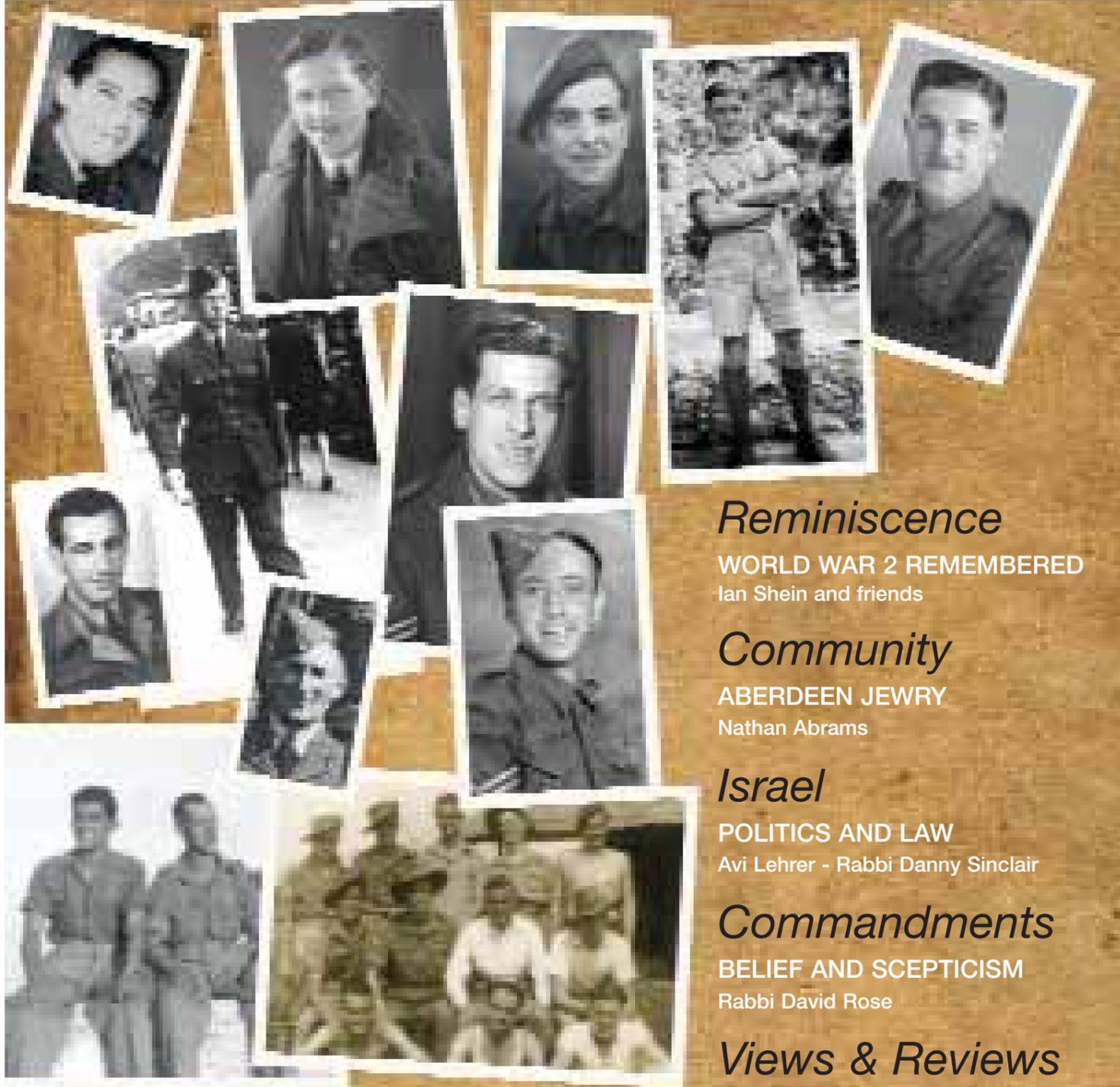


THE EDINBURGH

# STAR

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Sivan 5765



## *Reminiscence*

WORLD WAR 2 REMEMBERED  
Ian Shein and friends

## *Community*

ABERDEEN JEWRY  
Nathan Abrams

## *Israel*

POLITICS AND LAW  
Avi Lehrer - Rabbi Danny Sinclair

## *Commandments*

BELIEF AND SCEPTICISM  
Rabbi David Rose

## *Views & Reviews*

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY



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The Edinburgh Star apologises for the omission of the introductory paragraph to the CCJ report by Micheline Brannan which should have read...

We began our 2004-5 session on 11 November with an innovative joint bible study on Genesis Chapter 27. Chairing the meeting, Rabbi David Rose divided the 15 participants into 3 study groups to read the passage, identify the main issues and report back.

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

All pieces are accepted for publication at the absolute discretion of the Editor. The Editor has the right to make such amendments to any piece chosen for publication as may in his absolute discretion be required in the editorial interests of this publication and to avoid exposing this publication or its staff to any criminal or civil liability or otherwise to avoid bringing this publication or its staff into disrepute. Copyright subsists in this publication and in its typeset. No part of the publication may be reproduced by any means, including electronic, without the express written consent of The Edinburgh Star and without an acknowledgment of such consent, when given, being clearly printed together with an identification of The Edinburgh Star as being the source of such material.

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# From the Editor

The dust has finally settled after the highly successful dinner in celebration of publishing the 50th edition of our community magazine. A complete gallery of participants will be found within these folds to consolidate that event, and to mark the end of Peter Bennett’s highly commendable editorship and the beginning of my own.

Beginnings and ends feature strongly in this Shavuot edition, which in itself is a festival of renewal and consideration of what is happening in the world today. Rabbi Rose will be reflecting on the relevance of the Ten Commandments as given to Moses, in a world that has changed beyond all his recognition.

While I was reflecting on all that has happened between this and the last publication, clearly one of the more disturbing items that stands out, is the issue of the outrageous boycott by the AUT on two Israeli Universities. The matter has seesawed back and forth over a period of weeks and is many faceted. A supposedly apolitical and secular organisation is targeting Jews on the one hand, but has the support of a particularly misguided Jew on the other. We then read about American Jews trying to counter attack by boycotting any British Universities who uphold the AUT proposal. But many AUT members, Jews and non-Jews alike, are just as outraged by this policy of censorship. Perhaps it is worth considering that there are those in the AUT who are actually exercising their right to oppose the Union from within; surely a position from where they would have greater influence. This is clearly demonstrated by Jon Pike who has managed to delay any imminent and possibly irreparable damage, by bringing about a forum for further discussion. By the time this publication goes out it is hoped that the final outcome will have been favourable.

Election Euphoria, or lack of it, has also died down but has left a bad taste in the mouth, in the rather worrying guise of George Galloway. This is a politician whose party appears to be ‘Respectful’ in name only. He has risen in Muslim estimation and potentially unearthed a pocket of anti-Semitism in a location once occupied almost entirely by Jews. All this has been at the cost of deeply humiliating one of our own, Oona King.

But it isn’t all doom and gloom. There are still official authorities and millions of people that acknowledge the dangers of persecution, even 60 years after the reason for that remembrance. The world has been acknowledging how ignoring discriminatory policies redolent in the thirties, could so easily escalate into tragedy once again. But that part of our tragic history has not been ignored. The ending of the war, together with the liberation of the concentration camps, in particular Bergen Belsen in May 1945, have been remembered over and over by the media and by those who would not really know the meaning of the ‘final solution’ if it were not for on going education in schools. Clare Singerman’s passionate talk about how best to enable the younger generation to understand the Holocaust, is reported in this edition.

concentration camps, by calling to mind the war contributions made by some of our own community members during that troubled period and Ian Shein has created a pastiche of their recollections. Lindsay Levy writes a fascinating and heart stopping account of how Ida Skubiejska spent her war, and Hana Hornung finally closes the book in her account of her presence at the Holocaust Memorial in London.

The past cannot be separated from the present and concern for the situation in Israel has become a part of the Jewish psyche since it developed into our place of refuge after the Second World War.

Avi Lehrer discusses ‘The Dangers of Disengagement’ and offers his own thought-provoking solution to the problem. While still in the province of Israeli concerns, our past friend and community leader Rabbi Daniel Sinclair writes a highly academic but accessible article about women’s issues within orthodox law.

There are many other interesting and more local items, including a contribution from young Melia whose writing, it is hoped, will be the inspiration for further youthful involvement in future publications.

I would like to end by wishing you all a happy Shavuot and a request for your contributions towards a magazine towards which I hope I will continue to do justice.

Judy Gilbert



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We too commemorate, 60 years after the liberation of the

# Sixty years ago

Ian Shein

At the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war, articles in the "Edinburgh Star" highlighted members of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation who had served in the armed forces during the war years. Now ten years later, at its sixtieth anniversary, it is perhaps opportune to again highlight the remaining members who served during these fateful years 1939/1945.



## DAVID GOLDBERG

was born in Kiel, Germany, and at the age of 16 came to Britain on one of the last Kindertransport operations prior to war breaking out in 1939. He joined his brother in a hostel in Leeds securing work as an apprentice tailor's presser. Thereafter he moved to London and for two years worked as a waiter in one of the world famous Lyons Corner house restaurants. When 18, he volunteered for the army and was placed in the Pioneer Corps, "the pick and shovel brigade" as he vividly recalled it. A posting near Penicuik gave him the opportunity of making frequent visits to Edinburgh. During Pesach in 1943 he was invited to the home of Percy and Minnie Myerthall for Seder. There he met daughter Ray whom he married later that year.

His unit was shipped to Normandy immediately after D-Day, their main duties to collect boulders for building roads for the supply of equipment for the invading Allied army. This was in the region of Arromanches where heavy fighting took place. On return to England, David heard that Jewish soldiers of the Palestinian Regiment were stationed in Bolton. Believing that his proficient Yiddish would help communications, he volunteered to act as interpreter. He was immediately promoted to sergeant and duly arrived at the camp. "One of the quickest demotions in the British army took place when I had to tell the CO that the soldiers spoke Hebrew not Yiddish". Sergeant Goldberg returned to his base as Private Goldberg where he became a telephone operator in English.

"One of the quickest demotions in the British army took place when I had to tell the CO that the soldiers spoke Hebrew not Yiddish"

the demobilisation stores. Prior to his own discharge he was offered the opportunity of a commission. He advised the interviewing officer "I served for four years and was bossed about. I won't let that happen again!" David returned to Edinburgh and set up a cleaning/valet business on the South Side near the old Empire Theatre.

## ALEC ABRAHAMS

worked as an apprentice tailor's cutter in a Jewish firm in Glasgow when he decided, along with four close friends in the Jewish community, to volunteer for the Armed Forces at the outbreak of the war. His recruitment in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps resulted in his being posted to Egypt several weeks later. Due to his peacetime experience in tailoring, his army trade was defined as a "textile refitter" and he participated in the early desert campaigns of 1940/41. His unit was involved in the repair of covers for army lorries and Bren gun carriers. In May 1941, he was promoted to sergeant and was given the task of setting up a military depot textile shop with special responsibility for the manufacture and maintenance of camouflage nets, bush nets and mosquito veils. He ultimately had a staff of 300 machinists, the majority native peasant women who brought their own sewing machines with them. He recruited an Egyptian Jewish man as foreman. On one occasion, a reporter from the Glasgow Evening News came out to see the unit to write an article for the paper and classified Alec as "commander-in-chief machinists", a rapid paper promotion to high general staff with no noticeable rise in sergeant's pay.



Whenever possible he visited the wartime bustling city of Alexandria and attended the Synagogue where he found a very cosmopolitan congregation. Later in the war, a posting to Germany saw him in Hanover where he mixed with refugees, mainly German, to make a Minyan in a small room and participate in a service. Still later he served in Belgium from where he was returned home or demobilisation. His recollections of service life evoked the phrase "obedience and discipline" but not with any discernible distaste. Returning to Glasgow, he secured employment as a hand presser in a Jewish tailoring firm specialising in ladies' mantles. Moving to Edinburgh, he opened his own business of clothing alterations.

## NORMAN DORFMAN

worked as an assistant in an outfitters shop at the outbreak of the war but lost this position when the owner was called up forcing him to close his business. Due to his age and his own impending call up, he found it difficult to secure alternative employment. He contacted the Air Ministry, in which he had previously given a preference, and this resulted in enlistment in the Royal Air Force in 1941. As a leading aircraftsman, he served as an airframe fitter with the ground crew of a Mosquito Fighter Squadron in Norfolk as well as other operation stations in England. He recalls his round-the-clock duties attending RAF bombers, many badly damaged, after their return from raids over Germany.

At one station, the commander of an American squadron of Flying Fortresses, huge four-engine bombers, invited RAF personnel who wished to do so to fly with the crew over Germany to witness the destruction caused by massed Allied



Air Forces over that country. Norman took advantage of this and described it as "an experience never to be forgotten". The damage to cities such as Berlin, Cologne and Hamburg, to name just a few, had to be seen to be believed. By that time, towards the end of the war, the horrors of the concentration camps had been revealed and inevitably "had a resounding effect on my thoughts and emotions".

On one occasion, he did "what no one in their right mind ever did in the Forces, volunteered for an assignment". This meant being transferred to Weston-Super-Mare to attend a training course. The fact that his girl friend Lilian Levy was stationed in the WAAF at nearby Cirencester perhaps played some part in his heroic voluntary venture. Although she slightly outranked him, this proved to be no handicap in their future engagement and subsequent marriage. On his demobilisation in 1946, Norman initially worked in an outfitters shop before opening up his own business in Leith Walk.

## SAM LATTER

in between various occupations, signed professional forms in 1928 to become a part-time player with Third Lanark football team, playing for them for four years during which he won a second division championship medal. He and his late wife eventually opened gown shops in the city. In 1941 he enlisted in the RAF and after training as an armourer, was promoted to corporal when he became an instructor training air gunners. His duties included operational flights and he logged up 300 flying hours with the crews. Initially stationed at Drem in East Lothian, he met local Jewish boys Morris Brown, Hymie Abrams and Morris Levy. Sam likes to recall the time when rumour swept the camp that German paratroops had landed nearby. Ordered

to report to the office with a sub-machine gun, he found his commanding officer busily occupied having a haircut by the station hairdresser, another Edinburgh man, Corporal Henry Mann. His pleasure at seeing "a well kent face" was added to his relief in discovering that no such enemy landing had taken place.

In 1943 he was posted to Kirkham where many Allied airmen were stationed. His main duty was instructing personnel in the handling of guns, bombs, rockets and depth charges. As senior non-commissioned officer in age as well as ability, Sam also became orderly corporal with responsibility to



the warrant Officer for assembling defaulters for inspection. Service regulations, often seen to be quite petty, and discipline still ruled even in wartime. Towards the end of the war Sam was attached to 201 Squadron of Sunderland flying boats before being demobilised in 1945.

Returning to Edinburgh, he and his wife bought a sweet and cigarette shop in the West End. 21 years later when the lease expired, he purchased car batteries, tyres and radio business in Lauriston. Mr. Tom Farmer, later to become the world-wide Mr. Kwik-Fit, sold Sam tyres and spent a great deal of time in the Latter's shop. Sam now resides in a home where at the beginning of this year he celebrated his 101st birthday.

## ALEC KLEINBERG

worked as a cinema operator in Edinburgh's Haymarket cinema prior to his volunteering for the RAE in 1941. Initial training took him to Arbroath and thence to Wiltshire where he joined Bomber Command as an instrument mechanic before being posted to Doncaster. His duties kept him in various air bases in this country until August 1944 when his unit embarked on a troopship for Bombay. Serving for a short period in Poona, he spent most of his overseas tour of duty in Karachi. In that city he experienced the miseries of dysentery and was taken to the local military hospital where the welcoming words of the Medical Officer were "what on earth are you doing here?" To his

astonishment he found himself under the care of Dr. Manuel Mendick, an Edinburgh man who not only was Medical Officer but also happened to be married to Alec's cousin. His fond memories included being treated to a "first class lunch at a local Indian restaurant, courtesy of the good doctor who, being an officer, could well afford it". Another gastronomic experience, also outwith the field of conflict, was one Passover night when he and several Jewish colleagues were invited to an Indian Sephardi family in Karachi to be present at "a most interesting and pleasant Seder where the children enacted the story of the Hagadah with great enthusiasm".

A few months after the end of the war in Europe, the Japanese surrendered in August 1945. Later he was shipped home and amongst the service passengers encountered RAF Corporal Tom Levey, a well-known Edinburgh man. Alec was demobilised the following year and joined the Army Kinema Corporation as an operator. Belying its name, this was a civilian unit which used mobile cinemas to tour the north of Scotland to bring much sought-after entertainment to Polish and other troops stationed in remote regions. He thereafter opened a hardware shop in Gorgie with another branch following in Dalry.





## ARTHUR KLEINBERG

was one of five brothers who served in the Armed Forces during the 1939/1945 war. Due to his experience in the family bakery business, it perhaps came as no great surprise to him to find himself in the Army Catering Corps when he enlisted in 1941. Initially he was attached to the Loyal Regiment in Preston and thereafter to a section of the Royal Corps of Signals and the Royal Engineers in Aldershot. A posting to Gibraltar followed and he remained in that Mediterranean fortress for a year cooking and baking for the garrison. The gateway to the dangerous wartime waters of the Mediterranean, Gibraltar was one of the most strategic centres of operation in the Near East. This however did not prevent Arthur crossing into neutral Spain by ferryboat to the Spanish town of Algeciras where his attendance at the local Synagogue was rewarded by being given an Aliyah. Towards the end of 1942 his unit was shipped across the Straits of Gibraltar to North Africa where they were based in Algiers. Although that region saw considerable heavy fighting between German and British/American troops, he mentioned that his unit was non-combatant and that "the only targets his comrades aimed for at that time were the regimental cooks and luckily their aim was poor".



A posting to Taranto and Ban in South Italy followed, giving him the opportunity of spending some leave in what had been the open and capital city of Rome. Towards the end of hostilities, he landed in Salzburg in Austria, which had been taken by American forces. Arthur received his demobilisation after five years service believing that these years "had at least taught me to more easily accept a bit more responsibility". He returned to civilian life to resume his

interrupted career in his father's bakery business in East Crosscauseway. When his father died, he took over until his own retirement a number of years ago and leased the premises to what is now The Old Fashioned Bakery but is still fondly remembered by so many as Kleinberg's Bakery.



## RONNIE GOODMAN

worked in the display section of a large Leeds department store until he volunteered for the Royal Air

Force in 1940. He trained as a Radar operator with the Air Ministry Experimental Station in Dorset where other specialised duties involved knowledge of plastic explosive, detonators and safety fuses. Late in 1942, his company embarked on troopships to join a convoy at Gourock. The fleet sailed across the turbulent North Atlantic until warmer weather brought the shores of North Africa into view. The British 8th Army had recently won a resounding victory over General Rommel's Panzer Corps at Alamein and the capture of the whole of the North African continent was the target when American troops landed at Algiers and Oran early in 1943. Ronnie's unit disembarked at Algiers to set up a radar station, their duty to detect enemy air and land forces before they could attack or infiltrate Allied lines. They themselves were subjected to concentrated strafing from German Messerschmidt fighters and Stuka dive-bombers. Their radar vehicles were wired up for instant self-destruction should they be over-run.

Between Tunis and Bizerta a German counter-attack forced back Allied troops and his unit was cut off. The German were hunting for the radar station and to prevent their being surrounded, they destroyed their specialised equipment. Ronnie, a corporal by now, joined his colleagues to trek by foot to the nearest Allied lines. The German victory was short lived and May 1943 saw the surrender of all Axis forces in that part of the world. He was then posted to Taranto and Ban in South Italy. Having served for over three years abroad, Ronnie was granted home leave and travelled to England via Naples. Shortly afterwards he was demobbed and returned to Middlesborough. It was while attending the wedding of his Rabbi's daughter that he met his future wife Anne. Ronnie went into his father-in-law's furniture business until he opened up his own furniture store. He and his wife came to live in Edinburgh in 2000.

## ALEC RUBENSTEIN

was serving as an apprentice upholsterer when he received his call up papers in 1940. After initial primary training with the Royal Engineers, he was posted to a unit specialising in bridge building before being selected for bomb disposal training at Scottish Command Headquarters. He also undertook a driver's course after which, on promotion to lance corporal, he became personal driver to his commanding officer. Stationed in the West of Scotland, he witnessed the devastating German air raids on Clydebank in 1941. His unit was continually on duty and was actively involved in excavating over 600 unexploded bombs in that area. Promoted to full corporal, Alec received further training in more specialised equipment which saw his transfer to various units around the country. During one posting in Aberdeen, he encountered the Gold family who previously had owned a

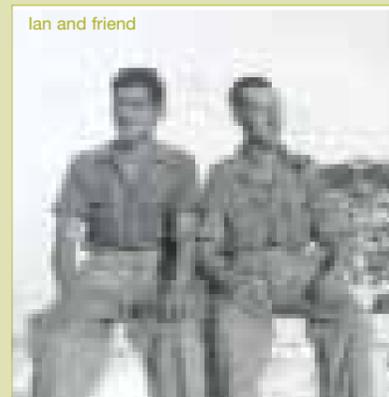
furniture business in Edinburgh. They invited him to their home and to preside over the Friday evening services in the small Synagogue in the city. Interestingly enough, there still exists a small Jewish community in Aberdeen, which periodically receives a visit from Edinburgh's Rabbi Rose. Whilst there, Alec was awarded the Royal Humane Society Testimonial Parchment for diving fully clothed into a river and saving a young boy from drowning.

"His unit was continually on duty and was actively involved in excavating over 600 unexploded bombs"

In 1941 his unit was chosen for duties overseas and preparations were made to embark for the United States for the purpose of training American troops on bomb dismantling and disposal. In December of that year, Japan attacked

US naval units at Pearl Harbour bringing that country into the war. His embarkation was cancelled and his special duties continued with the training of British and Allied troops. These were extended to include American forces when they arrived in Britain the following year. His army service, with continual instruction in bomb disposal, lasted almost six years. On his return to Edinburgh after the war, he continued working in the

upholstery trade before opening his own business as a manufacturer and re-covers in that field, continuing as such until he retired.



lan and friend



lan, second row on left

## IAN SHEIN

was called up in 1943 and reported to infantry training barracks at Fort George in Inverness-shire. There he volunteered for the Scots Guards, an inexplicable decision other than "I liked their peaked cap but they didn't like my flat feet". He found himself posted to a Royal Corps of Signals unit to be trained as a radio operator. Later he was transferred to Special Operations Executive. Further training in Shropshire preceded a posting to Monopoli near Ban on the Adriatic coast of Italy. Here, at Headquarters of Special Operations, duties were to

establish radio contact with partisans and Allied agents who had dropped by parachute behind the German lines in Yugoslavia. The contact, to receive and transmit Morse code messages, required being as swift as possible to prevent German detector-finders from homing in the agents' radios. As much as he wished, Ian never discovered who were at the other end of the Morse key. Transferred to Siena in Northern Italy he remained there during the latter days of the war in Europe. Due leave, he opted for Rome and attending one of the Synagogues there, met a fellow soldier from a well-known Edinburgh family in the person of Dave Bullon. A posting followed to the Far East. Whilst on a troopship in the Suez Canal, Japan surrendered but it was only much later that "I came to the somewhat reluctant conclusion that Japan's decision was in no way related to my posting to that part of the world". Landing in Bombay heralded a long cross-country train journey to Calcutta signals office where he remained for several months before a transfer to Mhow in the Central Provinces. A family bereavement resulted in compassionate discharge from the army after three years service. He returned to Dundee, where he had resided for many years, to take over the family tailoring business. Finding this completely unfulfilling, Ian applied for training in the Probation Service. After a spell at Glasgow University he secured a position as probation officer in his hometown of Edinburgh. Several years later, he was appointed Divisional Reporter to the Children's Panel in the Lothians.

"I liked their peaked cap but they didn't like my flat feet"

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# A Military, Medical Experience

Phillip Harris



During World War 2 Bangour Hospital, near Edinburgh, became an Emergency Medical Services Hospital, for the duration of the War. It included a Brain Injuries Unit (BIU), headed by Professor Norman Dolt, for the admission and treatment of casualties from European theatres of War, being flown in to Edinburgh airport, indeed some within a day from Dunkirk.

These service people had sustained major, and sometimes horrendous, injuries; Head, brain, facial and spinal injuries. One of the wards was solely for German prisoners of war (POW). I was the Resident Neurosurgical Medical Officer. After being called up, and trained in Army routines, I became an officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). An early posting of fellow officers and myself was to Southampton Common, near the Netley Military Hospital. Why there? It soon became obvious, as a large number of British women, and some children arrived. They had been POWs in a camp not very far from Hiroshima They had not realised that the huge flash was from the dropping of the first atomic bomb. Our job was to medically examine and record our findings, including studies of blood and urine, for possible radiation effects, malnutrition, etc. Our reports went to the authorities. Some of my fellow medical officers and I were being kitted out and trained to help form a Mobile Neurosurgical Unit for the Burmese theatre of war. However, the conflict there stopped.

Most of my time in the Army took place in Oxford, in the Military Hospital for Head Injuries, initially in Wheatley, but then mainly in the Churchill Military Hospital. The patients, male and female, and from all three services, had serious, and some major, head, brain, maxillo-facial and spinal injuries. The pathological-clinical effects included brain abscess, epilepsy, paralysis, paraplegia and some with gross disfiguring facio-cranial damage.

The staffing was superb and included several young medical officers, some having returned from various theatres of war,

and most of whom would later train and become senior, indeed quite distinguished hospital Consultants. I may mention just one such officer, Major James Baird, a good friend, who indeed became Lt General Sir James Baird, in command of the RAMC; He was a fine physician, and soldier. We had a full complement of staff including anaesthetists, radiologists, Officer Nurses, and the necessary laboratory personnel. Pathology was carried out in the laboratories in the Radcliffe Infirmary, in Oxford. In overall command were two very distinguished, outstanding doctors: - Brigadier Sir Hugh Cairns, Neurosurgeon and Air-Vice Marshall Sir Charles Symonds. Medical Neurologist

**“However dreadful, ugly and often disgusting wars are, there are sometimes ‘spin-off benefits’”**

The work was interesting and demanding. The morale was high in the hospital. However dreadful, ugly and often disgusting wars are, there are sometimes ‘spin-off benefits.’ I would instance the remarkable discovery of Penicillin by Fleming in 1929 and its development by Florey; then the first clinical use of this ‘magic, wonder drug’ was by the British Army in the Middle East and in the African battle zones. I can certainly vouch for the rapid effect on many infections, from gunshot wounds, shrapnel, etc. Another benefit was the proper organisation and use of blood transfusions. A third was the formation of excellent Mobile Neurosurgical Units during WWII.

My time for demobilisation neared, and one day I was approached and invited to consider taking up a short term Commission, and be promoted to Major, from Captain. But although I enjoyed my time in the Army, even including military discipline, I declined. I was young, and I strongly wished to begin to study and train, hopefully to become a hospital Consultant, and a University teacher.

## Sidney Caplan Recalls

“My uncle Maurice Caplan (Copland) joined the 57th Gordon Highlanders at the outbreak of war.

He fought across North Africa, Italy and landed in Normandy on D-Day plus 1. On 11th April 1945 his battalion entered Belsen to a scene he later likened to hell. He said that we did not know what to do and we gave these poor souls the usual British Tommy's answer in time of crisis hot sweet tea. This was the wrong thing to do.

The mortality rate was three hundred a day. For years after my uncle had nightmares about this horror that he saw at age twenty.”

With Compliments  
from  
Jessie Franklin

With Compliments  
from  
Mark & Judith  
Sischy

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# Ida's Story



Lindsay Levy

Ida Subiejska was born in Bedzin in Lower Silesia in 1914. It was an affluent area of Poland with an 80% Jewish population. Her parents were both university graduates, and her father, a member of the Silesian Chamber of Commerce, was the director of a factory exporting zinc, which employed 6000 people. Ida and her two sisters went to private school and she went on to Yagellon University in Krakov to read Geography and Zoology where she was the only Jewish girl in the science faculty. Her intention was to pursue an academic career, and she particularly wanted to make a study of the native tribes people of Colombia, one of the countries to which her father's factory exported zinc, but as the extraordinary story of her life turned out, South America is one of the few regions of the world that she has never visited.

In early 1939, when it was obvious to all that Hitler was about to invade Poland, Yagellon University passed regulations making graduation conditional on boys becoming cadets and girls being trained at the University medical school. For this reason in June of that year Ida became not only a graduate but also an officer of the International Red Cross.

In September of the same year the Nazis occupied central Poland. Ida had been active in the student protest movement against Hitler and a friend warned her that one of her fellow students had joined the Gestapo and was about to denounce her. She decided to leave immediately for Rumania. Her father was ill and unable to travel and her mother and middle sister decided to stay with him, but her mother asked her to take her youngest sister. They were never to reach Rumania, and it was the last time either of them would see their family again. When the two girls reached Lvov (now in the Ukraine) they were captured by the occupying Russian army and deported to a prison camp in the Taiga forest region of sub-Arctic northern Russia. There they worked for a year as prisoners of war in temperatures that could reach -40 Celsius, logging for twelve hours a day, and supplementing their meagre diet with berries and mushrooms from the forest.

In 1940, when the Nazis invaded Russia, and Stalin joined the allied forces, he signed a treaty with Churchill and Roosevelt, which included provision for the release of all Polish prisoners and the creation of a Polish Army. The sisters were given identity papers and together with other former Polish prisoners of war were sent on a mammoth train journey from the extreme north of Russia to Buzuluk in the southern Urals, where the Polish Army headquarters were located, a journey of several weeks.

At some point on this long journey the train drew into a station in the middle of the night. Believing they had finally

reached their destination, Ida jumped off the train, but as soon as she did so it started up again and, unable to catch up with it, she was left standing on the platform in total blackout as her sister, all the people she knew, and her possessions disappeared into the night. All she had was her identity papers tied around her neck on a ribbon. She knew that her sister would be looked after because another Polish ex-prisoner on the train had befriended her and in fact he later became her husband. It was 4 years before the two sisters met again.

**“Ida began to cry and a passing Polish officer told her. Don't cry, we're taking them to Palestine”**

Alone on the station platform Ida thought she could just make out a chink of light coming from a building. She made her way towards it and knocked on the door. A man's voice interrogated her, asking who she was, and where she came from. When she said she was Polish the voice asked ‘And are you a Jew?’ Ida said she was. ‘So am I,’ said the man ‘Come in!’ He brought her into the stationmaster's office, made her up a bed of chairs, and even found her a piece of bread which, she says, was an untold luxury in Russia at that time. Ida resumed her journey on the next available train and finally reached the Polish Army Headquarters in Buzuluk. She enrolled in the medical service, being once again the only female Jewish member, and worked there until she was ordered to travel to the

medical centre in Uzbekistan, and not long after that, to the main centre at Guzar, south of Samarkand, on the Afghan border.

Thousands of newly released Polish prisoners of war had been sent to Guzar and there were terrible epidemics of typhus, typhoid and dysentery that lasted for several months. With hardly any drugs to counter the diseases Ida and her colleagues continued to fight to contain the epidemic until ordered once again to move on, this time to the shore of the Caspian Sea, where they oversaw the evacuation of Polish troops to Pahlevi in Persia (now Iran) on rusty Russian ships. It was at this time that she recalls seeing many chasidic Jews crouched despairingly by the Caspian Sea. Ida began to cry and a passing Polish officer told her. ‘Don't cry, we're taking them to Palestine’

Whilst working in Persia Ida developed an ulcer, which required an operation, and she was taken over the Elburth Mountains to Teheran by army ambulance. When she recovered she stayed on and worked in the Polish section of the British army hospital, using her spare time to perfect her English. Here she was befriended by a British officer who one day told her he had sustained an injury to his leg which was not responding to treatment and it was likely that the leg would have to be amputated. Ida arranged for him to be privately treated by Jewish doctors she knew who had escaped Russia after the revolution. She thought that their familiarity with the region might give them more knowledge of the diseases acquired there. She was correct and

the officer's leg was saved. She now believes that her act of kindness was reciprocated, when in the months to come she was faced with the problem of arranging transport to Palestine for a group of Jewish refugees, young mothers and children who had arrived from Russia as army dependents. There was a branch of the Jewish agency in Teheran trying to help, but the Iraqis would not allow Jews to enter their land, so the only route to Palestine was by sea. Miraculously after yet more train journeys from Teheran to Keramsha on the Persian Gulf, a ship materialised and they were escorted to Suez by a Royal Navy convoy. This group of 1,230 refugees, known as the Teheran children, entered Jewish Palestine in 1943 and was cheered along the route to Haifa. There were 861 children in the party, the majority of them orphaned by the war.

After a short break in Tel Aviv Ida rejoined the army, working at the Royal Commonwealth Military hospital at Rehovot, which had a small Polish section. Although she loved Israel and was reluctant to leave, she was determined to return to find her family after the war. In 1944 she went by train to Cairo, and then to Suez. She was travelling on a converted P0 mail ship towards Gibraltar when D-Day was announced, and her ship crossed the

Atlantic in convoy, arriving at Greenock on July 4th 1944.

In Scotland Ida worked at the Polish section of the large military hospital at Bridge of Earn, and for a further year at Carnoustie where she worked with limbless servicemen. It was there, after

**“Ida arranged for him to be privately treated by Jewish doctors she knew who had escaped Russia after the revolution.”**

the war, when the postal service from Poland was restored, that she learned from an old school friend that her mother, father, middle sister, and all her remaining extended family members had been murdered at Auschwitz.

At the end of the war Ida married a Polish officer who, like her, had fought in many locations throughout the conflict. They settled in London where she resumed her academic career as a teacher, teaching for a spell in Italy and in Sydney, Australia, which was now the home of the younger sister who had escaped with her.

While she was in London Ida was an active member of St John's Wood

Liberal Synagogue. In 1989 she and her husband moved back to Scotland, but sadly ten years later she was widowed. She has now settled in Edinburgh and is the senior member of the Sukkat Shalom Liberal Jewish congregation here. She is extremely active in the congregation here attending both services and committee meetings, and last year, along with Daniel Naftalin, the youngest member of the congregation, she performed the ceremony of Siyyum by writing one of the two final letters on our torah scroll.

It was one of Ida's contributions to our community debate that fired me to write this article. We were having a workshop with our visiting Rabbi on the subject of prayer, - what it meant to us, and why and how we pray - something that many of us find hard to articulate. I remember noticing that Ida's eyes were closed and wondering if she had fallen asleep. Then she suddenly spoke up.

"Prayer saved my life once. I was standing in a river, up to my neck in water. The Nazis were on one side and the Russian troops were on the other, and I said the Shema ..." Nobody spoke for a while after that. As so often in listening to what Ida has to say we realised how very few of us have experienced even a fraction of the things she has seen.

# Holocaust Memorial Day

Hana Hornung

*It all started with a telephone call from Susan Green, our Northern representative of the AJR, asking me, if I would accept an invitation for the Holocaust Memorial Day. After hesitation, I agreed, feeling that it was my moral duty to attend, in memory of all those who had not survived.*

From then on, it started to be serious. I received an official invitation from the Home Office informing me that I could nominate a member of family or friend to accompany me to Westminster Hall. The day was divided into two essential parts. The morning was designated for survivors and liberators only, at St. James's Palace. The afternoon was to be at Westminster Hall. I got two admittance cards, one for St. James's State Apartments, the other for Westminster Hall. As it so happens, it was the picture room to which I was allocated. They most likely knew that I am fond of pictures! For practical reasons, we were distributed to different rooms, which meant that it was nearly impossible to find people whom you may have known.

St. James's Palace was largely built between 1531 and 1538 and used as a Royal Residence after the destruction of the Palace of Whitehall. It was only since the accession of Queen Victoria that the Sovereign lived at Buckingham Palace. The State apartments contain interesting Royal portraits and battle pieces. There are Mortlake tapestries in one of the chambers and arms and armour in the Armoury.

The beginning was very depressing, seeing all these old people queuing to enter, some of whom had mobility problems - the weather was grey, cold and it was raining, which underlined the sad occasion. Once in, there was help in the form of wheelchairs, nurses, stewards, etc. All around the room were chairs to sit down, small tables with open sandwiches and similar, a table where hot and cold drinks were offered. There was an atmosphere created to recover from the hostile initial environment and to get acquainted with those sharing the same room and similar fate. Their background was rather varied, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, German etc. Most have been in Britain more or less since the end of World War II. There was one lady, whose family was taken to concentration camps, and she came over to Britain as a baby. She obviously could not remember anything and was adopted and brought up in Britain. There were also soldiers who liberated Auschwitz. It was a big mix of very different people, with very different life stories.

Most were assigned to groups with a leader, who then would introduce some of them to the Queen or the Duke of Edinburgh. And then the big moment arrived. The Queen and the Duke began walking through the different rooms. We were advised to continue talking together, if we so wanted, stay seated, and treat this as an informal occasion, although in the letter from the Home Office, we were advised not to offer or to shake hands, but if the royal hand was preferred, to take it lightly and briefly!

At the end of the Reception coaches were provided to take us to the Westminster Hall location where we joined our guest. Obviously, there were quite a few policemen, both at St. James's and Westminster Hall, and security checks, before being admitted.

Westminster Hall erected in 1097 by William Rufus, was later destroyed by Richard II, It became a ceremonial centre of the country. It has a magnificent hammer beam roof, holding the heavy roof without pillars and dominating the interior space. Many famous state trials took place there, such as Sir Thomas More's. Now it is used for great functions and lying in state.

The Holocaust Memorial service in the Westminster Hall under the auspices of Her Majesty the Queen and the Government, was a most memorable occasion. There was music, starting with Elgar 'O hearken Thou' and a reading from Primo Levi's 'If this is a man' read by Christopher Eccleston, which was most moving.

The introduction by Lord Winston was followed by the music 'Scenes from Jewish Life' composed by Ernest Bloch. There were films - 'The Departure', and 'The Return' followed by music using words from the Diary of Anne Frank. One of the speakers who impressed me most was Stephen Fry, mentioning not only the perished Jews, but also the gypsies, the disabled, the homosexuals, all having been victims of the Nazi philosophy and persecution.

Reading of names by grandchildren of Holocaust survivors was powerful and emotional.

The connection with the 'forgotten' Holocaust was meaningfully expressed by the Boros Gypsy Ensemble.

There were many more speakers; Sven-Goran Erikson, remembering his visit to Auschwitz, and an excellent speech by Dr. Jonathan Sacks.

The arrival of the flame from Bergen-Belsen was followed by the prayer El Malei Rachamim sung by Cantor Stephen Leas and accompanied by the Central Synagogue Choir. The Prime Minister gave a very forceful speech, after which followed candle lighting and music.

The film "Pictures from Auschwitz Today" was shown and followed by 'Hear my prayer, O Lord'.

The Queen then departed, we all stood up afterwards there was music.

There were big screens placed all over the Hall, since it is a very large area, and thus all the events - films, candle lighting, speakers could be followed by everyone present. In contrast to St. James's, it was very cold, but we had been warned about this.

The Rt. Hon Tony Blair was standing near the exit, to give people the opportunity to speak to him.

My daughter and I made our way to the National Gallery, to have a hot drink and something to eat and to recover after a very long and trying day. And then back by train to Harpenden.



# Auschwitz, and Ever After

Rebecca Dreisinger

To honour the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, museums and institutes in America, Israel and Europe held memorials and PBS aired a new series: Auschwitz: Inside the Nazi Death Camps. Though I've seen countless Holocaust films and TV specials, read tens of Holocaust memoirs and recorded one of my own – that of the only surviving member of my paternal grandfather's sprawling Hungarian family – I watch the new PBS special rapt, right through to Linda Ellerbee's interviews after the showing. I know virtually all that PBS reports about the death camp where my family perished; I am reviewing a familiar script, reciting the lines. Still, I devour each new detail as though incorporating it, knowing that it will somehow conquer this massive monster, make it comprehensible, digestible.

As a child, I had a personal vendetta with Hitler before I had a historical one. It was his fault, my child's mind reasoned, that I had grown up with no paternal family tree, only a denuded family shrub, chopped off above my father's generation. In a recurring dream, I hid in a bunker underground with my family and several other families. Invariably, we would huddle crouched, listening to the ominous clip-clop of the S.S. men's boots overhead as they turned the house upside down, looking for us. And invariably, one of the other families had a baby that would start to cry. Sometimes the mother would succeed in calming the child, but seven out of ten times, the crying would lead a Nazi to our hiding place. Most often, the dream ended, as dreams do, in the middle of things, the baby still crying and the Nazi's boots still clomping toward us. Sometimes we would be discovered, and once or twice, gassed. Always, I woke sweaty and grateful, so grateful to be awake, to be here – American.

And yet, there has always been uneasiness to my Americanness. As a third generation American, a third generation Holocaust refugee, I shared

more than a little of the sense of displacement, more than a little of the immigrant's soul, though I was the daughter of two New York-born parents and had grown up ensconced in the safety of a very Catholic American Bronx neighbourhood. I could not make sense of the transformation that was supposed to take place – to have taken place – somewhere along this generational line, to magically render my parents, or at the least, myself and my siblings, Americans. If my ancestors had been branded too tribal to be welcomed into European society, how now were we meant to suddenly switch tacks and melt into the very normalcy of mainstream America? If tens of generations have played the eternal outsider, can their descendents suddenly become insiders once suddenly someone calls "game over!" and welcomes them in?

“Always, I woke sweaty and grateful, so grateful to be awake, to be here – American”

How, too, was I supposed to reap the benefits of the shelter and protection of a country that refused to open its doors to refugees fleeing a burning Europe? To bomb the train tracks that carried my ancestors to their death? PBS shows a memo sent to one of Roosevelt's higher-ups requesting such action, and the reply: "Kill it." That memo might have saved my entire family, I think to myself.

Once, at the height of my bunker dreams, I told my father how scared of the Holocaust I was, how afraid of Hitler – afraid even of the odious malediction that was his name. In an attempt to soothe myself and to prove my eight-year-old maturity, I then laughed shortly and said, "but it can't happen again, right? It can't happen here, in America. Right Dad?" My father surprised me. "Well.. it could. Probably it won't, but it could. Even here."

"But.. there aren't any Nazis left, are there? They're all dead, right?"

"No. A lot of them are dead," my father answered honestly, "but some are still alive, hiding." Flat out of comforting clauses, I dropped my affectation of maturity. "Do you think they're going to come back?"

Finally, my father caught on that I wasn't looking for the truth, but for some reassurance that I would only ever visit the bunker and the gas chamber in my dreams. He patted me on the back. "No, I don't think they will."

As I got older, I grew more able to differentiate between Europe and America, to understand that what had happened in Europe could not happen in this country in the way that it had happened in Europe. But knowing that still did not help me feel particularly American.

I consider myself a third-generation Holocaust survivor, but is there such a thing? I've never met anyone else who has taken on the mantle. Not many of the third generation speak out on the subject, and I question whether any feel as I do. Perhaps instead, rather than feeling themselves the continuation of a European line not European enough, not ~"White" enough, not Aryan enough, they prefer to experience themselves as the first truly free Jews, the first welcomed with open arms into the vastness. America gives you that freedom, after all.

Rebecca Dreisinger is a writer and counselor in Manhattan. She is completing a memoir 'Olive Girl', about becoming Israeli.

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# Saint Jane (Haining)

Elaine Pomeransky

Jane Haining was a local hero of a different kind. Dunscore-born, she became a missionary to the Jewish mission in Hungary and died for her beliefs in the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. Jane was educated at Dumfries Academy where she became Dux of the Modern School during the First World War, the year after the actor John Laurie had come runner-up.

Jane worked for ten years in a thread maker's in Paisley, but at a meeting in Glasgow about the Jewish Mission she turned to a friend and said, prophetically 'I have found my life-work.' After a crash course in Hungarian, she took charge of the Girls' Home of the mission in Budapest. The Nazis jackbooted their way into Hungary during the last March of her life, and she wept as she had to sew Stars of David on the youngsters. Gestapo men raided the place.

Jane had ignored the warnings of the Church of Scotland to come home to safety, and she was thrown in jail. She refused to reject her children, and it cost her her life.

According to Elizabeth Walker in her husband's book 'Legacy of Scots', Jane Haining was the only Scot to be slain in the Nazi concentration camps, and was probably gassed along with a batch of Hungarian women on 16 August 1944. However, her death

certificate reads: 'Miss Haining, who was arrested on account of justified suspicion of espionage against Germany, died in hospital, July 17, of cachexia brought on by intestinal catarrh.'

Now her supporters in Scotland are remembering her words as they try to have her honoured for eternity in the Avenue of Righteous Gentiles in Jerusalem. For her name to be admitted, much first-hand information is needed – an almost impossible task.

**Saint Jane (Haining)**  
Elaine writes a poem inspired by the history of St Jane

Auschwitz, the kiss you didn't have to take, lips eagerly pursed,  
Inviting the Nazi tongue to lick  
You with gas.  
Amongst the mass of strangers you died,  
Sacrificed.  
Name almost forgotten, because of your gender.  
Left Right  
Left Dumfries to end up on your knees for a race forgotten  
'I have found my life's work' your tune, but the world didn't dance.  
No rest in Budapest as you sewed stars of yellow  
Onto your chosen children.  
Light of Scotland, rejected the Church offering of safe return  
Held tightly the hands of those who yearned  
Your protection,  
Affection enough to lay down your life.  
'Even here on the road to Heaven there is a mountain range to climb'  
You whispered,  
As you were gassed  
With a mass of Hungarian women  
Such a German chore.  
Left Right  
Left the world on August 16th, 1944.  
The only Scot to be slain...martyred Jane,  
Remembered only by a sliver of Glasgow glass and plaque,  
Yad Vashem, men declared you 'Righteous' 55 years  
After you'd died.  
No libraries, films, memorials, tutorials  
Lest we forget St. Jane  
And the day you were crucified.

Two days before her (official) death, Jane had written obsessively to a friend Margit about apples, fresh fruit and bread: she was obviously starving. You can read between the censored lines. She wrote pathetically: 'Even here on the road to Heaven there is a mountain range to climb.'

The most moving tribute to the Dumfriesshire martyr was written by one of her former wards: I still feel the tears in my eyes and hear in my ears the siren of the Gestapo motorcar. I see the smile on her face while she bade me farewell. I never saw Miss Haining again, and when I went to the Scottish Mission to ask the minister about her, I was told she had died. I did not want to believe it, nor to understand, but a long time later I realised that she had died for me, and for others. The body of Miss Haining is dead, but she is not alone, because her smile, voice and face are still in my heart.'

Among the memorials to Jane Haining are two stained glass windows in Queen's Park church, Glasgow, where she worshipped, and a plaque in the little Kirk of Dunscore, which stands on the site of the one, where Robert Burns prayed most Sundays during his stay at Ellisland. (Information supplied by Dumfries and Galloway site visitors.) Jane Haining was declared "Righteous among the nations" by Yad Vashem at a meeting held in the Museum of Religion in Glasgow in December 1999.

# North-Eastern Exposure: The Life of Aberdeen's Jewish Community

Nathan Abrams



34 Marischal Street

A question often asked of me is, 'why did you choose Aberdeen?' When I eventually stop laughing, I reply that I didn't choose Aberdeen at all but that it chose me. Does this sum up the position of Aberdeen's Jews through the ages, I wonder? How many of them chose to move here down the ages, or arrived as a consequence of the usual push and pull factors that bring Jews to any part of the world? The occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the consecration of the Aberdeen Hebrew Congregation's synagogue in Dee Street, Aberdeen – the most northern place of Jewish worship in the British Isles – in June 1945, gives us an opportunity to look back briefly at the history of the Jews of the Granite City.

Accurate statistics of Jews in Aberdeen are hard to come by but there were no reports of Jews moving to Aberdeen before the nineteenth century, although there might have been a trickle northwards, particularly after the expulsion of the Jews from England. No Jews moved to Aberdeen, though, because they felt that there was no livelihood to be made there. The first record of any Jews in Aberdeen occurred in 1665. 'A New Letter from Aberdeen in Scotland, Sent to Person of Quality Wherein is a more full

Account of the Proceedings of the Jews Than hath been hitherto Published' reported that a ship with white silk ropes and white-branched satin sails emblazoned in red letters with the words 'THESE ARE THE TEN TRIBES OF ISRAEL', put in at the port of Aberdeen. Aboard was a large party of Jews, dressed in black and blue and with stores of rice and honey, from where it was unknown. The Professor of the Tongues and Languages was sent for and he determined that they spoke broken Hebrew and that they held a letter in High Dutch which said that they were bound for Amsterdam to correspond with their brethren there. Nothing more is known about this letter, its author (signed simply as 'R.R.'), the ship or its occupants, or even if they were indeed Jews. It is presumed that they were most probably on their way to join the pseudo-Messiah Shabbetai Tsvi in the Levant and did not stay in Aberdeen.

Thereafter, there is no mention of Jews in connection with Aberdeen until the eighteenth century. Between 1739 and 1829 sixteen Jews graduated in medicine from Aberdeen's two universities but all of them took their degrees in absentia. The first Jewish medical students to move to Aberdeen seem to be in the twentieth century

when a numerus clausus in operation at American medical schools brought an influx of students from there.

In line with the general history of Scottish Jewry, whereby, according to Kenneth Collins, 'There were almost no Jews resident in Scotland in the eighteenth century and communities were not officially established until the first decades of the nineteenth century', it was not until 7th September 1893 that a formal community was established in Aberdeen when its first synagogue was consecrated by Russian and Polish Jews on the first floor of a house at 34 Marischal Street. Jews must have been here for a while beforehand, though, probably ten to fifteen years, as they would have needed to find the money to finance the synagogue. It was also reported that, 'A feeling was said to have existed for a considerable time among the Jews resident in Aberdeen that a synagogue should be established in the city; but it was only in 1893 that anything was done to translate the feeling into action.' Furthermore, The Scotsman stated, 'Attempts have been made previously to form a congregation there, but without success.' The Jewish population at that time was 24 families and 26 seat holders. In that same year, however, the Minister and Shochet of the new community, Rev. James Littman, together with its President, Alexander Zamek, were prosecuted by the local branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for 'the slaughter of a bullock after the Hebrew manner, in connection with recent celebrations in the opening of [the] synagogue.' The case, fortunately, was dismissed and the judgement given that the Shechita had been expertly carried out. By 1894, fourteen Jewish businesses were listed in Aberdeen. In 1907, the then Chief Rabbi, Adler, visited the community

and gave a sermon in the synagogue. In 1910, The Scotsman reported, 'In Aberdeen it was ascertained that the Hebrew community at present consists of 23 heads of families and three single men, the total number of individuals being under 100. These are, with very few exceptions, of the poorest class, but they have a synagogue in Marischal Street, and maintain a pastor of their own. During the herring season Jewish salesman from Russia, who do business at Aberdeen, Peterhead, and Fraserburgh, augment the resident Jewish community.' The Jews of Dundee, by contrast, were determined to be 'more of the better-off class.' By 1929, according to Rabbi Salis Daiches, 'An even smaller number of Jews reside in Aberdeen – less than a dozen families, but they form a congregation, have a place of worship and a minister, who is also the teacher of the Hebrew classes, as well as a small cemetery. This means that each family, even the poorest, has to contribute a considerable amount, in some cases as much as ten shillings a week, towards the maintenance of the religious organisation and spiritual life of the congregation. And yet people persist in speaking of the miserly Aberdonian and especially of the avaricious Aberdeen Jew!' The character of the community remained largely Eastern European

"There were almost no Jews resident in Scotland in the eighteenth century"

until German Jews, fleeing Nazism, began to arrive in Aberdeen. If the Glasgow model is anything to go by, such Jews 'were initially received with sympathy, but as the Second World War approached, and Germans were increasingly seen as the enemy, even German Jews were treated with suspicion.'

As befitting a growing and wealthier community, in 1945, a new and larger synagogue, incorporating a Shul as well as communal areas, was consecrated in Dee Street. The synagogue itself is not purpose-built but a converted terraced house (it still contains an upstairs attic flat in which I

live). The population stood at fifty Jews, and four years later in 1949, a Jewish Literary and Social Society was established. In 1956, Rabbi Dr. Gustav Pfingst, a German refugee who had escaped with his family in 1939, was appointed rabbi but he died the following year. In 1960, the synagogue acquired a two-hundred-year-old Czech Sefer Torah from the Czech Memorial Scrolls Centre. The community numbered about 85 in 1966. In the 1980s, the synagogue was refurbished and in 1987, the bar mitzvah of Steven Shrago attracted a record number of seventy attending the shul and attracted a great deal of publicity. Today the number of Jews in Aberdeen, at least according to the most recent census, is approximately two hundred and approximately 50-60 participate in some form of the community's activities.

How closely I wonder does my situation sum up that of those other Jews, past and present, who came to Aberdeen? How many of them chose to move here down the ages, or arrived as a consequence of the usual push and pull factors that bring Jews to any part of the world? What exactly attracted Jews to such a remote and isolated community? For a long time Aberdeen 'enjoyed the reputation, rightly or wrongly, of being the only town in Scotland where Jews could not eke out a livelihood.' Nevertheless, the main reasons why Jews came can be listed here: Aberdeen's universities, refuge from Nazi Germany, military service, business and work opportunities, the Royal Aberdeen Infirmary, the energy industries and the oil rigs, all of which account for the migration of Jews to this city.

The standard of Aberdeen's two medical schools – King's College and Marischal College – was considered to be on a par with the best international institutions of higher learning. Yet, unlike Oxbridge, there was open entry, religious toleration and the fees and living expenses were relatively low. The first Jews in the English-speaking world to graduate with degrees did so from Aberdeen. Between 1739 and 1829 there were sixteen Jewish medical graduates although all but two of them were based in England. They

were largely refugees from the Portuguese Inquisition and Aberdeen represented their best hope of attaining a British medical qualification. The first Jew to graduate from Aberdeen was Jacob de Castro Sarmiento who received his M.D. in July 1739. A significant influx of American students came in 1930 when there were 203 applicants for places in medicine. Virtually all of those who applied were graduates of either New York University or the City College of New York (the 'Jewish' university). Other students came from South Africa, Germany and more recently Israel. Aberdeen's universities have also attracted Jews as staff. My example is perhaps typical. I arrived in September 2004 as a result of a job offer from the University of Aberdeen as a Lecturer in History. Many Jews that are here now and came in the past were undoubtedly attracted by the city's two universities – Aberdeen and Robert Gordon. Other notable scholars include David Daube who, in 1951, was appointed Professor of Jurisprudence at the University of Aberdeen.

Many of those who came as either staff or students were refugees from Nazism. Possibly the most famous (although not at the time) was the world-renowned philosopher Emil Fackenheim. In 1939-40 he pursued doctoral studies at the University of Aberdeen. While Fackenheim was in Aberdeen he was contracted by the synagogue to provide Hebrew lessons for the children. It was here that he picked up his recognisable brogueish, Scottish English. But his status as an enemy alien of military age in wartime led to his internment in 1941 and then deportation to Canada where he spent the next 20 months in a prison camp near Sherbrooke, Que. Fellow Holocaust survivor Eric Koch recalled how Fackenheim was arrested by a polite English bobby, who was invited in for tea, despite his mission. Years



Letter from Aberdeen

later, during the 1970s, another German-Jewish philosopher, Hannah Arendt, visited Aberdeen to deliver a series of lectures at the university.

Another who came was Peter Landsberg who obtained his first academic post at Aberdeen. There he met his future wife, the daughter of the Parliamentary correspondent of the Daily Express, through which connection they received a wedding present from Lord Beaverbrook. She studied botany, and, after bringing up three children became a published authority on medieval gardens. In 1934, Kurt Hahn, a teacher and educator forced out of Germany after 1933 as a result of his Jewish ancestry, founded Gordonstoun, near Aberdeen, on the model of his Schloss Salem School, embodying his educational philosophy of self-realization and social responsibility through community service. Hahn founded a further Preparatory School, Aberlour House, in 1947. Both schools survive today and are highly regarded British institutions even if it is often forgotten that Gordonstoun started as a school for refugee children and teachers from Germany.

Aberdeen has proved to be a tolerant place for Jews. Anti-Semitism, by and large, has not proved to be a problem here (although there have been definite anti-Jewish prejudices at times). This is because, in the words of historian Nicholas J. Evans, 'In the North East of Scotland, Aberdeen in particular, religion has been seen as a strictly personal thing. Whether Jew, Christian, Mormon or Muslim, it has been possible to observe one's own religious holydays as local holidays are rarely linked to Christian festivals (the notable exception being

Christmas Day). This is particularly true of Good Friday and Easter Monday (observed throughout the rest of the UK.) Such high holydays are not public holidays in the City of Aberdeen.' Even the Jewish Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland, bluntly known as the Committee for the Conversion of the Jews, didn't bother to carry out mission work in Aberdeen because it was 'understood that their poor are well cared for by their own rabbis and the better-off people.' Twice, no less, however, in 1896 and 1923, the mention of a synagogue in Aberdeen prompted laughter at the Church Assembly, with no explanation given, perhaps explaining why no mission work was undertaken.

Today in 2004, the community might be small and overlooked by its larger counterparts but it's still vibrant. Jews from all over the world including Israel, America, Uzbekistan, Germany, England, Scotland, South Africa, the Caribbean and Spain, attend. A full-range of holy day services, including Purim, Chanukah and most recently Passover, are held, as well as regular services and meals on Friday night and on Shabbat. I, for one, look forward to the next sixty years.

Nathan Abrams is a lecturer at the University of Aberdeen. At times, he feels like Dr. Joel Fleischman in an episode of Northern Exposure. His forthcoming book, Commentary Magazine 1945-1959: 'A journal of significant thought and opinion', will be published by Vallentine Mitchell in the autumn.

# The Danger of Disengagement



Avi Lehrer

"Out, damn'd spot!" Lady Macbeth cries, "out, I say!" (V: i: 35). The specific spots in the setting of Macbeth are Scotland and England, but the Israeli government is now switching the geography of the "out" to Gaza and parts of the West Bank.

What is the feeling in Israel about the proposed disengagement? With a population of nearly seven million people, Israel has nearly seven million differing views. In spite of broad categories of identifiable groupings, e.g. religious, secular, left, right, settlers, Sephardim, Ashkenazim, Anglos, etc there is much overlap. Take an Anglo left-wing religious male who has lived in Israel for just a few years. His opinions on the disengagement are not necessarily those of the religious parties or of the left-wing movements.

So knowing the difficulties of putting forward specific views, let me now do just that.

The settlers do not want to leave Gaza or any part of the West Bank because they believe that these areas are G-d given land to the Jews.

The left want to leave because they believe the occupation is wrong.

Many people want to disengage but only want to do that with an agreement with the Palestinians.

Many people want to stay and at the same time reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Some want a referendum on the issue. Others say that Israel is a parliamentary democracy and referendums are undesirable. Some, who want a referendum, want to exclude all non-Jews from voting in it.

What a mess!!

It gets worse. The Knesset has already voted in favour of the disengagement and the people who are now calling for a referendum are doing so because they want to overturn the Knesset's decision. In Europe and other places where referendums have been held, it has

always been held prior to a parliamentary decision on the issue. Not afterwards as is now proposed in Israel.

## Peace after Disengagement

If there is disengagement will there be peace and security? Unlikely. Disengagement of Gaza will still mean that the sea and air access to Gaza is controlled by Israel. In a short time, the Palestinians will be crying to the world that they are still living in a giant prison camp. If no real progress is made towards a final agreement with the Palestinians about borders and a general peace settlement, it is likely that within a year or two, the Palestinians will be calling out loudly for a Federation of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank to be called Palestine Israel. They will say that each entity will be able to control its own local matters but international and federal matters will be decided by one Parliament (which will have a slight Palestinian majority). Israel will have a devolved parliament just like Scotland. It already has a parliamentary building, so there will be no need to pour millions of pounds in that direction. That is the only saving grace. The Palestinians will muster 150 votes in the UN to support the Federation idea and Israel will be struggling against overwhelming international pressure. Then the term "Palestine Israel" as the name for the federation will quietly be changed to just "Palestine".

This is not quite a doomsday prediction, but pretty horrific for those of us who want an independent Jewish state called Israel. Perhaps it is about time that a think tank calculates the reward/risk ratios of a partial "disengagement".

## What about "Total Disengagement"

In the absence of an agreement with the Palestinian Authority, I support the idea of a "total disengagement". The Government of Israel should choose a line (whether along the security barrier or elsewhere)

and state this is what we require to be our borders. Before a Knesset vote, there should be a referendum in Israel of all its citizens entitled to vote as to the acceptability of such borders. If the idea is accepted the Knesset should then vote. If the Knesset approves the proposal then it should be implemented unilaterally in the absence of Palestinian co-operation. The international community should be asked to help the Palestinians with regards to government and administration. All Israel government and army personnel and equipment should be brought back to within Israel's new borders.

The Palestinians should be able to have total control of land air and sea routes adjoining their borders. The fear of course is that heavy weaponry will be brought into such areas. That I think is a risk worth taking. Any Israeli who wants to live in a Palestinian area can do so with Palestinian permission, but would not receive Israeli protection. Any Palestinian who wants to live within Israel, can do so with Israeli permission, but would not receive Palestinian protection. Workers will not be able to travel between the countries until there was a formal peace agreement. The world's politicians could not travel between Israel and Palestine without an agreement from both sides. Any citizen of a country that requires a visa from Israelis, will have to also obtain an Israeli visa to travel to Israel. This idea is not "isolationist" but is more likely to be acceptable to the international community than the outcome of a "partial disengagement" and more importantly, it is likely to provide Israel with greater security and peace in the long term. Perhaps then our sons will no longer have to spend their precious youth in the military. Perhaps then, we need not fear terrorist attacks in our towns. Perhaps then we can concentrate on improving the quality of life for all Israel's citizens, and provide increased education and welfare.

Avi Lehrer is an English lawyer who went on aliyah six years ago, and has since then been making films and is involved in the media, including British media-watch coverage of Israel.

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# Highlights of our 50th Edition Celebration Dinner

Juila Merrick (picture compilation by Malcolm Merrick)

As the guests assembled there was a repeated murmur of 'is he here yet? Are they all coming? Has he arrived?' and then joyful greetings. In a packed hall we found our tables. John Cosgrove, veteran, and sometime chair, of the editorial board, introduced the speakers: Rabbi Shalom Shapira and Eitan Abraham, the first editor, Mike Adler who edited 15 issues after his late wife Ruth had made a brilliant job of several editions. Then the celebrity guest Ned Temko spoke and finally Peter Bennett who was now handing the editorship to Judith Gilbert. Between speeches we ate, talked and drank a toast to The Star.

Judy Sischy had organised the whole event with the help of Mike Adler, Eve Oppenheim, John Cosgrove, Sidney Caplan, and with the advice and catering experience of Anita Mendelssohn and hard work of Christine Burns. Judy Sischy asked the editorial board to toast 'a rainbow of readers'.

Ned Temko was presented with a copy of Two Worlds by David Daiches and a bottle of 15 year old single malt, the same age as The Star.

Eitan Abraham tells the story of the founding of the Star in the 50th edition. Eitan spoke of his instant rapport with Rabbi Shapira who had 'a refreshing outlook on the art of the possible'. The Rabbi suggested that the Star could be used more for education. He suggested we looked again at page 26, issue 19 where 'a girl's batmitzvah project was published; it was no less important than the haftarah read out by a boy at his barmitzvah.'

Mike Adler spoke of the uncertain finances and the dilemmas over editorial policy. He had wanted to balance community news with a more national outlook and contributors who would speak their mind. He admitted there 'had appeared to have been some rumblings of dissent'. He highlighted interviews with 'two scions of the community Abe Rabstaff and Joe Lurie' that he had made. As a busy academic he was not always able to give as much time as he would have liked to The Star and there was laughter when he admitted he had to leave some things to the last minute. He thanked Ian Shein for his gentle chivalry and wise council and for keeping him in touch with the

community. This day was the eleventh anniversary of Ruth's passing and he paid homage to her role as editor. 'Ruth had agreed to become editor providing that she had complete editorial control and that she should be answerable to the editorial board.'

Ned Temko, discussing the rival religious and the cultural definitions of Judaism, advised us 'Maybe what has kept Jewish life vibrant and vital, what has sustained it over several thousand years is not your view or my view it is the argument. And the role of the Jewish Chronicle or The Edinburgh Star is not to gratuitously offend or upset everyone but it is partly to make sure that you spell the barmitzvah boy's name right, is partly to make sure we hold up an image that people enjoy Jewish life, but ultimately the thing without which an excellent Jewish publication like The Edinburgh Star or the Jewish Chronicle cannot survive, and I would argue Jewish communal life in the 21st century is the argument and if you lose the argument you're lost.'

Peter Bennett has brought the magazine into the twenty first century, most apparent in the new design. Here daughter Debbie who runs an advertising firm in Glasgow helped him. He changed production methods so that a print ready disk can be delivered to Meigle Printers in the borders. His third change has been to focus the magazine more locally. Contributions are sought about the local community or should be written by someone with a local connection. He thanked John Cosgrove for being "a tower of strength, for the voluntary help at all levels and the Editorial Board who all contribute to where we are today.

He was pleased to hand the editor's job to Judy Gilbert described by Shalom Shapira as 'ever blossoming'. Judy and Anthony cut and pasted many of the layouts of earlier issues and Anthony has provided countless line drawings.

**Some facts and figures**

**1st five editions** by Eitan Abraham

**Copyright of the name** 'the Edinburgh Star' belongs to Eitan Abraham

**1st edition** cost £450.74 and was 28 pages long

**The most expensive edition** (3rd edition, 48 pages and a glossy cover, art by Robin Spark) cost £4000

**Longest serving editor** 15 editions by Michael Adler

**Awards received** from the Board of Deputies

**Special commendation** for Issue 33, for Esti Sheinberg's article in particular.

**Runner up** for 'best communal magazine' in the year 2000.

**The readers**

160 copies to The Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation

200 by request from Jews and non-Jews

200 in the UK

36 to Israel distributed by Howard Stern

**International** a few

*All thanks to Ian Shein, Norman Dorfman and Norman Berger*

**The editors** Eitan Abraham, Ruth Adler, Michael Adler, Peter Bennett

**Guest editors** Julia Merrick, Esti Sheinberg

*The Star is funded by donations, advertisements and from Rosh Hashanah greetings.*

# Around and About

## The Shein Scene

21 ladies of WIZO attended a lunch at the home of Irene Mason on 26th January where they heard a talk and witnessed a demonstration on make up by Angela Bryden, head of Helena Rubenstein's team at Jenners department store. The ladies acquired knowledge on remaining young and beautiful, which no one would ever suggest that they require. A most satisfying meal was served by Kate, Sylvia and Irene and raised over £200 for funds.

On Shabbat 26th February a Youth Service took place in the Synagogue in which several members of the Cheder participated. Duncan Brannan and Daniel Gilroy acted as wardens with Isaac Forsyth as Shammass. James Hyams and William Gilroy undertook Torah readings while synopses of the Torah came from the ladies' gallery in the persons of Melia Rosen, Isobel Kelpie, Sarah Levy, Jessica Spencer, Amanda Hyams, Sonya Rosen, Erica Budd, Jacqueline Kahn and Sarah-Beth Neville. Michael Taylor read the prayer for the Queen. Lawrence Taylor, Maurice Griffin and Duncan Brannan read Musaf, Kiddush and Benching respectively. Katherine Neville gave the sermon. The youngest children of the community were also in attendance to give support to their friends. After the service, lunch was served in the community centre. A short talk by Mr. Adam Mallerman of Tribe followed, accompanied by Dalya Blitz. This concluded a most pleasant Shabbat morning to which all credit must go to the willing and competent youth.



The annual community quiz took place on 6th March in which 75 contestants, testing their brainpower on a variety of subjects, exhibited an admirable range of knowledge interspersed occasionally by ingenious guesswork. At a half-way

stage during which a first class supper was served, a presentation was made to popular Christine Burns to mark her 60th birthday and also her 25 years as caretaker of the Synagogue and community centre. Dr. Philip Mason, president, spoke of Christine's loyal, conscientious and ever willing attitude to tackle all her many varied duties in her ever cheerful manner. Mrs. Anita Mendelssohn, co-chair of the community centre, added her committee's thanks and wished Christine and her husband Dave, whose birthday also was close, many happy returns. This was echoed by enthusiastic rendering of 'happy birthday' by the gathering.

A special thanks to Hilary Rifkind and her helpers for excellent catering and congratulations to the winning team of Hazel and John Cosgrove, Hilary and Arnold Rifkind, Myrna and Morris Kaplan, Clarice and Berl Osborne, Freda Rifkin and Eve Oppenheim for proving to be worthy winners if only by a margin of half a point. Quiz Master was Ian Shein.

On 13 March another coffee morning took place in which members met in cosy surroundings to discuss the latest gossip, news, recipes and fashions. The ever-popular book and cake stalls were in evidence. Cheder parents augmented the attendance and further coffee mornings are planned.



On Thursday 24th March The Megillah was read as never before. Rabbi David Rose equipped himself with hats to suit all the characters and a voice to match. Mordechai appeared in a bowler hat, Esther with a glittery crown and magic wand, and of course Haman as the devil himself, cracking a big black whip. The energy with which the epic

tale was delivered was truly impressive and kept the whole community on the edge of its seat.

The prize for the best costume in the parade went to Edan Naor who went as Esther. Second prize went to Sarah Levy whose half and half costume (pyjamas and school uniform) represented day and night. The older children enacted the story in an innovative way having been entirely responsible for the production themselves. Hamen taschen were enjoyed followed by a satisfying meal organised by Hillary Rifkind.

A Friday night dinner under the auspices of the Shul events committee took place on 18 March in which 65 people participated. After the service, the efficient catering team led by Hilary Rifkind served a dinner, which could only be described as superb. Rabbi Rose welcomed everyone and the president, Philip Mason, thanked all for coming to make the evening so pleasant and enjoyable. Also present from Manchester were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Gaffin with their son Joseph, recently engaged to Jacqueline, daughter of Doreen and Lawrence Bowman. The president wished both families and the young couple a hearty Mazeltov.



A gastronomic feast, better known as the Lowrie Lunch, delighted 24 members of WIZO on 30 March when that distinguished connoisseur of good eating, Tom Lowrie gave a demonstration of how food should be prepared and cooked. Using the kitchen of Kate Goodwin's home he cooked and presented the humble haddock in his own inimitable style culminating in a most tasty and appetising dish. High praise came from the ladies who had the pleasure of savouring the end result. There

followed Tom's own ginger cake supplemented by home made biscuits baked by wife Vicky. A most satisfying afternoon resulted in the WIZO coffers jingling to the tune of £200.

WIZO's innovative diary included a visit to the small cinema within the Scotsman Hotel on April when an audience saw the film 'Keeping the Faith', a comedy with Jewish interest.

Thereafter the group made their way to the community centre where they enjoyed a buffet supper. Joining them were two members of Histadrut, Israeli Trade Union, who were en route to attend the TUC annual conference in Dundee. The two, Jaacov Shamay, acting chairmen of Histadrut and former member of the Knesset, and Avi Bitchur, chairman of the link organisation between the latter and the

Histadrut, had expressed a desire to meet members of the Edinburgh community. They expressed their pleasure at the invitation to attend the function and thanked co-chairmen Kate Goodwin and Sylvia Donne for their hospitality.

## Society Reports Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society Report

Avery Meiksin

From Judas to Murder Inc., Jews have oft been depicted by their detractors as criminals. Michael Berkowitz, Professor in Modern Jewish History at University College London, addressed the "Facts, Myths and Lies about Criminality and the Jewish Question." When the Nazis found that direct anti-Semitism failed to meet their expectations for wide-spread rejection of Jews from the professions in Germany, they reverted to the more successful, and time-tested, ploy of depicting Jews as criminals. Dickens portrayed Fagin as a Jew because he believed it more authentic as a representation of a dominant figure in the underworld. From where does the view of Jew as criminal derive? All lies? Not completely. In the sixteenth to eighteenth century Europe, the exclusion of Jews from professions forced them into becoming traders and pedlars, who sometimes, if only for the sake of survival, dealt in stolen goods. Jewish robber bands and smugglers roamed parts of Europe in the sixteenth century. Moses Mendelssohn and G. E. Lessing would later rally to the defence of the impoverished Jew as a victim of society, forced into businesses that were more tainted by criminality than the well-to-do professions. As Mendelssohn promised, after the Jewish emancipation, the prevalence of Jews in the underworld dramatically declined. But the reputation stuck like mud for several more decades, surviving into the twentieth century in the form of Jew as Bolshevik, which became a basis for curbing the immigration of Jews into Britain and America.



If today "asylum seeker" is a code-word for Muslim, so a hundred years ago "alien" was a code-word for Jew. Brian Klug, senior research fellow in philosophy at Oxford University, told us of "The Other Balfour: Recalling the 1905 Aliens Act." In the two decades preceding the Aliens Act, 100,000 East European Jews settled in England, including thousands who came on foot from Romania in the 'March of Despair.' The poor among the immigrants were viewed as a liability, and pressure was brought to stem the flow of Jewish immigrants. Balfour himself backed the Act, arguing that Britain had the right to keep out everyone who doesn't 'add to the strength of the community.' This hardly seems the same Balfour beloved by many Jews for the Balfour Declaration only twelve years later. But in fact one of Balfour's central purposes in the Declaration was to provide a homeland for the Jews, who he viewed as a separate nation that would never integrate in Britain. This would seem to suggest Balfour held Jews in low esteem. But the opposite was the case. Shaped by the reverence for the Old Testament of his Evangelical upbringing, Balfour regarded Jews almost as bigger than life. He declared them to be the most 'gifted race' since the ancient Greeks. In a show of support of the developing Jewish community in Palestine, he accepted the invitation to lay the cornerstone of the Hebrew University in 1925. Most poignantly for the future State of Israel, Weizmann reported that when he informed Balfour of the sufferings of European Jewry, Balfour wept.

Claire Singerman, a Senior Teacher in Hutcheson's Grammar School in Glasgow, spoke on "Which Way Now? Reflections of a Jewish Teacher." She gave her

unrestrained and well-argued point of view regarding Jewish issues in schools today. She was particularly concerned over the introduction of Holocaust studies. She pointed out that the official web page of the recently instituted Holocaust Memorial Day makes scant reference to Jews or Nazis in its principal aims. Rather than focussing on key questions like how Nazism could rise in a culturally advanced state, how the Nazis could come to achieve as much as they had, and what implications this has for Germany today, the day focuses instead on the unrealistic promotion of a perfect world. She was equally critical of some of the Jewish approaches to the teaching of the Holocaust, such as declaring its victims 'martyrs,' when in fact many identified little with being Jewish, especially as anyone with just one Jewish grandparent, even if raised as a Christian, was fated for the death camps. It is false to glorify the victims, and turns the Holocaust into schmaltz. Rather, as I.B. Singer emphasized in 'Enemies: A Love Story,' suffering doesn't ennoble the victim: the most ordinary people suffered, and they stayed ordinary.

At the final session of the Lit for the 2004-05 season, the speaker was the distinguished journalist and broadcaster Jonathan Freedland, familiar to many Lit members through his column in the Guardian and his contributions to the Jewish Chronicle. His talk, which was one of a series of nationwide events supported by Jewish Book Week, elaborated on the themes of his recently-published second book, 'Jacob's Gift: A Journey into the Heart of Belonging.' Inspired

by the birth of his son Jacob, he explored the lives of three very different members of his own family tree, each one personifying the longings, dilemmas, and identity-crises of 20th-century Jews: Nat, the upwardly mobile Edwardian immigrant who was both a passionately-assimilated Englishman and a passionate Zionist—yet who found himself serving as one of the British Empire's gatekeepers in Palestine; Mick, the militant East End radical fighting homegrown fascism in the 1930s; Sara, brought up in a pious but emotionally and physically impoverished household in the ultra-orthodox stronghold of Petach-Tikva. Extraordinary and fascinating as these life-stories were in their own right, they also provided the basis for Freedland's illuminating and passionately-argued consideration of the moral and political issues around Jewish identity here and now.



## Council of Christians and Jews

Micheline Brannan

On 3 February we began our 2005 programme with a discussion on The Theology of the Land, led by Rabbi Rose and Professor David Fergusson of New College, and chaired by Micheline Brannan. The Rabbi explained how the Lord made a 2 part covenant with Abraham: the covenant with the people of Israel was consummated in the giving of the Torah on Mt Sinai. It is eternal. The covenant of the Land was conditional nationalism – the Jews can never lose the right to the Land of Israel but can be exiled on account of their disobedience. The Rabbis debated the Jewish right to the Land throughout the 1900 years of exile but political Zionism only started in the 19th Century. Different groups dealt in different ways to the issue of how to respond to the majority population of the Land. Some were dismissive of Zionism as a secular movement. Some thought it would not succeed. Others, such as the Neturei Karta, were opposed to the idea of a State of Israel to the point of heresy. Rav Kook, a Zionist, explained that even though we believe the Land is ours, we still had to pay for it by purchasing it from the former landowners. The modern dilemma is how, theologically, to see the State of Israel. The 6 day war in 1967 convinced many that the hand of God was at work, but the Yom Kippur War in 1973 came as a terrible shock to Israelis and gave rise to the opposite extremes of Peace Now and Gush Emunim. The issue of how to achieve peace continues to exercise the Rabbis, with some believing that no part of the Land may be given up but others, such as Rabbi Melchior, accepting that although the Land was promised to the Jews it is not necessary for Jews to possess the whole of it in the present day, and that Pikuach Nefesh can justify giving up parts such as Gaza.

Professor Fergusson confirmed that there was also pluralism in the Christian response to the Land. There were few references to the Land as such in the New Testament but it was not clear whether that was because the right of the Jews to the Land was taken for granted or it was simply not on the agenda as Christianity was increasingly seen as reaching out to the gentile world. The Hebrew scriptures were not clear about the borders. In the present day, Christian theologians are fearful to address the issue because the discourse of human rights may be trumped by theological claims. Human rights considerations lead contemporary Christian ecumenical circles to be reticent about the Land. However the Dispensationalism movement sees Jewish return to Israel as foreshadowing the final era. While some modern Christian theologians fear the taint of Dispensationalism, there is also the fact that Supersessionism, which claims that the new covenant supersedes the promises of the Old Testament, has now been rejected by mainstream Christianity. Therefore the Jews can still now be regarded as the People of God. The fluid boundaries makes it possible for Zionist claims to the Land and human rights to be reconciled, in Christian thought, provided that the rights of others to live in the same area are also respected. These speeches were followed by a lively debate among the mixed audience. It was a very stimulating and enjoyable evening.

On 1 March 2005 a group of about 10 travelled to Glasgow for a joint meeting with the Glasgow branch of the CCJ addressed by the Moderator, Dr Alison Elliot. Dr Elliot had recently visited Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the Tsunami and spoke vividly and movingly about all her experiences. The main lessons

were that international agencies should seek as far as possible to use local expertise to carry out aid and rebuilding projects. To do so means that the rebuilding will be self-sustaining and empowering of the local people. Otherwise there is a risk that the short term enthusiasm of international aid will actually make things worse in the long term. And also in rebuilding, there is the dilemma of how much to modernise the way of life of the dispossessed people. Is it better to restore as much as possible of the traditional way of life even if it is fragile and vulnerable to further disasters? The Moderator gave us a vivid picture of the problems and dilemmas that have arisen as a result of the Tsunami as well as some intensely moving stories of loss and survival against the odds.

On 14 April, we met in the Community Centre for a demonstration Seder or Passover meal. A party from Craigbank Parish Church were in the synagogue for a visit and Rabbi Rose invited them to stay, swelling our numbers to over 20. We read the Haggadah, listened to the traditional songs on a tape, and benefited from explanations by Rabbi Rose. The ritual foods of parsley, salt water, Charoset (symbolic mortar that slaves in Egypt used to make bricks) and bitter herbs were blessed and tasted and we also had our share of unleavened bread or Matzah. This was a wonderful introduction to the Seder for our Christian visitors and also a helpful reminder to Jewish members of the meaning of the Seder in the run up to Passover.

Our final meeting of the year, with Cardinal O'Brien, on Tuesday 17 May, will be reported in the next edition.

The CCJ needs a new secretary and if anyone wants to volunteer please ring Micheline on 0131 667 3409.



The Edinburgh boys at the Tribe Brn Milenab Weekend 18-20th March at Carmel College

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# The Role of Halakhah (Jewish Law) in the Legal System of the State of Israel

Rabbi Prof. Daniel Sinclair LL.B (Hons.), LL.M, LL.D

1. The State of Israel is not a theocracy, and the ethos of its legal system is primarily secular and liberal in nature. There are, however, certain areas in which *halakhah* does play an official role in Israeli law. The foremost example is the provision that all marriages and divorces of Jewish citizens of Israel fall within the sole jurisdiction of the Rabbinical Courts. Another well known example is the determination of Jewish identity, which is an important factor in Israel's secular citizenship law. These examples are discussed in sections two and three below.

## 2. Family Law in Israel

Judicial autonomy in matters of personal status i.e. marriage, divorce and related matters, was granted under Ottoman law to the different religious communities living in what is today the State of Israel, and this arrangement was also adopted by the British Mandatory government. Jurisdiction in matters other than personal status was in the hands of the secular courts system, and was not linked to religious-communal affiliation. The Rabbinical Courts charged with administering family law for Jews in both the Ottoman and the Mandatory periods were staffed by traditional rabbinical scholars, and applied pure *halakhah*.

The legal system which came into existence at the time of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was that of the British Mandate, and, as a result, matters of personal status affecting Jewish citizens of Israel remained in the hands of the Rabbinical Courts. Under the Rabbinical Courts Jurisdiction (Marriage and Divorce) Act, 5713-1953, "matters relating to the marriage and divorce of Jewish citizens or residents of the State of Israel shall be within the sole jurisdiction of the Rabbinical Courts", and the law to be applied in these matters is "the law of the Torah". The sole jurisdiction of the Rabbinical Courts in this area is well-entrenched

in the Israeli legal system, and the *Women's Equal Rights Law*, 5711-1951, specifically excludes matters of marriage and divorce from the principle of equality between the sexes enshrined in this law.

Rabbinical Court decisions are, however, subject to judicial review by secular Israeli courts in relation to jurisdictional disputes, and breaches of natural justice.

Under Jewish law, the only way a woman may be divorced from her husband is by receiving a *get* (bill of divorce) from him. Rabbinical Courts may bring certain forms of pressure to bear upon the husband, and recent legislation permits the withholding of licenses, passports, and credit from recalcitrant husbands, in addition to the option of imprisonment referred to above. At the end of the day, however, if the husband refuses to grant his wife a *get*, she remains legally married to him. Since the wife is ultimately dependent upon her husband for the divorce, it is not difficult for him to use his superior legal position in order to gain a more favourable settlement than he deserves. In some cases, husbands resist all types of pressure to divorce, and cause their wives years of anguish before the *get* is finally granted. A woman who is unable to re-marry because of a halakhic impediment generated by her husband's refusal to give her a *get*, or lack of certainty

regarding his death, is referred to as an *agunah*, and the failure of the halakhic authorities to provide an effective solution for these women is, undoubtedly, a major problem in contemporary Israeli family law.

Other problematic areas of Jewish family law, from the perspective of the secular community at any rate, are the prohibition on marriages between Jews of priestly descent (*kohanim*) and divorcees (or converts), and the ban on marriages between the progeny of incest or maternal adultery - known as *mamzerim* - and other Jews. Secular Israeli couples who are unable to marry as a result of these prohibitions often marry abroad, and upon their return to Israel their married status is recognized, for all non-religious purposes, by secular Israeli law. Their children, however, suffer from the same impediment as far as Jewish marriage inside Israel is concerned, and need a foreign marriage certificate in order to obtain the practical advantages of marital status under Israeli law.

Both the *agunah* issue and the impediments to marriage arising from the laws applying to priests and *mamzerim* are important items in the ongoing discussions in contemporary Israel between religious and secular Jews. Amongst the solutions suggested for the solving of the *agunah* problem is the Talmudic principle that in certain cases, the rabbis are empowered to annul marriages (*hafka `at kiddushin*). The introduction of a form of civil marriage is the preferred solution for the other problems.

## 3. Jewish Identity

Under the *Law of Return*, 5710-1950, "every Jew has the right to come into Israel as an immigrant". This law was passed shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel and in the aftermath of the European Holocaust. The intention was to provide every Jew in the world with automatic Israeli

citizenship so that no Jews would ever again be forced to wander the world as stateless persons. In the leading case of *Rufeisen v Minister of the Interior*, H.C. 72/62, P.D. 16, 2442, the Supreme Court ruled that the petitioner, although born to a Jewish mother, and hence, halakhically Jewish, would not be granted citizenship under the *Law of Return*, on the grounds that he had converted to Catholicism during the Second World War, and now stood before the court in the garb of a Carmelite monk with the name of Brother Daniel. The Court held that the *Law of Return* is a secular law, and hence, the definition of term "Jew" is not a halakhic one. It is, in fact, to be defined by non-halakhic criteria i.e. empathy with the history of the Jewish people, and affinity with its religion. On this basis, Brother Daniel could not be recognized as a Jew for purposes of automatic citizenship. The outcome of the case, which occurred not long after the end of World War II, was undoubtedly influenced by the negative view of Israeli society at the time towards both Holocaust apostates and the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church was particularly resented because of its attitude towards the Jews during the Holocaust period.

A few years after the Brother Daniel episode, the Court applied its secular approach to Jewish identity in a case involving an Israeli naval officer who had married a non-Jew, and wished to register his children in the Population Registry as "Israelis without any religious affiliation" (*Shalit v Minister of the Interior*, H.C. 58/68, P.D. 23, 477). Since the children were not born to a Jewish mother, they were not halakhically Jewish. The Court, however, following the Brother Daniel precedent, held that in principle, there would be no legal bar to this type of secular registration. Nevertheless, it was unable to order the Minister to register the Shalit children as secular Israelis, since there was no such category in the *Population Registry Law*, and any change in the law would have to come about as a result of legislation by the Knesset. This decision sparked off a heated public debate between religious and secular Israelis over the issue of Jewish

identity in Israeli law, and in its wake, the *Law of Return* was amended, and a Jew for the purposes of this law was defined as someone "born to a Jewish mother, or converted to Judaism, and who is not the member of another faith" (Sec. 4B). The amendment to the law also provided that the right of a Jew, as defined under section 4B, to automatic citizenship "was to be vested in a child and grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew, and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew, except for a person who has been a Jew, and has voluntarily changed his religion" (Sec. 4A). This legislation incorporated both the halakhic definition of Jewish identity, and the precedent established in the Brother Daniel case into the enacted law. It also gave expression to the secular belief that the right to automatic citizenship should not be withheld from close family members who are not halakhically Jewish for at least three generations.

The issue of non-orthodoxy conversion to Judaism has been considered by the Supreme Court on a number of occasions. In *Association of Torah Observant Sefardim-Tenuat Shas v Director of the Population Registry* H.C. 264/87, P.D. 40(4) 436, the Court held that a declaration on the part of an immigrant that he or she had been converted to Judaism in the Diaspora, together with an official certificate attesting to that fact, would be sufficient for the purposes of citizenship under the *Law of Return*, and registration in the Population Registry. Once again, the Court followed the secular approach to Jewish identity for citizenship purposes established in its earlier decisions. It also followed the principle of international law according to which certificates in matters of personal status issued by other countries must be accepted at their face value unless they are patently false. This principle also applies to certificates of conversion to Judaism.

Until recently, the underlying assumption in Israeli law was that conversions carried out inside Israel would only be valid if they were approved by the Chief Rabbinate. The

legal basis for this assumption lay in a Mandatory Ordinance dating from 1925 which required the authorization of any conversion by the head of the religious community which the convert was seeking to join. Since the legal heads of the Jewish community are the Chief Rabbis of Israel, it was evident that non-Orthodox conversions inside Israel would not possess any legal validity. This changed, however, with the decision of the Supreme Court in *Pessaro (Goldstein) v Minister of the Interior* H.C. 103 1/93, P.D. 49 (4) 661. In this case, the majority held that the 1925 Ordinance only applied to matters of family law, it did not affect citizenship; hence, the validity of a Reform conversion carried out inside Israel did not turn on the 1925 Ordinance. The Court justified its ruling in terms of statutory interpretation, and the argument that the democratic rights of non-Orthodox Jews would be adversely affected by any other interpretation of the Ordinance, both in relation to their freedom of religion, and in the light of the principle of equal protection before the law. It is worthwhile emphasizing, however, that the Court limited its decision to the scope of the 1925 Ordinance; it did not provide a direct answer to the question of whether a Reform conversion would be recognized by Israeli law in relation to citizenship and registration. This point was made repeatedly and forcefully by the President of the Supreme Court, Barak J., more than once in the course of the decision:

"We have decided that in order to recognise a conversion pursuant to the *Law of Return and the Population Registry Law*, it need not comply with the requirements of the 1925 Ordinance. We are not taking this matter any further. We are not deciding which conversion is valid under these two laws. We are also not deciding whether a Reform conversion is valid pursuant to the *Law of Return*. Hence we have not ordered that the petitioner be recognised as Jewish under the Law of Return, and we have not ordered that she should be registered as Jewish in the Population Registry."

The strength of this caveat and its repetition attest to the tension

generated by the debate over the definition of Jewish identity for the purposes of Israeli citizenship and registration. The issue of Jewish identity is fraught with symbolism, and is one of the main flashpoints in the ongoing conflict between the religious and secular populations in the State of Israel. The Supreme Court has often been required to act as an arbiter with regard to the determination of Jewish identity in Israel, and it has never been very comfortable in this role. Clearly, the Court in the *Pessaro* case did not want to make a definitive pronouncement to the effect that Jewish identity for citizenship purposes is a totally secular matter, and chose, therefore, to limit its decision to the clarification of the scope of the 1925 Ordinance.

The Supreme Court's decision was strongly criticized, and the Ne'eman Committee was set up by the Israeli government in 1990 in order to find a way to resolve the conversion issue in relation to citizenship and registration. In its report, the Committee recommended the establishment of an educational institution for the training of candidates for conversion from all the streams of contemporary Judaism. The actual conversion ritual, however, would be performed by a Rabbinical Court consisting of Orthodox rabbis only, and the conversions would be recognized as valid by the Chief Rabbinate. There is halakhic precedent for setting up such special Rabbinical Courts for the purpose of converting candidates of dubious motivation in order to maintain Jewish unity, and to stem the tide of assimilation.

However, the Ne'eman Committee's proposals were not accepted by the Chief Rabbinate, and as a result, the national initiative collapsed. One such conversion institute was established on a private basis in Jerusalem. The struggle for a formula which will accommodate both liberal democracy and fidelity to the halakhah in the area of conversion to Judaism, is one of the focal issues in the contemporary dialogue between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews in Israel.

Rabbi Daniel Sinclair will be continuing his theme on Halakhah in the next edition where he will discuss its application in areas other than family law and Jewish identity.

## The Flick Collection of Contemporary Art

Samuel Robin Spark



Wartsaal Wildegg, 1989, Gean Frederick Schnyder

On Sunday 28 November the Literary Society heard a talk from Mr Richard Calvocoressi, Director of the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art and the Dean Gallery, on the Flick Collection. The title of his talk, "The Flick Collection of Contemporary Art: Whitewashing of Blood Money or the Jewel in Berlin's Crown?", reflects the intense controversy engendered in Germany and elsewhere by the recent exhibition in the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum in Berlin of about four hundred of the two thousand five hundred pieces in the Flick Collection of modern art. The collection is on loan to the Museum for seven years and selections of works from it will be shown intermittently during that time.

Why the controversy? The collection belongs to Friedrich Christian Flick, grandson of Friedrich Flick, a wealthy Nazi industrialist who employed some fifty thousand slave labourers in his munitions factories during the Second World War. After the war, Friedrich Flick was tried for war crimes and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, of which he served three. During this time he and his fellow-prisoners, also war criminals, were of course kept in conditions considerably more comfortable than those experienced by their free compatriots at the time. On his release he was able to rebuild his industrial empire and at the time of his death in 1972 he was West Germany's wealthiest citizen and fifth richest man in the world. He left a ten per cent stake in his business empire (which no longer exists as such, having been bought over in the 1980's) to each of his three grandchildren. Friedrich Christian Flick sold his share for sixty

million (US) dollars and used the money to finance his art collection. After the war, Friedrich Flick refused to compensate the slave labourers who had worked in his factories. His grandson has also refused to contribute to a compensation fund set up by Chancellor Schroeder but has set up in Potsdam with his own money a foundation to combat worldwide xenophobia, intolerance and racism. His view of the matter is that his grandfather was tried, convicted and punished, and he cannot be expected to share his grandfather's guilt. It is this refusal to acknowledge that reparation should be made for wrongdoing that is at the heart of the fierce opposition to the exhibition is being shown in Berlin in a publicly funded gallery and the acceptance by the gallery of F C Flick's renovation at his own expense of a disused warehouse in which to display the largest works. The underlying question of why his grandfather and his fellow Nazis were allowed to rebuild their industrial empires after the war is one that the German nation has not yet dealt with. Part of the reason, of course, is that, when the Cold War developed, it was necessary for West Germany to be built up quickly and Flick and his associates had the skills to do that. Only now is it possible to look back with some degree of objectivity and examine the compromises made at the time.

Of course many art lovers, including some Jews, applauded the holding of the exhibition. Chancellor Schroeder, himself an art collector, attended the opening. Modern art is inadequately represented in German art galleries, a legacy of the Nazi view of such art as "degenerate". Supporters of the exhibition, the Chancellor among them, wish to move on, to be open to all modes of artistic expression and finally to lay the past to rest. Flick himself in a statement included in the exhibition catalogue says, "I began collecting art in the mid-1980's. It was not long before my collection transcended the kind of relationship that one

can maintain as a private collector. The collection's sheer size and quality inevitably gave rise to aspirations to share my passion with as many people as possible, and to find a home for my works of art, one where they really belonged: namely in the public realm."

So much controversy has surrounded the exhibition that the art itself has been somewhat neglected in the media. The Flick Collection is a collection of contemporary works including, as well as paintings and photographs, some extremely large installations. Artists represented include Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy, Marlene Dumas, Larry Clark, Cindy Sherman and Duane Hanson. Mr Calvocoressi felt that insufficient time had elapsed to be able to say which of the works have a lasting future as opposed to purely contemporary significance. One of his favourite



Ich kann beim besten Willen mein Hakenkreutz entdecken, 1984, Martin Keppenberger

pieces was "Motorcycle Accident" by Duane Hanson, an exhibition of whose work was recently shown at the Gallery of Modern Art here in Edinburgh. It was typical of Flick, however, he felt, to have chosen such a grim piece rather than a more humane or humorous one. His taste seems to tend towards the aggressive, the confrontational and the alienating, the extreme and the repulsive. There is, of course, a long tradition in German art of dwelling

## Star Trek into the past

Answers in the next issue



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Robot K46 – Nam June Paik

upon the darker and uglier side of human life. Certainly delight, joy and humane feeling are largely missing here.

So far as museums and galleries are concerned, the controversy over the

Reproduction of pictures by kind permission of Richard Calvocoressi, Director of the 'Gallery of Modern Art', Edinburgh.

Flick Collection highlights the problems which can arise when accepting gifts or loans from private collectors. Museums cannot afford to ignore private collectors; they simply do not have the resources at their disposal to be independent. But conditions imposed by private owners can lead to a conflict of interest. We are fortunate in Scotland to have a very good record in the matter of collaboration between museums and private collectors. In thanking Mr Calvocoressi for his very interesting and thought-provoking talk, Robin Spark expressed his dismay and revulsion that the sufferings of so



Garten Skulpter 1968 – Dieter Rot

many slave labourers had incurred so unbelievably light a penalty as a short prison sentence, a view in which many of those present concurred.

Since the talk by Richard Calvocoressi on the Flick Art Collection, it was reported in Haaretz (27 April 2005) that Flick recently donated \$6.5 million into a fund for Nazi-era forced labourers. Quoting from Haaretz, "Friedrich Christian Flick had maintained that, as an individual, he was not obligated to pay into the fund set up by the government and industry - a stance that prompted intense criticism from Jewish groups and others....However, a statement last Friday from the foundation that runs the fund said Flick had made a contribution that would allow it to

provide extra humanitarian payments to needy surviving slave laborers." Michael Fuerst, the head of the Jewish community in the state of Lower

Saxony, told German online newspaper the Netzeitung, "This change of heart should have come much earlier."

## The Ten Commandments

Rabbi David Rose



As we approach Shavuot and our commemoration of the Revelation at Sinai we again contemplate the basic content of that revelation: the Ten Commandments. Many contemporary commentators have questioned the relevance of these precepts for today's world and indeed cast doubt on their moral validity. However, if we re-examine the philosophical underpinnings of the world's most famous dictates, we may

**"Respect means understanding that the world is not our exclusive domain and just as we have certain rights so do others"**

find that they are indeed relevant to today's society and its challenges. Many traditional commentators have seen the Ten Commandments not so much as individual laws but as moral subject headings; underpinned by the commands in the rest of the Torah. Indeed in Hebrew they are called the 'Ten Words'. This approach enables us to appreciate the moral grandeur contained within these words. I believe that the ideals contained within the Ten Commandments can be summed up in two phrases: identity and respect.

The Ten Commandments seek to establish our place in the world and inform us how we should relate to others. The statement that G-d redeemed us from slavery and the prohibition of idolatry seek to establish us as free independent human beings beholden to no one but G-d. In revealing Himself to us as a liberator and forbidding us worshipping anything or anyone less than the Absolute, G-d determines that man should not be a slave to man or nature and that both his body and intellect should be free to pursue his personal destiny. Idolatry enslaves man's spirit as much as slavery subdues his body. Worship of David Beckham, Brad Pitt or even Karl Marx is just as degrading as subservience to Baal or Moloch. Man needs ideals to follow and role models to look up to. We can either follow transient human ideals that enslave us or eternal Divine ideals that serve to liberate our true

potential. Furthermore, our passions can also enslave us; so G-d warns us against coveting what is our neighbour's: making us beholden to the dictates of fashion or the lure of advertising. Slavishly following the latest trends or seeking to keep up with others serve to delude us as to our actual character; robbing us of our true identity in a vain quest to be who we are not. The result is a confused and lost society; seeking fulfilment in drugs and hedonistic sexuality. The second ideal underlining the Ten Commandments concerns our relationship to the world around us and can be summed up in one word: respect. This is a word bandied about a lot today in various contexts, but basically has a very simple meaning. Respect means understanding that the world is not our exclusive domain and just as we have certain rights so do others. We are to realise that there are boundaries to our unfettered behaviour; places we cannot go, things we cannot have or do. The Ten Commandments see this concept as the underpinning of all our relationships; whether with humans, nature or G-d. We are to respect our neighbour's life, property and personal relationships. We are to respect our fellow human being's privacy and refrain from invading his personal space: physically, sexually or economically. We are to respect those who have contributed to our well being: our parents and the elderly in general: learning from our past to build the future. We are to respect nature and the world around us by refraining from exploiting it for one day a week; learning to care for the environment by respecting its Creator. We are to respect other's identity by not misrepresenting them in court or elsewhere: observing the boundaries between truth and falsehood, delusion and reality. We must respect our own and others' spirituality by not taking G-d's name in vain: using religion for our own ends. There is no more relevant message for our world today. Respect is the underpinning of civilisation and a society without it is on the road to the abyss. A world where everything is up for grabs from our neighbour's car or wife to the Amazon rain forest or the Alaskan wilderness, is not a world in which many of us would wish to live; or that in the end can survive.

Identity and respect; these are the two vital necessities for a civilised society, a sustainable world and human happiness. These are also the ideals of the Ten Commandments. Thus these ancient words are not only a moral message of the past but the necessary basis of our present as well as the vital underpinnings of our future.

### The Commandments as a Human Creation

Anthony Gilbert

It was suggested that I write this article as one which is in some sense complementary to that written by the Rabbi. The Rabbi has expanded on the theme of the current relevance of the Ten Commandments; the idea was for me to put a view counter to that of the Rabbi's; put slightly flippantly, I was to



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represent the views of those who either do not 'accept the Ten Commandments' or question their relevance in today's world.

The first of these is, of course, an impossible brief, and even the second would be a very hard corner to defend. The fact is that I am in agreement with much of what the Rabbi has written. I find a significant proportion of what is written in the Ten Commandments, not merely acceptable, but admirable; and I believe that the ideas contained there form a template from which one can build a philosophical framework with which to regulate one's whole way of life. Furthermore, I suspect that this is true for the vast bulk of humanity: I think there are few people who would disagree with the essential rightness of practically everything in the Ten Commandments that is concerned with relations between humans and the world they find themselves in (even if as a society, we are not all that good at putting all of it into practice).

So am I merely writing an article which endorses everything the Rabbi has written? No; my difficulty lies with those Commandments which impute the existence of a deity and then impose consequential requirements on human behaviour. I believe that the remaining Commandments stand perfectly well without the deistic commandments, and indeed serve as a sensible model for human behaviour, one entirely acceptable to a humanist. In relation to what is written in the

Rabbi's article, I am in complete agreement with the broad thrust of his third paragraph, namely that we should have respect for our fellow human beings, and more widely the whole Universe that we inhabit, but I find it difficult to accept much of his second paragraph. I do not believe the deistic Commandments help in the slightest in setting our place in the Universe, either philosophically or physically. It seems to me both possible and desirable to create a model of the Universe which does not invoke the existence of a deity. I have always found Einstein's notion of seeking simple explanations for complicated phenomena intellectually satisfying: why create the idea of a deity with all its inherent difficulties, when one can manage so well without?

**"I do not believe the deistic Commandments help in the slightest in setting our place in the Universe, either philosophically or physically"**

The Commandments are to be found in Exodus Chapter xx, verses 2 - 14. In verse 1, it is said that the Commandments listed in the succeeding verses were stated by a deity, and verse 2 is more of a self-proclamation by the deity than a Commandment. The remaining verses may be divided into three broad categories: verses 3 - 7 command adherence to the deity; verses 8 - 11

command observance of the Sabbath; verses 12 - 14 regulate human relations.

I would argue that many modern societies (particularly in the West) have little belief in the first of these categories and would reject the view that authority for the third category, which is nearly universally accepted, derives from a deity. Concerning the third category, most people would agree that there have to be limits on human behaviour. We are all aware of the consequences of allowing it to be unchecked. Examples ranging from the petty thuggery on city streets, currently bemoaned by the British Press, to the enormity of the Holocaust all testify to what one person is capable of doing to another if behaviour is not subject to regulation. Societies have always been aware of this human characteristic, and have thus evolved codes of rules for the broad protection of their citizens; the motivation is not deistic, but a wholly enlightened and laudable communal self-interest. I would regard the evolution of the third category of Commandments as coming directly through such a process, and view it as something of a triumph of human organisation over human nature. It is my view that human nature does not greatly change with the passage of time, so the Commandments regulating behaviour are as relevant today as when they were first framed.

Viewed slightly differently, a corollary to the rejection of the notion of a deity imposing rules to be obeyed by mankind is that this then gives each individual an enormous freedom. My view is that with such freedom must come responsibility. One might ascribe some of the ills of our present Society to enjoyment of the freedom without an acceptance of the responsibility which I believe accompanies it. The human framing of rules for the guidance of human behaviour is in my view an imperfect communal attempt to delineate these responsibilities for each individual. As already said, I think the framing of such rules is as relevant today as ever it was, perhaps more so, now that so many people have turned their backs on religious teachings, and that we should celebrate it as a man-made creation for the orderly conduct of the societies in which we live.

# Reviews

## The Genizah at the House of Shepher by Tamar Yellin

Judy Gilbert

**Before setting out on the voyage of discovery, which this tale unquestionably is, we must understand what a Genizah is. The word literally means 'hiding place' and is where sacred, vulnerable and often fragile documents are kept for safety.**

This highly imaginative story is based on very real concepts that have been woven into an evocative narrative. Tamar Yellin came from a family closely linked to the professions of the characters she so vividly describes. In 1854 her great-great grandfather, Shalom Shachne Yellin, a famous scroll checker, travelled from Lithuania to Jerusalem inspecting scrolls in every community along the way of his two year journey. On arrival he was asked to continue to Syria to examine the famous 'Keter Aram Soba 'Codex' (a hand written version of the bible) written in the 10th Century, and believed to have been consulted by Maimonides with respect to his Mishneh Torah. Shalom Shachne, too old to carry out the task, schooled his son-in-law to take his place and ten years later his own critical analysis of the codex was brought home and in constant demand for consultation.

In Yellin's Novel, Shula Shepher, a biblical scholar in England, is on a quest to discover more about herself. She returns to her grandparent's home in Jerusalem where she spent her formative years, and uncovers more than just family intrigue and a fascinating history of her ancestry. Shula is drawn into the wrangle over the long lost and rediscovered Shepher codex, so coveted by different family factions.

Shula meets the remaining survivors of her strange and dysfunctional family and is told that her great grandfather, Shalom Shepher, a scribe and scroll checker, felt that he had a mission to find the ten lost tribes. He returned with a sacred handwritten text after years of wandering in his search. His truly fantastic accounts of his experiences during this period grow in eccentricity and leave you wondering if he were describing a dream or a miracle. In much the same way as the Aram Soba Codex was lost to the flames, with the few remaining pages carefully distributed to secret protectors, so were the writings of Shalom consigned to a Genizah, but not before residing in the Ben Or Institute library under the watchful eye of Shloime Goldfarb.

Shula's family loyalties struggle with her desire to make the right choice about the destiny of the codex. The disturbingly unfathomable Gideon too, justifies his access to the precious Codex, not for his own ends, but for greater spiritual understanding, to be passed on to a wider audience. He has great influence over Shula, but in a far subtler manner than the family. Should she rescue the codex from its threatened life of obscurity in the Institute as claimed by Gideon? The curator Shloime declares in his arrogant and authoritarian way 'Until the question of ownership is resolved, we can not release the book for further study'. Will Shula's final decisive action be motivated by her professional interest or love?

The tale unfolds in its complexity, with as much suspense and adventure as when we read about Indiana Jones searching for the Holy Grail. Shula is an unemotional rationalist, shaped by her past relationship with her parents and career. Her search for the truth about her background and about the artefact is both analytical and academic. This dispassionate approach appears to have affected her

chances of any earlier romantic connection. Shula recognises an intellectual empathy between Gideon and herself and with this awakening, experiences growing uncertainty about the choices she had previously made regarding her first love Daniel, whom she now meets in her maturity.

Yellin uses highly descriptive imagery and language, which moves rapidly back and forth between ancient times, distant past and present. Shula muses 'The present is sceptical, but the past for me is full of miracles'.

The reader is drawn into the intimacy of the Shepher family and its history because it has elements with which we can identify. The little Yiddish references or Hebrew allusions, identifiably Jewish, are simple enough not to have to translate every minutia, therefore we belong. The remarkably short chapters are vehicles of temptation as the carrot and stick to a donkey. Adding to this pull and enhancing the enigma of the tale, Yellin often employs a strategy of not specifying who the 'he' or 'she' is until well down the page of the new chapter, mystifying as well as mysterious.

Although I was a little confused by the use of same names, Dan in the past and present for example, and thus chronologically challenging, it mirrored true life.

This is a book of colour and language. The past inextricably linked with present. The feel is autobiographical and yet we know that it is fiction. The Genizah at the House of Shepher is a drama that unfolds in bursts and can be read in just a few days or savoured in excerpts for bedtime reading.

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## A Review of Outwitting History by Aaron Lansky

Janet Mundy

When Judy Gilbert asked me to review a book for the Star, I was happy to oblige. My willingness turned to delight when I discovered that the book was by Aaron Lansky, founder of the National Yiddish Book Centre, whose promotional radio interviews I had heard the previous week. 'Outwitting History' is his story of how he came to set up the centre, and his progress from rescuing piles of Yiddish books for his own use to the worldwide operation that the centre is today.

In 1973, Aaron Lansky was enrolled in a course called "Thinking about the Unthinkable: An Encounter with the Holocaust" in Hampshire College, Massachusetts. He decided to learn Yiddish to help him with this course and found a tutor, Jules Piccus, to teach a small group. He discovered that there was a dearth of Yiddish books available, as they had all been out of print for many years. For example 'The Complete Works of Sholem Aleichem' was last published in the US in 1928. His search for Yiddish books took him to New York's Lower East Side, to a world that still held Guss's pickle emporia and Shapiro's House of Kosher Wines, "where dusty old men sold taleysim, mezuzahs, and other religious articles". Here Aaron and his friends were referred to Gottlieb's where they found thousands of Yiddish books. However, they discovered:

"one of the great ironies of contemporary Jewish life: Hasidic and extreme orthodox Jews, the only demographically significant segment of the Jewish population who continue to speak Yiddish and teach the language to their children, are completely hostile to modern Yiddish literature. For them, most Yiddish books are treyf posl, forbidden, unkosher."

The bookshop owner never agreed to give or sell the books to the students (always promising that he would think about it after yontef), but they had better luck at Mr Levine's bookstore, who gave them his entire collection of Yiddish books, inherited from his father.

In 1976, studying Yiddish literature in Montreal, Aaron was still on the hunt for books for his personal use. He discovered his local rabbi burying Yiddish books that he thought were no longer of interest to anyone, including a Yiddish translation of Das Kapital by

Karl Marx. He then realised that there were forgotten collections of books in synagogue libraries, attics and cellars, and that he might be able to access these for his own use. Some informal advertising elicited a torrent of calls and collections of books that soon filled his apartment and his parents' home. He then decided to take a leave of absence from college "to save the world's Yiddish books before it was too late".

His quest took him to many elderly people's homes, where a welcome, a substantial snack (such as gefilte fish, blintzes and lokshn kugl) and a wealth of stories inevitably accompanied the book collection. He started with a small team, but soon recruited volunteer book collectors, or "zamlers", who would collect books in their own communities, including Sorell Skolnik, now nearly 100, Jacob Schaefer, whose collection of 45,000 volumes in California is a record, and Mr and Mrs Field, who collected small bundles of books by bus throughout the Bronx. Books were also collected from William Uris, father of Leon, and Aliza Greenblatt, the mother-in-law of Woody Guthrie, who lived in Sea Gate, at the tip of Coney Island, where writers such as Isaac Bashevis Singer once lived. Her neighbours, Sam and Leah Ostroff, became dedicated zamlers and the story of how they came from Eastern Europe to America is one of the poignant highlights of the book. I also particularly warmed to Mrs Langert, who persuaded Aaron's team to bring their truck from Massachusetts to Manhattan on a Sunday at 11 am, so that she could have a lift to a banquet at the Roosevelt Hotel, and who later organised an emergency rescue of a library of books from a building at the point of demolition, with the help of a group of black and Puerto Rican children.

Examples of authors whose works were rescued are I. L. Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, Avrom Reisen and Mendele, whose works included a parody of 'Don Quixote' and a translation of Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days. Other translations into Yiddish cover a range from Bambi to The Bhagavad Gita, as well as Mark Twain, Emile Zola, Leo Tolstoy, Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde. One of the rarest editions to be discovered was 'Leksikon fun politishe un fremdverter' (Dictionary of Political and Foreign Terminology in Yiddish) edited

by Dor-Ber Slutski and published in Kiev in 1929. It was previously thought that all copies had been destroyed by the secret police in the Soviet Union, but one copy had been taken "hot off the press" by an American visitor, little knowing that he had rescued the only remaining copy.

As well as the USA and Canada, books have been collected worldwide from places as diverse as Israel, Zimbabwe, Latin America (including Cuba) and the USSR. The Book Centre is now based in a \$7 million building on the campus of Hampshire College, where Aaron started his Jewish studies.

The collected books are redistributed to colleges and individuals throughout the world. However, most of the books were printed on pulp paper, which easily crumbles. Stephen Spielberg helped fund the digitisation of the literature through his Righteous Persons Foundation and there is now an online catalogue, www.yiddishbooks.org, which promises: "We will custom print a brand new copy of every title you order". Current projects include making the books available online, without the need to print, and translating the most popular works into English. The website records that the first instalment of the Sami Rohr Library of Recorded Yiddish Books has recently been released. These are CD compilations including Tevye der milkhiger (Tevye the Milkman), by Sholem Aleichem, the book upon which Fiddler on the Roof is based; Gimpl Tam (Gimpel the Fool), by I.B. Singer and Roman fun a ferd ganef (Romance of a Horse Thief), by Joseph Opatoshu.

Aaron Lansky's enthusiasm for his cause shines through on every page, making it a joy to read. My only mild gripe is that, beyond brief mention of Ladino and other Jewish vernaculars on page 11 of the book, only Ashkenazi Jewish history is related, completely ignoring Sephardi culture, as if it didn't exist. That apart, I would highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the resurrection of Jewish culture, particularly of the 19th and early 20th century. It is an excellent stepping stone to rediscovering Yiddish literature, even for those of us who no longer speak the language.

## The Shabbaton

Melia Rosen

I couldn't wait all week for the Shabbaton at the Rabbi's! In maths (my last subject on a Friday), I was basically counting down the minutes until the class would finally end... then I could go to the rabbi's! When I arrived, all of my friends greeted me at the door, with a nice warm welcome. They introduced me to Dalia and Adam, 'Tribe' representatives who were to run our Shabbaton.

After Friday night services, we had a delicious dinner cooked by the Rabbi! We had four courses! I guess it's a Jewish thing to have so much food. Then all of us sat in a circle and had an amazing discussion that made us challenge our minds. We talked about G-d and how he made us to make our own moral and ethical decisions rather than creating us like robots, which are programmed to make certain decisions. It was great to learn from each other, because everybody had their own opinions.

" Basically every good deed you do, you get one good angel, and every bad thing you do, you get a horrible black gooey angel"

We had talked so long that it was already time to go to bed! So we got into our pyjamas and prepared a mid-night feast...! Dalia brought the yummiest foods like kosher popcorn, pretzels, haribo and chocolates. Then she shared one of the most life changing stories I have ever heard!

The story all had to do with judgment day after you die. Basically every good deed you do, you get one good angel, and every bad thing you do, you get a horrible black gooey angel. The good and bad angels hop on a scale and then if it tips towards the good side your soul rests in the Garden of Eden... if it tips towards the bad side then you go to a horrible

place were there's torture, fire, etc. I'm scared for judgment day, so I'm going to try my very hardest to live my life as a 'mench'.

At Shul the next morning, there was a youth service, which drew the best attendance, filling the seats with people of all ages, including babies. The Cheder kids each played a role in running the service. We heard really well written synopses of the Parsha, Torah reading and a sermon. Everyone did a great job and I felt proud to be part of it all.

The families stayed together after the youth service to eat a specially prepared lunch. Then Adam was asked to speak. He shared a really inspirational speech with the whole congregation saying that synagogues needed to change to keep Judaism alive. I couldn't agree more. I personally think the Edinburgh Synagogue should be open to change. I thought the youth service turned out to be a big hit, and we should definitely do it more often.

I think we should encourage the youth to have a role in the weekly services, because we could then become familiar enough with the order of the service to follow along. This way of looking into the future will enable us to teach our own children with confidence and show us how to lead the service.

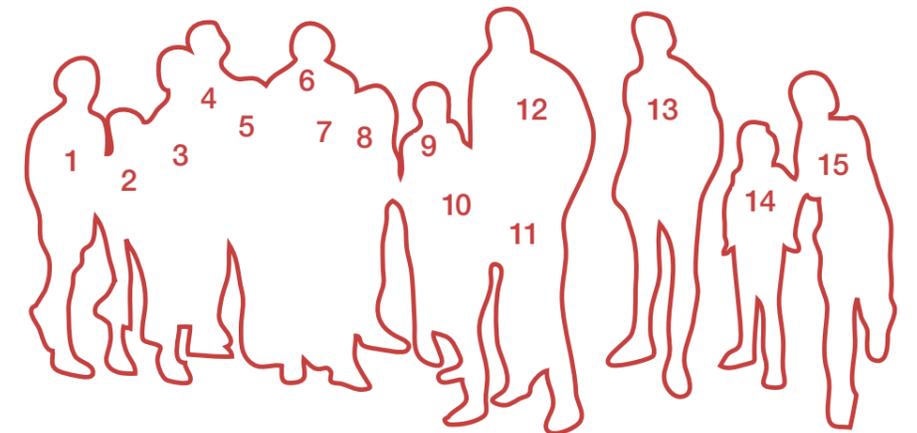
Later after our third meal and some more discussions, Havdalah arrived. I love Havdalah because of all the wonderful tunes we sang. I knew that Shabbat was ending and that we had to get back to our regular schedule again. Adam said even though Shabbat was concluding for this week we could still try hard to bring a piece of Shabbat into our daily lives like reading a part of 60 Days for 60 Years or saying the Shema in the morning. Just something little like that can get you one more good angel.

We ended our Shabbaton with bowling! The rabbi was the best at it... so if anyone needs some bowling tips, he's the one to ask. I have to say this was the best Shabbaton ever!

## Answers to Star Trek Issue 50

LEFT TO RIGHT:

1. Jonathan Mason
2. Benjamin Bowman
3. Tony Goldberg
4. Michael Rifkind
5. Howard Nocolsby
6. Sally Cowen
7. Jenny Sischy
8. Wendy Goldberg
9. Jackie Bowman
10. Uri Wittenberg
11. Raffi Wittenberg
12. Ian Caplan
13. David Kaplan
14. Michelle Bowman
15. Paul Goldberg

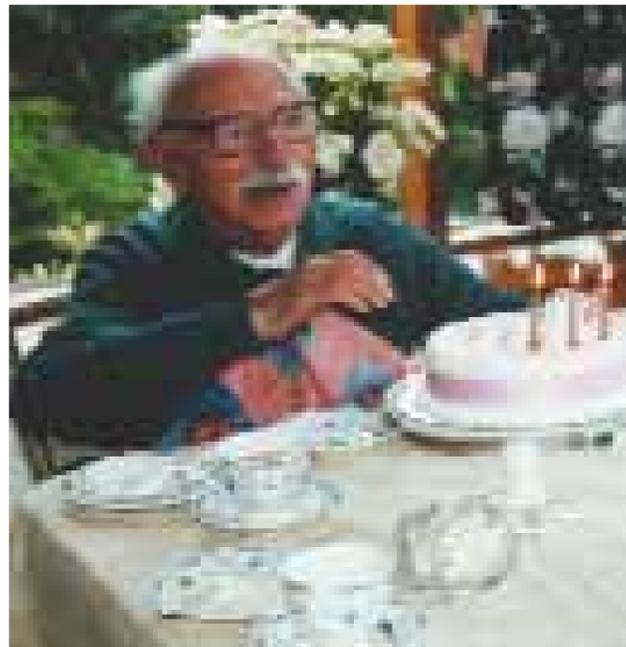


# Obituaries

## Cecil Samuels 1901– 2005

My father was born in Glasgow in July 1901, six months after the death of Queen Victoria. He was the youngest of a large family whose parents had come from Grodny in Poland. His father was an interpreter, who used to travel to New York on the immigrant ships, he remembers being very impressed by his uniform, and it was only much later that he realised that his mother didn't approve of her husband's frequent absences from home.

He was brought up in the 1st World War world of the Gorbals where everyone helped everyone else. There might not have been much money but there was a love of learning, and helped by his much older eldest brother, he went to Hutcheson's Grammar School, and then to Dental College. However this wasn't easy, and when money ran out, he had to do other things until he had earned enough to go back to College. Among other things, he worked in a shipyard, and as a clerk in a law firm.



When he qualified, it was the Depression and he had to go to England to find work. After some years he had enough money to come back to Glasgow and start up a practice of his own. In the meantime, one of his sisters had married one of his close friends, and in this way he met his wife and they soon married. A long and happy marriage spoiled only by his wife's ill health in the last years of their life together.

They gave me, their only child, a happy loving childhood and

were delighted that when I married, it was to a young man whom they loved as a son, despite the fact that to my father's disappointment he liked cricket and rugby and not football!

In time there were three granddaughters who gave him so much pleasure, and when they in turn married, there were the great-grandchildren. One of the most special days in his life, when he was 99, was the birth of his only great-grandson, whom he held at his Bris, a very proud moment.

On his one hundredth birthday, he sat surrounded by family and said he didn't know how he had managed to reach such a milestone, as it was not in his hands to have done so.

He had a great capacity for loving and was loved by very many people, and he will be missed by all who knew him.

June Glass

I never thought that I would ever have to deliver a eulogy for Grandpa. I really thought that he would live forever. I know that it's an odd thing to believe, but only a few weeks ago he told us that when he had reached a 102, he also thought that he could

go on for ever, but the last year he said, had been hard and he wasn't too sure anymore. He was a remarkable man, not only because of his age, but perhaps more so as a result of his continuing optimism & cheerfulness despite the obvious problems that old age brought.

He was a devoted husband to Grandma Ruby & literally did not leave her side after she suffered her stroke. He did everything around the home and was a wonderful cook. My childhood memories are of being greeted by grandpa at the front door, stripy apron on, pots sizzling in the kitchen and the delicious smell of home cooking. When I was older, we would often swap culinary tips and for that reason we both wished that we possessed a pair of tongs to turn our sausages under the grill.

He was always so delighted to see us all and hear our news. Grandpa was fiercely independent and remained so until the last. He was a great teller of stories & his eyes would sparkle when recounting tales of his student days. I remember asking him why he had chosen dentistry- the answer because that was what all his friends had chosen. Quite interesting I thought that my Grandpa too, had succumbed to peer pressure in his youth.

He had an amazing memory for people, names and events that took place some 80 or 90 years ago. He remembered hearing Lloyd George. He remembered the layout of streets in Glasgow in the 1930's & he would often ask if such and such a shop still existed. He kept an interest in politics even after he reached his 100 years. Despite his sight and hearing failing him, he still asked about his football team, Glasgow Rangers (a small fault in a good man, as my husband said) and I know mum had to keep up to speed with the latest development in the league, so that she could try and answer his questions. He touched the hearts of so many over the years and was loved so very much, that perhaps we should be celebrating his life today rather than mourning his passing.

Lisa Cohen



## Mary Berkengoff (Mashki ) 2.11.1910 – 17.2.2005

How can you encapsulate nearly ninety-five years of a rich life into a few short paragraphs? Impossible, however I shall try. Anyone who knew my mother will remember her fondly for her sense of humour and her kindness. The daughter of Joseph and Leah Caplan her parents came to Scotland from Russia to make a new life for their family. My mother had six sisters and two brothers and she was the last of her family, although not the youngest,

she outlived them all. I think it was a combination of hard work and determination that kept her going. Widowed at an early age in 1959 when her husband Hyman Berkengoff died all too suddenly, she was left to bring up her two sons Martin 13 years and Leonard 7 years. This did not faze her in the slightest and returning to work, she always ensured her family had a warm and loving home filled with the smell of her wonderful cooking.

She was completely non-materialistic. Taking all her pleasure from watching her family grow, nothing pleased her more. She was delighted with her grandchildren Barry, Peter and Lucy and her step grandchildren Corinna and Tracy, loving them all equally and never forgetting a birthday or special event. Never tiring of talking about their accomplishments and how well they were all doing. Her great grandchild Bruno was the latest addition to this group to receive the same treatment.

My mother got on well with her daughter in laws Sheana and Susie

and spent as much time as she could with them. She had many a lunch or day out with my wife Susie regaling her with stories of the family going back to her childhood, surviving two world wars and all manner of political change. She met it all with good humour and was never daunted by it. In her later years unable to go out much on her own because of failing eyesight she derived much pleasure from that wonderful institution the Edinburgh Lunch Club and enjoyed meeting her friends each Tuesday and Thursday.

In my mother's ninety-fifth year the family had begun to consider nursing home care and enquiries were made and a place reserved. Having looked after herself and been independent all her life she was quite determined that she would never need to and this she never did.

She was a remarkable woman who will be sadly missed and much thought about by her family and friends.

Leonard Berkingoff

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## Announcements

### Congratulations

We are delighted to announce the engagement between **Tony Goldberg** son of **Leila Steel** and the late **Phillip Goldberg** to **Anat**, daughter of **Baruch** and **Balia Schreiber** of Toronto.

**Betty Glass**, who celebrated her 100th birthday on 2nd June

**Rabbi Cohen**, who celebrates his 90th birthday in Jerusalem. He was Rabbi of this Community in 1945, after Rabbi Daiches and left to become Chief Rabbi of Ireland. He later moved to Israel where he has since lived for many years.

### Thank you

Our thanks go to: **Lady Hazel Cosgrove, Mr Ronald Goodwin, Mr and Mrs Sam Skop, Mr and Mrs Norman Berger, Mr and Mrs Sidney Caplan, Mr and Mrs David Mendelsohn**, for donating prizes for the raffle at the 'Star' dinner.



**Norman and Joyce Cram** wish to thank our friends for their kind visits and good wishes during Norman's recent stay in hospital. He continues to make good progress and hopes to be home again soon.

I wish to express my deep appreciation and thanks to all in the community who contributed such an unexpected and

wonderful gift on the occasion of my 60th birthday and my 25 years as caretaker of the Synagogue and Community Centre. I am extremely touched by everyone's generosity.

**Christine Burns**

### Dear Editor

You don't know me, but I was born in Edinburgh, Miriam (Meechie) Pinkinsky, in 1916 that should give you an idea of my vintage.

Your article by Jenni Calder, Growing up with David Daiches, evoked so much nostalgia in me. The Daiches family was part of my youth in Edinburgh in fact Dr. Daiches was the Rabbi who married my husband and me.

I recall acting in many of the skits written by Lionel and David, and Sylvia was one of my best friends. The community was very much larger then - four or five hundred Jewish families, quite a contrast to the 300 Jews in all now. My husband, Dr. Meier Lichtenstein, was an honorary president of the Jewish Student Society. I could go on and on with my anecdotes of life in Edinburgh, but...

Thank you for the article by Jenni Calder.

Yours sincerely,  
*Miriam Lichtenstein*

### Best British Bagles

by Joyce Cram

Nick Cosgrove asks in his most enjoyable article 'Kosher Reekie' Did Kleinberg bake bagles?' The answer is no; but the finest bagles ever tasted were baked in Edinburgh before his time. The baker was Sam Bialik who

had his bakery in the Pleasance. Anyone of my generation will tell you that Sunday mornings, the queue stretched from his shop well down the Pleasance, all waiting patiently for Bialik's Bagles. They bore no resemblance to the large, tasteless ones sold in supermarkets today. These were half the size but twice as tasty, crisp shiny brown crust and soft and luscious inside!

In my day we had three bakeries and three butchers. The bakeries were Kleinberg's, Sam Bialik and Sammy Cowan's, where the late Betty Franklin presided over the grocery department. The butchers comprised, Gabriel's, Hoffinberg's and Lurie's, as Nick observed, Joe was brilliant at marketing! Which butcher did mothers choose? The one where the children were presented with samples of Joe's pickled meat, which kept them happy, of course. In 1950 when meat was still rationed, extra rations were available to expectant mothers, so your butcher was the first to know who was expecting!

I was also reminded of the comment my 5-year-old grandson made on seeing all those jars of Mrs Elswood products on Joe's shelves 'What a busy lady that Mrs Elswood must be'. Happy memories of days gone by.

Philip Harris remembers Bullens, the Jewish Fish & Chip Shop!

### Volunteers please

The Luncheon Club needs people to cook for it on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please spare one morning every eight weeks and phone Avril Berger on 664 2938 if you can help.

## Forthcoming Events

### June

12 Sunday

WIZO annual lunch at the home of Kate and Ronnie Goodwin

13 Monday

First day of Shavuoth

22 Wednesday

Synagogue AGM

### July

24 Sunday

Fast of Tammuz

### August

14 Sunday

Fast of Av

20 Saturday

Annual Civic Service

There are no meetings of Lodge Solomon, Council of Christians and Jews or Literary Society during the summer months. These along with dates of future WIZO lunches to be confirmed in next edition.

**Junior Maccabi** meets on alternate Sundays from 1pm to 3pm.

For further information, contact Jonathan Danzig (229 3054).

**Senior Maccabi** meets on Sunday evenings in members' homes.

For further information, contact Alice Kelpie (337 1894)

**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.