

THE EDINBURGH

STAR

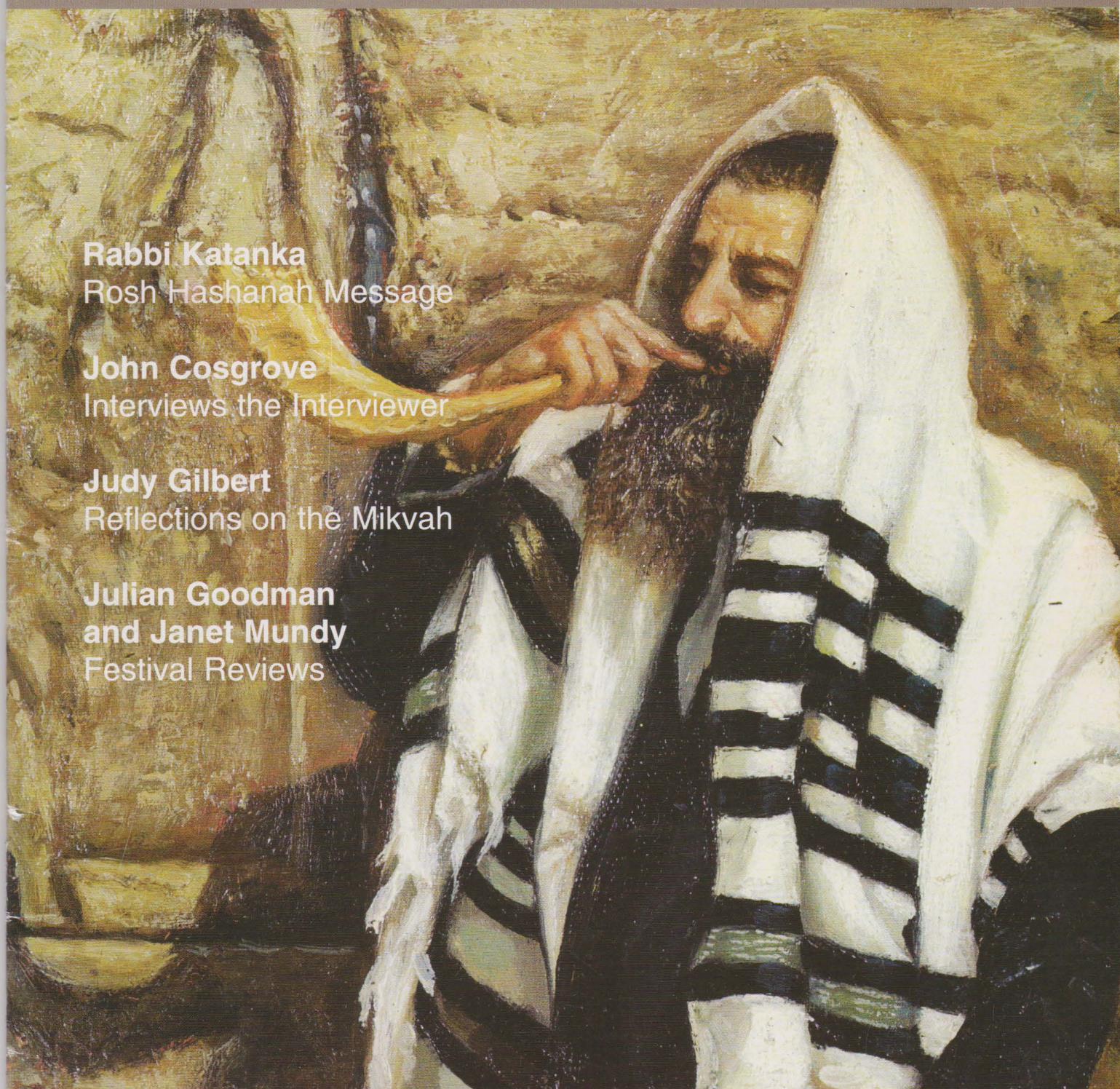
No. 43
September 2002
Tishri 5763

Rabbi Katanka
Rosh Hashanah Message

John Cosgrove
Interviews the Interviewer

Judy Gilbert
Reflections on the Mikvah

**Julian Goodman
and Janet Mundy**
Festival Reviews



THE MAGAZINE FOR THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY

THE EDINBURGH

STAR

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The Edinburgh Star

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Shofar at the Wall by **Udi Merioz**
(reproduced by courtesy of the artist)

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The Board would also like to thank
Mr & Mrs Harold Mendelssohn for
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Editorial

With the approach of Rosh Hashanah, we look back on a momentous year, which on a global level, started with the events of 11th September, saw unprecedented levels of terrorist activity in Israel and turmoil on the financial markets. We in Edinburgh live far from the epicentre of these events yet who can claim immunity from their impact? With today's media reporting every minute detail, it's hard to separate such distant events from our day-to-day lives and yet we have to, because no matter how traumatic an occurrence, we need to retain hope for the future and this is a time when we must look forward with optimism.

As we go to press, I read that there are some initial withdrawals by the Israeli Army from some of the recently occupied Palestinian areas and that these withdrawals seem to have been negotiated on the basis of some effort by the Palestinian leaders to suppress their militants and prevent the devastating sequence of suicide bombings. I have said before that eventually there will be dialogue, eventually there will be a peace but a true peace can only come from a real dialogue between the two peoples, a real understanding of each other's issues and a new generation of young people who grow up to be both part of their own community and yet respectful of others.

The past year has seen some significant changes in our own community. The Friendship Club has been a stalwart of our community for nearly half a century. In

August of this year we saw the sad end to that most popular of Edinburgh's institutions with a farewell tea held on a barge cruising the Union Canal from Ratho. That event is reported by Freda Riffkin in this issue.

Formed in 1956 by Dinah Bindman with David and Celia Leigh the Friendship Club has held a pivotal roll in the social life of the senior congregants. In our small community it is hard to realise the popularity that this organisation enjoyed in its early years. Their minute book recalls the planning of the 4th birthday party back in 1960. The event was to be a dinner at the Carlton Hotel at the princely sum of three shillings a head. Concern was expressed at the committee meeting that there would not be enough room to accommodate all those attending. Can we imagine such a problem today? These birthday parties continued through the years and for a long time there was also a popular Friendship Club Chanukah Dinner.

In recent years, continuity of the Club has been in the capable hands of Betty and Willie Caplan. It is regrettable that due to health problems and falling support they are unable to continue the good work but all of us owe a debt of gratitude to Willie, Betty and all the many hardworking committee members before them who have combined to give our community one of its best loved institutions.

This year has also seen a significant change in the management of our synagogue creating, for the first time, a separation of the religious and management duties within the Shul Council. It is hard to imagine that there will not be further change over the coming years as the demographics and character of our community change but that should not in my opinion be viewed in a negative way.

Change has been a constant throughout history and we should look forward and not back.

I continually find myself thanking people for their support in the production of this magazine. This edition completes my first year as Editor and I feel it appropriate to thank not only those who are part of the Editorial Team but people in the Edinburgh community and in many parts of the world who's sincere interest in our publication keeps it alive with a flow of interesting articles, letters and indeed financial support. One of the great revelations since my occupation of the Editor's chair is discovering the huge reservoir of good will that exists for the Star and its importance not just for our small community but the for the vast Edinburgh Diaspora. Whenever I feel weighed down by the pressure of completing an issue, I remind myself of that relationship.

There are many locally who have worked hard for the Star and none more so than Ian Shein. Ian has been associated with the Star since its early days. He is a 'Star' reporter in every sense and in addition to his journalistic tasks, is the main person responsible for organising the major and vital task of distribution. In this issue, another 'Star' of our magazine, John Cosgrove interviews him as a special tribute to his exceptional work

May I conclude with thanks to all our readers for their encouragement and support over the last year and to offer sincere wishes from myself and the Editorial Board of the Edinburgh Star for a healthy and happy New Year L'Shana Tova.

Peter A Bennett

Star Trek into the Past

Do you recognise anyone here?

Answers on page 19



New Year Message from the Rabbi

Rabbi Katanka

If we seek to understand what has made Judaism so remarkable a faith for so long, look at the biblical and prophetic readings for Rosh Hashanah.

It is my pleasure to offer my First New Year's message to all the readers of the Edinburgh Star. I know that there is a wide circulation of both members and former members of our distinguished community as well as those who have had association over the years. All of us must look at this New Year with fresh hope following on the tragedies we have seen in Israel over the past two years. Prayer is more important at this time than ever before because as many Israelis have been saying 'it is only a miracle from G-d that can save us from our difficulties'. It is the ideal moment to rediscover faith and to return in whole hearted repentance. Judaism has an unusual concept 'All is well that begins well'. It is our custom to start our year by spending many hours in communion with G-d in order to send us into the New Year in the correct spirit. Very soon we will once again hear all those traditional melodies that will rejuvenate the innermost depths of our souls.

Recently I met a young man from the former Soviet Union. He described to me how he made the journey from not even knowing he was a Jew to eventual orthodoxy. He had a friend who took him along to a Seder. He himself did not know the difference between Passover and Easter, but the mystic and unique atmosphere of the occasion relit a spark that had been dormant within him and within many other Jews for over 70 harsh years of Communism. He inspires me to prepare for not another year but a New Year. The Hebrew word *Shonoh* means *Shinui*, change, there has to be some change. I am reminded of the gentleman who had worked for his firm for twenty-five years. As he was being presented with the customary gold watch, he remarked 'I have not had twenty-five years in the job, I've had the same year twenty five times'. There can be little point in a photocopy, surely one must strive for new heights, search for new ideals and for this there can be no greater guide than our Torah; the blueprint for a meaningful life.

I find it very challenging to have joined the community in its sixty-ninth year in Salisbury Road. We are about to celebrate our 70th anniversary as a worshipping congregation. In the Ethics of the Fathers we are told 'At seventy comes the hoary

head or old age! In the 21st century this is not always the case. There are many 70, 80 or even 90 year olds who live busy active lives. Modern science has helped to preserve life and indeed the quality of life; age has become a state of mind. If you were to ask me my prognosis for the next 70 years, I would without hesitation offer a positive approach. It is entirely up to ourselves if we want a thriving community we can have one, but it all depends on attitude. Dayan Morris Swift once wrote 'Judaism is based on reciprocity'. We do not press buttons and passively watch blessings appear. We do not touch a switch in order that gifts shower down from Heaven. We give and then we receive in return. We stand before G-d on Rosh Hashana and we plead "Give us, give us!" We ask for parnassah, livelihood. We ask for health, we ask for happiness. We ask for pleasure from our children. What are we giving in return? What are we bringing to the table? Are we willing to heighten our observance? To strengthen our commitment? To bolster our support of communal needs? We must realize that Judaism, as in every aspect of life, is a give and take endeavour. We have no right to demand unless we have participated. We have no right to ask until we have demonstrated our conviction. We have no right to plead, if we have not in some way merited that right.

It is no coincidence that in every Kaddish of the Ten Days of Penitence we change the text to *Le'ela U'le'ela* which means higher and higher. As Robert Browning put it 'A man's reach should exceed his grasp'. Climb high, climb far, your goal the sky, your aim the Star!

The popular *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer declares that all human beings appear before G-d for judgement like *Bnei Maron*. The Talmud gives several interpretations of this term. One is sheep. Just as the sheep climb over the mountain in single file so we each appear individually before G-d to be judged. Another interpretation is soldiers. Rashi explains that soldiers in King David's army were proud and self confident, assertive and in control of their situations.

Will we be sheep or will we be soldiers? Will we give up or will we move forward with pride and enthusiasm?

When Winston Churchill was asked how he felt on reaching the age of seventy. He replied 'I feel quite good, considering the alternative'. Considering our alternative, the answer is obvious!

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Desperate Times



Effective Measures

The last two years of terror have taken their toll on the Israeli people. Thousands of individuals and families have been left struggling for their survival. Many lie in hospital beds fighting for their lives. Thousands mourn the loss of loved ones. The depth of suffering is unimaginable.

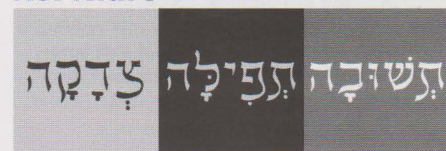
This year the Kol Nidre Appeal will reach out to Israeli people whose lives have been shattered by terrorism. It will provide desperately needed funds to families coping with the aftermath of an attack, covering a wide range of needs - from long-distance hospital visits to medical equipment and home care costs.

By supporting trauma centres, emergency hotlines and counselling services, the Kol Nidre Appeal will also provide psychological and emotional support to people traumatised by terrorism - from those

wounded in attacks to bereaved relatives and witnesses of these horrific atrocities.

This Kol Nidre you can ensure that they do not suffer unnecessarily. You can provide the strength, hope and support that the Israeli people need in these desperate times.

Kol Nidre 5763



Appeal 2002

If you would like to make a contribution to the Kol Nidre Appeal, please call 020 8446 1477

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A Capital View

Ian Shein

More than 300 years ago, in 1691, a Jewish man by the name of David Brown, petitioned the Town Council for permission to reside and work in Edinburgh.

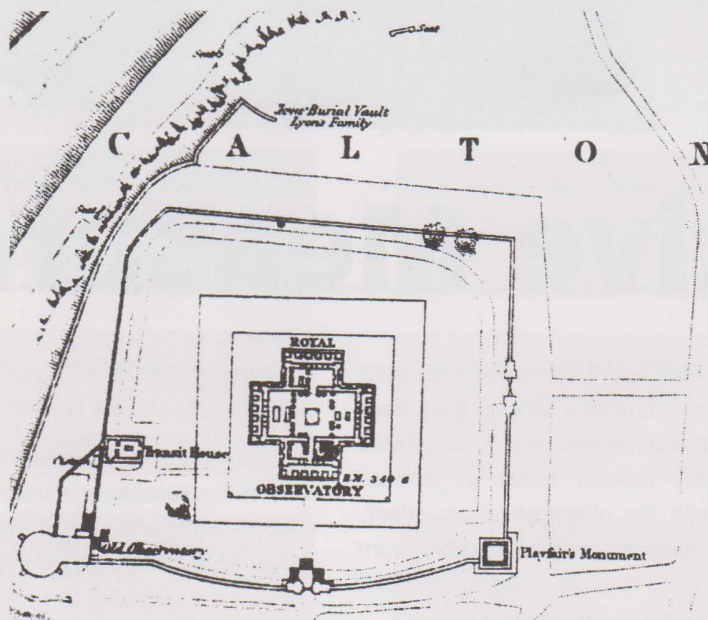
His cheek, what we might call his chutzpah, was vehemently opposed by the Dean of Guild who argued that, because Mr. Brown was a Jew, it followed that he had denied the basic tenets of Christianity and could not be granted the privileges he sought. However, Mr. Brown had the support of the Town Treasurer who replied that, although he was a Jew, he was no infidel but was 'one of the ancient people of God, the seed of Abraham from whom the flesh of Christ came' and, as such, he deserved to become a citizen of Edinburgh. David Brown's petition was approved by a majority of the Town Council and became, in effect, a declaration of liberty for Jews in Edinburgh and indeed throughout Scotland.

He applied for permission to purchase a small plot of ground, either on Calton Hill or on Bruntsfield Links, as a burial spot for his family. He had been most disconcerted by the refusal, on three occasions, of the Royal College of Surgeons to admit him as a member. After due deliberation, the Town Council agreed that, on payment of £17, Mr. Lyon could be given a small piece of land on Calton Hill. Today there is no trace of the spot and it could well be that it has been lost under the buildings on the Hill. However, an 1852 Ordnance Survey map shows a spot marked as 'The Jews' Burial Vault'.

The Edinburgh Almanac commented on the

Kennington and Jenners and is now the famous department store Jenners. At that time, Princes Street comprised a row of three-storey buildings with sunken areas in the front and shops above.

The first intimation that a number of Jews had actually settled in Edinburgh was in 1793, immediately after the French Revolution. Because of the war between Britain and France, the British Government had passed an Immigration Bill which required all aliens to register with the local magistrates. For some reason, Jews were allowed to register with their Synagogues, which were then legally bound to pass this information to the authorities. But, because there was no Synagogue in Edinburgh at that time, Jews reported to the magistrates. The names of 16 Jewish men and four Jewish women appear on the register.



Map showing Burial Ground.

In 1717, another Jew, Isaac Queen, paid £100 - a great sum of money at that time - for the privilege of trading in the town and, from the records, it appears that Mr. Brown did not have to pay anything for this privilege.

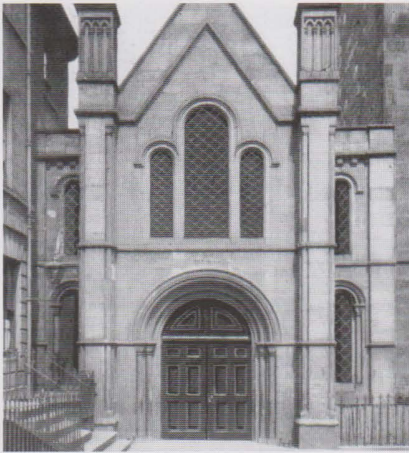
Towards the end of the 18th century, a German Jew called Herman Lyon, who described himself as 'a dentist and a corn operator' - and, as such, may have been the first expert in foot and mouth disease -

fact that another Jew, Shadrach Moyse, described as a Customs House Officer, had built one of the first houses in Princes Street (no. 21) during the early part of the 19th century. However, there must be some doubt as to whether he actually was a Jew because Jews were barred from holding any office under the Crown or Municipality at that time. In 1816, Philip Levy was appointed furrier to His Majesty George III and, as such, was entitled to have the Royal Coat of Arms above his shop, next door to the premises which later became



Rev. Moses Joel

The first Kehilla, or Congregation, of Jews in Scotland was established in Edinburgh in 1816 in a room in Richmond Court, off Nicolson Street. It served the needs of 20 Jewish families and was referred to as a Synagogue, which was a rather grandiose title because it was really no more than a room used for prayer. Interestingly enough, this was seven years before the first Synagogue was established in Glasgow. At that time there were about 5,000 Jewish families in London and the provinces of England.



The Synagogue at Graham Street

The first Minister to the Edinburgh community was Rev. Moses Joel who was appointed around 1830 and remained here for 40 years. The community was not well-endowed financially and could afford only the bare necessities although it is clear that the Minister was paid for his services. The Sepher Torah, the Holy Scroll, was owned by one Jacob Ashenheim who loaned it to the community.

In 1816, a Jewish cemetery was secured in Braid Place, just off Causewayside, which became known as Jews Close. It was used for the next 50 years when ground was purchased at Echo Bank Cemetery in Newington. The present cemetery in Piershill has been in use since 1914.

Around 1825 a tenement in Richmond Court other than the one mentioned above was converted into a Synagogue. It had an initial membership of 67 families and served the community for 43 years. In 1868, a building in Park Place to the north of George Square on the site of the old University Men's Union was acquired and was used for thirty years until an old chapel in Graham Street, off Lauriston Place and opposite the Old Royal Infirmary was purchased. This was enlarged in 1913 and used until the present Synagogue building was opened in 1932.

It is sometimes said that if three Jews were marooned on a desert island, there would soon be three Synagogues. Thus, it is not surprising that a few small congregations at that time preferred to form their own places of worship. Besides the main Synagogue in Graham Street, there were Bet Hamedrash (houses of prayer) in Richmond Court (see above), Roxburgh Place and South Clerk Street, at which small groups of Jews would gather regularly. One of these in Richmond Court, known as the Greeners Shul, was particularly popular with newly-arrived immigrants, who felt more at ease in their own company, speaking their own distinctive form of Yiddish.

The Congregation soon had to deal with the

problem of educating the young members of the community. An article in the Evening Courant in October 1827 reported that "Jewish residents in Edinburgh have established a school for instructing their children in the Hebrew language. Last week the first examination of the pupils took place in the presence of a number of oriental linguists. Satisfaction was expressed at the progress of the children,



Rev. Furst

which reflected great credit on the teachers. The school does not exclude pupils of other religions and may be regarded as an important step towards liberality on the part of this remarkable people. We understand that the Jewish families permanently residing in Edinburgh amount to 20 and the undomiciled portion of the tribe is also numerous and the whole fall little short of a hundred souls."

But there were clearly some problems and, fifty years later, in 1880 the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Adler wrote as follows to the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation: **"I regret to learn that the state of your congregation is not as satisfactory as I would wish. I learn that no adequate provision for instruction of between 300 and 400 children exists.** I am aware that, occupied as Rev Mr. Furst is with his primary duties of Chazan, he is unable to devote necessary time and attention to the large number of children. I thus earnestly hope that your community will take steps to engage a competent teacher. A vacancy should be declared offering an adequate salary in the Jewish papers. You may rely on my co-operating with you in this most desirable end of providing the needful Hebrew and religious instruction."

I must not overlook the Jewish tradesmen who came to the city from Manchester in 1880 to work in the Caledonian Rubber Company in Dalry. They set up their own Synagogue in Caledonian Crescent. Perhaps not surprisingly, friction arose between them and the main community on the South Side, the latter looking upon them as ignorant intruders who refused to accept their dictat. On several occasions, the Chief Rabbi had to be called in to act

as mediator. However, in addition to the conflict between the two communities, the main community clearly had problems of its own. One item from the minutes of a meeting dated September 1881 stated that "The meeting considered the disgraceful conduct of the Beadle embezzling seven pounds four shillings belonging to the congregation. As the Holy Days were approaching, when the services of the Beadle were so necessary, the delinquent should be kept on to do the necessary services with the exception of saying prayers for the congregation and should not to be allowed to collect any more money until the next general meeting". A subsequent meeting "agreed that a private subscription be raised for him provided he left town".

But to return to the early days of the 19th century, there was little immigration and due to the high mortality rate, the Jewish community did not grow appreciably. Edinburgh had become a city of elegance, pride – and poverty. Historically Jews were not allowed to practise in the professions and, because the capital was not a strong manufacturing centre but was, rather, a centre of finance, banking and insurance, it was difficult for Jews to find employment in the city. Because many Jews were craftsmen and tradesmen, such as cabinet-makers, tailors and furriers, they tended to settle in cities like Glasgow. In England, they were particularly attracted to London, Manchester and Leeds.

The Jews in Edinburgh were not well endowed materially. However, they enjoyed freedom of movement and were generally well received by the local population. The Scots had liberated themselves from the intolerance of former times and revered the teaching and moral principles of the Old Testament. There were however serious restrictions on Jews in the wider society. It was not until 1835 that Jews were entitled to vote at elections and not until 1845 that they were allowed to hold municipal office.

In April 1834, The Scotsman published a report of a meeting which took place at the Waterloo Hotel in order to petition both Houses of Parliament to remove the disabilities under which "Jews of His Majesty's dominions now labour and to place them in the same situation with all others of His Majesty's loyal subjects". The meeting was presided over by the Lord Provost and many non-Jews supported the motion, which was signed by all 33 town councillors. However a further 23 years were to pass before Baron Lionel de Rothschild was elected to Parliament. Because he was required to take the Oath and to swear on "the true faith of a Christian", he was unable to take up his seat until 1858.

The Russian pogroms which followed the

assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, gave rise to mass emigration which continued until the outbreak of the first world war. Prior to this, Jews had come to Britain first from Germany and Holland and later from Eastern Europe, in particular from Poland, Russia and Baltic States. Many arrived on the east coast of Scotland, some being told by unscrupulous ship captains that they had arrived in America.



Rabbi Dr. Salis Daiches

They saw the grim uninviting warehouses of Aberdeen, Dundee and Leith and came ashore only to have their dreams of utopia quickly dashed by the realities of the situation in which they found themselves. Many Jewish organisations were set up to help them. They provided essentials such as Synagogues, Jewish education and kosher food. In Edinburgh, a number of cultural, educational and other facilities were established. In some instances, they were used to combat Christian missionaries who offered financial support and medical aid to encourage needy Jews to attend mission halls. Edinburgh's oldest communal organisation, the Jewish Literary Society, was founded in 1888 and is still going strong.

In 1905 the Aliens Act limited the number of new immigrants but, by the beginning of the First World War in 1914, there were some 12,000 Jews in Glasgow and 1,500 in Edinburgh. The number of Jews in Glasgow never exceeded 15,000 and the number in Edinburgh was 1,800 at its peak. In the 1920s and 30s, a number of American Jewish students came to Scotland to attend university as the 'quota system' imposed limits on the number of Jews who were able to study at American universities.

Members of the community were also active in the secular life of the city. Rev. Jacob Furst, who was appointed Minister in 1879 and remained in that post for 40 years until 1918 when he was succeeded by Rabbi Dr. Salis Daiches, had a son Elias who became a Director of Hearts Football Club in 1907. He then became Vice-

Chairman and was noted for his emphasis on team discipline. Furst was the driving force behind the erection of the Hearts of Midlothian War Memorial at Haymarket, which was unveiled in 1922 before a crowd of 35,000 people.

The impact of the small Jewish community on the everyday life of Edinburgh was marked in 1911 by the Town Council, led by the Lord Provost, making their first visit to the Synagogue in Graham Street and this close relationship between the community and the civic authorities has continued to the present day.

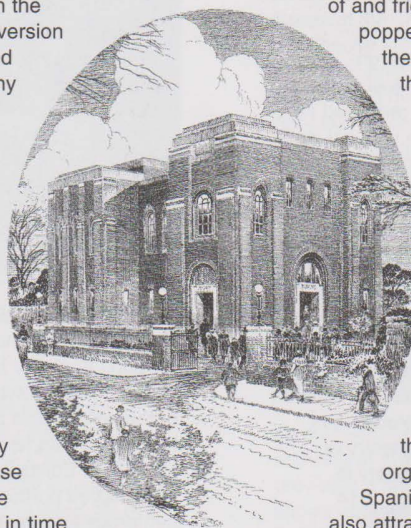
When Jews first settled in Edinburgh, the great majority lived in the South Side, a miniature version of London's East End and Glasgow's Gorbals. Many of them worked in small workshops and whenever they could, they set up their own businesses. Others travelled long journeys to small towns and villages in Fife and neighbouring counties, often knocking on the doors of houses in mining communities attempting to sell their wares, mainly on credit. They had to use public transport and were always home on Fridays in time for the Sabbath. Imagine these devout Jews travelling to Fife and beyond, amazing their fellow travellers as the train thundered across the Forth Bridge by putting on their tallis and teffillin to say their morning prayers.

Members of small Jewish community in Edinburgh worked hard and lived frugally but were determined to make a living to support their own and other families. An interesting item in the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation minutes of 1917 tells of the time the Edinburgh Community bought a raffle ticket to help the South Shields Hebrew Congregation Building Fund and won first prize. This was a Sefer Torah. A member had to travel to South Shields to collect the prize as it was not thought appropriate to send such a holy item by train on its own!. In that year, 1917, there was great excitement in the Jewish community when the famous Balfour Declaration was announced. It coincided with a period of strong Zionist activity in Edinburgh which encouraged Jewish people of all ages to make their homes in what was then Palestine.

As explained above, during the 1920s and 1930s the great majority of Jews in Edinburgh lived in the South Side. The Pleasance, comprising St. Leonard's, Roxburgh Place, Richmond Street,

Carnegie Street and Adom Street amongst others, housed a very close-knit community which met, gossiped and shopped in the nearby kosher butcher, baker and delicatessen shops which abounded the area. Unlike today, there were a number of shops catering for the Jewish community where Yiddish and Litvak vied with broken English, and where Jewish housewives were able to inspect the cragginess of the chickens offered for sale, decide whether or not the challah and bagels were as fresh as yesterday, and drive the deli man to distraction after his vain attempts to procure the right size of schmaltz herring from a barrel which submerged his arm from fingers to elbow. Invitations were unheard of and friends and neighbours popped in constantly to hear all the latest news and to escape the hard day-to-day grind

Left: Impression of proposed synagogue by A. Mc Gibbon



which they would otherwise experience. Then as now Jews were to be found in all political parties but most were committed to socialism and a few were active communists. A number of them had been active in the Bund, the Jewish workers organisation in Russia. The Spanish Civil War in the 1930s also attracted many Jews to the Republican cause to fight against fascism. After the Nazis seized power in Germany, the Jewish community helped to organise a boycott of German goods.

Between the wars, opportunities existed for young Jewish people to attend university and they did so in increasing numbers, aided by the Scottish educational system, by scholarships and by the encouragement they received from their parents who often saw their offspring as "my son, the lawyer" or "my son, the doctor".

At the end of the first world war, Edinburgh



Rev. Levison



Rev. Ordman

acquired a new Rabbi whose name became synonymous with the Edinburgh Jewish Community. Rabbi Dr. Salis Daiches was an extremely distinguished religious leader, whose fame soon spread far and wide. Many non-Jews looked upon him as the Chief Rabbi of Scotland, a position which did not (and still does not) exist. He was one of the leading lights in investigating the possibility of establishing a single community in Edinburgh. At the time, the construction of a purpose-built Synagogue was regarded by many as a utopian dream whose realisation was out of the reach of the local community.

The planning commenced at a Special General Meeting in 1926, when the estimated cost was put at £20,000. Protracted negotiations ultimately secured the site in Salisbury Road and appeals to raise the required money were launched. By a tremendous effort, the dream was realised in 1932 when the Synagogue was opened in the presence of the Chief Rabbi, the Lord Provost, local MPs and other dignitaries. Local and national newspapers gave the event considerable coverage. The synagogue seated almost 1,500 congregants and was filled to capacity during the High Holidays. The clergy consisted of Rabbi Daiches, Rev. Levinson, Rev. Ordman and Mr. Rubenstein. Over the next few decades the community became much smaller and in 1980 a revolutionary change took place when the Synagogue interior was transformed by literally raising the floor to provide a smaller more compact Synagogue on the upper level whilst providing an excellent lower level community centre. When this was first proposed, some male members complained that they would have to climb stairs to come into Synagogue. They were immediately reminded by irate ladies that that was what they, the ladies, had been doing for many years!

Many organisations now use the first class facilities in the building proving that although the congregation is now much

smaller, it is still vibrant. The Synagogue contains the old choir room which is utilised during the High Festivals. Interestingly the male choir was established many years ago and a minute of council dated September 1921 relates "the choir boys are requesting payment for their services and should the answer prove unsatisfactory, would feel compelled to discontinue rendering their services to the Congregation. It was agreed to make payment of five shillings (25p) to each of the fourteen boys". Our current choir, if not so young, is not so demanding.

This tale spanning vastly different eras, portrays a small but colourful, active and resilient membership which has surmounted the inevitable problems inherent in provincial congregations. It has contributed greatly to Scottish and indeed British Jewry and has the strength, solidarity and spirit to continue doing so.

The above is part of a talk given to members of the Council of Christians and Jews in Edinburgh last year. Acknowledgments are due to Mr. John Cosgrove for his articles on Edinburgh Jewry in the 1989 editions of The Edinburgh Star, together with information from the books by Abel Phillips and Kenneth Collins.



Officials attending the opening in 1932.



Rev. Teitleman



Opening Group

Rev. S. Knopp, Chief Rabbi Dr. I. Jakobovits, Rabbi Dr. J. Weinberg, Lord Provost T. Morgan, Cardinal Gray, Minister at the Scottish Office Malcolm Rifkind MP, Congregation President M. S. Cowan



Rabbi Dr. Weinberg

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30 Years in Israel - the First Chapter

Debbie Sinclair

Debbie Sinclair's series of Letters from Israel continue with the first of her recollections covering thirty years in Israel.

I know one football statistic: in May, 1972, Leeds beat Arsenal in the FA Cup Final. I know this only because the match was televised the night before I left Australia for Israel, and all the males at my going-away party were glued to the television instead of socializing! Thirty years, then, since I packed one suitcase, slung a tennis racket on my back (it wasn't for me - I don't think that there were any tennis courts in Jerusalem at the time), and boarded the plane for an adventure which is still continuing. Thirty years provides many memories anywhere: in Israel, this young state which needed to build itself in such a hurry, this land of incessant change, forever striving to catch up, move forward and gorge itself on new experience, this country which attracts such a variety of people from all over the world, eager to escape their established, conservative societies and try out their new ideas in a new society which has not yet crystallized into rigid modes of conduct, the memories pile up at breakneck pace, jostling for position and crowding each other, until sometimes they seem to merge into one wild, colorful whirl, tempered at the edges by the soft pink glow of the Jerusalem evening sky. It would be impossible to squeeze thirty years of memory into one short article; allow me, then, to share some memories of the first few years, when my relationship with Israel was taking shape.

Volunteering on kibbutz Sde Eliahu was the first stop. It was June, and because the average noon temperature in the Beth Shean Valley was 38 centigrade, work in the fields began at three in the morning and went through till eleven. The afternoon was for sleeping, but with no fans or air-conditioning in the rooms, the term 'water-bed' took on a whole new meaning. Seasons changed quickly, and with it, our work. Still strong in my memories of that time are the heady feeling of intoxication

while picking the last of the grape harvest, already fermenting on the vines; scampering up to the top of the trees for a (strictly forbidden) cigarette break in the olive orchards; in August, our field-breakfast of translucent crimson pearls of the pomegranates contrasting vibrantly with the pure white yoghurt, providing an aesthetic as well as gastronomic feast; and the aching muscles from bending down to plant the front lawns of the kibbutz, not from grass seeds (never heard of those!) but from chopped up bits of old grass root, which needed to be laid in furrows and covered over.

I was still on kibbutz in those early days of September 1972, when the whole country remained glued to the radio as the horror of the massacre of eleven Israeli sportsmen and women at the Munich Olympic Games unfolded. It was my first experience of national mourning, and my first encounter with the reality of anti-Israeli terror - as a tragedy striking the national family, and not just something that happened in a distant place to people we cared about in theory but don't really know.

In October I moved to Jerusalem to begin my studies at the Hebrew University. The early months were very difficult, for although my Hebrew was really quite fluent, concentrating for hours on end, in Hebrew, on the intricacies of Talmudic law, Roman law, Common law, Constitutional law, Philosophy of law etc, while taking notes, was exhausting. Still, I loved the fact that so often, we were dealing with matters that went to the very heart of the State and of Judaism - Who is a Jew; rabbinical jurisdiction over matters of marriage and divorce; the constitutionality of annexation; what should be the nature of the evolving Israeli legal system, and much more. As I wrote recently, I also loved - and still love - the campus on Mount Scopus.

'No-one was scared to walk around then - Jews and Arabs mixed freely, trade flourished. How sad are the empty streets of the Old City today.'

Student life, too, was full of new experiences. Living with students from Sweden, France, England, Argentina - what a change from the monotone of the Melbourne Jewish Community. Countless evenings spent at the religious (Bnei Akiva) student dormitory in the Old City of Jerusalem - climbing on the rooftops to listen to the combined tones of the Church bells, the nasal wailing of the Imams in the mosques, the murmurs of the late night worshippers at the Kotel. Walking home in the early hours of the morning, always drawn by wonderful smells to the corner of Jaffa Rd. and the Prophets Street, to buy piping hot bagels from a man as round as bagels he sold, who never seemed to move from his stool at the entrance to the hole in the wall that was his shop. Often, I'd stay overnight at the dorm, to be wakened in the morning by the braying of donkeys, which at that time were the main form of transport on the dirt tracks of the Old City. No-one was scared to walk around then - Jews and Arabs mixed freely, trade flourished. How sad are the empty streets of the Old City today.

My own dormitory was in the Shmuel Hanavi neighbourhood. Prior to the Six Day War, Shmuel Hanavi had bordered on No-Man's-Land, and naturally, only the poorest segments of the population could be induced to live there. We helped out the local kids with their homework: the two-bedroom apartments, completely devoid of books other than what the kids brought home from school, sometimes housed

twelve or even more members of a family. Today, the face-lifted area houses the hundreds of families attached to the Ohr Sameah Yeshiva; in the early seventies, as I recall, that Yeshiva started up in a single apartment across the road from our dorm, and its handful of students wore beads and psychedelic shirts and walked around with permanent beatific smiles.

In May, 1973, the State threw itself a 25th birthday party. We watched the rehearsal for the spectacular aeronautical displays from the top of the highest dome on Mount Scopus, and then the real thing - not only aeroplanes, but tanks decorated from top to bottom, thousands of soldiers from all the different branches of the Israel Defense Forces, parading through the main streets of Jerusalem, showing ourselves and the world how brilliant we were, how successful, how permanent. The tank treads tore up the surface of the streets, costing the Municipality a small fortune, but who cared? We were tremendously pleased with ourselves!

What a short time it was from May until October, 1973. I had signed up for a trip to the Sinai leaving on Sunday, 7 October, the day after Yom Kippur. I never made it (and have still not visited the Sinai to this day). On the morning of Yom Kippur, walking to shul, which was situated quite close to the entrance to Jerusalem, I remarked to my friend how strange it was that buses were moving on the inter-city roads. Everyone knew that on Yom Kippur, the streets

belonged to pedestrians and kids on bikes, and not a motorized vehicle stirred. Returning to my friend's apartment for a pre-mincha nap, we found the neighbours desperately tossing out the accumulated junk from the air-raid shelters, radios blaring out the news of the surprise attack on Israel by Syria and Egypt: the party was over.

'For a couple of days, the fear that the Israeli forces would be overwhelmed was real, and we tried to comprehend what that might mean, all the while struggling to hold on to hope.'

For a couple of days, the fear that the Israeli forces would be overwhelmed was real, and we tried to comprehend what that might mean, all the while struggling to hold on to hope. The military tide turned, and the danger of annihilation passed, but there followed weeks of nightly blackouts, months of food rationing, of the torture of daily news bulletins listing the latest victims of war - many of them our relatives, friends, classmates. Naomi Shemer's 'lu yehi' - an adaptation of the Beatles' 'Let it Be' - became the anthem of this War, just as her 'Jerusalem of Gold' had earlier become linked inextricably with the Six Day War. University classes soon resumed, but only women attended - the males were all

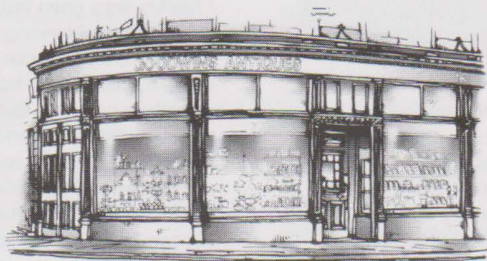
fighting. We each adopted a soldier from the class, making sure that he received copies of all the lecture notes and missed as little material as possible. (My 'adoptee' is now the Jerusalem District Attorney!) By the end of the War, our class had grown a little smaller, there were more widows amongst the Faculty, and quite a number of the returning soldiers bore injuries - some burned, some crippled, and some suffering from trauma and shock. Israel was sad, and angry with itself and its leaders: although it could not be said to have lost the Yom Kippur War, it knew that its own grievous misjudgments and mistakes had caused an unbearable amount of suffering, with near-fatal consequences. Israel matured during that time: the innocence and cockiness of May, 1973, were gone.

Disengagement agreements were signed, the pain of the War subsided somewhat, and the struggle over settlement of Greater Israel began in earnest. Small groups of mostly young people set out in the dead of the night from pre-arranged meeting places, silently making their way on foot over hills and through wadis, and by dawn, a new 'stronghold', replete with water tower and fence, would have been established somewhere in the territories known as Judea and Samaria. Sometimes the Army would intervene, chasing and rounding up the night-hikers and returning them to their cities; but often it did not. Later, of course, settlement of large areas acquired in the Six Day War became official government policy, and people were actually encouraged through tax breaks and the lure of spacious, affordable housing, to move out. Israel was expanding.

Towards the end of 1975, Danny and I married, and we moved to Australia for a couple of years. During those years, Yoni Netanyahu became a posthumous hero for his role in the spectacular Entebbe hijacking rescue, the United Nations equated Zionism with Racism, and the Labour Party lost its monopoly on political power in Israel. We came back to Israel shortly before that memorable day in November 1977 when Sadat stepped off a plane at Ben Gurion airport, bringing with him, for the first time, a glimmer of hope for a more peaceful future. But that all belongs to the next chapter.

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Mikvah Reflections

Judy Gilbert



Mikvah Steps

The Mitzvah of being in attendance at the Mikvah is truly a privilege. It is spiritually cleansing for both the 'Mikvot' and the attendant, and mostly decorous; but it can also have its lighter if less reverential moments too. It was the day after I gave the Cheder children a basic explanation on the ritual bath that gives rise to the following account.

'Our Mikvah can not be said to be the Hilton of Mikvahs though the function is no less purposeful and consequentially spiritually uplifting.'

Although both men and women can, and do, make use of the Mikvah (not at the same time, I may stress!) it is mostly used by the fairer sex just before her wedding and at regular intervals during her life when she is not expecting a child. (no need for biological details) Men will take advantage of the facilities before the important Yomtovim, and also at less critical times, sometimes in company and with great gusto. (so I have heard). It is not necessary for them to be supervised in the same way as a woman, and I suspect the 'overflowing' joy with which they renew themselves is such that it is just as well. It would be desirable to be able to submerge in water that is completely composed of the free flowing variety i.e. river or stream but it is still acceptable, and will fulfil halachic requirements, if a sufficient proportion of the 'good stuff' is incorporated into its poorer brother the tank variety. Our own Mikvah is of the more modest example, halachic because of its sufficient, if not excessive, commodity of the vital ingredient, rain, of which Edinburgh is never in any short supply!

Our Mikvah can not be said to be the Hilton of Mikvahs though the function is no less purposeful and consequentially spiritually uplifting. The reason for its unfortunate camping out, or to be more charitable, youth hostel status, is not just because of the austere if endearing surroundings, but the interesting heating and pumping system. Thus for the women who attend, there is the added element of surprise.

Immersion in freezing cold water is not expected and goes beyond the call of duty. I have however witnessed such devotion on one occasion when I really was not contacted soon enough to be able to avert this added penance. Even then it was difficult not to appreciate the fundamental beauty of the ritual and the mitzvah was carried out gratefully and without complaint.

The water is heated by a boiler which is also somehow connected to our long-suffering caretaker's heating system. The requisite depth of Mikvah water takes about (I use this term loosely) four hours to heat. When I had the 'call' Mrs. Burns kindly offered to switch on the boiler at a pre-arranged time to save me the bother of having to come out specially. The water was introduced the day before as I had given a talk to the Cheder and there is nothing like a bit of contextualisation to enhance a possibly incomprehensible practice to very young children.

For religious reasons and also for the sake of modesty and anonymity a woman will arrive under cover of darkness. It was therefore with horror that on arrival to carry out my duties, I discovered that the poor woman was going to be greeted not only by me but by the well dressed consortium of about 100 men slowly trickling in to the Shul looking forward to a Lodge meeting!

I tried to do a good imitation of nonchalance, hovering at the gate furthest from the Shul entrance in readiness to whisk the lady away from curious eyes as quickly as possible. But the determination of men looking for parking places was not to be thwarted and I responded to friendly salutations and enquiries with 'just waiting for a friend'... Why on earth I should have chosen this particular spot to meet, must have been a puzzle!

In the event the lady arrived very much later than expected, full of apologies and explanations that she and her husband had got lost having arrived from London and being strangers to Edinburgh.

We slipped into the building which was by now like a Turkish Bath. Emerging from the water symbolises re-birth. Naturally in order to emerge, one has to enter in the first place.

Dipping our fingers into the steamy liquid confirmed just how efficiently the boiler could function after a mere six hours, if it really tried. There was to be no imminent entry and measures had to be taken to avert a potentially disastrous situation. I am ashamed to say that the workings of the boiler were a mystery to me. Try as I would to reduce the temperature by desperately pressing various buttons I failed. I would have to reduce the amount of hot water by means of a very temperamental pump and re-introduce the cold. When I say temperamental I actually mean self-willed. In order not to offend it you have to carefully prime the pump with exactly the right amount of water. When the system roared into action like a lion, I felt proud with success until the smug beast came to a shuddering halt and after so short a performance. Twenty minutes and several attempts later I had to think of an alternative strategy if I were not to lose all credibility, and the precious confidence, of this lady.

I would just have to bale out as much water as I could by hand. I must inform those who don't know me, that at that time, I really was reduced to one hand, having a broken wrist and sporting a formidable looking contraption to prove it. By this time the 'Mikvot' had begun to take pity on my plight and together we carried water from the



Mikvah Pump

idiosyncrasies of the equipment seemed to fox even our technician and sadly we might have to admit defeat.

Mikvah in a bucket, discharging it unceremoniously down the preparation bath a few feet away. Rabbi, I confess, this may have been why you observed a slight puddle on the rain water tank cover when you made your inspection. Many exhausting buckets later, but unsurprisingly not enough, as it turned out, and with the addition of cold water, we decided to test it again. The lady bravely and tentatively descended two steps before admitting it would take a lot more than courage to go any further. Dressing once more and rushing round the corner to fetch her technically minded husband, so wisely installed in 'The Craggs', we were soon all staring pensively into the pool to size up the situation. The

'I threatened the pump with losing his customers, (I'm sure it must be a he) but I was prepared to give him one more chance.'

I threatened the pump with losing his customers, (I'm sure it must be a he) but I was prepared to give him one more chance. I am sure the pump could sense my dogged perseverance. Miracles do happen. The pump not only roared into life but continued to growl until the water had reached such a level that would enable us to introduce enough cold to allow the evening to draw to a very satisfactory conclusion. I offered up a prayer of thankfulness. Mr. X removed himself to the safe distance of the pub once more while Mrs. X serenely descended the steps to salvation. In water that she declared to be absolutely perfect, she ultimately completed the Mitzvah. She was deeply grateful and so was I for her enormous forbearance.

The only problem, as I was later to discover, was that Mr. Burns (the caretaker's husband) had to shave in cold water the following morning!!!

Photographs by Judy Gilbert

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CPE02

Interviewing the Interviewer

Face to Face with Ian Shein by John A. Cosgrove

If I were asked to name the person who has contributed most to the success of *"The Edinburgh Star"* over the years, I would have no hesitation in naming Ian Shein. Appointed to the position of Editorial Assistant under the editorship of our founding editor, Dr Eitan Abraham from edition 4 in 1989, Ian was responsible for chasing up promised articles and distribution. That he still undertakes these onerous and often thankless tasks is a tribute to his unbounded enthusiasm for the magazine. But we had to wait until edition 13 in 1992 to read his contributions. In that "Barmitzvah" edition, we published the first of a regular series of articles based on his research into the archives of our Community. They made good reading and his lightness of touch and humour gave us a lot of pleasure. In 1997, he turned his attention to interviewing members of the Community and his personality profiles are eagerly awaited with each edition. For this edition, we have given Ian a holiday. Instead, we interviewed him in an attempt to find out more about our "Star" interviewer.

Where were you born?

I was born, bred and had my Barmitzvah in Edinburgh and lived here until I was 14. The family then moved to Dundee where I remained for the next 20 years.

What did you do when you left school?

I entered my step-father's tailoring factory in Dundee initially to become a tailor's cutter. However I disliked this very much. I decided not to return to this type of work when in the army. I was a radio operator in Special Operations Executive and perhaps that made me realise that I desired a more exciting civilian job! Sadly my step-father died suddenly and I was left with the responsibility of managing the firm.

What was the best thing that happened to you in Dundee?

From a Jewish point of view, Dundee was not the most stimulating place as at that time there were only 30 families. There was great excitement when the few young lads heard that a young Jewish girl had arrived in town. It was Joyce who had secured a position as a personnel officer in a jute firm. She had had reservations about coming to Dundee but thought she would try it for two years to gain some experience and I was responsible for her remaining there for much longer than she intended. We were married in South Shields (her home town) in 1952 and Pearl was at the wedding.



Pearl and Ian Shein

What did you then go on to do?

At the age of 35, I decided if I did not get out of the business then, I never would. I had been interested in law and the police service but felt my age was a handicap for a recruit. At that time there was a lot of publicity for the Probation Service and I applied. I was accepted and after a prolonged period of training was delighted to be appointed to a post in Edinburgh. Several years later when the Social Services were integrated (I always maintained they were disintegrated), I was appointed Area Officer in charge of a multi-purpose team working in West Pilton. Thereafter I became Divisional Reporter to the Children's Panel in the Lothians.

Together with Joyce, you wrote and produced and acted in some famous productions for the Edinburgh Festival in the 1970's, tell us about these?

It really was Joyce who had the idea and inspiration to write three shows for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. They were presented on three successive years in the old communal hall and were great successes. Joyce actually wrote the scripts and music. I helped minimally. She also wrote the first 'Mock Wedding' thirty years ago. I had the dubious distinction of being the tallest and ugliest bride ever and had a wonderful partner, a much smaller but equally indescribable groom in the person of the late Philip Brown.

What are your favourite memories of these productions?

The memories I have are of Joyce pacing up and down outside the 'theatre', hopefully listening for laughter and applause, of the newspapers critic the next day (they were always good) and of the great rapport and enthusiasm of the local cast. It was good fun.

You and Joyce were involved in local politics in Edinburgh how did this come about and what are your memories of this?

Here again Joyce was the political animal and I was more or less the Dennis Thatcher of the team. Joyce was always a keen Liberal and we joined that party when we came to Edinburgh. She became a city councillor for the Corstorphine ward and I helped out at election times distributing leaflets and canvassing and cajoling people on how Liberal they should be! I recall meeting many famous and important personalities at meetings, functions and dinner parties. It compensated for all the hard work. At that time there were three Jewish members of the City of Edinburgh District Council: Joyce, Nat Gordon (Liberal) now in Israel and Malcolm Rifkind (Conservative) who went on to grander things.

The tragic loss of Joyce must have been the most traumatic moment in your life. How did you cope and how would you advise others in a similar position to cope?

Joyce died very suddenly. I cannot attempt to describe my desolation and grief. I could never have survived on my own. It is necessary to be involved and to mix with people even though at that time your whole being rebels against this. My family, friends and the whole community could not do enough for me. Nevertheless it took me five years before I could attempt a smile. Pearl was my saviour. She actually brought me back to life. She was Joyce's best and oldest friend, having been in the same primary school class in South Shields. She likes to tell the story of her first day in school when the teacher told Joyce that a new little Jewish girl called Pearl was joining the class and would she, Joyce, look after her. Many, many years later Joyce often said "and I'm still ruddy well looking after her".

I have known Pearl for over 40 years and it is my joy now to take over from Joyce and look after her. But I think it is the other way round! A wonderful person, she is my true soul mate and love.

What are Pearl's impressions of the Edinburgh Jewish Community?

Pearl has lived for many years in a large Jewish environment and obviously misses the facilities therein. She also misses her family, not least the eight grandchildren, hence our frequent trips to Manchester and Dawlish. She loves Edinburgh and has

always found the Jewish Community extremely friendly and warm. Never at any time has she had to consider herself a 'stranger' and is so much part of everything. Pearl really enjoys meeting people. After the Sabbath Kiddush in the Synagogue, I have to literally drag her out otherwise she would be chattering to everyone in sight. And I like to have lunch before three o'clock.

You are well known as a brilliant and witty public speaker with an easy flow of language. Do words come to you easily or do you ever suffer from "writer's block"?

I am very flattered to be described as a good speaker. I enjoy speaking on a particular theme and doing any research required. There are times when words do not come so easily and I find what helps is to substitute the missing word with an alternative word, rather than resort to hesitant 'ums' or 'ers'. But it doesn't really matter as by then half the audience would have left and the remainder fallen asleep.

You have held many important positions in the Community, which office has given you the most pleasure?

I did enjoy being Secretary of the Congregation more so than being Treasurer. I have always preferred clerical tasks – compiling minutes and administrative work to juggling around with figures. Being Master of Lodge Solomon also gave me great satisfaction. My uncle, the late Barnett Levey was the first ever Master of Lodge Solomon as was his son the late Tommy Levey so there was a family tradition.

You would have made an outstanding President of the Community and at one point you were the "heir apparent". Why did you decline to go forward to the top job?

Although being Treasurer usually leads to the Presidency, I felt very reluctantly that I could not proceed to that office due to work commitments. It is most noticeable when the President is not in Synagogue. It was the minor festivals which concerned me. My work often entailed quick decision-making and being on call. The necessary absences from the office on several occasions during the week would have proved very difficult.

Did being Honorary Secretary of the Congregation give you an interest in the Archives of the Community?

Definitely! It was interesting to compare the problems we were having then in the mid 1970's to what happened 100 years before and that was the inspiration for the series of articles I wrote for the "The Edinburgh Star" on the old minutes of the Congregation.

You have been in charge of the Library of the Congregation since its inception in 1975. What are your feelings about it?

The Cosgrove Library is an excellent collection of books — some 1600 volumes of Jewish interest — a wonderful resource. I wish more people would make use of the library and if anyone would like more information, would they please contact me.

With the diminishing membership of the Jewish Community, how do you view the future?

I do not share some gloomy prophecies which I have heard. Maybe I am an optimist in this respect but I feel there is a vibrant and positive attitude within the majority of members. Perhaps we will have to look at the number of Jewish people who currently reside in the city and for some reason are

Over the Grenetz . . .

As the proceeds from our humble fringe show are all going to a worthy charity we hope that you who have been conned into actually paying to see it will be charitable in your criticisms!

For the benefit of our many non-Jewish patrons perhaps we should explain some of the terms used in the show. Refugees leaving the program ridden countries of Europe were often forced to leave illegally. The Grenitz was the frontier over which they were ganvered. Ganvered means stolen so they stole over the borders to freedom.

I must confess that they came into Leith and not Granton as the title implies but the alliteration was too good to leave out.

Baigles and challoas are forms of bread much favoured in Jewish households. Chollent is a dish of meat and potatoes which can be prepared before the Sabbath begins and used to be left in the baker's ovens over night on Friday so that it retained its heat for the Sabbath mid day meal. Orthodox Jews will not light ovens on the Sabbath.

Thanks to Mr and Mrs Andrew Kay for allowing us to use their son's last letter to them.

Mrs J. Lurie wrote the letter in Yiddish and we are grateful to her for both this and the time she has spent giving coaching in pronunciation. Thanks also go to the Librarian in The Edinburgh Room of The Central Library for digging out some of the early events for me.

Of all the people who could relate the history of Edinburgh Jewry I am the least qualified and I apologise to those who could have done it so much better if they had been available and had the time.

I don't think we've hurt anyone's feelings but if we have there are several excellent Jewish lawyers we would recommend and just as many Jewish accountants to calculate the damages.

To all our visitors, we hope that you enjoy our lovely Edinburgh at Festival time. May you go in good health and return to us soon.

To all the locals, my personal thanks for being a great community and allowing me to join you. As a complete incomer, I had no right to remark on your history, but it is done in affection.

Shalom.
"Joyce Shein"

Programme from the 1970's show, Over the Grenitz to Granton

not members of the community. Should we be looking at the type of service they desire? I am not for one minute suggesting we turn Reform but changes often are inevitable. We had an example of this at the recent AGM when a new Executive-type leadership was agreed upon.

Do you have any ambition to write a significant piece like a play or a book and what would be the subject of such a project?

Like many other people, I have always wanted to write a book or a play. I thought ages ago about tackling a book for children, but J.K. Rowling has beaten me to it! I do not know about a play as such. I prefer to think in terms of sketches with humour predominant. The difficulty is trying to be original.

You have been involved with the Edinburgh Star from the first year of its publication and have been its "Star" interviewer. What does it feel like to be

THE COMMUNITY PLAYERS

present

OVER THE GRENITZ

TO GRANTON

AT

EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNAL CENTRE

This is a mother telling the story to her children.

CAST

SHIRLEY BENNETT
MICHAEL BERRY
RENE BERRY
SUSAN BERRY
DOUGLAS BRODIE
HAZEL COSGROVE
JOHN COSGROVE
MARC COWAN
BETSY DORFMAN
DANIEL HARRIS
BRIAN LEVEY
AUDREY OPPENHEIM
IAN SHEIN
JONNY SPERBER

Produced by: Rene Berry

Musical items by: Rev. Knopp & Hebrew

Congregational Choir

Lighting by: Bennet's Electrical

Stage Manager: Millie Harris

There will be an interval of 15 minutes

on the other side?

I have compiled about fifteen interviews for the 'Edinburgh Star' and I must say that I find this to be the most difficult. I much prefer being on the other side as it were. Being interviewed makes me feel self-conscious.

Alas Ian's modesty, minimises the actual work he does in the Community, I know from personal experience that in the past year, apart from the sterling work he does for the "Star", he has given a serious and well received lecture to the Council of Christians and Jews, he performed in and wrote every part in the highly acclaimed "Mock Wedding", he proposed the toast to the lassies at one of the best Burns Suppers and recently at a private simcha, he proposed the main toast with his usual tact and humour. I have no doubt that others could add more to the list of tasks he readily undertakes. Ian Shein is truly a communal treasure.

Daniel Deronda

Review by Judy Gilbert

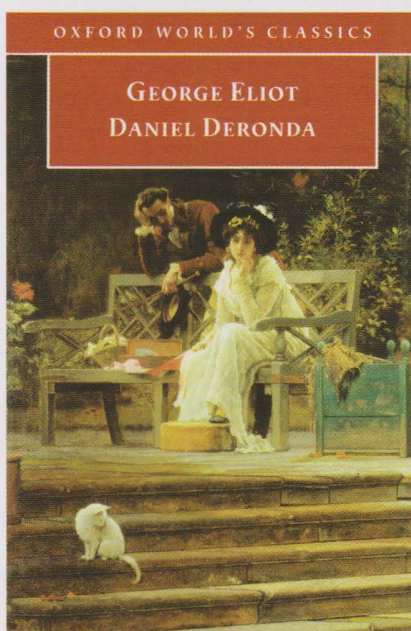
George Eliot née Mary Anne Evans 1819-1880 wrote *Daniel Deronda* as a possible consequence of having first formed a close friendship with the Talmudic scholar Emanuel Deutsch, and secondly responding to a visit later made to a Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam.

Daniel Deronda is a young man who has been brought up by an English gentleman Sir Hugo Malinger. Deronda's own family background is a mystery. At a time when he begins to speculate on his origins, his whole life is changed when he saves the life of a young Jewish woman who is trying to escape the pain of her own very uncertain and traumatic family life by drowning herself. Daniel is moved by Mirah's plight and in helping her to try to find her family, he journeys towards self discovery. Gwendolen is the beautiful, spoiled and much admired young woman whose family has fallen on hard times. They have been taken in by wealthier relations who try to encourage her to accept the hand of a well connected and rich suitor, Grandcourt. He and Deronda happen to be cousins but Grandcourt has a dark secret which puts Gwendolen in a seriously heart searching predicament. Deronda first comes across Gwendolen at a gambling house in Leubronn and from that moment on, their crossing of paths gathers momentum.

The novel has many intricate themes; self love, unselfish love, Victorian attitudes to duty and responsibility and an insight into class difference. The major theme, however, centres around personal identity, particularly Jewish identity.

Clearly Eliot has researched Jewish observance in great depth and exhibited her acquired knowledge through Mordecai, one of the many contenders for the position of centrality in the novel, and whose character might have been inspired by Deutsch. The degree of Mordecai's biblical outpourings and archaic language are truly awesome. He represents the Jew whose one desire is to see his people return to Zion. To this end he adopts Daniel Deronda as his protégé, and through whom he could fulfil his dream, knowing that ill health will prevent him so doing.

Early on in the book certain stereotypical references dispose one to believe that here



too lie the usual anti-Semitic prejudices in a period when Jews were looked down upon as ethically dubious. Indeed Mirah appears only to be tolerated by some, because of her beauty, tremulous vulnerability, sensitivity and culture. Her overwhelming generosity in thought and action have almost raised her to sainthood 'How can an ugly Christian...convert a beautiful Jewess, who has not a fault?' (p 306) which leads one to ponder if this is the only means of Jewish redemption. She more than balances out her grasping and unscrupulous father Lapidoth, who seems to be the role model to delight bigots. It is amusing to look more closely at the names Eliot has chosen for her characters. They often appear to reflect their attributes or

profession for example Klesmer the musician, who is sought after in the best of circles and accepted only because of his incredible virtuosity, despite his religion and disagreeable manner.

It is to Eliot's credit that she later reveals her own fair-mindedness by opening up a debate, not to determine whose belief is divinely favourable but to question whether assimilation could ever be justified. It is also clear that far from the initial impression of the book being a celebration of true blue English blood, Eliot seems not only to rejoice in the notion that a minority people should exist at all, but she appears to commend its best efforts to survive intact, as a matter of duty.

The plot twists and turns. Its fascination lies in the tantalising search for the truth about both Daniel's and Mirah's background. A moral sense of duty permeates the novel and is reinforced by the quotations preceding each new chapter, many of which are in classical German. Be warned. The author proudly displays her language skills in much the same manner as her coquettish and suffering heroine Gwendolen, who enjoys being the centre of attention.

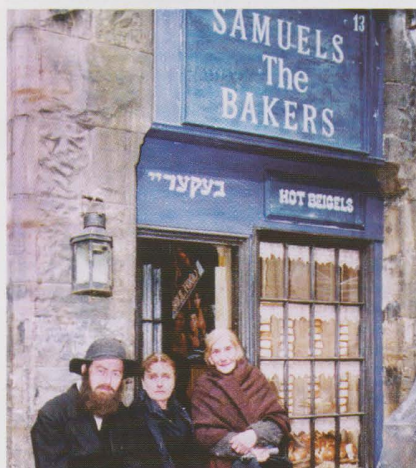
Daniel Deronda is a seriously big read. At 700 odd pages long, one may find cheating a severe temptation. Eliot has not held back on descriptive minutiae or philosophical discussion which may be relevant to the text, but is not essential for understanding. In view of this, it is possible to be 'selective.' To parody the memorable speech made by the Emperor Franz Joseph in the film *Amedeus*.... 'Just cut a few words and it will be perfect.'

'It is to Eliot's credit that she later reveals her own fair-mindedness by opening up a debate, not to determine whose belief is divinely favourable but to question whether assimilation could ever be justified.'

While George Eliot is acknowledged as a fine and perceptive writer she is probably better known for her novels 'Silas Marner' and 'The Mill on the Floss', with 'Adam Bede' and 'Middlemarch' running close behind. It must have been highly perplexing therefore, when book-sellers recently found

'Where did all these Semites come from? Where had they all been hiding? Some enterprising person could perhaps make use of this success story to fill the seats in Shul on a Shabbat morning!'

themselves running out of the less well known 'Daniel Deronda'. Soon, would-be buyers were to be frustrated to discover that this book was not to be found anywhere in Edinburgh. Why the sudden interest in the 'School novel' with which many adults remembered having been force fed, in the in the dim and distant past? Fifteen minutes of fame is the answer or more correctly, as it happens, 2 ?! At the beginning of what we in Scotland laughingly call Summer, the BBC made contact with the Edinburgh Jewish community with an offer not to be refused. Daniel Deronda was going to be put out on television some time in November and in view of its overriding theme, they would be looking to the Jewish Community for extras in this production. If anyone would be



Howard Kahn, Shirley Bennett and Gloda McKean

interested in taking part, auditions were to be held in the Synagogue on the given date. The response was breathtaking and it hadn't even been advertised beyond the reach of the community members. Where did all these Semites come from? Where had they all been hiding? Some enterprising person could perhaps make use of this success story to fill the seats in Shul on a Shabbat morning! Aspiring thespians was the name of the game. I am not ashamed to report that I too was willing, nay eager to give my hat size, shoe size and other vitally important pieces

of information to the 2nd director. All applicants had their photographs taken and we were told that if we were successful we would be contacted. The old maxim 'don't ring us, we'll ring you' was reinforced. In my



Director - Louis Max

case all this was in vain, but I was not deterred. I was determined to get onto the set as the 'Star reporter', naturally. One phone call later I was enthusiastically invited to report to Alexander Oakley, 2nd director, on any of the dates of the shoot. He would ensure that I got onto the set to speak not only to various members of the production team, but to the Producer himself.

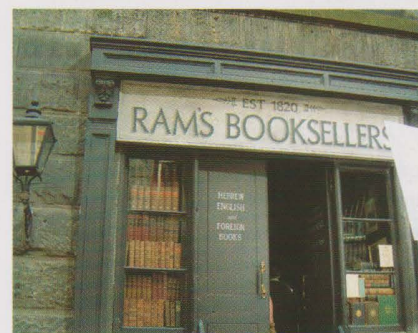
On arrival and after taking one or two photos of people being primped and preened in the cleverly adapted dressing rooms of the Apex Hotel, Alex whisked me off, down Candlemaker Row behind the Sheriff Courthouse, beneath George IV Bridge. The cobbled court yard had miraculously been transformed into the East End of 1785. Armed with my trusty Pentax and feeling very honoured, I positioned myself directly behind the cameraman to watch Hugh Dancey, who plays Daniel Deronda, being filmed in the book shop scene, over and over again. Other main parts are taken by Romala Garai who plays Gwendolen, Jodi May plays Mirah and Mrs. Meyrick is played by Celia Imrie. The director is Tom Hooper. Between takes I was fortunate to have the opportunity to speak to the most charming and interesting Producer Louis Max as we sheltered under the bridge in the pouring rain. I was delighted to be able to see some of my friends, 'the extras' in all their glory; Shirley Bennett, Howard Kahn, Judy



and Jonathan Franzman, Jonathan Danzig, and Golda McKean. I was truly impressed with the resilience of all those involved for repeating over and over again, hour after hour the same short sequence for what would amount to no more than the 2 ? minutes mentioned earlier. The prize, however had to go to Rosie the horse who let out a truly heart rending whinny to express her sheer frustration, before proceeding to do only what comes naturally, as a practical protest.

It is true that initially only personal involvement with the production was the motivating factor for buying the book but it was a worthy discovery. George Eliot has written a novel of great importance whose theme, which despite our modern times, we can easily appreciate even if we can not fully identify with it. If you fail to find the book, make a note in your diary to watch the television production which will surely be a fascinating insight into attitudes towards Jews at this time.

Photographs by Judy Gilbert



With Compliments
from
Mark & Judith
Sischy

Udi's Art

S Robin Spark

I first met Udi Merioz when he was a student at Edinburgh College of Art. Udi is an Israeli and, prior to taking a degree course at Edinburgh, he was already an accomplished artist. Now in his forties, he is not only one of Israel's leading younger artists but also the owner of an art gallery, the promoter of the work of other Israeli artists, a writer and a teacher.

During his four years in this city, Udi made many friends at college and out of it, including members of the Edinburgh Jewish Community, and regularly attended Shabbat morning services in the Shul. Among his close friends were the late Simmy and Fanny Levinson. The Levinsons enjoyed entertaining the young Udi in their home for Shabbat meals followed by conversation in Ivrit.

A hard working and articulate student, Udi contributed in no small measure to the vivacity of the new painting styles emanating from Edinburgh College of Art at that time. Never plagiaristic, but often eclectic, Udi produced both large and small images which were always captivating. A quick worker, he was able to complete well executed and remarkably talented works in a relatively short space of time.

For a time he taught me to refine my painting and drawing techniques and through his interest and unfailing support I was encouraged to aspire to a place at the college on the same degree course.

After graduating, Udi returned to Israel to take over the Blue and White Gallery in Cardo Street, Jerusalem. He has established the gallery as an outlet for the work of major artists such as Chagall,



Psalms



Artist in studio

Agam, Ben Avram, Levyatan and Lichtenberg. He has pushed aside the boundaries between painting and tapestry through his research into what he calls 'soft painting' an innovative form of tapestry. Recently he has been awarded a commission to design tapestries for the new Hillel Synagogue at the University of Michigan. He has set up several very successful exhibitions in the United States, notably in the Jewish Community Centre in Minneapolis, and in the next two years will be organising art shows in Michigan and Jacksonville, Florida. These exhibitions are part of a current trend in the U.S. to showcase Israelimade items to help Jewish artists and businessmen.

Udi's work is in the collections of various Israeli government ministries, including the Office of the Prime Minister, the American Embassy in Tel Aviv, the White House and in those of private collectors worldwide. He created artwork for the bicentennial celebrations of American independence now on permanent display in the White House. He was commissioned by the Israeli Air Force to create artwork to commemorate the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. He was also commissioned by one of Israel's most famous pilots, the late Asher Shamir, to execute a special oilpainting and associated lithograph.

In spite of the demands of his own creative work, Udi undertook for some time the curatorial administration of the Israeli Prime Minister's Art Collection. He continues to teach and lecture on art in academic institutes in Israel and specialises in the development of art as a means of communication. Between 1983 and 1985 he was responsible for creating through the medium of art a communication facility to aid the absorption of the Ethiopian Jews in

the southern region of Israel.

As an artist Udi has impressive expertise in both traditional and innovative techniques. A very fine painting in a traditional medium, illustrated on the front page of this issue, is "Shofar at the Wall" depicting an Orthodox Jew blowing the Shofar, symbolic of Jerusalem's call to the nation to listen to her voice. It is a remarkably fine piece of work done in a realistic but not sentimental manner.

The work has mesmerising power and strength and one can almost hear the blasts of the Shofar.

Many of Udi's works are "soft paintings" which have come to be known as "Udi's Art". Soft painting is a new technique developed in Israel by local artists. The medium for these works is synthetic fibres in brilliant and dazzling colours. They are all



The Wall

handmade and look and feel very much like tapestry. As a student in Edinburgh Udi had been seeking a new medium and subsequently in soft painting was to find a form that he would handle with dexterity and originality. In the photograph of Udi in his studio you will see him at work on one of his tapestrylike murals.

Some of the soft paintings are representational in style, such as the tranquil work entitled "The Wall" in which small Lowrylike figures stand before the pale, almost luminous Wall that towers above them. The oil painting entitled "Jerusalem Forever" shows another view of the Wall, this time in the evening with the city lit up. Again small figures appear in the foreground with the tightly packed buildings of the old city on either side. The mood this time, however, is no longer tranquil but rather busy and vibrant; the city has come to life after the quiet of the middle of the day. Other soft paintings such as 'Jerusalem Dance', Jerusalem Forever" and Spring" show different degrees of abstraction. The colours are electrifying and the shapes do indeed 'dance'.

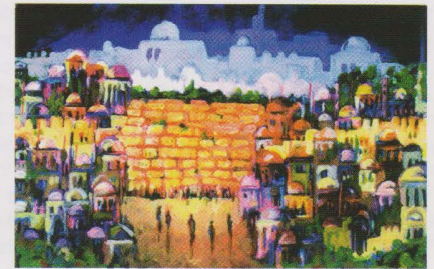
The lithograph "Psalms", depicting in a triple design Psalms 41, 19 and 29 is more closely worked. The lyrical treatment of the rich combination of Biblical symbols and calligraphic Hebrew text has at once a dreamlike quality and at the same time suggests song and its musical accompaniment. By contrast with the densely detailed composition of "Psalms" the painting "Flowers" is much more loosely



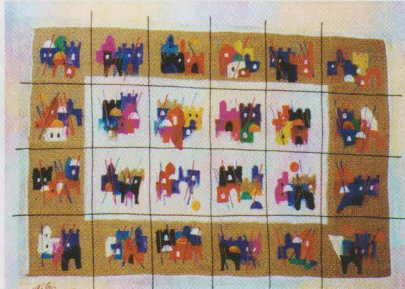
Flowers



Jerusalem Dance



Jerusalem Forever (Oil)



Jerusalem Forever (Soft)



Spring

rendered. Virtually every bloom dances in its own distinct space. This animation and the bright clear colours employed communicate in a very direct way the sheer joy of life.

Besides pictures, the Blue and White Gallery offers giftware of extremely high artistic quality. For example, Yaacov Agam, the renowned practitioner of kinetic art (you may possibly be familiar with his "Fountain" at La Défense in Paris) has designed for the gallery, beautiful mezuzot and enchanting dreidels which are certainly works of art in themselves.

So when you visit Jerusalem, be sure to call in at the Blue and White Gallery where you will be warmly welcomed by Udi and his father Elyada, once a painter himself until he was wounded in his right arm. There you will find a splendid collection of the works of outstanding Jewish artists, past and present, and, most importantly, a fine selection of the joyful and lifeenhancing work of Udi himself.

Blue and White Art Gallery 1 Cardo Street, Old Jerusalem ISRAEL e-mail: blue-white@mail.com web site: www.gift-museum.com

Paintings are reproduced by courtesy of the artist.



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Dear Editor

I should like to tell you how much I enjoy reading The Edinburgh Star and how I look forward to each edition. I was especially interested in Eva Erdélyi's article on 'Three Worlds' and it brought back my childhood memories.

My dear mother, Dora Caplan was fluent in German and she was active in helping these refugees who arrived in Edinburgh from Germany and other parts of Europe. She organised evening classes in English for them at one of the local schools and as a child, I remember our home was always open to them for a chat, a cup of tea and a sympathetic ear.

There are perhaps a few inaccuracies in the article and Mrs Erdélyi humbly admits to their possibility but I must comment on her mention of the 'late' Professor Norman Porteous of Hebrew at the University of Edinburgh. My husband and I visited Edinburgh at the end of May this year, surely some time after the article was written and we were privileged to spend an afternoon with Professor Porteous at his home. I was one of his students from 1950 to 1954 and received an honours degree in Semitics.

Professor Porteous is a remarkable man. He was a brilliant scholar, a great teacher and is a devoted friend to this day. He is now in his 104th year and although he is frail physically, his mind is alert and his memory phenomenal. We would like to say that when a person is prematurely eulogised. It is a good sign for longevity. We wish the Professor AD MEIA VE'ESRIM until 120!

Carmel Cohen

Dear Editor

A reaction to the article 'My Country' by Edgar Prais

Having been an Israeli citizen for 15 years, residing in Israel, with a British as well as an Israeli passport, I feel justified in 'expressing my personal views', not on the

many shortcomings of our State, but on the truly terrible situation my country has landed itself in. I have never joined a political party, being not interested in party politics. I am, however, deeply concerned with the fate of my people, with Peace in the Middle East, and the future of my country. My task as I see it, is not to criticise, or to condone, but to think of ways, in which the tragic clash of our historic rights with those of the Palestinian people, could be turned into peaceful coexistence. I claim the same privilege as Mr. Prais, of speaking my mind, and I am grateful to our Editor who, I trust, will give me the opportunity of doing so.

I do not know exactly what a 'panacea' is, but if I am going to offer something like that, it will be a vision of the future. A lot of time and effort, as well as a few miracles may be needed, before it can become reality. But I feel sure, in fact I know, that there are forces, both on the surface and underground, working toward some such a solution of the conflict as I have in mind. And let me say this: 'Talking' and 'Doing' are not enough. There has to be also a lot of constructive, hopeful, and above all, fresh thinking, to bring about changes of attitude and save us from catastrophe.

Let us ask ourselves, for instance, how we could bind a negotiating partner to his promises, whose religion allows him to break promises made to an 'infidel'. Let us think about ways, in which one could involve the United Nations Organisation in building a future peace, and let us try to reeducate ourselves, as our fanaticised 'brothers' will have to be reeducated. The result of my own thinking is the following recipe. It may be distasteful to a variety of your readers, for a variety of reasons; but I cannot help that. These are the ingredients:

Guarantee of Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, after the Palestinian terror activities and anti Israel incitement have stopped.

Dissolution of all Terrorist organisations in the Middle East, destruction of their

centres, factories and networks.

Formation of a Palestinian State with a Provisional Government committed to peaceful coexistence with Israel.

Evacuation of Jewish Settlements and unconditional withdrawal to the 1967 border, with a special status for Jerusalem to be negotiated.

Training and reeducation of the so-called Refugees, sponsored by the UNO. Resettling them, after closing the camps, within the new State of Palestine.

The evacuated West Bank Settlers might, if they so choose, be resettled in Israel, preferably in a project of reclaiming the deserts of the Negev.

Thus the mistake we made by occupying the conquered territories would at last be acknowledged and corrected by a voluntary withdrawal. Such a move should entail recognition by all our neighbouring Arab states, and might, hopefully, also turn the tide of worldwide anti-Semitism. Then we might perhaps have peace at last, and not only have it, but deserve it, in our own eyes and in the eyes of our friends abroad. I am grateful to Mr. Prais for his stimulating article, which has tempted me to express my own convictions and ideas.

Eva Erdélyi, 24.6.2002

Star Trek into the Past Answers

Edinburgh Synagogue Choir on a visit to The Great Synagogue, Leeds in 1977

Left to right from the back:

Norman Dorfman, Ian Leifer, Charlie Simenoff, Selwyn Dorfman, Philip Mason, George Bindman, Mark Sischy, Jeffrey Sofaer, David Mendelssohn, Rev. Sam Knopp.

Obituary

Andrew Kaye

1912 - 2002



When it was suggested that I might write and obituary for my dear father, I had a little

chuckle to myself. How my dad would have enjoyed that. He loved to see his name in print. The last time that happened, he must have shown me the article 50 times! Come to think of it, maybe he just forgot he had shown it to me, after all, he was 89 years old.

Andrew Kaye was born on 3rd November 1912 in the French Hospital in London to Clara (nee Epstein) and Maurice Katz. He was the eldest of three children, Dora (now deceased), Rosa and André. They moved to Edinburgh when he was about a year old. He was educated at Dean Primary school and from there went into the tailoring business with his father.

When the Second World War broke out, he was drafted into the army and in 1940, joined the Durham Light Infantry where he served in Egypt, Italy, Greece and Austria. After that he was in the Royal Artillery which he preferred as he didn't have to walk everywhere! He was also with the 8th Army, one of Monty's 'Desert Rats'. Years

later he would say he was now a rat without the desert! He fought in Italy and was wounded during the famous battle for Monte Casino. Following that he recuperated somewhere in Sicily. He was also with the occupying forces in Austria. For all his war experience, I actually have little detailed knowledge of those years as he did not like to talk about it

He was demobbed in 1946 and joined his father's tailoring business in George Street. He met my mother at a wedding in Glasgow, they courted for about a year and were married in Queens Park Shul, Glasgow on the 18th January 1950.

After his father's death, he moved the business from George Street to Raeburn Place where he stayed until 1996. After he retired, he loved to attend the luncheon club and community social functions. He also served on the Friendship Club Committee.

Sharon Findlay

A large stack of newspapers, with several copies visible on top, showing various headlines and images. The text 'Now available daily.' is overlaid in large white letters.

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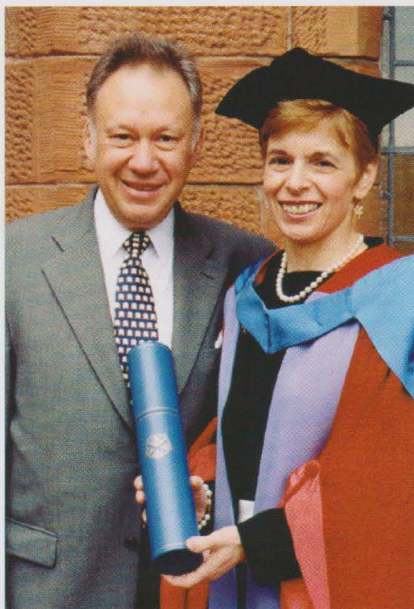
theJC.com

Congratulations



Sir Malcolm Rifkind
Photo courtesy: The Scotsman www.scotsman.com

Sir Malcolm Rifkind on the award of an Honorary Doctorate *honoris causa* from Edinburgh University.



Lady Hazel Cosgrove with husband John

Lady Hazel Cosgrove on her third Honorary Degree this time from Glasgow University, (her alma mater).

Jonathan Adler (older son of **Michael** and the late **Ruth Adler**, past editors of the Edinburgh Star) and **Susie** (née Shenkin), on the birth of their first son **Samuel Harris** on 17th August.



Jonathan Mason weds Deborah Cowan

Irene and **Philip Mason** on the marriage of their son **Jonathan** to **Deborah Cowan** at Kenton Synagogue in London on June 9th 2002.

Pearl and **Ian Shein** on their grandson **Andy** graduating LLB from Newcastle University.

Esti Sheinberg on her marriage to **Ron Lewis** on 11th August 2002.

Hilary West (née Cram) was honoured at Shavuot by Pinner Shul by being chosen as their Eishit Chayil (Woman of Worth) for the work she does, especially for the youth of the Community.



Betty and Willie Caplan

Betty and **Willie Caplan** who celebrated their 60th Wedding anniversary earlier this year. Willie has recently suffered from ill health and we wish him well.

Rochelle and **Monty Braverman** on becoming great grandparents.

Dr. Jonathan Bard on the award of a Personal Chair in Bioinformatics and Development at Edinburgh University.

Thanks

Norman Cram would like to thank everyone for the phone calls, cards, visits and enquiries during his stay in hospital. He is now recuperating at home.

Acknowledgement

A late but sincere acknowledgement to **Albert Morris** who kindly loaned the excellent photograph of Joe Lurie in his shop which was used on the front cover of the last edition of the Star.

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Freda Riffkin Reports



Enjoying the Lunch

LUNCH CLUB JUBILEE LUNCH

On June 4th the Lunch Club held an extremely successful Lunch to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of HM The Queen. This was organised by the Convenor, Joyce Cram and a willing staff of cooks were very busy in the kitchen. The Hall was decorated in Union Flags and the patriotic decor was continued in the table napkins etc.



The cooks survey the strawberries

40 members and cooks sat down to lunch. The Shul President Dr. Ian Leifer proposed the loyal toast which was drunk needless to say in Palwin No. 10.

After lunch the club was entertained by Shirley and Peter Bennett in their usual excellent manner to a wonderful selection of patriotic songs culminating in a spirited rendition of Land of Hope and Glory sung by the members to the accompaniment of much waving of red, white and blue table napkins.



Treasurer, Freda Riffkin welcomes guests & introduces Dr Leifer



Shirley Bennett leads a rousing version of Land of Hope & Glory

Many thanks to all the hard working cooks who helped to make this event such a success.

EDINBURGH WIZO ANNUAL LUNCH

The Annual Lunch of Edinburgh WIZO took place on Sunday 16th June at the home of the hospitable Kate and Ronnie Goodwin and, as usual, was a great success. 59 guests, including 6 from Glasgow, enjoyed a beautifully catered lunch of filled bagels, preceded by delicious home made soup and followed by cakes and coffee.

The Executive and Committee were delighted to announce that £574 were raised for WIZO funds.

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Preparing to Board

LUNCH CLUB OUTING 15TH AUG 2002



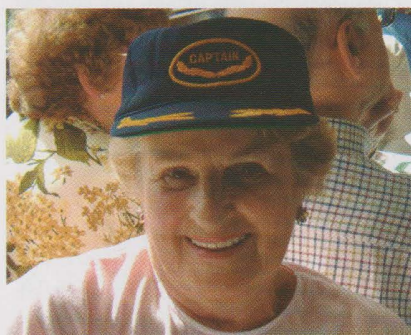
Tea on Board

The lunch club went cruising down the river by way of a barge from Ratho down the Union Canal. After lunch at the Community Centre, 2 buses took 36 members and the cooks to Ratho where we boarded a barge and had a most enjoyable afternoon. The weather was, for once in this so-called summer, sunny and warm.

The saloon of the barge was set for tea and we enjoyed music, singing and a delightful afternoon tea. The outing was funded by the Friendship Club and our only regret is that Betty and Willie Calpan were not able to join us. We thank them so much for one of the best outings that the Club has ever had.



Rachelle & Monty enjoy the views



Captain Joyce Cram

CIVIC SERVICE SHABBAT, 17TH AUGUST 2002

The annual Civic Service in the Synagogue was once again honoured by the presence of the Lord and Lady Provost, members of the City Council, High Constables and Civic officials.

After welcoming the guests, Rabbi Katanka in his sermon, recalled that Edinburgh during the Festival made him think of how Jerusalem must have looked during the time of the Pilgrim Festivals. At that time, people from all over Israel thronged the streets and there was not a bed to be found.

After the service, Kiddush was served and Dr Philip Mason presented the Lord Provost with an illustrated book of World Synagogues and reminded us all that the Lord Provost of the time, Sir Thomas Whitson had been present at the opening of our Synagogue Building back in 1926. The Lord Provost replying said that he had been a councillor for 25 years and had attended the Annual Civic Service at the Synagogue nearly every year during that time.

CHEDER PICNIC

The Annual Cheder Picnic took place on Sunday 23rd June 2002 at Bonaly Scouts Park. This event ends the Cheder year and is well attended by pupils parents and teachers. There was the usual picnic lunch followed by games organised by Junior Maccabi. The older members enjoyed a cricket match.



Cheder Picnic

THE RUNNING REPAIRS RAMBLE

The Running Repairs Ramble took place as planned on 14th July. The 12 mile walk was a huge success. The Community Centre Committee wish to thank all those who took part together with the kind and generous sponsors. A total of over £500 was raised.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation held its Annual General Meeting on 19 June, and the theme was one of modernisation. A motion was passed to change the constitution of the Synagogue to allow for a separation between the religious and administrative duties of the elected officers, in line with most other communities. The changes also allow for the possibility in the future of women being elected to the Synagogue Executive. The Synagogue's Community Centre also amended its constitution to amalgamate its Management and Ladies Committees.

Newly elected President, Dr Philip Mason, thanked the outgoing President, Dr Ian Leifer, and spoke of his desire to build on recent moves to use the expertise of a wider array of members and to make the community more inclusive in the hope that 'we can build a community that will be successful and here for many years to come'.

Other positions nominated at the meeting included Mr John Danzig as Treasurer, Dr Ian Leifer as Honorary Vice President, & Dr Philip Mason, Mrs Freda Rifkin, Mrs Hilary Rifkind & Mr Alec Rubenstein as Trustees.

*With Compliments
from
Jess Franklin*

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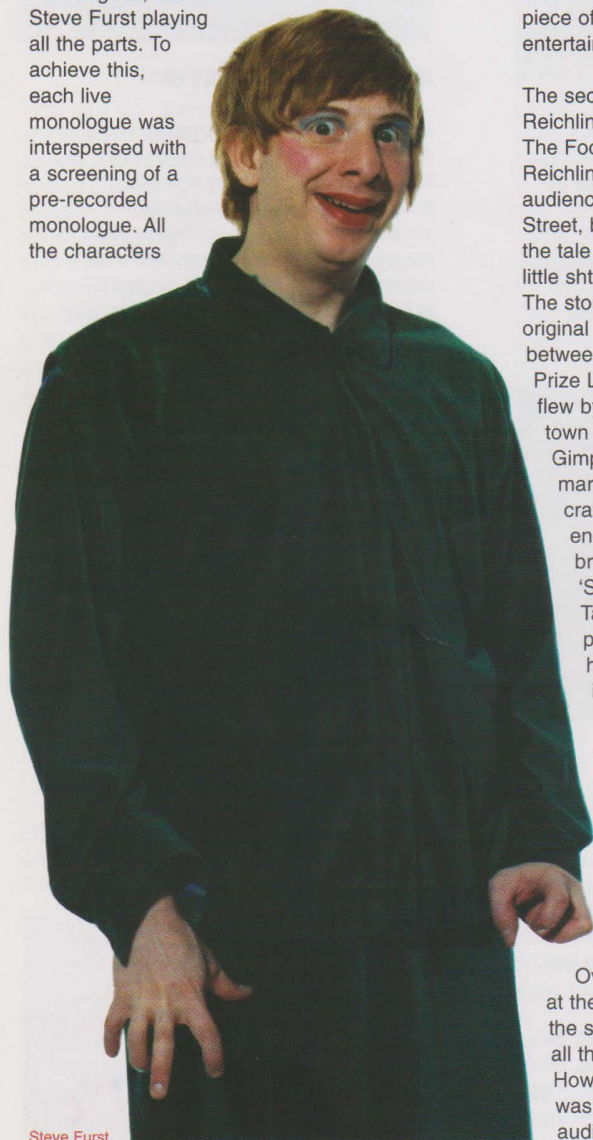
Edinburgh Festival - Reviews

A review of Edinburgh Festival Fringe By Julian D. Goodman

Once again I braved the ever-changing Edinburgh weather to see what The Festival Fringe had to offer.

Yet again, there was a decline in the amount of Jewish comedy available for the connoisseur. It appears to be a dying art form as it is absorbed into mainstream humour more and more; however, where there's a will - there's a sobbing relative, and a few gobbets of glee caught my eye.

Steve Furst's show 'Celebrity Squares' at The Pleasance Dome (Bristo Square) was my first port of call. It was a series of monologues, but with Steve Furst playing all the parts. To achieve this, each live monologue was interspersed with a screening of a pre-recorded monologue. All the characters



Steve Furst

portrayed were delightfully bizarre and off the wall. Kensal Rise - a neo conceptual artist, Lynne - a somewhat disturbing, yet poignant stalker convinced that she's married to celebrity TV chef Anthony Worrall-Thompson and The Dark Lord of PR, to name but a few. All the characters were currently or had been, affected by celebrity status! The show was directed by Channel 4 comedian Ben Miller, and featured a cameo appearance by TV's Jamie Theakston. An extremely clever piece of work that was thoroughly entertaining from start to finish.

The second performance I saw was Saul Reichlin in his world premiere of 'Gimpel The Fool' by Isaac Bashevis Singer. Reichlin again had a fairly intimate audience at The C Venue, Chambers Street, but charmed the rapt listeners with the tale of his somewhat 'gullible' life in a little shtetl at the turn of the last century. The story had been translated from the original Yiddish through a collaboration between the author and his fellow Nobel Prize Laureate, Saul Bellow. The time just flew by as we discovered how the whole town had created a sport of duping poor Gimpel at every opportunity including marriage, and the audience were left craving more of the storytelling by the end of the show. Luckily, Reichlin had brought his show from last year, 'Sholom Aleichem ~ Now You're Talking!' back for a return run of two performances a week to keep people happy! These performances put me in mind of a Jewish 'Ealing Comedy'. You may not belly laugh all the way through, but you will certainly treasure the sheer wit and charm of the piece, and the performance for a very long time!

Andy Zaltzman returned to Edinburgh with another stand-up show called 'The Catapult Of Truth 2002' at The Pleasance Over The Road. I roared with laughter at the start of the show, and the end of the show and kept up a steady chuckle all the way through the middle too. However, I think some of his material was far too clever for some of the audience to appreciate immediately.

Luckily it all filtered through eventually, and I think we were all laughing at different things at the same time - a very curious experience indeed. A cheap shot at Israel made me bristle with indignation until I realised the metaphor used was a poke at people's perceptions, however as I said before it was all too clever for most people there, which was a great shame! All in all, his best performance in Edinburgh I've seen to date!



Who's Harry

Steve Furst's alter ego Lenny Beige was also in town making a welcome comeback.

'Lenny Beige's Pick of The Fringe' was showing at The Pleasance Over The Road, providing a showcase for a cornucopia of shows appearing all over the Fringe. Special Guests were interviewed over lunch provided by the Kosher Chicken Gibleet Queen's eldest son. On the first day, we were treated to a performance of Madame Galina's 'Ballet Star Galactica'. An hilarious ballet master class provided by a rather rotund, yet wonderfully agile Russian prima ballerina. This character was the comic



Madame Galina

creation of the wonderfully talented Mr. Iestyn Edwards, who had brought his show up to The Pleasance Dome for a second year at The Fringe. While the audience were treated to

mitzvah sweets thrown at them by Mr. Beige with an explanation of their fun and educational value at Purim time, I got a Sefer Torah on mine and swapped notes at the back of the class! The showcase finished off with a game of Bingo for the audience to win free tickets to one of the showcase performances. As always with Lenny, it was seamless fun provided by a consummate professional in a very cheap wig!

In an effort to discover all things Jewish, I went to see a performance of 'The Art of Schmoozing' at The Gilded Balloon Caves. This was an Australian duo, Anthony Menchetti and Dean Clark's attempt to teach the world this ancient Jewish art form. The antipodeans' view on this skill was extremely funny and well worth going to see, especially for the musical interludes, wonderfully performed by their charmingly awkward characters.

While comedy may be hard to seek out, there is always plenty of Jewish Theatre on offer, a lot of which could not be included. One show I feel worth mentioning is 'Who's Harry?' at The Pleasance Dome. Not particularly Jewish in content, it did however feature a wonderful performance by a young Israeli actor in the lead role of Icarus. I had caught a glimpse of the show at 'Lenny Beige's Pick Of The Fringe', and was determined to see the whole thing. The third play written by 19-year-old Henry Fleet was one of those gems you happen across by accident. An extremely funny tale of two compulsive liars; one a cabaret hostess 'Destiny' the other a salesman 'Icarus', brought together by their therapist 'Hope'! Omer Barnea is apparently Israel's answer to Dermot O'Leary, well known and much sought after in Israeli TV and film. Currently based in the UK, he gave a wonderfully comic performance of an entertainingly awkward character, Icarus. Mention must also go to his three alter egos 'Engelburt', 'Raymond' and 'Marvin' excellently played by Kevin Bishop, Will Norris and Alastair Sims. A funny script, brilliant performances and glorious music made for a happily spent afternoon. It was no surprise that it was enjoying rave reviews and selling out at the box-office. It was definitely my 'Pick Of The Fringe'!

The Middle East - What Next?

Edinburgh Book Festival Debate featuring Amos Oz, David Grossman and Raja Shehadeh

This year's Edinburgh Book Festival was of particular interest to the local Jewish community, as it featured Israel's two most prominent living authors, Amos Oz and David Grossman. Both authors discussed their latest works at sessions during the Festival, but the highlight was a debate on the Middle East chaired by David Pratt, International Editor of the Sunday Herald, which also involved Palestinian author Raja Shehadeh.

Each writer started by giving their own interpretation of the question posed by the title of the debate - 'The Middle East - What Next?'. Amos Oz emphasised that the view of outsiders, particularly in the United

States and Europe, tends to be too simplistic, and that 'deep down inside' everyone in Israel and Palestine recognises that ultimately there will be two states. He said that both sides will 'face surgery that will hurt like hell', and that sympathy should be extended by the outside world, as well as material help to resettle Palestinian refugees and to move settlers from the West Bank.

Raja Shehadeh lives in Ramallah, which at

'...the view of outsiders, particularly in the United States and Europe, tends to be too simplistic, and that 'deep down inside' everyone in Israel and Palestine recognises that ultimately there will be two states.'

the time of the debate had been under curfew for 55 days. It was impossible to listen to his moving account of life under blockade without feeling that there must be a better solution. While agreeing that a two-state solution is the only long-term answer, and that most Palestinians accept this, he differed markedly from the two Israeli speakers in stating that Israel should compensate Palestinians for the effects of the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and acknowledge Palestinians right to return (even if it is impracticable to carry it out). Controversially, he suggested that sanctions are required to make Israel leave the occupied territories.

David Grossman had only just arrived in Edinburgh and also gave a real sense of what daily life is like in the region, as he inhaled the experience of being here without being afraid'. (The following evening, at his individual event, he noticeably jumped at the sound of the Tattoo fireworks and ambulance sirens). Despite their differences, he gave a sense of the respect between the three speakers, and that if it were up to us, we would come to an agreement'. He spoke of his desire for a committee for peace and reconciliation similar to that in South Africa, but that he felt that was now like a dream, compared to the 'certain distorted logic in the hermetic bubble where everything is justifiable'.

All three speakers emphasised the need for an outside influence to bring the opposing forces to the negotiating table. However, they also accepted David Pratt's assertion that attitudes on both sides were hardening, even amongst liberals. Amos Oz quoted Arab perceptions that 'Jews are regarded as pigs and monkeys who should be erased', while Raja Shehadeh pointed out that a generation of Palestinians were growing up with no personal knowledge of

Israelis to counteract the anti-Semitic propaganda.

Everyone agreed that leaders with vision, courage and imagination were required (and were probably not going to be those currently in power). In answer to a question from David Pratt, no one could suggest anyone waiting in the wings who might have the potential to make the breakthrough. However, they each had an answer when asked what one step could be taken now to improve the situation. Amos Oz suggested that Ariel Sharon should visit Ramallah to make an 'emotional breakthrough' and recognise the tragedy, suffering and right to statehood, and make a token removal of two settlements. Raja Shehadeh said that there should be an immediate withdrawal of the blockade, accepted the 'gesture' of a removal of settlements, along with the cessation of the building of new settlements. David Grossman spoke of the proposal of the Minister of Defence, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, to start by withdrawing Israeli troops from Gaza and to allow Palestinians to take over the security in the area. If there are no Palestinian attacks on Gaza, then the withdrawal could be extended to other regions. He emphasised the need for the total renunciation of suicide violence by Palestine, not only for Israel's sake, but also for the Palestinians themselves, otherwise, when the Palestinian state is established, the 'phenomenon' will continue and be directed against moderate Palestinians.

'...he felt that the spirit of possible compromise shown by the speakers was like a little candle against a roaring storm'

The whole debate was conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and in great eloquence by all three speakers. Two small metaphorical quotations will serve to illustrate the quality of the language used, and also the almost insoluble dilemma of 'what next?' for the Middle East. David Grossman said that he felt that the spirit of possible compromise shown by the speakers was like a 'little candle against a roaring storm', in an atmosphere of hardening attitudes and stereotyping. Amos Oz later turned this sentiment on its head by requesting 'the order of the teaspoon' where everyone should 'pour water on the fire', and that it was crucial that 'our' voices be heard and believed.



Best Wishes for a Happy New Year and well over the Fast

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The Community Centre Committee

Edinburgh WIZO

Edinburgh Ladies Guild

Coming Events

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Sunday **Community Centre**
Coffee Morning
- 7-8 Sat-Sun **Rosh Hashanah**
- 15 Sunday **Kol Nidrei**
- 16 Monday **Yom Kippur**
- 21-22 **First two days of**
Succoth
- 28 Saturday **Shemini Atzereth**
- 29 Sunday **Simchat Torah**

OCTOBER

- 6 Sunday **Community Centre**
- Join us for an evening to remember. Have a laugh a minute playing the White Elephant lucky dip game. It will only cost £5 and is suitable for all ages. Come along to find out more!
- 17 Thurs 7.30pm **Council of Christians and Jews**
- 20 Sunday 8pm **Literary Society**
Clive Lawton, Director of Limmud

21 Mon 7pm **Lodge Solomon**

27 Sunday **Community Centre**
Our very own Bill Simpson will be playing along with his band which features a singer of popular songs. The evening includes a meal.

NOVEMBER

- 3 Sunday 8pm **Literary Society**
David Capitanchik, Aberdeen University:
The Middle East peace process.
- 18 Monday at 7pm **Lodge Solomon**
- 21 Thurs at 7.30pm **Council of**
Christians & Jews
- 24 Sunday at 8pm **Literary Society**
Dr Seth Kunan, Head of Religious Studies,
Aberdeen University: The Secret Jews of
the American Southwest.

30 Saturday **First day of**
Chanukah

DECEMBER

7 Saturday The usual excellent dinner will be followed by a mixture of Israeli and

Ceilidh dancing. As we have the services of a professional band who will teach us the dance steps, this evening should be a real winner with all ages. - Those less energetic will find that they can sit back, relax and watch the dancers.

16 Monday at 7pm **Lodge Solomon**

Junior Maccabi meets on alternate Sundays from 1pm to 3pm. For further information, contact Joel Raffel (229 5541) or Samuel Danzig (229 3054).

Senior Maccabi meets on Sunday evenings in members' homes. For further information, contact above.

The Luncheon Club meets every Tuesday and Thursday at 12.30pm

The Parent and Toddler Group meet on Sunday mornings at 10am

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

All Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society events take place on Sundays at 8pm.



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