

# The Edinburgh Star

Journal of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

September 1998

No. 31

Tishri 5759





# The Edinburgh Star

SYNAGOGUE CHAMBERS

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Tel: 0131-668 3331

## Typesetting, page origination and printing:

Meigle Printers Ltd.,

Tweedbank,

Galashiels, TD1 3RS

**Front Cover:** Fireworks over Edinburgh Castle during the Festival.

The Editorial Board acknowledges with thanks the secretarial assistance of Val Simpson.

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*Mr & Mrs Harold Mendelssohn for kindly defraying the cost of sending The Edinburgh Star overseas.*



I START with a disclaimer. In order to prevent any misunderstanding, I should like to make it clear that the views expressed in this editorial are those of the editor alone. They are not necessarily shared by members of the Editorial Board and should not be taken to represent the views of **The Edinburgh Star** or the Edinburgh Jewish Community. Now for the substance. Like many people and, no doubt, many readers of this magazine, I have been very troubled by the scandal which has engulfed President Clinton. It is, in many ways, a tragedy of Shakespearean dimensions – the tragedy of a man with enormous political ambition who rose from humble origins in a state with little political influence to become the President of the United States, and arguably the most powerful man in the world, and is then destroyed by his own reckless and immoral conduct. How should we react to this? Opinion poll evidence suggests that a clear majority of the American public is prepared to overlook his affair, his public denial of the affair and his subsequent admission that he had made ‘a bad mistake’. But, are they right to do so? Not in the opinion of Senator Joseph Lieberman, the only observant Jew in the Senate who is also one of the President’s oldest friends and political allies. Referring to the President’s admission on television that his behaviour had been ‘inappropriate’, Senator Lieberman argued that ‘such behaviour is not only inappropriate, it is immoral and it is harmful’ and that it is deserving of ‘public rebuke and accountability’. Is Senator Lieberman right in his view?

There can be little doubt that the President’s behaviour was grossly immoral. It directly contravenes two of the Ten Commandments: ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ and ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness’ and involves a serious abuse of power and trust. Doctors, teachers, lawyers and others who are entrusted with power are bound by codes of professional ethics which are intended to protect the vulnerable, and contraventions of these codes are usually and in my view rightly, heavily sanctioned. Should the same standards not apply to politicians? There can likewise be little doubt that the President’s behaviour has also been extremely harmful. It has undermined public trust in politicians and public respect for the Presidency, damaged the President’s credibility and made him into a lame-duck President. After all, if, by his own admission, he lied in public about his affair, why should he ever be believed when he claims to be telling the truth? Although it is clear that the President’s future will be determined by pragmatic calculations, in particular about how it will effect the electoral prospects of the Democrats and the Republicans, the only moral course of action for the President, it seems to me, is to resign.

In this *Rosh Hashanah* issue, **The Edinburgh Star** resumes its normal format. Whether or not this is a result of the appeal in my last editorial, we shall never know. However, in this issue, we again carry a number of longer, feature-length articles. In addition to Rabbi Sedley’s New Year Message, we carry two very contrasting articles inspired by *Rosh Hashanah*. In the first, Aaron Demsky explores the paradox of a New Year which falls at the beginning of the seventh month of the year rather than, as one might expect, at the beginning of the first month. In the second, Ros Abramsky gives a feminist perspective on the sacrifice of Isaac, presenting it from his mother Sarah’s point of view. This is an unusual example of creative writing from someone in our own community and we hope that readers will be stimulated by it. We are also delighted to publish a profile by Ian Shein of a very special woman in our own community, Christine Burns, and a personal credo from Ian Leifer, recently elected President of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, who makes a very eloquent argument in favour of a partnership between the religious and the secular, between *Torah* and ‘*derech erez*’ or ‘the ways of the earth’.

Following her very revealing interview with Binyamin Netanyahu in **Issue Number 29**, we are very pleased to be able to carry another article by Suzanne Glass, an interview with Ricardo Eichmann, archaeologist son of the infamous Nazi, Adolf Eichmann. Should she have interviewed him? We will be pleased to carry letters from readers who have views on the subject. We also carry an article on ‘Internet Judaism’ which will, no doubt, be of interest to the growing number of people, young and old, who surf the internet looking for interesting material. And Julian Goodman is back with another retrospective on ‘Jewish Comedy on the Fringe’.

In this issue we print our last photograph in the series ‘Star Trek into the Past’. This has been a very popular series but we have now run out of material and concluded that, like all good things, it should now come to an end. Anyone with ideas about what might be put in its place is invited to get in touch with Ian Shein or the Editor. Attentive readers will notice that the new series on ‘Jewish Identities’ which was announced in the last issue, has failed to materialise in this one. However, this is only because those who have agreed to write (and most of those who were approached have agreed to do so) needed a little more time to put their thoughts together. The series will definitely start in the next issue.

I would like to end by thanking John Cosgrove for editing **Issue Number 29** while I was away, members of the Editorial Board for their help and support, and everyone who has contributed to the magazine during the last year. On behalf of the Editorial Board, I should like to wish all our readers a happy, successful and peaceful New Year.

MA



## THE RABBI'S ROSH HASHANAH MESSAGE 5759

I am writing this in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing, the bombings of the US embassies in East Africa and the American retaliation. These tragedies were perpetrated in the name of religion. The continued deadlock in the Middle East peace negotiations is a cause of concern around the world. Again there are those who justify the violence as a holy war. However, the main threat to Israel today is not about issues between Palestinians and Jews, but the growing divide within Judaism between the religious and non-religious. Acts of violence and destruction which are perpetrated in the name of religion, or in the name of secularism are destroying the fabric of Israel, and by extension of world Jewry.

The Jewish month of Elul is known as a time of special closeness. The Sages tell us that the letters of the word Elul are the first letters of the phrase from Song of Songs (VI;3) "*Ani L'dodi, V'dodi Li*", "I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me". This teaches us that the month of Elul, the month of spiritual preparation before Rosh Hashana, is a time for fostering relationships. In Song of Songs, King Solomon describes the relationship between the Jewish nation and God, but in using the metaphor of two young lovers, he also teaches us the importance of relationships with other people.

The Halacha (Orach Chaim 263;3) teaches us the order of priority, that peace between people takes precedence over commandments which strengthen our relationship with God. Shabbat candles are lit in order to bring peace between husband and wife. The light and warmth which the Shabbat candles bring to a home on Friday night provide a cosy atmosphere in which families can spend time together. The Halacha teaches that if one does not have enough money to purchase both candles and wine for Kiddush, they should "buy the candles, because that brings peace between people".

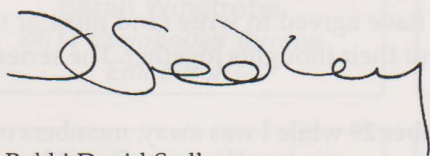
The reason that peace between people is more important is that *Shalom* (Peace) is one of the names of God. (Vayikra Rabba IX;9.) Through increasing peace and harmony in the world we increase God's presence in the world. This is the simple meaning of one of the verses that we say as part of the Rosh Hashana Musaf. In the section describing God as King we recite "*Vayehi Bishurun Melech, B'hisaseph Roshei Am...*". "He was King in Yeshurun (Israel) when the people's leaders gathered themselves together and the tribes of Israel were united" (Deut. XXXIII;5). Through our unity God's unity is felt in the world. On Rosh Hashana we must recite verses of Kingship before God in order to crown Him King over ourselves. In order to do this we must make peace between ourselves first.

The rewards of peace are tremendous. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba XXXVI;6) tells us that even if all of Israel are worshipping idols, yet they have peace between themselves, God does not punish them for their transgressions. Though King Achav was one of the wickedest kings in the history of Israel, and the people at that time had idolatrous temples on every hill, they never lost a battle, because there was no enmity amongst them.

Peace begins at home. The road to harmony is not through newspaper editorials, or television journalism, but through our own daily interactions. If we treat each other with respect, even if we do not espouse the same religious view, we can make God's presence stronger in the world. Through acts of kindness we can make unity between ourselves. Then God will again rule Yeshurun, and show the rest of the world the true path to peace.

"*Oseh Shalom Bimromav, Hu Ya'aseh Shalom Aleynu...*", "He who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace amongst us...". This refers to the heavens, in Hebrew '*Shamayim*'. According to our Sages, it is so named, because it is made up of '*Aish*' and '*Mayim*', 'Fire' and 'Water'. God is able to take these two opposites, which in the physical world are unable to coexist, and from them create the fabric of the heavens. We pray that this same harmony, and unity of opposites should prevail among us here on earth.

May the year ahead bring all of us happiness, success, health and peace,  
Shana Tova



Rabbi David Sedley  
Minister of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation



# FREDA RIFFKIN REPORTS....

## EDINBURGH FRIENDSHIP CLUB

*Betty Caplan writes:* On 29th March the Club held its Annual Tea Dance. Thirty-six members and guests all had an enjoyable time. Live music was provided by Stuart Caplan on the organ; Shirley Bennet's singing was thoroughly appreciated; Henry Mann also entertained us; and Geneveve Littauer gave a demonstration of Highland dancing.

The Club enjoyed an outing to Perth on 25th May. The weather was good, as was the hotel and the meal provided.

## ANNUAL WIZO LUNCH

The annual WIZO Lunch was held at the home of Ronnie and Katie Goodwin, 2 Ettrick Road, on 21st June 1998.

Although this has been a poor summer, the heavens smiled as usual on the WIZO Lunch held on a glorious Midsummer day. There was a large attendance of 97 people and the meal prepared by the Cordon Bleu Committee was excellent as usual. The Goodwin's garden looked beautiful and the many children who accompanied their parents had a wonderful time as Katie had provided a pony which obligingly gave rides. A total of £750 was raised for WIZO at the function. This most enjoyable and pleasurable afternoon was enjoyed by all.

*With Compliments  
from  
Mark and  
Judith Sischy*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF EDINBURGH SYNAGOGUE

The AGM of the Synagogue took place on Wednesday, 24th June 1998 in the Communal Hall.

There was a good attendance of members of the Congregation. The President, Dr N Oppenheim in the Chair, gave a report of the year's achievements and then called upon the Secretary, Mr W Simpson to read the Minutes of the last meeting.

The Treasurer reported on the Finances and announced that subscriptions for 1998 would be increased.

There was discussion concerning the provision of a toilet for the disabled and it was announced that Edinburgh Council has given a 50% grant towards the cost. The toilet will be situated in part of the existing Ladies' Room in the Hall, but considerable reconstruction work will be necessary.

Voting took place for Council Members and the following were elected:

Mesdames Melissa Gilroy Anita Mendelssohn and Rose Orgel, Drs Ian Leifer and Philip Mason, Messrs Laurence Bowman, John Danzig, Arnold Rifkind, Bill Simpson, Johnny Sperber, Richard Winetrobe and Michael Wittenberg.

It was announced that Mr B Dorfman was retiring as a Warden and Mr D Goldberg and Mr S Judah

were then appointed as Wardens. Mr S Caplan then reported on the Communal Hall activities and the existing Committee were re-elected.

Dr Oppenheim, the retiring President, gave his Valedictory Address, and was warmly thanked by Dr Leifer for all the hard work he had done for the last twelve years, sentiments which were enthusiastically received and seconded by the members.

In accordance with the new rules of the Constitution the following were elected as Hon Vice Presidents: Mr J Cosgrove, Mr M Cowan and Dr N Oppenheim.

Dr Ian Leifer was unanimously elected as President and Mr Bill Simpson as Treasurer.

## CIVIC SERVICE

The Edinburgh Community was doubly honoured on Shabbat Re'eh, 22nd August 1998, on the occasion of the annual Civic Service. We were proud to welcome His Excellence Dr Dror Zeigerman, Israeli Ambassador to the Court of St James, and Mrs Zeigerman, the Lord Provost, the Rt Hon Eric Milligan, Mrs Milligan, and other members of the City Council. After the service, the President welcomed the guests with some very well chosen words, and the Lord Provost thanked the honorary officers and members of the Congregation for the reception. Gifts were then exchanged between the Ambassador, the Lord Provost and the Congregation.

## EDINBURGH JEWISH BURIAL FRIENDLY SOCIETY

The Annual General Meeting of the Burial Society took place on Wednesday, 5th August. The following Executive and Committee Members were elected:-

President: Mr Gerald Glass

Vice President: Mr Alec Rubenstein

Hon Treasurer: Mr Myer S Cowen

Hon Secretary: Mr Ian Brodie

Recorder: Mr Gershon Mendick

Committee - Messrs Willie Caplan, David Goldberg, Sam Latter, Philip Mason, Gershon Mendick, Richard Rifkind and Robin Spark.

Joshua Lurie resigned as President on health grounds and tributes to his many years of hard work for the Society and to his sympathetic manner and helpful advice to the bereaved were made by his successor Gerald Glass.



## Congratulations to:

The Editorial Board offers its congratulations to:

**Alit and David Sedley** on the birth of their first daughter Shoshanah (and many apologies from the Editor for omitting to record this important event in the last issue).

**Jean and Richard Winetrobe** on the birth of their second daughter Sarah Catherine.

**Hazel and John Cosgrove** on the birth of their first grandson Saul James Korn in Pinner, Middlesex.

**Ethel and Bert Hallside** (formerly of Edinburgh) on the birth of a first great-grand-daughter and **Frances and the late Lewis Gordon** (also formerly of Edinburgh) on the birth of a first grand-daughter, Maya Gurfinkel in Michigan, USA.



**Jonathan Adler**, elder son of the late **Ruth Adler** (former Editor of *The Edinburgh Star*) and **Michael Adler** (current Editor of *The Edinburgh Star*) on his marriage to **Susie Shenkin** in the Edinburgh Synagogue (see photo above).

**Gillian Berger**, elder daughter of **Marsha and Lennie Berger**, on her marriage to **Gary Rudin**, also in the Edinburgh Synagogue.

## COMING EVENTS

### September 1998

21st Monday	First Day Rosh Hashanah
22nd Tuesday	Second Day Rosh Hashanah
29th Tuesday	Kol Nidre
30th Wednesday	Yom Kippur

### October 1998

5th Monday	First Day Succot	
6th Tuesday	Second Day Succot	
13th Tuesday	Simchat Torah	
18th Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 pm
19th Monday	Lodge Solomon	7.00 pm
22th Thursday	Council of Christians and Jews	7.30 pm

### November 1998

1st Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 pm
	Literary Society	8.00 pm
	<b>Dan Jacobson</b> on his latest book ' <i>Hershl's Kingdom</i> '	
8th Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 pm
16th Monday	Lodge Solomon	7.00 pm
26th Thursday	Council of Christians and Jews	7.30 pm
29th Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 pm
	Literary Society	8.00 pm
	<b>Avinoam Shalem</b> on ' <i>The graphic artist E W Lilien</i> '	

### December 1998

13th Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 pm
	Literary Society	8.00 pm
	<b>Esti Sheinberg</b> on ' <i>Antisemitism in Music</i> '	
14th Monday	First Day Chanukah	
21st Monday	Lodge Solomon	7.00 pm

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

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

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

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

The Parent and Toddler group meets on Sunday mornings at 10.00 am.

All meetings are subject to alteration.

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

**Dr Philip Mason** on being elected Honorary Secretary of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation.

**Dr Esti Sheinberg** on graduating with a PhD in the Faculty of Music, University of Edinburgh.

The Rifkind family on the *Bar Mitzvah* of Benjamin Rifkind, younger son of **Aaron and Joyce Rifkind**, in Toronto.

*With Compliments*

*from*

*Jess Franklin*

205 Stenhouse Street

Cowdenbeath, Fife KY4 9DL





## The Food Column

By Shirley Bennett

Nothing beats honey cake (great with a cuppa) so here is a recipe that I have used many times:

### Honey Cake

- 12 oz self-raising flour
- 1 teaspoonful ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoonful mixed spice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoonful bicarbonate of soda
- 2 eggs
- 4 oz caster sugar
- 3 tablespoonfuls oil
- 8 oz honey
- 1 oz raisins
- 1 oz shredded almonds
- $\frac{1}{4}$  pint warm water

Sieve the flour, ginger, spice and bicarbonate of soda. Warm the honey. Beat the eggs and sugar till light and frothy. Add the oil and

warmed honey, then the dry ingredients alternately with the water. Add the raisins and mix to a smooth batter, then turn into a shallow greased tin about 9 inches wide, sprinkle with shredded almonds and bake in a moderate oven about 1 hour (375° Regulo No 4).

I remember when dips first became fashionable some years ago and greatly enjoying deep-fried mushrooms served with a dip of mayonnaise and tomato ketchup. One of the most memorable dips I have tasted was some time after that when we were staying with friends in California over Yom Kippur. To break the fast, our

friends' daughter appeared with a bowl of dip that was unlike any other I have ever tasted. The crunchiness of the water chestnuts in this dip was memorable. You might like to try this recipe sometime:

- 1 packet frozen chopped spinach
- 1 tin water chestnuts
- 1 pint of sour cream or smetna.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  pint mayonnaise
- 1 packet vegetable or leak soup mix.

Defrost the spinach. Drain the water chestnuts and chop into small pieces. Mix all the ingredients together. This makes a very large quantity so you can halve the ingredients for a smaller quantity. Serve with crisps or crudities.

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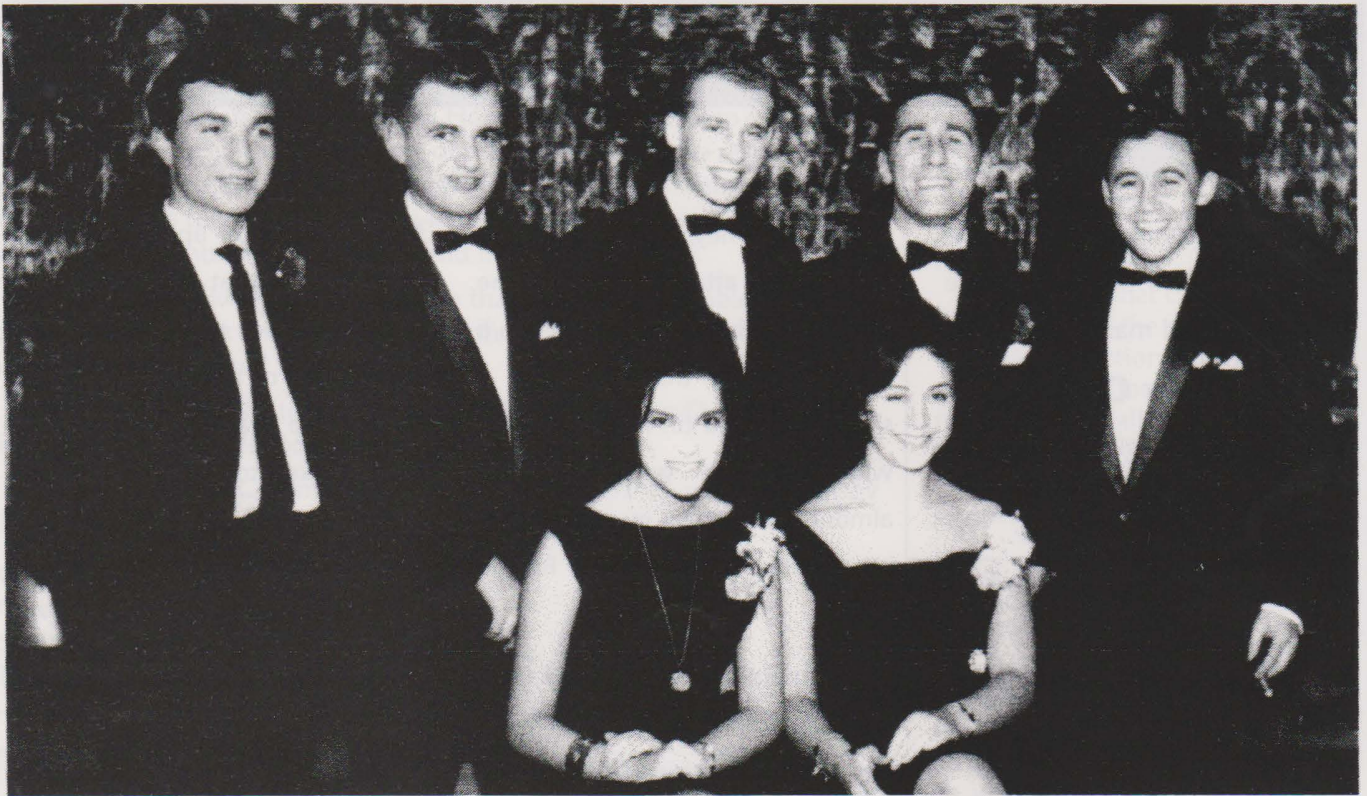
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## STAR TREK INTO THE PAST



*This photograph is of a group of young members of the Maccabi Ball Committee in Edinburgh in the early sixties. As usual, the next edition will reveal all.*

In Issue No. 30, the happy group in the top photograph was taken in Edinburgh on 20th May 1948 at the engagement of Rita Noble and Abe Smullen. At top from left to right, Ethel Goldstein (née Davidson), Essie Blint (née Braverman), May Barnett (née Stoller), Ruby Cram,

Freda Riffkin, Claude and Anne Wayne.

The lower photograph is of a cheder class in Edinburgh in May 1950. The teacher is Derek Pugh, now Visiting Research Professor of International Management at the Open University in London.

The class consists of (left to right top row): Susan Nathan, Maurice Sagman, Brian Cohen, Sidney Caplan, Robert Bindman, David Fluss, Mr. Pugh, Anne Sterne, Frank Abramson. In the front row, Harold Levey, J. Kyman, Mickey Cowen and Barry Leigh.

Gillian Berger and Gary Rudin were married on Sunday, 6th



*Gillian Berger and Gary Rudin*

September after meeting five years ago in Tel Aviv.

Gary's parents, grandma, brothers and sisters-in-law travelled from America and Canada. His uncles and aunts from Israel and South Africa came to celebrate their wedding in Edinburgh, officiated by Rabbi Sedley together with Rabbi Fletcher from Glasgow.

After a honeymoon in Bali, Gillian and Gary will settle in Didsbury, Manchester. They are looking forward to returning to Edinburgh as often as possible.

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## Profile

## CHRISTINE BURNS

One of the most regular attenders at the Synagogue, ever present at Minyonim, always available at the numerous meetings, functions and simchas within the Community Centre ... and not even a member of Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. Well, not officially, but as near an honorary member as ever one could be. Christine Burns has been closely associated with the community for almost 18 years and surprisingly still manages to retain the capacity to smile and be cheerful. This is the picture which greets locals and visitors alike when they arrive at the Synagogue or the Community Centre. Her warm welcome is a precursor of what lies within.

Christine was born in Edinburgh, the eldest of three children. The family lived in the Sighthill area of the city and she attended Carrickvale Secondary School. On leaving, she worked as a sales assistant in the Princes Street store of R W Forsyth for five years. After that she had a similar position with Goldberg's in Tollcross. Her main enjoyment was dancing and she frequented popular venues including the Fountainbridge Palais and the New Cavenish, but only after official vetting by her father, a city police officer. She met her future husband, Dave, at the former and the couple married in 1964.

On completing his education at Inch Secondary School, Dave became an apprentice engineer at Henry Robb's shipyard in Leith. After four years he gave this up to join British Rail in London as a fireman. Returning to Edinburgh, he secured employment as a maltman in a local brewery before starting up his own business, the Burns Cleaning Company which specialised in office cleaning. For the past 17 years he has been employed by Lothian Regional Transport on permanent night shift. The couple



by IAN SHEIN

have three children and four grandchildren, Christopher (12), Michael (8), Laura (8) and Shaun (5). Needless to say the family form a large part of their lives. Christine and Dave also enjoy holidays abroad. Their other pleasures are reading and meeting friends on social occasions. Dave is a golfer and a member of Lodge Solomon.

Towards the end of 1980, Dave's father, who had been caretaker of the Synagogue for 12 years, retired. A separate caretaker was then employed for the old Community Centre opposite but the massive conversion of the Synagogue in 1980 resulted in the existing Community Centre being constructed within the same building. Mickey Cowen, President of the Congregation at that time, spearheaded the innovative planning behind the project. He, along with others including the co-chairmen of the Ladies' Committee, Dinah Penn and Avril Berger, interviewed Christine as a possible successor to her father-in-law, and she was subsequently appointed caretaker. She has fond memories of Rabbi Dr Weinberg and Rev Knopp who were the clergy at that time. Mr Burns senior remained for several

months to acquaint her with the intricacies of the job. Although very charitable by nature, she discontinued his habit of supplying tea and sandwiches to vagrants who periodically made their way to the door. Initially she found the work something of a 'culture shock' but this gradually grew into a 'way of life'. She recalls the numerous visits to the kitchen by Reuben Zack, her mentor, who once recompensed for his cup of tea, regaled Christine with many esoteric and enigmatic accounts of the Jewish religion. *Mechitsa*, *Mezuzah* and *Mikvah* became permanent parts of her vocabulary. Without having to undergo the lengthy and onerous procedures of conversion, her knowledge of Jewish customs, rituals and beliefs increased through first-hand experience and practice on a daily basis. He or she who would endeavour to bring food into the Community Centre without the sanction of the 'Burns Din' would indeed be both brave and foolhardy.

Christine describes her work as hard but enjoyable. It certainly keeps her fully occupied. The *Shabbat* and week-day Services, the Festivals, the innumerable meetings of various organisations, the functions, all regular features of Edinburgh Jewish life, make the concept of a 9 to 5 working day into a realm of make-believe. Apart from her normal duties ('job-description' is a term unknown to her), she voluntarily assists in security, guided tours of the Synagogue, tea making for meetings and, it is generally believed, would readily act as 'tenth' man at services were this to be permitted. However, there is little compromise in Christine's philosophy – one is Jewish and acts accordingly. Tradition has to be maintained. She feels herself to be

*Continued on page 25*



# MOSES MENDELSSOHN STARTED SOMETHING

by Ian Leifer

A few weeks ago I read an article on the history of controversies within Judaism. It began in the Second Temple period, mentioning the disputes between the Jews and the Samaritans and the Sadducees and the Pharisees. It continued through a period of about two and a half thousand years, ending with the 'great divide' between Orthodoxy and Reform in the nineteenth century.

Unfortunately the article did not cover the last one hundred and twenty years from the beginning of the Zionist movement to the present day. Today at the end of the twentieth century, controversies within Judaism still abound but for the Edinburgh Jewish Community and for Jewish Communities all over the world including Israel, one controversy seems to rise above all others. It is the precise relationship between the practice of Judaism and the modern Western society and culture in which we live.

The historian Leopold Zunz (1794-1886) remarked that the Jewish Middle Ages lasted until the end of the eighteenth century in that the currents of thought and life which followed the Renaissance and shattered the medieval picture largely passed by the Jews. Confined in the ghetto, European Jewry, which constituted by far the largest segment of Jewry at the time, cultivated its own traditional way of life until the Western world and its culture was opened to Jews after the French Revolution and the subsequent Jewish Emancipation. Yet already in the second half of the eighteenth century the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) Movement had as its aim not the disavowal of Traditional Judaism but, rather, the encouragement of the new science and learning among the Jews, of an openness to Western ideas and norms that might result in a rationalist approach to the tradition and a general widening of Jewish horizons. The *Haskalah* did not



Moses Mendelssohn 1729-1786

imply that Jewish observance should be abandoned. Many of its adherents, the *Maskilim* (the enlightened ones), were totally observant in their private lives. The movement was led by Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), the grandfather of Felix Mendelssohn, the composer.

The controversies pioneered by Mendelssohn still exist today and can be expressed by either one of two questions depending upon one's viewpoint: either 'To what extent should a Jew be prepared to compromise with the practice of Judaism in order to accommodate to the norms of Western culture and society?' or 'To what extent should a Jew be prepared to compromise with the norms of Western culture and society in order to preserve the practice of Judaism?'

The difference between the two questions is a difference of emphasis and balance and what is needed in our community today is a greater focus on the latter and less on the former. In essence the difference between the two questions is that between indifference and commitment and, in the end, is that between assimilation and survival as Jews.

Currently in the afternoon service (*Mincha*) on Shabbat, we

read from the *Pirkei Avot* (the Ethics of the Fathers). In chapter two, verse two, we find the following statement attributed to Rabban Gamliel, the son of Rabbi Judah the Prince:

'It is good to combine the study of the Torah with a worldly occupation'.

The term 'worldly occupation' is a translation from the Hebrew '*derech erez*', literally 'the way of the earth'. This statement formed the basis of the philosophy of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) who lived in Germany and has often been referred to as the founder of Modern Orthodox Judaism.

Hirsch's philosophy was based on the statement '*Torah im derech erez*', literally, 'Torah in the way of the earth', or more freely, 'Judaism, together with a worldly occupation'. Hirsch developed the concept of worldly occupation to embrace Western culture. This was the 'way of the earth' that had to be combined with the study and practice of the Torah. Hirsch stated that '*derech erez*' refers not only to ways of earning a living but also to the social order that prevails on earth, the mores and considerations of courtesy and propriety arising from social living and things pertinent to good behaviour and general education. Hirsch sought to demonstrate in all his writings that the combination of Torah and *derech erez* was not only possible but also essential if Judaism was to come to grips with the challenge of modern life.

The ideas of Mendelssohn and Hirsch could be found in the twentieth century here in Edinburgh in the ideas of Rabbi Dr Sales Daiches who was the Minister of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation from 1919 until his death in 1945. His 'big idea' was a synthesis of the religious and the secular (see Issue No. 29 of *The Edinburgh Star*, page

*Continued on page 18*



# THE SECRET OF THE THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by AARON DEMSKY

We are about to celebrate the Jewish New Year of 5759 Anno Mundi which falls on the first day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. Has anyone stopped to consider the contradiction in this formulation? Surely the beginning of the year should fall in the first month of the year rather than in the seventh month.

The truth of the matter is that every day falls before or after a new year of some sort. In the secular Gregorian calendar followed in the western world, the new year begins on 1st January. People living in China celebrate new year at the new moon which usually falls in February. In ancient Babylon, the new year was celebrated during the first ten days of Nissan, which falls close to the spring equinox. Most of us know or have heard of different new year dates in different cultures which fall at different times during the calendar year.

Let us get back to the question of the Jewish New Year and try to understand this seemingly internal contradiction of why it falls in the seventh month. In order to understand the calendar from a Jewish perspective, we must go back to the sources. The primary formulation regarding the structure of the Jewish calendar is found in the rabbinic text called *Mishnah Rosh Hashanah* (1:1), codified around 200 of the Common Era. It begins with the amazing statement 'There are four New Years'. Many people think there can be only one new year by definition but now we hear that there are four! From a sense of contradiction we move to a feeling of wonder. What is the riddle here?

The *Mishnah* gives us a breakdown of the four dates:

1. 'The first of Nissan is the New Year of Kings and of Holidays' The author of the *Mishnah* is pointing out that this date is the beginning of the civil calendar when the Kings of ancient Israel used to count the start

of their 'regal' year. For instance, if King David had died on *Shavuoth*, two months after Nissan, his son Solomon would have finished that year as an 'interregal' period. He would have counted his own first year from the following Nissan.

The *Mishnah* then adds that this date is the start of the religious calendar as well. Unlike most of the calendrical systems of the ancient world which are rooted in nature, the biblical reckoning of time began with an historic event, the Exodus from Egypt: 'This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you' (Exodus 12:2). The very first commandment given to the whole people of Israel is significantly its own unique way of telling time, often a fundamental aspect of determining the distinctive identity of a culture or religion.

In the Bible, the holidays follow this order: 'Three times a year you shall hold a festival for Me: You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) – eating unleavened bread for seven days as I have commanded you – at the set time in the month of Abib – for in it you went forth from Egypt; ... and the Feast of the Harvest (*Shavuoth*) of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering (*Sukkoth*) at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work in the field' (Exodus 23:14-16). Note that the last festival of the Ingathering comes out close to the autumnal equinox, which is here described 'at the end of the year'. This is for all intents and purposes also the beginning of the year. But this passage implies that the year begins in the Spring. Another contradiction?

2. The second New Year of our *Mishnah* begins on the First of Ellul, the sixth month, and designates the appointed time from which you give a tithe from your flocks of sheep or cattle. In other words according to

the Rabbis, when you make out your accounts to the Temple and priesthood, all the livestock born prior to that date is held to belong to the preceding year. Every animal born after the First of Ellul counts for the following year's tithe. However, this date was not universally accepted. There was an alternative view, attributed to Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Shimon, that the tax year for tithes should begin a month later on the First of Tishri, after the last foaling at the end of the summer.

3. The third New Year of our *Mishnah* is the First of Tishri, the seventh month. This is the date for calculating the year, that is the beginning of the calendar year, when, this year, we move from 5758 to 5759 AM. What does this mean? There are two interpretations. The first interpretation is that it is the start of the civil calendar as used by the gentile world in antiquity. We know that in ancient Canaan, the year began in the Autumn with the onset of the rains. During the Hellenistic period, the Seleucid dynasty also began its civil year in Tishri. Similarly, along with the rest of the western world, we keep the first of January as the beginning of the civil calendar and next year we will change the calendar year from 1998 to 1999. The second interpretation, which has become the dominant one in Jewish tradition, is that we count the years, beginning from the creation of the world, designated *Anno Mundi*, on this date. Therefore, this year, 5758 AM is actually based on a Jewish interpretation of biblical chronology. This brings us back to the inner contradiction noted at the beginning of this article why the start of the year is celebrated in the seventh month.

The *Mishnah* continues by noting that the First of Tishri is also the beginning of the Sabbatical Year, that is the seventh year when the land should lay fallow, and it is also the beginning of the Jubilee Year



which occurred every 49th or 50th year. In addition, the age of trees is determined by this date. This is significant since the fruit of the tree cannot be eaten during the first three years after the tree is planted. If the tree was planted prior to the First of Tishri, then it has gained a year and on the First of Tishri it will be considered as two years old. All these agricultural matters have in common that time is reckoned according to the natural year which, in the land of Israel, begins in the autumn with the first rain.

4. The fourth and final New Year mentioned in this *Mishnah* is the one that falls on the First of Shvat, the eleventh month. It is the New Year of the Tree. Since the winter is coming to an end, the sap begins to flow and the tree emerges out of its sleep into a new season and life cycle. The date was chosen to determine the commencement of tithes of fruit to the temple and the priesthood. However, there is a difference of opinion between what was probably the older view of Shammai, stated above, and that of Hillel who maintained that this New Year should fall on the Fifteenth of Shvat when most of the winter season has passed. We follow Hillel in this matter. In modern Israel, the holiday of *Tu-beShvat* has been renewed as our Arbor Day.

It is clear from this review of the *Mishnah* that, although it enumerates four New Years, that we are not talking about four equal divisions of the year. We also note that the four dates are not of equal status and have not played an equal role in Jewish life throughout the ages. Actually, they divide into two pairs. The first pair (First of Ellul and Tu-beShvat) are concerned with the tax year, that is, with tithes of animals or of plants. Indicative of its secondary nature is the fact that there is a dispute regarding the exact date of each. Regarding the tithes of animals, there is a difference of opinion as to the month, i.e., the First of Ellul or the First of Tishri. Regarding the tithes of fruit trees, the fluctuation

is a half a month between the First and the Fifteenth of Shvat.

On the other hand, two New Years' dates are central to Jewish life, so much so that even after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and outside of the Land of Israel, these two dates have not lost their significance for the Jewish people: the First of Nissan and the First of Tishri. Both touch upon basic motifs and values in the religious and national life of Israel. They are undisputed, fixed dates, balancing out the year at six month intervals close to the spring and autumn equinoxes.

What's behind these two dates? For the answer we must look further into what is behind calendars in general. The civil calendar that begins on the first of January is a Christian adaptation of the ancient Roman calendar that celebrates the renewal of the sun after the winter solstice and overcoming the primal fears and anxiety engendered by the thought that the sun might be disappearing.

Ancient calendars are basically functions or expressions of nature. In the pagan world, nature and religion almost always go together. Thus the sun, moon, fields, forests, rivers, storms and even fertility are all manifestations of the divine and find their expression in the calendar. In the ancient world that Israel came into, there were two main centers of civilization, Mesopotamia and Egypt. Both of these great civilizations – like most great civilizations like that of China and India – that emerged at the beginning of history were 'river cultures'. These societies began by harnessing the power of the river, a process that not only created government but found religious expression as well. The culture and economy of Mesopotamia was dependent on irrigation from the Euphrates and the Tigris, just as ancient Egypt was dependent upon the Nile. Following nature, these societies set their cultural time clock in the Spring after the snow had melted in the mountainous sources of their respective rivers. Their calendar reckoning joined

three aspects of their society – civil authority, religion and nature.

The region where the people of Israel lived was Canaan. This area was not dominated by a major river, but was dependent on rain for irrigation. As noted in the *Torah*, 'but the land you are about to cross into and occupy, a land of hills and valleys, soaks up its water from the rains of heaven' (Deuteronomy 11:11). Therefore, in Canaan, which became *Eretz-Israel*, the beginning of the year starts with the rain season in the autumn which, as we have seen above, is called 'the going out of the year' in the Bible. In later Hebrew, the beginning of the winter season is called *stav*, literally 'rain'. It follows on from the Summer, which is called *qaitz* in Hebrew, probably related to the word *qetz*, i.e. the 'end (of the year)'. The old Canaanite religion expressed these seasonal changes in mythic terms about their major deity Baal, the storm god who brought rain and fertilized the earth. We recall this connection in the late Hebrew term *sde ba'al*, a field that is irrigated by the rain, even though the term has been demythologized and become a secular, technical expression.

Thus, from the point of view of *Eretz-Israel*, the natural year begins in the Autumn, on the First day of Tishri. This is clear from our *Mishnah* as shown above. We recognize the fact that nature affects everyone, Jews and gentiles alike, in Canaan and Syria and by extension in the whole world. From a Jewish perspective, *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are cosmic holy days when all mankind is judged and nature is reborn. In the liturgy for *Rosh Hashanah*, we repeat the litany *yom harat olam*, 'the day the world was born', and on the Day of Atonement we proclaim: *yom hadin lekhkol ba'ey 'olam*, 'a day of judgement for all humanity'.

In contrast to this universal aspect of Judaism, there is also a particularistic side that is connected to the choice of Nissan as the official beginning of the year. For the first time in history, we have a calendar that is rooted not in nature but



rather in an historic moment – the Exodus from Egypt. Although the Israelites received their calendar in Egypt it was intended for living in the land of Canaan. A calendar beginning in the spring would have stood out in a society where nature began in the autumn. The message of this reckoning is that we as a people are independent of nature. We live in another dimension. We celebrate the great moments of sacred history but not necessarily the seasonal changes of nature as deified by the surrounding pagan world. The *mitzvah* of the calendar defines our identity as a people, as a religion and as a culture with its

own inner time clock. The First of Nissan is the beginning of both the civil and the religious years that make up the particularistic side of Judaism. However, it should be noted that while this aspect of nature has been separated from the other two and is celebrated in the autumn, we are fully aware we are a part of mankind and of our overall responsibility for God's creation. We do not deny nature, but rather do not accept its deification. Moreover, we have learned how to incorporate nature even into our national and religious holidays.

The beauty of Judaism is that it knows how to balance the para-

doxes that make up the complexities of life. In this case, expressing our desire to maintain our own particular identity at the same time as we reiterate our concern for and partnership in the destiny of mankind. The first aspect is formulated in the calendar in the New Year of Nissan and the second is celebrated in the New Year of Tishri. We express this duality in our lives when we say that the universal 'Rosh Hashanah falls in the seventh month' of our national calendar that starts from Nissan.

*Aaron Demsky is Professor of History at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. He visited Edinburgh last summer.*

## COVENANT

by ROS ABRAMSKY

### 1. MORNING

Giving birth in old age proved to be a profound shock to already ageing muscles and organs, and I can be sure of nothing any more. As I wake from the light doze that is the nearest I can come these days to sleep, I am conscious of the harsh metallic taste that I know comes from the blood oozing from my ageing gums.

Even in my debilitated state, even though I have little to contribute to the life of the modest settlement in which I enjoy the status of matriarch, the girls come to see me. They make me comfortable and supply my modest needs for food. Sometimes their mothers come to ask my advice, though I often wonder whether they do this because they think I will use my influence on their behalf with my husband, who is really in charge.

But I doubt if they'll be visiting me today. He's not here, you see. For the first time in our life together he has left me behind. He said I was in no state to undertake such a journey. How ironic. His son, who stretched and split my already aging body in coming into the world, making me useless and burdensome

as a potential traveller, has added insult to injury by supplanting me as his companion as well.

Through the window in the stone and daub hut I can see the stars fading and the deep velvet of the sub-tropical sky turning to the deep blue of the dawning. The configuration of the friendly constellations are a little different, of course, from the ones I used to gaze at as a girl in the temple, hundreds of miles to the east where I grew up, as a personification of the moon-goddess, a vessel to be filled by those eager men wishing to fathom her mysteries at first hand.

As the growing warmth of the day stirs the settlement into life, a lively but respectful child, eight or nine years old, tiptoes her way into my room, carefully balancing in her long and surprisingly strong arms a bowl of water she has drawn from the well. Through my sticky eyelids I glimpse her clean linen smock. Daughter of one of the animal herders, dark and strong like her brothers, she bids me good morning before she gently helps me to rise from my pallet and night wrappings. Her brothers are off on the adventure too. It's always the women who are left behind.

When I was her age I was learning my duties in the temple. The moon became at once my sacred identity and my enemy. I feared her rising. I resented that she came out before my friends, the less threatening stars, and remained long after they had faded away.

My housekeeper, who joined us as a child from a small local tribe of simple lifestyle, is a homely body who has no idea of such sophisticated perversions. She and her children help me with fairly good grace. It gives her a certain status to wait on the leader's wife, and her family get a little extra food. Her widening body is modestly robed, and her gait is a little unbalanced. Perhaps her hip is troubling her again. As she waddles in, she smiles encouragement, though her expression is a little strained.

'My sons have returned. I am so glad to see them. Your husband seemed so serious when they all left.' She is relieved. But my worry deepens.

'They know nothing,' she says, in answer to my unasked question, 'only that father and son are to proceed alone to the high place in the north.'



My mind slips back to the day, back there in the east, I caught my husband in a kind of trance. A kinsman of mine, also taken for service in the temple, was tall and straight then, in the first pride of full manhood. It seemed strange indeed to see him sitting in a quiet alley with his back against a tree. He was completely still, but taut, not slumped in sleep.

I asked him later about his trance. 'I was talking to God,' he said. 'And what were you talking about?', I asked mockingly. The gods of which we knew, of which we under certain circumstances became part, were forces of nature, greedy, combative. They talked among themselves – but to us? Not a chance.

He said that his God did listen, did care about him. And that one day he would help him to break free of the miserable, broken, exploited lives to which we seemed to be doomed. I never believed him. But I restrained my laughter.

Years passed. He was turning grey and jealously watching his brothers bring up their families. In their impossibility of fulfilment, his dreams grew ever bigger. First it was just children. Then it was land. Next a dynasty. After that a whole country.

'We'll have to go somewhere else and begin again'. I bridled at the 'we'. But he ignored my protests. 'Don't you want a better life?', he asked. 'Don't you want to be with me? Don't you want to have my children?'

## 2. NOON

So long ago, such promise. And where is that man into whose beautiful hands I entrusted my painful, sore, but secure little life at this moment? We are all his very property and substance. But none of us knows.

In the heat of the day the girl comes back, looking tousled and tired. She is taken aback when I open my mouth, speaking a full sentence for the first time that day. I

asked her how it goes with the lads who came back. 'I would be glad if they could come and bring me news of my husband,' I carefully articulate. She is kind and patient, but promises nothing. Soon she skips away to rejoin her playmates.

All are free – they have to work hard or they don't eat. Sometimes they are called upon to fight. But no-one forces them or enslaves them. He and his God have given them freedom, dignity. And rules.

And now he is punishing me. By his absence, by taking away my only son, to show him what he must learn to do and continue to do for himself, to perpetuate the contract with the God whose promises seem only to come to fruition through the shedding of blood.

At last the boys come. They enter slowly, accustoming themselves to the stench, bracing themselves for the sight of a wrinkled face, wondering how to conduct themselves with a person at the other edge of life.

Like their sister, they are handsome children. The taller of them now almost fully grown, straight, strong, his muscles honed with field work and walking. His brother beside him is still a chubby, awkward child.

They look so tired, so confused. I will have to be gentle, to conceal my urgent concern. 'So boys, tell me about your journey.'

'We have never been so far away,' chirped the child. 'We saw so many hills and trees, and rivers. He was kind to us, your husband. But he looked old, weary. His son tried to cheer him up, but he would not be comforted. As they headed off towards the hills, he would look only at the wood bound on the back of the donkey'.

'Did you help them choose the animals to take with them, up into?', I probed.

'That's the funny thing, they took no animals', the older brother replied.

The little boy knits his brow. 'Why did they take the knife, then? We already chopped the wood for the fire', he queried innocently.

There was only silence left in the tent. My heart chills. There would surely be no animals to kill out there on the hills. Images of the the first-born babies we had seen flung into the fire crowded into my mind.

What a price we had paid to break with all that. But they just can't resist, these men, the urge to play their part in dabbling with the forces of life and death. To demonstrate their loyalty to higher things by staking their own flesh and blood. Having already paid with mine, am I now to pay over again through that of my only son?

I feign sleep so that the unwilling, uncomprehending messengers could go. They slip quietly out to join their playmates, only the older faintly aware of the despair permeating my body.

## 3. NIGHT

Suddenly there are people, voices in the room. They carry the heavy presence of adult men. I wake, sodden again, to the pitch blackness of deep night.

'Go to greet your mother, my son', says a familiar voice.

This handsome, healthy young man in the prime of life should find himself elsewhere in the middle of the night, approaching a cleaner bed with a much younger woman in it. Yet I am so glad to be embraced by him. For once he conquers the reserve with which he normally approaches me. I can feel the life force in his veins, his joy and relief at being reunited with his home and family, even his decrepit dam. After a decent interval he releases his grip and stands upright.

'Greetings, mother. It goes well with me', he said, responding to the question in my eyes, 'but now I must rest. Goodnight'.

His father comes towards me, more slowly, stooped but firm and deliberate in his movements.



'You were worried about our journey, weren't you? But as you always have, you let me go freely, even with your only son.

'I knew his life was on the line', I say, hard, bitter, resentful.

'To contemplate that rejected, abhorrent act was the only way, you see. The only way to prove that the link between heaven and earth is real, is rooted in individual lives, can stand the test of sacrifice'.

'And what was in it for you? What was at stake in this disgusting, murderous bargain?'

'I want you to know that this time there was no question of a bargain with some kind of payoff for me. It was an instruction – a test perhaps – but there was no option to refuse. I want you to forgive me for not confiding in you, but I feared both your sceptical tongue and your frailty and misery. I could not face having to choose between God and you.

'This was an imperative I had to acknowledge and answer – alone. And, again, my faith has been

rewarded. Through it we have won the future. Our son and his descendants will gain the legacy we have so long been promised. They will have to work to earn and deserve this: through work on the land, with the animals, building settlements and ruling themselves in mutual respect for all.

Knowingly or not, I had played my part in setting this story in motion. Now my work is finished. And he knows it. He has passed the test – but it has done for me.

He kisses me tenderly, perhaps more tenderly than ever before.

I smiled one last time. But my thoughts were not so sunny. 'Why could you not talk to me, give me your faith and knowledge? Why did your vision, your mission use and break my body without enlightening my mind. What exactly am I to you, to your God?'

'You have done well, and I will honour you more in the completion of your task than in the steps you made along the way'. Patronising and mysterious. But I have no

strength left. Only his gentleness matters now.

Out of the window I can just make out the fading moon, once mistress of my soul and my body, now just a dim light about to go out in the glare of the rising sun.

Whether what we had wrought was for good or ill, it was no longer in my power to change the future. As he said, I had played my part. His too is nearly over.

He embraces me once more, and then lets me turn to the wall, spent, beyond pain, at last ready and almost willing to embrace the peace of wakelessness.

*Ros Abramsky is a former journalist who now teaches science communication. this is her first venture into creative writing.*

*With Compliments  
from  
JOHN AND HAZEL  
COSGROVE*



*The Sacrifice of Issac (Akedah) in the 6th century floor mosaic of the synagogue at Bet Alpha, Israel.*



# HOLOCAUST: THE NEXT GENERATION FACE TO FACE

by SUZANNE GLASS

*When journalist Suzanne Glass, right, went to interview archaeologist Ricardo Eichmann, her grandmother refused to talk to her. For Ricardo's father was Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi responsible for the deaths of many members of Suzanne's family. Here, in a very personal account, she explains why she felt compelled to meet the son of a notorious mass murderer.*

As a child, I wasn't afraid of the Big Bad Wolf. I wasn't afraid of the Wicked Witch. Instead, I was scared of a ghost – the ghost of a Nazi monster. His name was Adolph Eichmann. I was seven when I asked my grandmother what had happened to her grandmother: she told me how the old lady had survived in hiding in Berlin on a diet of raw potato skins, until she was dragged out of her cellar by the Nazis and thrown on a train to Auschwitz. On the way, she suffocated to death, and was at least spared the horrors of the concentration camp. My grandmother told me that Adolf Eichmann was Hitler's right-hand man, and that he was the Nazi who signed the deportation papers to send her grandmother to die. Eichmann was captured by the Israelis and hanged in 1962. I demanded to know everything about him. Why did he hate Jewish people? What did he do to children like me? Did he hurt them too? Grandma told me about her friend's little boy. He was my age when Eichmann sent him to scrub himself clean in the shower then turned him into smoke. After that, when I played hide-and-seek, cowering under the bed or behind the shower curtain, I waited for Eichmann's ghost to pounce on me and turn me into smoke. The Big Bad Wolf and the Wicked Witch seemed innocuous by comparison.

My grandparents suffered many of the phobias common to Holocaust survivors, and passed them on to my mother. As a child I learnt that

it was pointless to get excited about holidays; suitcases carried painful connotations of flight and deportation, so almost invariably our family holidays were cancelled at the eleventh hour. I remember too, as a teenager, coming home with a blue-and-white striped party dress. My mother took a large pair of scissors to it and cut and cut till she could cut no more. The fabric reminded her of concentration-camp clothing and the fate of the cousins and friends whom Eichmann had sent to scrub themselves clean.

I retained my morbid fascination with Eichmann long after I stopped playing hide-and-seek. Throughout my twenties, though, his ghost lay dormant. But in 1995, Eichmann reared his ugly head: I read in a newspaper that his son, Ricardo, had been appointed Professor of Archaeology at Tübingen University in southern Germany. Until then, the younger Eichmann had lived in virtual anonymity – the name Eichmann is to the Germans what 'Smith' is to the British. But to preempt any scandalous publicity, he had decided to 'come out' about his parentage. I felt compelled to track Ricardo down. I called him time and again, until he agreed to see me. I told my grandmother of my plans over dinner one Friday night. The sabbath candles were flickering on the table, and my grandmother, still razor-sharp at 86, asked me how my career was progressing. 'Darling', she said, 'Who are you interviewing this week?' 'I'm, um, I'm going to Germany, Grandma,' I replied.



'Germany,' she said, 'Whatever for?'

'I'm going to interview Ricardo Eichmann, Adolf's youngest son,' I replied.

She didn't speak for a long time. Her face was ashen when she said, 'Not my granddaughter, sitting opposite the flesh and blood of a Nazi monster. Not my granddaughter!'

Guilt-ridden, I boarded the flight to Stuttgart.

'I'm going to interview Adolf Eichmann's son' I blurted out to the elderly man in the next seat.

'Ah, ja', he said.

'I suppose it's an odd thing for a nice Jewish girl to do', I said.

'We must move on', he said.

I scrutinised the black-and-white picture on the cover of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, an account of Eichmann's trial and subsequent hanging. A scrawny, short-sighted and scruffy man glared up at me. As I sat on the train from Stuttgart to Tübingen, then walked up a hill and across a courtyard towards my meeting with Ricardo Eichmann, I visualised that picture and prepared myself for more of the same. The corridor on which Ricardo Eichmann's study was situated was dark. The hide-and-seek fears of my childhood followed me as I walked its length. On the last door hung a plaque engraved with the name Professor R



Eichmann. Hot and sweaty, I knocked. A tall, handsome man with black hair and dark-blue eyes answered the door. He was young; in his late thirties perhaps. I'm sorry', I said, 'I was looking for Professor Eichmann'.



Adolf Eichmann

'Frau Glass', he said, 'Ich bin Professor Eichmann, I am Professor Eichmann'.

For the first hour of our meeting we sat in his study. But this was no normal interview. The interviewer talked. The interviewee listened. I told Ricardo how his father had signed the papers to send my relatives to Auschwitz. I told him how, as a child, I had longed for a big family – for aunts and uncles I never knew, for cousins never conceived. I told him how his father had deprived me of them, and that because I had come to see him, for the first time in my life my grandmother wasn't speaking to me. I explained that she thought evil was genetic. All the time, Ricardo Eichmann sat quietly and listened, his hands folded in front of him on his shiny wooden desk. Beautiful hands, I couldn't help noticing. Eyes and hands are always the first things that attract me to a man.

'Look', he said, 'There are many people who feel about me as your grandmother does. I have to accept it'.

I asked him how he felt about his father: I held my breath.

'For me', Ricardo said, 'Adolf Eichmann is an historical figure'. Had he answered any other way, had he dared to hint at a modicum of love for his father, I might have had to get up and leave. Certainly I would not have found myself, a little later, in an atmospheric Italian restaurant with Ricardo Eichmann. As I looked at him, I remembered my grandmother's ashen face.

'I feel guilty', I said, 'I mean, me, the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors and you, the son of a Nazi monster, eating lunch together. It's ludicrous'.

It was perhaps because I admitted to my own feelings that Ricardo Eichmann began to open up. Ricardo was five when his father was kidnapped in Buenos Aires by the Israeli secret police. He remembers sitting on the doorstep, day in, day out, waiting for his Daddy to come home. 'But didn't you know your father was evil?', I asked, on the attack.

'I was five', he said. He told me how, as a child, after the family returned to Germany, he never knew exactly what had happened to his father. It was a taboo subject. 'It wasn't until I was thirteen that I opened a magazine and saw a picture of the noose which hanged my father'. He told me how, after that, he would turn bright red when anyone mentioned the SS or the Nazis. He was so filled with shame that he simply told people his father had died as a result of the war. He gave up his training as a pilot when, during a chemical-warfare drill, they were asked to enter gas-filled rooms nicknamed the 'Eichmann soup chambers'. He told me how he felt when he saw his father's signature on the deportation papers that ordered the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews.

As Ricardo talked, I watched him, and, astonished, felt my rage begin to dissipate. At first I didn't let on: I felt disloyal to my grandmother. 'What do you tell your children about their grandfather?', I asked.

Ricardo Eichmann looked pained. 'I had dealt with Adolf Eichmann, and put him aside. But last week my seven-year-old son asked why there was a journalist in our house. I told him he wanted to talk about Daddy's father who was a bad man



Ricardo Eichmann

and ended up sort of in the gallows, like in his *Lucky Luke* comics.' I sat there, writing down his words, now deeply disturbed by my feelings – I was having lunch with the son of a mass murderer, and I was feeling sorry for him. I told him. I blurted it out, I couldn't help myself. 'I don't want sympathy,' he said, 'It is an affront to the six million who died in the war'. Somehow, after lunch, Ricardo Eichmann and I found ourselves outside in a sunny piazza, sipping cappuccinos. It struck me that to passers-by we must look like a couple, each intensely interested in what the other had to say. An ugly scene flashed through my mind; 'Mum, Dad, Grandma, this is Ricardo Eichmann, Adolf's son. You remember Adolf. The one who sent our family to burn ...'

'Are you all right?', he asked. 'Yes', I said, embarrassed. 'Yes, I just felt a little dizzy for a moment. I was just thinking, though, that you and I both have an albatross around our necks. The albatross of

*Continued on page 25*



# INTERNET JUDAISM

by ARON LANDY

Imagine – you're the rabbi, it's Friday and you are facing writer's block thinking about the sermon for tomorrow's barmitzvah. And it has to be a good one ... the gabbaim have told you that the building project could depend on it. Do you call the Chief Rabbi's office for inspiration? Do you call a friend? Or do you go to your PC, tap in to the internet and search for something new there? It's all anonymous, no-one will know, and with luck you'll find something pretty interesting.

Far fetched? Unbelievable? Well, given the incredible variety of Jewish learning that is available on the internet, it must be rather tempting to say the least.

So what is the internet exactly – is it really a useful tool for business, research and leisure or just something used by antisocial teenagers? The easiest way to envisage the internet is as an enormous reference library. Any organisation or individual worldwide can lodge information there and keep it up to date at virtually no cost. This makes it totally different to ordinary libraries, and so information is available from a vast array of sources, ranging from the British Museum to the Knesset, from Buckingham Palace to the person next door (e.g. the author has his own pages on the internet).

Although no catalogue exists – and given the constantly changing nature of the contents, it would be hard to create one – computer programs are available, enabling you to search their records for what you want (these are known as 'Search Engines'). For example, anyone interested in Dr. Stefan Reif's Cairo Geniza research project (featured in Issue No. 29 of *The Edinburgh Star*) could easily find the material which they have put on the internet, which includes not only pictures of actual Genizah fragments with translations and explanations, but background information including pictures and

CVs of staff members.

In the same issue was an interview with Netanyahu. Interested in a tour around the Knesset? It's on the internet. Or in Israeli political parties? They're on the internet as well. All in all, the internet has dramatically cut the cost of providing, maintaining and accessing information.

As a result, vast numbers of individuals and organisations have set up 'web sites' to purvey their own news, views or information, and this has included the Jewish community in no small measure. Communal organisations, *Yeshivot*, Israeli universities as well as regular *shiurim* can all be accessed. Shamash is one organisation which specialises in this – their web site has *Divrei Torah* from more than 100 authors from Shmuel Boteach to Shlomo Riskin. A web site which I found recently contains the complete Hebrew text of the *Tenach* and *Talmud*, with extensive cross referencing, which is truly amazing.

In addition, commercial web sites abound, such as hotel chains, travel guides, timetables, and even virtual greeting cards! This interesting concept enables people to send a message to a friend's computer which consists of a picture of a *Rosh Hashanah* card together with a personal message.

What makes the whole experience even more interesting is that it is not only documents that can be examined over the internet, but pictures and sound are available as well. There are hundreds of video cameras permanently linked to web sites, a notable example being that of *Yeshivat Aish Hatorah* in Jerusalem, which shows minute by minute the view of the Western Wall. As for sound, any number of *shiurim* are available to listen to, as well as lessons on how to read from the *Torah*, lead prayers and so on. Pictures are also used extensively – you can take a look at art treasures

in many of the world's museums or examine the view from your holiday villa without leaving the comfort of your home.

Shopping too has been implemented electronically. The cheapest place to buy a book is now from Amazon, the world's largest book warehouse in Seattle (USA) – using your credit card over the internet. One example suffices: 'Blessed Are You: A Comprehensive Guide to Jewish Prayer' by Rabbi Jeffrey M. Cohen costs \$21 plus \$13 shipping (approx. £13 plus £8 shipping) at Amazon, compared to £25 plus £2 postage at a UK internet bookshop. And if you have time on your hands, you could visit a 'chat room' (where anyone can 'chat' to others in the room by typing messages) dedicated to your favourite hobby.

Access has become so easy and cheap that virtually anyone anywhere with a computer can set up a web site with whatever content is desired, and the information will be accessible by all other users. This ease of communication and dissemination of information has led to the term 'global village' being applied, and it really describes things quite accurately. As Prof. Stephen Hawking wrote recently, 'we are making progress, helped by the fact that all theoretical physics papers are now on the internet. It has made physicists the world over into a global village. If someone has a new idea, they send it to a computer in Los Alamos. Within a week, there will be several developments of the idea.'

Whether for the casual browser (or 'web surfer' in the jargon of the internet world) or for the more serious researcher, the internet is a very powerful resource. Documents, sound recordings and still and moving pictures of all sorts can be examined in this vast library. So whether you are the Rabbi looking for subject matter for a sermon, a student looking for inspiration for



an essay, an armchair visitor to the Israel museum or someone who just wants to see what is going on at the Western Wall, you can get the latest information from the internet.

Vast though the resource is, it does have many drawbacks. By its very nature it is like a library without an editor – anyone can publish anything in this electronic world – so you can find plenty of useless and distasteful material, from that which is simply wrong, or represents the random musings of the computer owner to really pernicious racist and pornographic material. Laws have been enacted in some countries to try to stop the dissemination of this material, but they have a limited effect, because the computers comprising the internet network are located in so many different countries. There have been some notable successes, though – the musician Gary Glitter was investigated by police after pornographic pictures of children were found saved on his computer when he had it repaired (a little known feature of most internet viewing programs, or browsers, is that they automatically save everything you view on to your computer).

A particularly annoying feature of the internet is that with all of this rubbish around, it is often hard to find what you are looking for. When I went on holiday to Morocco, I wanted to look up some background information but when I asked the search program to look for 'Morocco' it returned so many hundreds of references that it took hours to find anything relevant and interesting. Even when I tried to find the Geniza web site with a search program, it wasn't simple – the research unit is, of course, called the Taylor-Schechter Research Unit, so looking for 'Geniza' didn't get me there. It did, however, bring up a web site with a paper that has been published on a Geniza fragment, which luckily had the word 'Geniza' in its title, and from there I got to where I wanted to go. Most aspects of using the internet are very easy, but when searching

for information, experience is invaluable if you are to separate the relevant from the irrelevant.

So is it for everyone? Well, not everyone wants to subscribe to a reference library, no matter how big it is. But it can be useful and enjoyable to find out what is being printed in newspapers around the world, shop from your armchair and see the products, examine the view from your hotel before you book

and so on. Businesses find it even more useful – with the right sort of web site, interest can be generated in an audience which might not previously have been reached. And of course, there are those in need of a short cut. How should we react to the Rabbi who gets his sermons from the internet? I say, if the material is good and the audience haven't heard it before, good for him!

*Dr. Aron Landy, grandson of the late Barney Adelman (see obituary in Issue no. 29) lives in London with his family. He is Senior Warden of South Hampstead Synagogue and writes programs for Psion computers (distributed via the internet!) as a hobby. In the time that remains he works for a major investment bank.*

### Some useful references:

#### Newspapers:

[www.jchron.co.uk](http://www.jchron.co.uk)  
[www3.haaretz.co.il/eng](http://www3.haaretz.co.il/eng)  
[www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)

London Beth Din – [www.kosher.org.uk](http://www.kosher.org.uk)

Taylor-Schechter Geniza Unit – [www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Taylor-Schechter](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Taylor-Schechter)

Amazon Bookshop – [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Shamash – [www.shamash.org](http://www.shamash.org)

tanach directory – [www.shamash.org/tanach/tanach.html](http://www.shamash.org/tanach/tanach.html)

dvar torah directory – [www.shamash.org/tanach/dvar.html](http://www.shamash.org/tanach/dvar.html)

Rav Soloveitchik's shiurim – [www.shamash.org/tanach/tanach/commentary/mj-ravtorah](http://www.shamash.org/tanach/tanach/commentary/mj-ravtorah)

Hebrew Tanach & Talmud at Hebrew University of Jerusalem –  
[snunit.huji.ac.il/snunit/kodesh/kodesh.html](http://snunit.huji.ac.il/snunit/kodesh/kodesh.html)

Western Wall – [www.thewall.org](http://www.thewall.org)

The Knesset – [www1.knesset.gov.il](http://www1.knesset.gov.il)

Israeli Politics  
[www.inter.net.il/~avoda](http://www.inter.net.il/~avoda)  
[www.likud.org.il](http://www.likud.org.il)

[ramat-negev.org.il/israel/ispolit.htm](http://ramat-negev.org.il/israel/ispolit.htm)

Israel Museum – [www.imj.org.il](http://www.imj.org.il)

Israel Bible Museum – [israelbiblemuseum.com](http://israelbiblemuseum.com)

Search Engine – [www.metafind.com](http://www.metafind.com)

### *Continued from page 9*

25) – a synthesis of Judaism and the finest ideals of Scottish culture, in other words a synthesis of Torah and *derech erez* here in Edinburgh.

Perhaps Rabbi Daiches was too ambitious in trying to achieve a synthesis. Perhaps what is needed today is more a partnership than a synthesis, a partnership between the religious and the secular, between

Torah and *derech erez*. More a partnership of equals and less a partnership where Judaism is relegated to a relatively minor role. A partnership in which Judaism will continue to play a very significant and major role in all our lives today and in the future.

*Dr Ian Leifer was recently elected President of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation.*



# HAVE I GOT JEWS FOR YOU?

## A REVIEW OF JEWISH COMEDY AT THE FRINGE

by JULIAN GOODMAN

No! Well not many! I thought it was pretty slim pickings last year, but Oy! did I have my work cut out for me this time around! I wish I was that thin on the ground, I can tell you! Having scoured the Fringe Programme for anything vaguely Yiddishe, I knew I was going to have to settle for some pretty loose connexions, but I couldn't find terribly many of those either, heigh-ho!

I gritted my teeth and set out with grim determination, but, once again, the first show I saw set the standard. Strangely enough, it wasn't a 'stand-up' show but an excellent piece of theatre, *'Shylock'* at the Assembly Rooms. Gareth Armstrong gave an awe-inspiring performance in his one man play, taking the audience on a tour through 400 years of anti-semitism in this country and Europe, while anchoring himself to 'The Merchant of Venice', all with an overwhelming passion, yet amazingly with a strong undercurrent of Jewish Humour. Armstrong played a bit-part character called Tubal, Shylock's only friend, and Shakespeare's only other male Jew, telling the history of major massacres throughout the ages, most of which started in England. The Norwich Blood Libel in 1144, York in 1190 and Edward I's expulsion of the Jews in 1290, all presented from a Jewish perspective, explaining Shakespeare's portrayal of Jews in light of the fact he had never officially met a Jew in his life. Despite the seriousness of these subjects, Gareth Armstrong managed to describe them with such great charm and wit there was no doubt on whose side the audience was intended to be. He personified with apparent ease all the major characters in the play and several different Shylocks down through the ages. Having entered to the haunting strains of Bruch's *Kol*

*Nidrei* he captured the audience, dragged them kicking and screaming through several emotions, with sharp and wickedly funny observations on stereotypes and the world's misconceptions of Judaism, and abandoned us to our fate at the end of his play, emotionally exhausted, yet exhilarated from such a rich performance!

My next port of call was The Pleasance to revisit a comedian I reviewed last year, *Adam Bloom*. I was much impressed. His Jewish material had at least tripled in the intervening twelve months – from one gag in his hour to *three!* He told the same anatomical joke as in his previous show, but did a nice line on the orthodox Jewry of North London setting out an 'ingenious' plan to carry out burglaries in Hendon and Golders Green on a Friday night. The audience, two-thirds of which seemed to be Jewish, loved it. He had just received his 5 stars from *The Scotsman*, and on

realising the size of the Jewish contingent he enquired 'Did I get 5 stars from *The Jewish Chronicle* as well, or did *The Scotsman* have a 2-for-1 offer on?' That was it, but hey, it was more than we got last year. The rest of the show was rather fun too, but he'd made such a big thing on telly about being Jewish, it was a pity it didn't feature that much more in his act!

It was then time for me to have a look at the 'loose connexions'. *Harvey Fierstein's Torchsong Trilogy* at 'Venue C too' may have been the story of a Drag Queen's love life and not to everyone's taste, but boy it's got some powerful Jewish Humour in there. It was in an oppressively hot and tiny venue, but it was worth enduring the discomfort and seeing this edited version just for the banter between Arnold, the main character, and his disapproving 'Yiddishe Momme', Mrs. Berkoff. Having seen the movie, Harvey Fierstein and Anne Bancroft are a



Gareth Armstrong in *Shylock*.

PHOTO: JO LUKE



hard act to follow. However, The Broken Dream Theatre Company made a brave attempt to bring a big movie to a tiny stage and just about brought it off. I was rather sorry to see the scene of the *'Shiva House'* cut out. Mind you, with a cast of only five we were lucky to see all three parts of the trilogy attempted, let alone some of the trickier scenes. All in all, I left with a smile on my face and feeling rather impressed with the effort that had gone in to the adaptation, along with the stamina of the cast.

My penultimate show was at The Queen's Hall, *'Out of the Blue'* with Rabbi Lionel Blue. The venue was packed to capacity for this one-night only show, and although there were quite a few Yidden there, the majority of the audience were not common-or-garden gentiles, but dyed-in-the-wool Christians, and from the moment Rabbi Lionel Blue stepped onto the stage the adoration swept through the hall! It was a fascinating sight, almost like a 'revivalist meeting'! He would make a comment, and, dotted about the place were people who would answer him back in either agreement or dotage! I couldn't help but wonder what would keep Jackie Mason's ego in check if he had that sort of power!

The evening was anecdotal with Lionel Blue strolling through his life and experiences, gently explaining how he got to where he was today. He started off by explaining that it was his first visit to Edinburgh since 1953 when he attended a Hebrew Summer School. He went to see the 'Tattoo' and was amazed to find himself behind two Rabbis who were debating in fluent Hebrew – 'The Freudian significance of kilts'! He went on to chat his way through his early ministries until he reached his most important congregation, his most current one of BBC Radio listeners. 'A congregation of all faiths and none, ... mostly none!' His main aim was to get people out of bed on a Monday morning, but 'with enough moral stiffness to stop them diving back in under the duvet again!' He joked about his own



Adam Bloom  
PHOTO: STONE RANGER PRODUCTIONS LTD

failures and inadequacies and how he came to realise that humour and entertainment were his real ministry. He explained how jokes help people to deal with problems that they can't solve, thus making something positive out of the situation.

The second half of the show consisted of considerably more joke telling, mostly Jewish ones, and the audience lapped them up. He deftly found a suitable joke or anecdote to accompany each topic and kept the audience chuckling away at a fair old pace! He occasionally touched upon weightier aspects of his personal life and the difficulties that have arisen, but in a light-hearted way always managed to steer the audience away from the serious topics back into gentle comedy. It was a polished performance of a professional raconteur. He might not have tailored his show to a specifically Jewish audience and didn't teach that much about *Yiddishkeit*, but he did show the human face of Judaism with all its frailties and failings to a non-Jewish audience who know little or nothing about Judaism. All this cosily wrapped up in Jewish Humour. Although most of the jokes were well known it was still extremely pleasurable to hear one's favourite Jewish jokes being told, in the same

way one would welcome the comfort of a pair of one's favourite old slippers!

I finally tottered down the Cowgate to The Gilded Balloon II to see *'David Tabastsky – True Stories And Other Bullshit'*. Having seen my first flyer of the Fringe that practically reeked of 'chicken soup', I was full of hope! Oh lack-a-day and woe was me, what a tiring show that seemed to be! He started off reasonably well, with inept juggling tricks and a bits of traditional shtick that were quite funny, but when his routine started proper it became very hit and miss. His impersonations included a gun-toting lunatic on the New York subway, a Southern Evangelist who juggles for Jesus, which I must concede was mildly amusing, and last but *definitely* least an annoyingly grating personification of his mother! The gratuitous swearing I found to be a hackneyed view of the 'Big Apple' and somewhat disappointing. However there were times when he seemed to be getting better, such as the dialogue between himself and his mother over the telephone, where she warned him that she had 'the new AT&T Jewish Radar 'phone-I can find you anywhere!!' and that's about as good as it got. His routine then nose-dived as he married a German girl to the 'horror' of his family, portraying everybody as racists, which was supposed to be for comic effect, but it just didn't seem in the least bit humorous. Consequently, while the ending had a clever message to convey, it was a tedious journey we had to endure to reach it!

After three weeks in the Fringe, I hadn't found my self *platzing* over anything sidesplittingly funny, but nevertheless I had been more than adequately amused by most of what I'd seen. While *'Out of the Blue'* was a close runner-up, the *'5 Magen Dovids'* this year had to go to *'Shylock'* simply for the buoyant feeling it left you with on leaving. He definitely deserved his pound of flesh; mind you, I can probably afford it!



## The Slow Mirror and Other Stories – New Fiction by Jewish Writers,

edited by Sonja Lyndon and Sylvia Paskin, published by Leaves  
Publications, 1996, 232 pp. £9.99

reviewed by Stanley Raffel

This is a collection of 26 stories by Jewish writers. As the editors (each of whom has contributed a story to the book) explain, the selection principle is simply that all the authors consider themselves Jewish, not that there necessarily be anything particularly Jewish about their stories. The consequence is that we get an extremely varied collection of material, for example Moris Farhi's *Lentils in Paradise*, a tale told from a child's point of view of sexual awakening in a Turkish bath in Ankara, Zvi Jagendorf's *Strudel-bakers 1951*, a rendering of one evening meal in a Viennese family we would probably nowadays consider dysfunctional, Shelley Weiner's *The Vote*, about relations over the years between a Jewish woman and her maid in a changing South Africa, Carole Malkin's *The Silence of Dishes* which deals with the narrator's return to Miami to face the difficult issue of having to put a relative into an old age home, and Tamar Yellin's *Kafka in Bronteland*, a stylish account of various encounters and events that affect the narrator as she lives her life in a dramatic moors setting in Yorkshire.

And the stories do not just demonstrate geographic diversity. There is also variety of style, content, and genre. So there are two stories with frank and sometimes graphic gay and lesbian content, Shaun Levin's *Shoes* and Rozanne Rabinowitz's *Maza Zoftig*, stories that eschew realism for fantasy, for example Micheline Wandor's tale of feminist self-assertion, *The Devil in the Cupboard*, and there is even a story that manages to combine Jewish themes with science fiction, the *Lost Tribe Found* by Edinburgh's own Ellen Galford. Also, although the majority of the stories use what I would call conventional narrative

techniques, some such as Stephen Walker's *Mr. Silberman Meets the Pope* and the already mentioned story by Tamar Yellin are exploring the newer less committed narrative style associated with writers like Donald Barthelme and Don De Lillo.

I found the sheer diversity of this collection both impressive and also reassuring because it certainly suggests that there need be nothing particularly confining about identifying oneself as a Jewish writer. But perhaps a harder question is whether there remains anything that we would particularly want to call Jewish in a collection assembled with such an open admission policy. A first fact here is that with a few exceptions, e.g. Gabriel Josipovici's *The Hand of God* which does recount, albeit with very ambivalent overtones, a religious experience; the title story, Richard Zimmler's *The Slow Mirror*, which has miraculous elements; and the aforementioned story by Stephen Walker which deals with events which though they may have 'scientific' explanations at least hint that there may also be divine forces at work, the stories are not overtly or even covertly religious. And yet I would say that most of the stories end up drawing on, albeit sometimes in a way that transforms that tradition, aspects of Jewish tradition, culture, ethnicity, including religious tradition. For example, even though the focus is not on the religious element, Deena Linett's *Seder* still depends on the significance of that celebration for most Jews. Jack Gratus' *A Suburban Tragedy* partly relies for its impact on Jewish attitudes toward extramarital sex. Ellen Galford obviously depends for her reworking of this idea on the original story of the twelve tribes of Israel and also on the whole history of themes around the Jew as stranger and exile,

transformed in her work, comically, to the Jew as (literally) an alien. At least two stories, Jagendorf's and Frederic Raphael's *Going Back* are at least partly inspired by the Jewish resonances of one particular food, strudel. Also, one cannot fail to notice the number of stories which deal, in one way or another with younger persons' (the authors'?) attempts to revisit, sometimes just to memorialise but often also to attempt to somehow rectify, e.g. by better understanding and by forgiveness, relations with the elderly, parents, grandparents, other relatives, often of the immigrant generation. Incidentally, it seems that far more of these authors are interested in parents than in children.

How good are these stories? Although the quality is certainly uneven, it is a testament to the editors that I found that none of the stories were without merit although some struck me as the most perfectly realised. Interestingly, these were not the ones written by authors who are already well known, at least to me. In this category, there are stories by Elaine Feinstein (*Christmas in Berlin*), Dan Jacobson (*The Circuit*), and, as noted above, Frederic Raphael (*Going back*). Feinstein's story, while undoubtedly competently done, seems too pat and sentimental. Raphael shows his usual talent for mimicking the clever if oh so affected dialogue of a subset of Oxbridge intellectuals although in this instance, (if not always), the result exudes a nasty amorality. Jacobson's work seems most disappointing. He makes what strikes me as a much too forced analogy being Jewish and being the mechanical hare that is chased by dogs in greyhound racing. As many other stories suggest, we both need and, if we are imaginative, can find, much stronger versions of Jewishness than his implied sense of the Jew as permanent victim.

I would single out four stories. Jagendorf's piece is noteworthy for the real understanding it displays of differing points of view and the way we battle to sustain them even in the



most apparently trivial daily actions. It also manages to suggest the redemptive moments there can be in even the most, to a less observant eye than his, drab of lives. Malkin's is a very well constructed account of how two people achieve in the end a kind of reconciliation where their early history makes that seem impossible. Weiner's, rather like *Driving Miss Daisy*, is a convincingly realistic and touching story of the growth in mutual respect between maid and employer. Jonathan Wilson's *Dead Ringer*, also very well constructed, shows a son managing (just) to do what is right by his mother and others. It also has a very ingenious ending. All of these stories, though not overtly religious, have in common that they have a lively awareness of what in religious terms I suppose would be called sin; including different forms of sin; the difficulty of deciding what is a sin; complacency as a kind of sin; and, above all, the possibilities both of forgiveness and second chances as remedies of a sort for even the gravest of sins. Thus in *Strudelbakers 1951* (though this is not the only focus in this rich concoction) we see a traditional father and his more modern son battling and then resolving in a way that is comical but acceptable to both sides the problem of whether to wear a yarmulke at dinner, with Jagendorf making it clear that more than one's religious belief is at stake here. In *The Silence of Dishes* the two main characters have to deal with what they both recognise as the indefensible legacy of one of them having been gratuitously cruel to the other. In *The Vote* a maid and her employer in a changing society have to face and, to an extent rectify, the inevitable violations to human dignity (even when the employer is not particularly unjust) that such a relationship entails. And in *Dead Ringer* the narrator has to face issues of neglect that surface in his mother's desire for him to visit his brother's grave with, again, the author showing us how this behaviour can have more than just religious significance. Here, both in

the sheer awareness these authors bring to problems of this order and in the resources they seem able to develop to deal with them, we see the Jewish religious tradition exerting a continual and beneficial

influence, even among its secular children. This is an excellent collection of stories which I think most readers of *The Edinburgh Star* would find both enjoyable and illuminating.

## Country Fact Files – Israel

by Jose Patterson,

published by Macdonald Young Books in hardback, 1997, £9.99.

reviewed by Lesley Danzig

The Country Fact Files Series on Israel has been written principally for 9 to 13 year olds by Jose Patterson. It is a book crammed full of statistics on modern-day Israel which makes numerous comparisons with other countries ranging from how much cow's milk was produced in 1993 to the percentage of diamond exports in 1994. Its author, Jose Patterson, was formerly an Advisory Teacher in Special Education and is now a full-time writer of children's non-fiction. She has lived and worked in Israel.

The book paints a vivid picture of life in Israel today with each of twelve topics (which range from 'Natural resources' to 'Transport') backed up by easy-to-read graphs of all shapes and colours. Every page includes beautiful colour photographs, each one worthy of a chapter in itself, for example an illustration of early-morning shoppers at a market stall encapsulates a cross section of the population buying bread. They include a woman in a fur coat flanked by a uniformed workman and a young orthodox man.

Each topic is further expanded by a section called 'Key Facts' which is not a summary of the chapter but contains four or five key statistics, often elaborated by interesting snippets of information such as that Israelis are among the longest-living people in the world! And did you know that in 1995 there were 59 cars per kilometre of road in Germany compared to 100 cars per km of road in Israel, 'the highest in the world'?

This is very much a book dealing with life in the 90's and as such only a very short paragraph is devoted to the historical background on the rise of the State. For example, it is quite unclear (perhaps deliberately?) who fought whom in the War of Independence. More generally, internal and external politics are given a fairly low profile.

Noticeably missing is a chapter devoted to the Jewish religion and all its factions in Israel. There is one line in a paragraph headed 'Religion' but that is in a chapter about 'Daily Life'. Also missing were any pictures of Chasidic or Haredi Jews, a subject I would expect to form an integral part of any book on Israel.

Another criticism is that the information on Kibbutzim consists of a perfunctory paragraph outlining the original ideals but not bringing us up to date with the enormous number of recent changes that have affected kibbutz life today. In addition the accompanying photo of two kibbutz nursery nurses wheeling trolleys, each containing four standing toddlers being taken 'on their daily outing', may be a typical occurrence but does not give any sense of the unique quality of kibbutz life. Indeed the comment elicited from one of this reviewer's children was 'Why have they put these children in cages?'

With the presumed intention of avoiding controversy, Jose Patterson has, certainly from a Jewish adult's perspective, written a book about

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## In Memoriam



**ANDRE CURZON**  
23.7.1911 - 8.8.97

Our dear father was born in Lodz, Poland in 1911, being one of four brothers and two sisters. His mother, brother, his sister and her family perished during the Nazi oppression. A full account of these tragic times, written by Dad, was published in **The Edinburgh Star** (Issue No.7, September 1990, pages 23-24).

Prior to the war, with the assistance of his brother Henry, our father reached France. As the war broke out he was enlisted in the Polish army, and was brought to Britain in a Dunkirk-type evacuation from France. Later as a sergeant in an anti-aircraft command, he was stationed in Scotland and in Dover. In 1944 he settled in Edinburgh where he married our dear mother Freda Lichtenstein, daughter of one of the large Jewish families of the time. Meanwhile our father's late brother Henry remained in France, his sister Esther emigrated to Australia having survived the Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. His late brother Maurice, having fought with the partisans in Russia also settled in Edinburgh, thanks to our father who located him in a displaced persons' camp in Germany.

During the Edinburgh years, our father forged for himself a successful

business and family life, and was a well respected member of the Edinburgh Jewish Community. Through the 1950s to the early 1970s he ran the only kosher delicatessen business serving the Jewish Community in Edinburgh. When the shop premises were compulsorily purchased, he set up his own-label *Alfa* edible oil company, producing and marketing the product himself. He then purchased a busy greengrocer business in Bruntsfield which he ran until his retirement.

He had always been a Zionist, interested in the foundation and survival of the State of Israel and its people. During the 1920s and 1930s he was a member of the Gordonia and went on Hachshara with a view to emigrating to Palestine. However due to the ban on Jewish immigration his dreams were frustrated. When our dear mother sadly passed away on 26 December 1989, Andre, who was very bereaved by his loss, decided to go on Aliya to Israel to be with his son Philip and family who live in Pardess Hanna.

Despite ill health, nearing the age of 80 and showing true resolve, he managed the move, and settled in Netanya in 1990. He very much enjoyed the short years he lived by the sea air label in Natanya, making new friends, playing bowls, bridge and chess. He could converse in English, Hebrew, Yiddish, German, French and Polish and was respected by many people both in Netanya and in Pardess Hanna.

He was a very wise worldly person, with a deep interest in Jewish history, literature and the arts. Despite a debilitating terminal illness, he never complained and showed tremendous courage and determination to the very end. As an example, at age 83, very frail from ill health and despite all our arguments, he travelled on his own, half way across the world to be with his sister in Melbourne, Australia. We marvel at how he managed it.

Our father was always positive and very independent, and had a great inner strength and thirst for life. Despite the hardships and traumas in early life, he was sensitive and caring and had a good sense of humour.

Following a long illness, he was finally laid to rest on 8 August last year alongside his dearest Freda in Pardess Hanna. He was a great grandfather, and is sadly missed by his son Philip and family, his son Irvine in London, and his sister Esther and her family in Australia.

*Irvine and Philip Curzon  
London and Pardess Hanna, Israel*

**JENNY SISCHY**  
20.12.1976 - 5.7.1997

*We reproduce below an edited version of the tribute to Jenny given at her stonesetting on 5 July 1998. This is an exceptional departure from our regular practice but is, in my view, the right way for **The Edinburgh Star** to honour the memory of a truly remarkable person (Ed.).*

We are gathered here this afternoon to bid farewell and to consecrate a memorial stone to a very special person, Jenny Sischy (Pninah bas Mordechai), who died exactly one year ago. So good, so sweet, so wise, so gentle, so brave – so young. We looked on as she battled against a terrible disease, we prayed that she would win, she fought so hard but it eventually overcame her.

We know that Moses composed a payer for his sister Miriam which is regarded as the simplest, shortest and most beautiful prayer in the Hebrew language: 'El naw, refaw naw' law which means 'Please God heal her now'. How often we said that prayer for Jenny.

We recall Jenny's warmth, her courage, her optimism when faced with such adversity, the sweet smile and the gentle voice which gave encouragement to those around her.



These have gone but we are left with the memory of a beautiful girl who performed her Batmitzvah and then wrote about it in an article called 'A day to remember all my life' which was published in the second issue of **The Edinburgh Star**.

Jenny approached her Batmitzvah with the tremendous enthusiasm she showed for all her school-work, her swimming, indeed for everything she did and it shows through in this extract. She wrote 'The Rabbi gave the three of us a delightful sermon, following which Mr Cosgrove presented each of us with a beautiful *Siddur*. After that, we returned to our seats. The moment I had been thinking about for weeks was over but, funnily enough, I was not glad. Although standing in front of the Ark was very nerve-wracking, I have to say that I enjoyed every minute of performing our piece'. So honest, so typical of Jenny.

She was a prolific writer and, at the tender age of 13 was blessed with a talent to write with thoughtfulness and clarity of vision. In a school essay, she wrote about her fears for the future. 'There are many things lying ahead of me which I do not understand and this lack of understanding turns them into fears. One of my main fears about the future is death. What happens when one dies? Is there an after-life? Is there a heaven and a hell? Nobody, nobody will ever be able to answer these questions because nobody can come back after they have died to tell us what it is like. I suppose this is a good thing in a way for it leaves us something to wonder, something to look ahead at, after our lives'. This was just a small part of a most profound essay - she was so talented and so observant of detail. We can only imagine how successful she might have been if she had been spared.

She used to scribble away, often in verse. Listen to these extracts on

her illness, written at one of her many crisis points.

I feel so distraught, so  
devastated and knocked

Was it worth it all I've been  
doing, all I've fought

Against, my battle, this  
exhausting illness

Things have been down, things  
have been up

Things have stayed steady, got  
frantically stuck.

All I desire is a 'normal' life,  
study, some travelling, some  
sun,

A decent figure, a pretty face, a  
smile or some laughter - some  
fun

Then I will know for me life has  
begun.

And what can I do? I have no  
choice

And I know deep down that I  
will never give up.

As we all know, she never did give up but the illness was too strong for her. There was never a day without humour and laughter. All who knew her had their lives enriched. We may imagine as we approach the 21st century that we are the masters of our own fate. But the humbling message from Jenny's short life is that science and medicine do not have all the answers. It demonstrates just how frail we all are.

John Cosgrove.

### For Jenny

*The trees of summer gather  
here, in one green place,  
to remember you.*

*A shade without blackness,  
the shadows as important as the light,  
where each leaf applauds  
your coming and, turning,  
mourns your departure.  
Your absence finally loss.*

*Words clustered round you,  
as crystals whose charge  
you changed to make us  
understand the deepening well  
you carried within,  
where drowned stars  
shimmered and spun into darkness.*

*Stone has made you ageless;  
it gives no remedy for pain.  
But this day of dancing leaves  
heals the unchosen grief  
and is set forever  
in our hearts.*

JOYCE CAPLAN



## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir

On behalf of Scottish Friends of Alyn Hospital, I should like to express my sincere thanks to all those members of the community who responded so generously to our appeal. So far, a total of £954 has been raised. This will be put towards the purchase of a hi-lo treatment bed to enable children to receive their treatment more easily and in greater comfort.

I should also like to inform readers that cards are available to mark a range of special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. These cards can be obtained from me.

Finally, I should like to inform donors that Dr Nathan Oppenheim has become Hon Treasurer of the organisation.

On behalf of the Committee, I should like to wish all readers a happy New Year.

Clarice Osborne  
Chairman  
Scottish Friends of Alyn  
Ettrick Manor, 56/2 Spylaw Road, Edinburgh EH10 5BR



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**SELLING YOUR HOME?**

*Continued from page 16*

the past. Your father put a curse on my grandparents' life, on my parents' life and on my life. But he also put a curse on my life.'

He smiled then, a sad smile of acknowledgement, and he stood up slowly to leave. He said he was pleased to have met me and that if I was ever passing near Stuttgart again, I really ought to get in touch. I shook his hand and turned away.

The adrenalin pumped. Last month I passed through Stuttgart. I dialled Ricardo Eichmann's number. I closed my eyes and let it ring a couple of times. I saw my grandmother's ashen face and hung up.

*Suzanne Glass was born in Edinburgh and is now a freelance journalist who writes regularly for The Independent, The Independent on Sunday and The Guardian. This article was first published in Marie Claire.*

*Continued from page 8*

an integral part of the Jewish way of life without it interfering with her own personal and familial responsibilities. Her strong affinity with the community was exemplified some years ago when the Literary Society won the Glasgow Jewish Quiz. Christine was proud to announce that 'we' had won.

It is obvious that Christine enjoys the company of the community. Her warmth, affection and genuine concern for its members is heartily reciprocated by all of us and we look forward to many more years of her and Dave's involvement in our communal life.

*Continued from page 22*

Israel containing some glaring omissions. However as an aid to working on a school or *cheder* topic on modern Israel, this book will be an invaluable resource for teachers and parents. *Country Fact Files - Israel*, is colourful, informative, well written and could not fail to engage any 9 to 13 year old's attention, add to their knowledge and hopefully provide an incentive to further study of the State of Israel.

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