Samuel Spark. My grandfather had already set up in business for himself as a travelling salesman. The family settled in Causewayside in Edinburgh, where in due course my Uncle Louis and Aunt Rebecca were born. As new immigrants the Sparks found life hard and living conditions very poor. My grandfather's brother, Hymie, had already established himself as a travelling salesman in jewellery. He and his brother were close and Hymie unhesitatingly helped his brother out whenever necessary.

Rachel's death at the age of thirty-eight in giving birth to Rebecca was a devastating blow to the family. My father, at the age of nine, found himself in charge of his younger brother and sister while his father travelled the Borders during the week, returning only at weekends. Despite this burden of responsibility my father proved an able scholar, both at Sciennes Primary School and Boroughmuir Secondary School, where he achieved the best results in his year in the Higher Leaving Certificate Examinations. He continued his education at Edinburgh University, where he was the secretary of the Jewish Students' Association. His ambition, supported by the advice of his headmaster, was to study medicine but such a long, expensive course was beyond his family's means and he had to settle for an M.A. degree, specialising in Maths and Science, followed by teacher training at Moray House.

His first teaching post was in the north of England; he then returned to Edinburgh where, at Donaldson's School for the Deaf, he taught, for some years, the hearing children of deaf parents. These years were the happiest of his teaching career.

In the thirties he emigrated to Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, to take up a teaching post at a boarding school near Bulawayo. Prior to his leaving, my parents were engaged to be married and in 1937 my mother went out to join him. They were married and settled in Bulawayo where I was born in 1938. When the Second World War broke out he joined the Rhodesia Defence Force. In 1943 his marriage foundered and he returned with me to Scotland in 1945. The rest of his teaching career was spent in schools in and around Edinburgh.

Although I lived with my maternal grandparents, my father took a close interest in my upbringing and education. He was always a concerned parent, taking me out regularly and paying my school fees. Like my grandparents, he wished me to have religious instruction leading to my Bar-mitzvah. He would have liked me to become a doctor but was eventually reconciled to my being an artist, remarking as he looked at my drawings, "Oh, you can draw after all".

Sadly, the severe depression from which he suffered throughout his life required him to be hospitalised from time to time. Only in recent years has an adequate treatment for this condition become available. In spite of his illness, he retained an impressive sharpness of intellect to the end of his life, and his precision in the deployment of language would put most of us today to shame. He was widely read and had a profound understanding of the human predicament. He retained to the end of his life an old world courtesy, especially appreciated by the ladies.

In his last days, well-nigh blind, physically very frail and feeling that life had no more to offer him, he longed to pass away. His wish was granted on October 26, 2002, two months short of his ninety-eighth birthday.

S R Spark

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## Annie (Reif) Baum

1916 - 2002



Edinburgh lost one of its own on February 22nd, 2002. My beloved mother Annie (Reif) Baum passed away in our precious land of Israel and rests there with my dearest father Reb Pinchas (Peter) Reif.

My mother's life began in Auld Reekie on June 19th 1916. The youngest child of Reb Aaron and Sarah Rapstoff, my mother was a wonderful daughter who looked after my Bobba and Zaida until the end. Although Bobba unfortunately had to spend the end of her life in Bangour Hospital. Zaida's last moments were in Mummy's arms in our home at 34 Kenilworth Drive, Edinburgh. Mummy was a bus conductress during the second world war so that she could still be there for her parents. After she married my Daddy z.l. in 1943 she still looked after them and refused to leave them even when Daddy really wanted to go to Israel to live. A wonderful and devoted wife and mother, she was the true Aishes Chayil up at the crack of dawn and never in bed until very late. She was always busy cooking, cleaning, washing and sewing. Anyone who knew Annie Rapstoff/Reif remembers her fried fish, latkes and her "ginger" cake. Her soup stuck to your ribs. Our house was open to all and we always had company. Mummy always seemed to have enough for everyone. She even found time to make clothes for me and in time for my younger sister Sharron and many was the time I heard her helping my brother Stefan with his homework, just by listening to him recite his Latin verbs. My mother was a second mother to all her nieces and nephews who loved her dearly. She was active in the Ladies guild and in the Friendship Club and worked for the Chevra Kadisha after Rabbi Weinberg asked her to perform this great mitzvah. She never complained about her life, her pains or her family and I never met anyone who didn't like her in Edinburgh, Toronto or Israel. Those who knew Bobba loved her so much. She lives on in all of us. May she rest forever in peace.

Cynthia Reif.

# Coming Events

## February 2003

**9 Sunday 8.00pm**

### Literary Society

Owen Dudley Edwards,  
Edinburgh University  
*Scott/the Jews and the American Civil War*

**17 Monday 7.00pm**

### Lodge Solomon

**20 Thursday 7.30pm**

### Council of Christians and Jews

Paula Cowan, University of Paisley  
*Teaching about the Holocaust*

**23 Sunday 8.00pm**

### Literary Society

Prof Philip Schlesinger,  
University of Stirling  
*W.G.Sebald and the Condition of Exile*

## March 2003

**2 Sunday 7.00pm**

### Community Centre

Quiz

**9 Sunday 8.00pm**

### Literary Society

Dr. Sharman Kadish,  
University of Manchester  
*Anglo Jewry and Synagogue Architecture*

**18 Tuesday**

Purim

**20 Thursday 7.30pm**

### Council of Christians and Jews

Rabbi David Katanka,  
Edinburgh Hebrew Cong.  
*Jewish Music in Worship*

**24 Monday 7.00pm**

### Lodge Solomon

## April 2003

**6 Sunday**

Cheder Moch Seder (tbc)

**17/18 Thursday/Friday**

First two days of Pesach

**28 Monday 7.00pm**

### Lodge Solomon

## May 2003

**15 Thursday**

### Council of Christians and Jews

AGM followed by talk Rev. Kevin Pearson  
*Between Two Worlds*

**19 Monday 7.00pm**

### Lodge Solomon

**Junior Maccabi** meets on alternate

Sundays from 1pm to 3pm.

For further information, contact Joel Raffel  
(229 5541) or Samuel Danzig (229 3054).

**Senior Maccabi** meets on Sunday

evenings in members' homes.

For further information, contact above.

**The Luncheon Club** meets every Tuesday

and Thursday at 12.30pm.

All meetings take place in the Community

Centre, Salisbury Road, unless otherwise

stated. All are subject to alteration.

### WIZO Annual Lunch

**Katie and Ronnie Goodwin** will be

extending hospitality for a Bagel Brunch

on Sunday 15th June at 12.30pm

Venue: 2 Mayfield Gardens

### Running Repairs Ramble

The Community Centre Committee are

organising a sponsored walk on Sunday

13th July. Those interested should

contact Doreen Bowman.



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