

# W ESTMINSTER QUARTERLY

Volume XV No.1

January 2024



*Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon* by Edward John Poynter

**Menelik 1**

**Jews in the Royal Marines**

**The Amadeus Quartet**

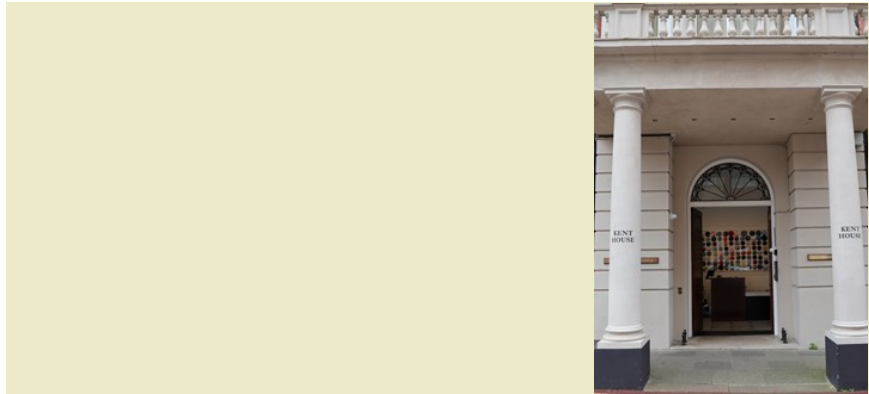
**Alephs, Oxheads and Abjads**

## Inside this issue

From the Rabbi	3
The Amadeus Quartet	4
Flora Solomon	6
Jews in the Royal Marines	8
The Jews of South Africa	10
Régine	12
Amusement Arcade	13
Menelik 1	14
Royal Family Connections	15
Alephs, Oxheads and Abjads	16
JAPGW	18
Serendipity	19
The Jews of Northampton	20
Ritual Objects 2. <i>Rimonim</i>	21
Editorial/Letters	22
Poetry Page	23

This edition of the Quarterly has been generously sponsored by a member who wishes to remain anonymous. If you are interested in sponsoring an edition, please contact us. We'd be delighted to hear from you.

## Westminster Welcomes New Members & Friends



*Photograph of Kent House by Chris Rees*

**Please note that for our online edition we do not include Lifecycle and New Member Updates**



I write this soon after the devastating terrorist attacks in Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup>. I suspect it will still feel relevant now, as you read.

We have been having listening circles in *shul* to support people in the face of this devastation in Israel. I was part of one, in which each of the twenty members who came and spoke for a strict three minutes about how they were feeling; everyone else listened, supportively and non-judgementally. We were not to argue, correct, respond or even refer back to what someone had said. You can imagine how difficult this could be. Can't argue! Can't correct! I valued it, and I want to tell you why.

Firstly, people are feeling really worried, and they need to come together to share how they're feeling. I want to hear how you're feeling and to support you - at least by listening. I know that you each want to support others by asking how they are, and just listening.

I will mention a few vignettes from my experience, to share some of the power of that listening, and because you might find your feelings reflected.

One young woman of twenty-three, talked tearfully about feeling alone. She went to a great university in which protests for Palestinian statehood veered into hatred of Jews, and into the celebration of Jewish deaths. On social media she sees people refusing to call acts of terrorism acts of terrorism - responding to them differently or seeking to justify them. This can make one feel alone confronting anti-Semitism - sometimes unintended, but there. I appreciated listening to her because she was seated next to her mother who would occasionally hold her hand while she spoke. She had done the same for her mother just beforehand, as her mother spoke. I was moved by mother and daughter supporting each other here in

our community. Around the circle and in our community, so many of us have an awareness of anti-Semitism, that is very painful right now.

In the circle, one member talked about how she is a Shoah survivor - hidden during the war, her father taken and killed - and how this experience has of course been with her all her life. Now she said what's happening to the Israelis and Palestinians makes those experiences even more present. Several people in the group expressed deep hurt for the murdering of Jews and for the taking of innocent Palestinian lives. There was a sentiment that sometimes we're not sure if this concern can be expressed in the Synagogue.

I spoke to one young man recently, in his twenties, who grew up in this community. He has a cousin who has been called up to Gaza - he and his family are so worried for him. He also has a friend who is Palestinian, living in Gaza. He hopes and prays for him too. He first got in touch with me to say, very gently and beautifully, that he had hoped this sentiment could be shared in our Synagogue communications and spiritual leadership. We talked on the phone. I expressed how I'm sometimes not sure how much people can stretch their hearts; and many in our community are in such pain, in fear for their friends' and families' lives, grieving for their siblings within our people of Israel, furious at the terrorism and the apologies for it, so I don't want to distract with arguments and fallouts. He very sweetly said, 'I so appreciate that, and I trust you.'

I was moved by the depth and breadth of people's feelings in that circle and beyond. I wanted to bring some to you, to encourage you to sit and hear another's feeling and share yours, without judgement or argument. With support and care. I was moved by people's feelings, by hearing of their life, and what shaped them, and who they're thinking of, and how they're connected.

I know there could be an argument that now is not the time for feelings, listening and support, that the blood of those murdered screams out from the ground. The blood does scream out, and we hear that too - but the teaching of our Judaism is not, when confronted with pain and

difficulty, to shut off or retreat into hatred.

The teaching of our Rabbis is: when you are confronted with views and feelings which may seem contradictory, make for yourself a heart of many rooms (*tosefta sotah*) or in the language of a parallel text (*Bavli Chagigah 3b*) make your ears like a funnel, *U'k'neh lecha meiviyn lishmoa*. The need is to listen to others, and to make room in our hearts for their views and feelings. Of course, when you take time to listen without judgement, you see that sentiments that seemed at odds needn't be at all. One can be horrified by the shocking terrorist murder of young men, women and children, our hearts hurting at grandmothers being held hostage. To acquire an understanding heart, we also need to be brave enough to feel what we're feeling too, and to share some of it.

I appreciated the listening circle for the comfort of listening to others, and also because I felt I could share some of my own feelings. As Rabbi, it's not always clear I should, but I was a participant, and asked to share my reactions. I was able to say: I'm finding this so sad, so tough. It's the shock, the deaths and the brutality, and how people are feeling - my family, friends and dear teachers there, frightened, and frightened for the future, profoundly depressed. I find purpose in supporting others, and it's a hard responsibility. I share this now as I did then, not so that you should all worry about me specifically, but I want to model vulnerably, and with difficulty, making oneself an understanding heart to listen - and that means listening to how we ourselves are doing, and growing that resilience; and listening, supportively, to others.

We mourn those whose lives have been taken. We think of all those living in fear there right now. We think of each other and support each other - we make for ourselves a heart of many rooms, growing, with space for those feeling isolated, horrified, and scared, and for those fearing the deaths of innocents.

**Rabbi Benji Stanley**



## The Amadeus Quartet



Three of them first met while they were held as enemy aliens in the UK. Peter Schidlöf, a viola player, met Norbert Brainin, a violinist, at an internment camp in Shropshire. Moved to a second camp on the Isle of Man, Schidlöf met another violinist, Siegmund Nissel. With the assistance of Myra Hess and Ralph Vaughan Williams the three were released and began to study with Max Rostal. In 1946 Schidlöf met the man who would complete the ensemble - Martin Lovett, a cellist. Thus began the life of a group which went on to become one of the most famous quartets of the twentieth century who gave their London debut as the Amadeus Quartet on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1948.



*Norbert Brainin*

The Leader, Norbert Brainin, was born in Vienna in 1923. When he was seven, he was given a quarter-size violin for his birthday, and he loved the instrument and never considered any other career. By 1938 he had lost both his parents, and he and his siblings came to England, where they were supported by his uncles who had a fur business in Bond Street. In 1939 Brainin was sent to a boarding

school near Southend but was given permission to concentrate on the violin and he began lessons with Carl Flesch. He played for various refugee organisations and, whilst still in his teens, he acquired a great deal of concert experience. He won the Gold Medal in the Carl Flesch competition in 1936.



*Siegmund Nissel*

Siegmund Nissel, the second violin, was also born in Vienna. The term 'to play second fiddle' is commonly taken to indicate inferiority but Nissel was not only a very accomplished musician in his own right, he was also greatly respected as a teacher. From the age of six he showed a remarkable talent for the violin. In 1927, when he was nine, the family moved back to Vienna, and he had lessons with Max Weissgarber. As the persecution of the Jews increased, in 1938 his parents decided to send their son to a safe country. Nissel was only sixteen when he was put on one of the last trains leaving Austria for the UK. Nissel was the practical operator in the Amadeus group. It was Nissel who came up with the name Amadeus. He thought that it was appropriate that the quartet should have a 'neutral' name, rather than taking the name of the leader. (The four had appeared as the Brainin Quartet at Dartington International Summer School in July 1947.) It was he who sorted out the business problems and took care of contracts. There was considerable anxiety when he developed a brain tumour. However, it was successfully removed in 1960.



*Peter Schidlöf*

Peter Schidlöf, whose original first name was Hans, was born in Unter Olbendorf, Austria, in 1922. He attended a Roman Catholic boarding school, although he was a Jew, and - extraordinarily - studied violin with a local blacksmith. In 1938, he, too, fled the Nazis, leaving Austria for England and went to the Blondell School of Music in Devon. As with the others, he was interned at the outbreak of World War II. Because he was originally a violinist, when the quartet first started playing together Schidlöf and Brainin took turns, switching between violin and viola, but after a while it became clear that for the group really to progress, Peter would have to agree to play viola as his principal instrument.



*Martin Lovett*

Martin Lovett, the fourth member of the Quartet, was born in Stoke Newington in 1927. His father Sam was a cellist in the Hallé and London Philharmonic Orchestras. His mother was Leah (nee Rothenberg). All of Martin's grandparents had arrived from Russia in the 1890s and it was his paternal grandfather who introduced him to the violin. However, from the age of eleven,

young Martin was determined to follow his father's choice of instrument. Aged fifteen, Lovett won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music. After graduating in 1945, Lovett began to freelance, sometimes playing alongside Sam in the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester. He often participated in Max Rostal's chamber orchestra - where he met the other future Amadeus members - and whilst still in his teens, he was appointed principal cellist of the Sadler's Wells Orchestra. Lovett was the youngest member of the group and he had to learn German quickly.

Partly due to the BBC Third Programme, chamber music gained popularity and when the then leading ensemble, the Griller String Quartet, left Britain for a university residency in California, the Amadeus's extraordinary success soon made it possible for the four men to live on what they earned as a quartet. Teaching posts followed: they were resident at York University from 1966 to 1968, and from 1978 they taught at the *Musikhochschule* in Cologne; and from 1986 at the Royal Academy in London.

Martin Lovett recalled their most remarkable concert as one that took place in Vienna in the late 1950s. 'We were just coming on stage. The entire audience gave us a standing ovation. I thought, *this is the town that threw out my Viennese colleagues when they were boys. Now this.* It only happened once in our lives.'

Peter Schidlof died in 1987 at the age of sixty-five, after thirty-nine years as part of the ensemble and Martin Lovett said that his tragic death meant the end of the Amadeus Quartet, as he was 'simply irreplaceable.' The Amadeus international summer course at the Royal Academy of Music was launched as a monument to Schidlof and celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1999.

It was felt that, rather than launching an Amadeus string quartet competition, one of the more prominent ideas to commemorate Schidlof, was to be a summer course which would enable the remaining members to pass on something of their experience.

After the dissolution of the Amadeus Quartet, Norbert Brainin continued to share his deep knowledge of Classical art through sonata recitals, seminars, master classes for young artists, and more especially through the Brainin Foundation that he set up shortly before his death.

Siegmond Nissel played few concerts, but was much in demand as a kindly but critical and analytical teacher. He said that the only way to help young quartets was to help them in their motivation to play that music. 'There is that ever-changing interpretation of getting nearer the truth - and that in itself makes all the privations, hardships and difficulties worthwhile.' He held chamber music

positions at both the RAM in London and the *Musikhochschule* in Cologne.

Martin Lovett played in two piano trios and took part in various *ad hoc* ensembles for special occasions. He also taught, although even in his most frequent role, as a chamber coach - at the annual Cambridge symposium for young quartets or the Amadeus's own summer schools - he was sometimes hampered by his lack of sympathy with much modern music. Norbert Brainin died in 2005 and Siegmund Nissel in 2008, but Martin Lovett lived to be ninety-three, dying in 2020 from Covid complications.

The Amadeus Quartet's members were awarded numerous honours, including:

The Order of the British Empire.

Doctorates from the Universities of London, York, and Caracas.

The Great Cross of Merit - the highest of all German awards.

The Austrian Decoration for Science and Art.

**Claire Connick**

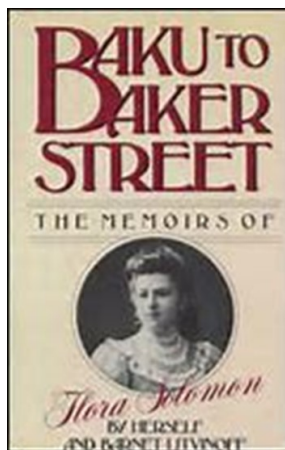


*At the Wigmore Hall, celebrating twenty-five years of playing (1973).*

## Flora Solomon

(1895-1984)

### *Spycatcher Extraordinary*



It is a strange element in the Jewish character, that throughout history, from Biblical times to the present day, Jews have been involved in intelligence work, as spies or in covert roles, often leading to exposure, betrayal and treachery.

Moses sent out spies to see if the land of Canaan was a suitable home for the Israelites, and the tradition of Jews who spied for their homeland or their adopted country has continued since that time. The revelation of the treachery of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg in America, the spy Jonathan Pollard who sold top secret American files to Israel, and David Greenglass, Ethel Rosenberg's brother who revealed atomic bomb secrets and betrayed his sister, shocked the Jewish community.



*Flora as a young woman*

The recent production of *A Spy Among Friends* on BBC TV has revealed much about the 'Cambridge Spies' debacle, when several – we may still not know how many – young Englishmen betrayed

their country's intelligence secrets to their Russian paymasters. The names of Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Anthony Blunt and especially Kim Philby, have gone down in history as among the most blatant traitors of all time. What is less well known is the part played in that long and frightening saga by the Jewish woman who was foremost in tracking down Philby's betrayal, and his final exposure.

Flora Solomon was born in Belarus in 1895 to Sophie and Grigori Benenson, believed to be related to the Rothschilds. Grigori Benenson made a fortune in gold and oil (he was banker to the Tsar) and came to England in 1914, but much of his fortune was lost three years later in the Russian Revolution. While still a very rich man he bought the City Investment Building in Lower Manhattan and it was renamed the Benenson Building, but when his fortune vanished, the building had to be sold. He died at his home in Queen's Gate in London and is buried in the Willesden Jewish Cemetery. Flora was an ardent Zionist, spending much time in Israel, as had her father. Flora described herself as 'Russian soul, Jewish heart, British passport'.

In the years leading up to World War II she worked to bring German Jews, particularly children, over to England finding them safe homes here and in Israel. She also helped the government to organise food distribution. For her work she was awarded the OBE. In 1932 she was at a dinner party where Simon Marks, son of the chairman of Marks & Spencer, was also present. She challenged him over the store's employee welfare standards. 'A store is not a collection of private individuals,' she said, 'it is a team of people working for a common project. The wellbeing of an individual cannot exist in a vacuum.' She told him that some employees could not afford to eat lunch – 'it's firms like yours that give Jews a bad name!' He was most impressed and immediately gave her the job of setting up a Training Department to help employees learn new skills and develop team spirit. She was at the time the only woman executive in the company; women were employed only as clerks, cleaners or dressmakers, with male supervisors. From her efforts

sprang Marks and Spencer's well-earned reputation for caring for their staff, a reputation copied by many organisations. She introduced cafeterias, beauty parlours and hairdressers as well as seaside holidays, with a welfare office in each store. Her work was a direct influence on the Labour Party's Welfare State and the National Health Service, and she was the driving force behind the establishment of The British Restaurant, set up to ensure that British people during the war could obtain a cheap nourishing meal wherever they happened to be.



*Celebrating Flora at Marks & Spencer*

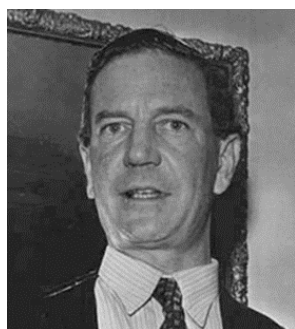
In 1918 Flora had married Lt-Colonel Harold Solomon, OBE, MC, an English career soldier and stockbroker, much involved in the affairs of Palestine. Under Sir Herbert Samuel he was appointed Director of Commerce and Industry of the Palestine Administration. He was also Governor of the Haifa Technical Institute. They had one son, Peter, who became the founder of Amnesty International. Harold died in 1930, leaving Flora to bring up Peter by herself. At the wish of his grandfather, Grigori, he took the family name of Benenson.

Harold and Flora lived for a time in Palestine, often staying with the Weizmanns, and meeting members of the Israeli government. Golda Meir enlisted her help in giving refugees and Holocaust survivors improved living conditions. Flora welcomed visitors and friends, bringing Arabs and Jews together socially. Peter was born in England, but Flora then returned to Palestine. Harold was buried in Switzerland.

While in Israel, Flora had met Harry St John Philby, also known as Jack



Philby or Sheikh Abdullah; he was a British Arabist, adviser, explorer, writer, and a colonial intelligence officer, who served as an advisor to King Abdulaziz ibn Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia. She got to know his family, including his young son Harold Adrian, always known as Kim.



*Kim Philby*

Back in England, she had an affair with Alexander Kerensky, the Russian lawyer and revolutionary who led the Russian Provisional Government and the short-lived Russian Republic for three months from late July to early November 1917. She founded the Blackmore Press, which published her own biography, *Baku to Baker Street: The Memoirs of Flora Solomon*.

While working at Marks and Spencer Flora became friendly with Aileen Furse, a store detective there. Aileen was somewhat unstable, later to be overwhelmed by mental illness. Flora later remembered her as belonging 'to that class, now out of fashion, called county. She was typically English, slim and attractive, fiercely patriotic, but awkward in her gestures and unsure of herself in company.' She introduced Aileen to her friend Kim Philby. In 1934 he had married Litzi Friedman, a young Austrian communist from a Jewish family. That same year a Soviet agent, Arnold Deutsch, was sent to England to recruit young university students to the communist cause. One of these students was Kim Philby. Later Philby divorced Litzi and married Aileen, though her mental problems were a constant difficulty in his life.

For many years Philby played a leading part in intelligence affairs both in Britain and America and, much admired by men

and women, was handsome, charming and with a brilliant brain. None of his friends, family or colleagues had any idea that he was passing on his secrets to communist Russia. Aware that the net was closing in, Philby resigned from MI6 in July 1951 but was publicly exonerated by the then Foreign Secretary, Harold Macmillan in 1955. He resumed his work as both a journalist and a spy for MI6 in Beirut.

Philby's career as journalist, intelligence officer and spy has been well documented, but Flora's part in his unveiling is not so well known. As early as 1937 he had made a clumsy and fruitless attempt to involve her in his work for the Soviets. He told her at that time that he was doing important work for peace, and 'you should be doing it too.' Later on, after the war, while reading the *Observer*, on which Philby was a reporter, she was angered by his anti-Israel attitudes. He clearly supported Russian views of the nation, very pro-Arab. She remembered his earlier suggestions that she should join the communist view on world politics.



*Guy Burgess*

In 1962, at a meeting at the Chaim Weizmann Institute, the research centre endowed by the Chairman of Marks and Spencer, she met an old friend, Lord Rothschild. Victor Rothschild worked for British Intelligence, having won the George Medal during the war for 'dangerous work in hazardous circumstances'. He was also a contemporary of the Cambridge spies and was in fact accused at one time of being one of them. Flora told him of Philby's approach, and of her opinion that he was handing over vital secrets to his Russian masters. 'You must do something,' she insisted. Her evaluation of his treachery

was taken to MI5 The CIA in America was already aware of the fact that one of their leading British colleagues - Philby was now head of British intelligence in the States - might also be working for Russia. However, little action was taken until Rothschild investigated the matter more fully.

Flora was invited, unwillingly, to a meeting at Victor's home, bugged for the occasion. She revealed her concerns to the MI5 agents present. 'I will never give public evidence', she said. 'there is too much risk.'

An important figure in the intelligence network was Nicholas Elliott, a close friend of all the Cambridge conspirators - Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Anthony Blunt (Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures) and of course Kim Philby. When the rumours of Philby's links with the Communists seemed to bear some validity, Elliott decided to take action. In 1962 in Beirut he confronted his old friend. Philby admitted frankly that he had been a Communist since he was at Cambridge, and that for all the years he had worked for British Intelligence, he had been sending information to Moscow. Elliott asked him to sign a confession, but granted him a few days grace. Less than a week later, Kim Philby took a Russian ship to Odessa, travelling on to Moscow, never to come back to the West.

Aileen Philby took her own life in 1957, and Philby married twice more, in between several affairs both in the West and in Russia. He was always attractive to women; one of his affairs was with Melinda Maclean, wife of Donald, his fellow traitor.

Ben Macintyre, author of *A Spy Among Friends*, says of Flora Solomon that 'she changed the working practices of Britain, and by denouncing Philby when she did, changed the course of British history. Had she not done so, this country's most notorious traitor would probably have got away with it.'

Flora Solomon died in July 1984 and was buried in Switzerland, beside her husband Harold. On her gravestone are the words, 'Where there is no vision, the people perish.'

**Philippa Bernard**

## Jews in the Royal Marines



*The badge of the Corps of the Royal Marines*

My late husband Leo, a founder member of Westminster Synagogue, served in the 1939-45 war as a member of the Royal Marine Commando. The story of how he joined the service has become something of a family legend, as so few Jews fought in that particular branch of the services. When war broke out in 1939 Leo was anxious to join up but was much too young. Nevertheless in 1942, anxious to join the Royal Navy and still under age, he went into the Navy Recruiting Office in Finchley Road. He was found to be colour blind and was turned down. As he was leaving, a burly Royal Marine sergeant stuck out his arm. 'Where do you think you're going?' Five minutes later he was in the Royal Marines and soon on his way to RM headquarters in Deal.

The story of another young Jew who joined the Royal Marines was told in the *Jewish Chronicle*. In 1943 it reported that, for various reasons (chiefly to escape feared unfavourable discrimination), a number of Jews enlisted in the Forces as Church of England or under other denominational headings. However, the paper quoted a letter from the Commanding Officer of a company of Royal Marines in which he confirmed the entry into that force of a Marine, Isaac Cohen, as C. of E. Cohen had entered the recruiting office very timidly, although anxious to join. A facetious sergeant, hearing his name, said 'Isaac Cohen, C. of

E., I suppose?'. Cohen, then ignorant of the term, thought the sergeant said, 'Civvy I suppose?' and he answered 'Yes, Sir.' This surprised but amused the N.C.O., who therefore entered C. of E. on the enrolment form. When Cohen later applied for leave in the usual way for *Yom Kippur*, he was met with the reply that Church of England men did not have such leave! In due course, to the relief of Marine Cohen and his family, the record was altered to 'Jew'.

The Royal Marine Commandos are the United Kingdom's special operations force, one of the five fighting arms of the Royal Navy, and provide the majority of Special Boat Service personnel, and a company strength unit to the Special forces Support Group.

Royal Marines trace their origins back to the formation of the 'Duke of York and Albany's maritime regiment of Foot' on 28 October 1664, and during World War I were active – as part of the Royal Naval Division – in Belgium and at Gallipoli.



*The Royal Marines Association CEO Jonathan Ball (President of St. John's Wood Synagogue) presented Keith Breslauer with a HM Royal Marines Band side-drum during a Guildhall Dinner in London.*

The first Royal Marines Commando unit was formed at Deal in Kent on February 14<sup>th</sup> 1942 and designated 'The Royal Marine Commando'. They trained at Plymouth, joining the British Army Commandos. The Division command



*The band of the Royal Marines*

structure became a Special Service Brigade command. The support troops became landing craft crew and saw extensive action on D-Day in June 1944. Some, including Leo, landed on Sword Beach, together with the Canadians who were considered among the most ruthless of the Allied fighting troops. The Marines then moved on, after heavy bombardment, into Holland, where they were involved in bitter fighting, later assisting some of the Parachute Regiment who fought at Arnhem.

The Marines have no chaplain of their own – they share Royal Naval chaplains. Chaplains join the Royal Navy as experienced clergy of their denomination. They undergo naval training at Britannia Royal Naval College alongside other Royal Navy officer cadets. Those serving with the Royal Marines may be selected to attempt commando training: if successful they become Royal Navy Commandos and wear the Commando green beret and, on No 1 uniform, the Commando Dagger badge. The Jewish Chaplains, apart from normal commitment in their own religious sphere, looked after the men's welfare. This included kosher food, burial rights and Sabbath and Holy Day Services.

Very few Jews joined the Royal Marines during the First and Second World Wars. No special arrangements were made for their care other than those extended to the Navy as a whole. Kosher food was not obtainable while they were on active service, but orthodox Jews were usually able to manage on vegetarian meals. They had no facilities for worship nor for burial on the field of battle. A small booklet – *Prayer Book for Jewish*



*Members of H.M. Forces* - was issued in 1940 by HM Stationery Office 'with the authority of the Chief Rabbi'. A 'Prayer before a Battle' reads in part, 'Give me the strength to do my duty this day as a true and loyal Israelite in this war for freedom and righteousness.'

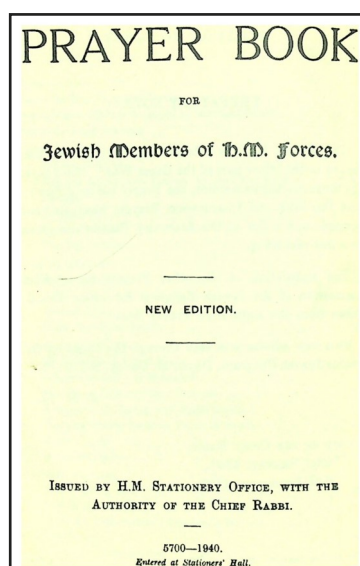
## In June some of his reinforcements were ambushed in the mountains during a mission and only twelve men escaped

A few Jewish Royal Marines achieved distinction during the time of war. The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to Lieut. Peter G. Davis, Royal Marines, for bravery, resource, and devotion to duty under dangerous conditions during operations in the Adriatic. Lieut. Davis was the son of Solly and Iris Davis. In the summer of 1944 Davis was based on the island of Vis, in the Adriatic, as commander of a flotilla of Landing Craft. In June some of his reinforcements were ambushed in the mountains during a mission and only twelve men escaped to shore. Davis took the chance to recover their weapons and rescue another officer who had been wounded. After the war, he was sent to Germany to oversee the establishment of the Royal Marines Demolition Unit along the Rhine. During the 1960s he was a company commander in 40 Commando deployed to the jungles of Borneo for the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation. He led 'Pugforce', an amalgam of Royal Marines, Ghurkhas, Sarawak Rangers and Iban trackers deep in the jungle and managed to capture several rebels.

Another feature of the Royal Marines, perhaps better known to the public, is the Royal Marine Band. Their familiar white pith helmets appear on many State and other occasions. We do not know of any Jews who played in the Band but with their love of music, it is possible that some did so. There is usually a contingent of the Band present at the march past the Cenotaph on Armistice

Day. The Jewish Ex-Servicemen's parade takes place a week after the main parade, when Jewish representatives of all branches of the forces march down Whitehall. The Chief Rabbi says the *Kaddish*, and a special prayer for Holocaust victims. AJEX was given the right to the march by George V in 1934, and Jews are the only ethnic minority who are allowed to hold a religious ceremony at the Cenotaph, with all the roads closed.

In 2022 representatives of the Royal Marines Association, the charity arm of the Marines, visited Israel for the Veteran Games. First held in 2019, this event saw sixty-five British wounded, sick and injured Armed Forces veterans, from all branches of the services, travel to Israel with their families where they competed with their Israeli counterparts who faced identical challenges. The Veteran Games recognise the fundamental role played by sport and family in supporting the ongoing recovery of veterans who have suffered physical and psychological challenges as a result of serving their country.



**Philippa Bernard**

## Jews in the Battle of Britain



*Runnymede Air Forces Memorial*

In 2020 the RAF Museum in London mounted an exhibition in connection with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain to remember Jewish heroes of the Second World War. Few people realise the vital part paid by the Jews of the Royal Air Force, but collecting the memories of those who were there has brought back a wealth of tributes.

The project was sponsored by Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich as part of the football club's effort to fight anti-Semitism. One of the heroes was Michael, son of Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann. He was a trained pilot as well as a distinguished scientist and worked for the Coastal Command Development Unit, developing new strategies and technology for Coastal Command in the battle of the Atlantic. Michael's plane ditched in the Bay of Biscay in 1942 and his body was never recovered but he is remembered at the Runnymede Air Forces Memorial.

Jews serving on active service in the RAF were in particular danger. Had they been shot down over Germany and it was discovered that they were Jewish, they had little hope of being treated as prisoners of war. Many removed their identity bands which bore their religion, but some refused to do so, one remarking, 'I was born a Jew and I'll die a Jew.' Jewish women, too, served in the Air Force during the Battle of Britain, on the airfields of southern England, in supporting the men in the RAF in canteens, factories and planning offices.

Few Jewish airmen and women are still alive to recall their service in the war, but they have passed on their experience to their children and grandchildren and will never be forgotten.

**Philippa Bernard**

## The Jews of South Africa



*The Gardens Synagogue Cape Town*

On 4th September, 1841 the SS Prince Rupert, from London, with one hundred and sixty passengers and cargo for New Zealand, was entering Table Bay, South Africa, about nine o'clock in the evening, when she ran aground on Mouille Point, stuck fast, and became a total wreck. Most of the passengers and crew were saved, including one who was Jewish (his name is unknown) who agreed to make up a *minyan* for the small nucleus of Jews in Cape Town and thus enabled the Jewish community of South Africa to come into being. Until this time no Jewish congregation could exist, as the early settlers from the Dutch East India Company did not permit any but the Protestant religion to be practised there.



*Gardens Synagogue interior*

The first thing this embryo congregation did was to purchase a burial ground, and then to build a synagogue; its Hebrew name was *Tikvah Israel* (Hope of Israel) but it was always known (and still is) as the Gardens Shul, after the Gardens area of the city where it was built. The first service was held on *Kol Nidre*. Today the congregation – and the building – have expanded considerably and the original

building is known as the Great Synagogue.

It is believed that there were a few non-practising Jews in South Africa before the establishment of the first synagogue, though little is known of them. The earliest detailed knowledge we have of South African Jews is of that Service held on *Kol Nidre* in the home of the Norden family. Benjamin Norden was a leading member of the new community, together with the Mosenthal brothers who started a prosperous wool industry, mostly of mohair wool with the Angora goats they had brought from Asia.

Another distinguished family, immigrants from England, was that of Aaron de Pass, also early members of the Garden Synagogue. Aaron was created a Judge and with his brother Daniel they became the largest ship owners in Cape Town, founding prosperous sealing, whaling and fishing industries. Other Jews in South Africa in the nineteenth century were ostrich farmers and entrepreneurs in the early diamond mines.

By 1880 the Jews of South Africa had expanded to around 4,000, many of whom had emigrated from Lithuania, and the discovery of diamonds and gold on the Cape invited further increase in numbers. In the years leading up to the First World War some 40,000 Jews came to South Africa. In May 1910 the Union of South Africa was created as a self-governing dominion of the British Empire, after the passing of the South Africa Act, amalgamating the four separate British colonies, Cape Colony, Colony of Natal, Transvaal Colony and Orange River Colony.

In spite of the 1870 Act allowing freedom of worship, these early South Africa Jews suffered considerable anti-Semitism. They were considered white but were neither Afrikaans nor Dutch, and neither they nor Catholics were able to take up military posts nor offices of state, nor could they become superintendents of mines or supervise the native population. All teachers in places of education, from primary schools to universities, had to conform to a 'Christian and Protestant' spirit. They were often deemed *uitlanders* (foreigners) and remained for

the most part outside South African life. A few joined the white South Africans living outside the towns and were sometimes called *Boerejode* (Boer Jews), speaking Afrikaans and intermarrying with their neighbours. Johannesburg was sometimes referred to as Jewburg.

The city of Johannesburg was not founded until 1886, when gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand (white water ridge) and the area surrounding the mines became densely populated with miners and their families. The first Jewish citizens were mainly from Britain but were soon joined by more from the families of the Lithuanian Jews already settled there. By the end of the century more than 10,000 Jews lived in the area, outgrowing the congregation of Cape Town. These early Johannesburg Jews were prominent in the gold industry, playing an important part in the government of the country and the municipal councils.



*Great Park Synagogue Johannesburg*

The first Jewish community in Johannesburg – the Witwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation – built a synagogue in 1888 and this was followed by several more as numbers increased, mostly following the orthodox tradition, though by the present time there are fifty-five as well as three Reform temples and one Independent. The South African Board of Jewish Education has established several Jewish primary schools, as well as two high schools and a seminary for training teachers, a Yeshiva and several colleges catering for more specialised forms of Jewish education. There is a Department of Hebrew with a full-time Chair at the University of Witwatersrand.

Another city in South Africa, the third largest, is Durban, formerly Port Natal. It too has a small Jewish community – it is recorded that a young Jew called Nathaniel Isaacs came to Durban as early as 1825. Fellow Jews from Cape Town and Johannesburg helped the small Jewish group to build a synagogue – converting a Methodist chapel – and to lay out a burial ground. One leading member of the Durban congregation was appointed Mayor of Durban and others sat in the Union Parliament.

There are smaller Jewish communities in most of the large towns of South Africa, though many do not have a synagogue or communal buildings. Among them are Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and East London.

Early in the establishment of Johannesburg's Jewish community Zionism became a driving force. In 1898 the South African Zionist Federation was formed and relations between Israel and South Africa continued to be friendly. However in 1930 the South African government passed the Quota Act restricting Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. The ideology underlying the Act was part of the racist and anti-Semitic discrimination that had taken hold of the popular imagination at the time. Nazi philosophy and propaganda found warm reception from many South African whites, who reciprocated many of these ideals. The 1930s saw a huge increase in anti-Semitism both in the social and the political arenas. The South African Jewish community's reaction was to fight against the sentiment as best they could but they were constrained by fears for their safety and future both in South Africa and worldwide. Johannesburg Jewry's response to the events was to consolidate the Jewish communities and to look on Israel as an escape route should it become necessary.

Many Jews in South Africa were strongly against Apartheid. However as more impoverished black people began moving into the cities in search of work and housing, they began to fear for their own way of life, and many decided to emigrate to Israel or to Europe.

Shortly after Israel's declaration of independence, the South African government of Jan Smuts recognised the State of Israel, but two days later, Smuts – a long-time supporter of Zionism and a personal friend of Chaim Weizmann – was voted out of office. D.F. Malan's National Party became the new government, having run on a platform of legislating Apartheid. The large Jewish population was in the main composed of Zionists, many of whom had provided important financial support to the Zionist movement in the decades after the Balfour Declaration. The South African government granted recognition to Israel on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1949 and formal diplomatic relations between the countries began in the same year with the opening of Israel's consulate-general in Pretoria. However, South Africa had no direct diplomatic representation in Israel, and was represented by the United Kingdom instead, until it sent a consul-general to Tel Aviv in 1972.



*Nelson Mandela*

During the 1950s and 1960s, Israel became an open critic of the Apartheid Regime in South Africa, hoping to establish good relations with black-majority countries in Africa. In 1953 the Liberal Party of South Africa was formed under the Chairmanship of Alan Paton, the novelist, author of *Cry the Beloved Country*. Many Jews joined the party, or were in favour of its principles, including the Jewish actress, Janet Suzman.

In 1994, Apartheid was formally abolished when Nelson Mandela was



*Janet Suzman*

voted in as South Africa's first black President. Under his rule relations between South Africa and Israel remained cordial, though since then, the Country has drifted towards closer ties with the Palestinians, to the dismay of Israel. She maintained an embassy in Pretoria and a trade office in Johannesburg for some years, while South Africa had an embassy in Tel Aviv. This continues to be the case, though more recently relations have deteriorated. The South African Department of International Relations summarises the prevailing situation as follows: 'There is currently limited political and diplomatic interaction between South Africa and Israel, mainly due to Israel's antagonistic attitude towards the MEPP [Middle East Peace Process] and disregard for International Law regarding the rights of the Palestinians and their territories. South Africa's baseline is that Israel must return to negotiations and create favourable conditions for peaceful negotiations.'

The Jews of South Africa continue to enjoy a peaceful religious life, with highly regarded educational facilities and reasonable relations with their black and white neighbours. Many have achieved world-wide distinction in the fields of science and medicine, the arts and academic research.

**Philippa Bernard**



## Régine (1929-2022)



Régine Zylberberg was born in Anderlecht, Belgium. There is some evidence that she was originally named Rachelle. Her parents were Polish Jews who had lived for eight years in Argentina, but her father was an alcoholic and inveterate gambler. After he lost the family bakery in a game of poker, they moved to Paris, but soon after, her mother abandoned the family and went back to live in Argentina, leaving Régine and her brother, Maurice, in their largely absent father's care.

During the Nazi occupation of France, the children went into hiding in a series of foster homes, including a convent in Aix-en-Provence where Régine was beaten by other girls for being Jewish. At the age of fourteen, she was working at a refuge for the elderly in Lyon where she fell in love with the owners' son, Claude, nephew of Bernard Schonberg, the Chief Rabbi of the city. In 1944 he was on his way to the synagogue to discuss marrying her, when he was arrested by the Nazis and sent to the concentration camps, where he died. Shortly afterwards, at the age of sixteen, Régine married Leon Rotcage, with whom she had a son, Lionel in 1945, but they divorced four years later. Lionel became a journalist and married, as his second wife, Telsche Boorman, the daughter of the British film director John Boorman. Rotcage died of cancer in 2006.

In post-war Paris, Régine worked in the café-bar-brasserie established by her father in the 20<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, where she also learned to cook. The decisive moment came when she found a summer job in a hat shop in Juan-les-Pins. The Côte d'Azur was beginning to become full of celebrities, and when Régine saw all eyes turn to Aly Khan and his bride Rita

Hayworth, she decided that she wanted to be part of that world.

Régine, as she was always styled, got her first taste of nightlife in the early fifties as a hat-check girl at the *Whiskey à gogo*, a Paris club that lent its name to one in Los Angeles. Although never a beauty, her red hair and occasional turns as a singer caught the eye of people like the playboy Porfirio Rubirosa. With funding from the Rothschilds, Régine opened her own place in 1957 near the church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.



*Art Deco entrance to Régine's*

After opening Chez Régine, she also became well known as a singer and occasional actor, starring in films by the directors Claude Lelouch and Claude Zidi and recording a number of albums.

For many years, she maintained a parallel career as a torch singer, known to French audiences in particular for *Les p'tits papiers* (1965), a song written for her by Serge Gainsbourg.

She married Roger Choukroun, a computer engineer, in 1969 and divorced him in 2004, but despite her marriages and many lovers, Régine would always describe Claude-Michel Schonberg as her 'first and only true love'.

Régine practised martial arts, would fast for a week before opening a new club, and employed three psychics to cleanse her aura of the residue left by the thoughts of those she had to meet and greet.

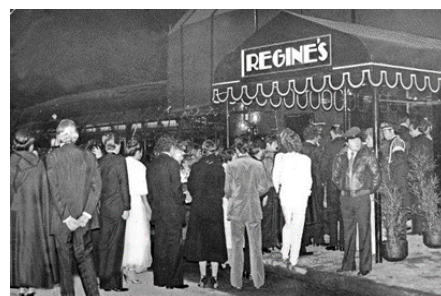
While most famous internationally as a nightclub entrepreneur, back home Régine was always considered more for her contribution to French song-writing. French singer Renaud called her the last historic representative of the French

*chanson*, inspiring an entire generation of singer songwriters, including Serge Gainsbourg and Barbara (Monique Andrée).

After performing in the legendary *Olympia* venue in the French capital in the 1960s, Régine sang in New York's Carnegie Hall to a warm reception by an American audience, a feat that among French singers only Edith Piaf could match.

Although she would adopt an Art Deco look for her clubs – all mirrored glass and low tables – at first, she padded out the furniture with some borrowed park benches. The rich and famous went to Régine's, to see and be seen, but their exclusivity was founded on illusion; a 'Full' sign would be put outside each of her clubs even as they opened, a hype that created the demand that saw everyone, however privileged, queue to enter. To enhance this idea of exclusivity, the clubs maintained a fearsome door policy that involved scrutiny through a peephole. The club claimed to be the first to sell bottles of drink rather than simply cocktails. Certainly, it made it *chic* to dance to recorded music, rather than to a live band.

Régine soon became the talk of the town, shaking up Paris's staid social scene. 'Back then, the in-crowd was very small,' she recalled. 'It was high society, royalty and the real film stars.' In fact, her skill lay in gradually expanding those categories as times changed. Where once there had been a Jean Harlow night, when even the guests' Rolls-Royces were sprayed white for the occasion, by the 1970s she was hosting a Kitsch-themed party for Vivienne Westwood, with *crème au chocolat* served in chamber pots.



*Even the rich and famous had to stand in line.*



*With Serge Gainsbourg*

Régine presided over events like a mother hen, serving up spaghetti at three in the morning. Among those who frequented her club were Georges Pompidou, the future president, Brigitte Bardot, Salvador Dali with his lover Amanda Lear, Karl Lagerfeld, Françoise Sagan and the singer Barbara.

She dyed her hair flame red and attracted diverse lovers: the actors Robert Mitchum, Warren Beatty, Gene Kelly, Steve McQueen and Omar Sharif, and singer Jacques Brel, as well as sporting stars and alpinists Jean-Claude Killy and Maurice Herzog, the Spanish matador El Cordobés and the Swedish tennis champion Björn Borg.



Dancing was her passion: 'If you can't dance, you can't make love,' she would say, and she also claimed to have started the craze for *The Twist*. The Duke of Windsor went to her Club to get her to teach him the steps. In 1961 she moved venues to Montparnasse, and in 1974 opened *Jimmy's* in Monte Carlo.

A year later, she took up residence in the Delmonico Hotel, New York. She opened a club on the ground floor, selling 2,000 annual memberships at \$600 each. Her

clientele was eclectic but almost exclusively wealthy, powerful and well connected. Among them were Andy Warhol, Brigitte Bardot, the Rothschilds, the Kennedys, Liza Minnelli, Truman Capote, Marlene Dietrich, Richard Nixon, Georges Pompidou, the mobster John Gotti, Salvador Dali, Joan Collins and Michael Douglas (reputedly her godson).

Selling franchises to local entrepreneurs, Régine expanded to a chain of twenty-three clubs, stretching from Rio de Janeiro to Kuala Lumpur and was said by the early eighties to bring in over \$500 million per year. She had her own line of fragrances and was so famous in France that when she came off Concorde, the customs officers did not bother to check her passport.



Sadly, as tastes changed, her empire dwindled. Bad investments – in a hotel in Nîmes and the venerable *Le Palace* club in Paris – sapped her fortune, costing Régine her villa at Saint-Tropez and forcing her to sell her many establishments.

For those who knew her traumatic history - and she made no secret of it - Régine's self-professed workaholism and her search for recognition and respect were rooted in trying to compensate for a childhood blighted by an alcoholic father,

an absent mother, and the Nazis.

Still entertaining and making public appearances in her eighties, Régine Zylberberg died on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2022 at the age of ninety-two.

**Claire Connick**

## Amusement Arcade

### THE PRIZEWINNER

Little Izzie Cohen won a million pounds on the lottery.

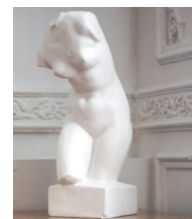
He bought an old mansion and instructed builders and decorators to bring it up to a fine standard.

When it was finished, the man in charge of the work was taking Izzie round his new home.

'But vat is all these naked peoples doing here?' he asked.

'You asked for a statue in every room, so that's what we did' was the reply.

'No! No!' cried Izzie. 'I wanted those tings you pick up and say "Hello! 'Stat You?"'



### THE LAST MEAL

Fabrizio, Jacques and Abe are about to be executed and they are asked what they wish to have for their last meal.

Fabrizio asks for a pepperoni pizza, which he is served. He is then executed.

Jacques asks for a filet mignon, which he is served. He too is then executed.

Abe requests a plate of strawberries.

'Strawberries?'

'Yes, replies Abe, 'strawberries'.

'But they are out of season.'

'So, nu, I'll wait'





## Menelik 1 First Emperor of Ethiopia



*Solomon and the Queen of Sheba*  
by Piero della Francesca

*'When the Queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the Lord, she came to test Solomon with hard questions. Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan - with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones - she came to Solomon and talked with him' 1 Kings 10:2*

The mysterious Queen of Sheba appears in the historical folk tales of many countries and religions in Asia and Africa. Beautiful, intelligent and very rich, she has many names. She is usually known as Makeda, though in Hebrew she is *Malkat Saba*; the accounts from Yemen, Islam and Ethiopia have different versions. Her homeland is referred to as Saba or Sheba in Arabia Felix; it is believed to have been part of modern day Yemen.

The legend surrounding the relationship between Solomon and the Queen tells that the King was preparing to build the Temple in Jerusalem, and was seeking merchants from across the world to buy materials for it. An Ethiopian seller of fine goods told his Queen about the wonders of the Israelite King and the treasures of Jerusalem, so she decided to visit the Holy Land in person. She was

overwhelmed by what she found and - so the story goes - decided to convert to Judaism. A great feast was set for her before she returned to her own country, and she stayed at the palace, the King promising her no harm, and she in return promising not to steal from him. He broke his oath and slept with her, giving her a ring as a token. She had a son by him whom she called 'Son of the Wise Man', later named Menelik. In Ethiopia the Queen's son was raised as a Jew.

As a young man, Menelik returned to Jerusalem to meet his father for the first time. He brought his mother's ring with him and was received with great honour. Solomon tried to persuade him to stay and rule Israel as his successor but he wished to return to his motherland. Solomon sent many Israelites with him, though they were not happy to leave. Some modern day Ethiopians claim ancestry from these exiled Jews.

## Solomon, according to the legend, sent the Ark of the Covenant back with Menelik as a gift

Solomon, according to the legend, sent the Ark of the Covenant back with Menelik as a gift (see *Westminster Quarterly*, July 2018). Some still claim that it now resides in the Church of Our Lady of Zion in Axum in Ethiopia. Most of these legends come from a medieval book written in Ethiopia, *Kebra Nagast* or The Glory of the Kings, the national epic of Ethiopia, by Nebure Id Ishaq of Axum. The text, in its existing form, is at least 700 years old and is considered by many Ethiopian Christians to be a historically reliable work.

It was as early as 333BCE that the Ethiopian Empire converted to Christianity and the remaining Jewish community exiled themselves to the Simien mountains. Here they remained, cut off from the rest of the Ethiopian

nation, and declining to mix with the Christians now in command of the country. They refused to convert and were greatly oppressed by those around them. They always felt a love for and a strong link to the Holy Land, and many years later, hundreds tried to make their way there, fighting their way across the desert and suffering greatly as they went.

When the Queen died, her son Menelik was crowned King of Ethiopia. He founded the Solomonic Dynasty there which ruled for three thousand years, the last Emperor being Haile Selassie who was dethroned in 1974.



Haile Selassie's full title was: *His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, King of Kings and Elect of God*, thus acknowledging his descent from Solomon (see *Westminster Quarterly*, October 2023).

The black Jews of Ethiopia may well owe their origin to the Queen of Sheba, whose racial descent is undisputed.

**Philippa Bernard**



## The Royal Family and its Jewish Connections



Edward VII

One of Queen Victoria's favourite people, after her beloved Prince Albert, was Benjamin Disraeli. Although baptised at the age of twelve, he was widely regarded during his time as Prime Minister as a Jew, especially by his anti-Semitic rival, William Gladstone. Responding to an opponent in the House of Commons, Disraeli once said, 'I am a Jew, and when the ancestors of the right honourable gentleman were brutal savages in an unknown island, mine were priests in the temple of Solomon.'

Disraeli also supported a Bill to remove the requirement that MPs swear a Christian oath of allegiance, a requirement which prevented Jews from assuming office. British Jews have been allowed to sit in Parliament since the passing of the Jews Relief Act in 1858.

Several Jews were part of Victoria's son Edward VII's inner circle, including the Baghdadi-born Reuben Sassoon, whose friendship with the King perturbed much of the British aristocracy. Even more importantly, Edward intervened on behalf of the Jews of Russia, broaching the subject with his cousin, Czar Nicholas II, while on a state visit to that country. Cousin 'Nicky' ignored 'Bertie'. English politicians expressed dismay at the King's behaviour - but for the Jews, Edward became a hero.

When still a Prince, and at a time of mounting anti-Semitism in Europe,

Edward was without any meaningful occupation and was bored. He took consolation in a style of living beyond his means. His Jewish friends became indispensable to him and many of his numerous mistresses were also Jewish. His group provided the camaraderie, the lavish entertaining, the political intelligence and financial advice that he so desired. Amongst this disparate group were Nathaniel Rothschild - the first Jewish peer - and his brothers. Then there were others, their cousin, Baron Ferdinand, the Sassoons (the 'Rothschilds of the East'), and Baron Maurice de Hirsch - the least known but richest of them all - who made a fortune by driving the first railway through the turbulent Balkans. One of Edward's closest friends and riding partners was financier Ernest Cassel, and the anti-Semites of the time sometimes called the King's residence outside London, Windsor Cassel. When Hirsch died in 1896, Cassel took over the Prince's private investment portfolio; an arrangement sweetened by Hirsch's final instructions for £300,000 worth of loans to the Prince being written off on his death, and Cassel's guarantee that any losses accrued by 'Bertie' be underwritten by the banker. So close did Cassel become to the Prince that when Bertie asked courtier the Marquis de Soveral 'have you seen *The Importance of Being Ernest*?' de Soveral replied, 'no Sir, but I have seen the importance of being Ernest Cassel'.

Just as Edward had no time for the anti-Indian racism of so many of his peers, he also paid no attention to those who criticised him for having close confidants and friends who were Jewish. His lack of discrimination was appreciated by London's Jewish community, who, in 1911 erected a statue to Edward in Tower Hamlets.

In 1935 Edward VII's son, King George V, received a letter from a Jewish girl based in Israel. When she was twelve, Yehudit Ya'avetz wrote a congratulatory letter to King George V in Hebrew, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his coronation. She sent it from Haifa, where she had emigrated two years previously from Germany. In it, Ya'avetz thanked the King for helping the Jewish people, and wrote, 'I apologise dearly that my knowledge of

the English language is still insufficient to express my feelings in this language, but I hope that the lilt of the Hebrew language will intermingle in the ears of His Majesty.'

One step away from the Royal family in more modern times, the Churchills, father and son, had close friendships with prominent, talented Jews. One was Nathaniel Mayer 'Natty' Rothschild, first Baron Rothschild, head of the British branch of the famous banking family. He was the first Jewish member of the House of Lords.

When it came to defying contemporary prejudices, Winston Churchill took the same approach as his father. Lord Randolph Churchill was frequently criticised for his association with Jews. Once in an English country house, a leading aristocrat greeted him: 'What, Lord Randolph, you've not brought your Jewish friends?' 'No,' said Randolph, 'I did not think they would be very amused by the company.'



There are other interesting connections between the Jewish people and Britain's Royals. The late Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh also has an important Jewish link. His mother, Princess Alice of Battenberg was recognised in 1994 by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile, for saving a Jewish family in war-time Athens. She is buried at the Convent of Saint Mary Magdalene on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

King Charles even has his own blue velvet *kippah*, with a royal crest on it in silver, to wear at Jewish gatherings. So, it seems that there is something of a bond between the Royal family and the Jewish people of Great Britain.

**Claire Connick**

## Alephs, Oxheads and Abjads



Achingly sad and beautiful, Purcell's aria 'Dido's Lament' is played annually at the Cenotaph, and regally performed by Jessye Norman on YouTube. The words were penned in the English alphabet in which Hebrew roots are evident, but Hebrew is not an Indo-European language, so how that came to be is not so evident, nor Dido's part in it.

She was a Phoenician princess who founded Carthage in 814 BCE. Virgil wrote of her love for Aeneas who fled there from Troy's destruction but abandoned her to found Rome, bridging the ages to give Romans a glorious but non-Greek ancestry – like their alphabet. Its foster parent first appeared in the works of Homer and others in eighth century Greece (BCE is omitted here from century ordinals); but the implied continuity from earlier Aegean culture is not true of the alphabet, unrelated to Minoan hieroglyphs and nothing like 'Linear A' or 'B' of Mycenae. Homer signposted its origin in the tale of Odysseus winning a Phoenician silver bowl in Achilles's foot race, 'in beauty far the goodliest in all the earth'. Various precious bowls have been found around the Mediterranean with Phoenician inscriptions resembling ancient Greek.

Linear B was a 'syllabary': hundreds of symbols represented consonant-vowel syllables, in contrast with only two dozen characters in the Greek alphabet. It developed for the administration of a palace-centred city-state and died with it in the Late Bronze Age Collapse of the early twelfth century. Throughout the Mediterranean basin, people were set back to life in hamlets and farmsteads with little of the art or industry of their predecessors, beginning half a millennium of illiteracy known as the Greek Dark Ages. Cuneiform survived, as did proto-Canaanite created by common people with a shared culture, not for officialdom. Yet this Abraham of scripts using only consonants, called an 'abjad' from its first four letters, would be

ancestral to almost every alphabet in the world.

Cuneiform evolved in Sumer from count marks and pictograms exemplified by the Kish tablets of 3500 BCE, later adapted for the syllabary of Akkadian, *lingua franca* of Mesopotamia. Laws on the Hammurabi stele of 1800 BCE are our earliest example, noted for 'lex talionis', the measure-for-measure principle ordained in Exodus as an eye for an eye. Early diplomatic letters from Byblos, discovered at Amarna, seek Egypt's help against encroaching southern 'Habiru' (the first mention of Hebrews) in mixed Akkadian-Canaanite. Of similar age in Ugarit, from where Afghan tin was exported to the copper island of Cyprus, the cuneiform of the 'Ba'al Cycle' texts used only thirty phonetic symbols, with the first appearance of the proto-Canaanite alphabetic order. As international trade centres, Ugarit and Byblos needed scribes skilled in more than one system, promoting crossover.

## archeologists reported a tenth century joint venture near Haifa for the production of purple dye

Our longest proto-Canaanite example is a 1000 BCE six-inch potsherd from the Elah valley where David smote Goliath. Flinders Petrie discovered sixteenth century graffiti by Canaanite slaves in the turquoise mines and on a temple sphinx at Serabit El-Khadim in the Sinai, rebutting a view that early Israelites were illiterate. The British Library website refers to other graffiti scratched in 1850 BCE in the Wadi El Hol by 'non-native Egyptian speakers', derived from 'acrophonic' hieroglyphs which signify the opening sound of the word for the object. The wavy line the Egyptian /n/ sound for water, became the /m/ of *mayim*.

Phoenician/paleo-Hebrew characters were simplified proto-Canaanite, but oddly, some texts were written left to right with the characters also flipped; even in 'boustrophedon' in which both the

characters and text, often without word dividers, reverse direction on each line. The transition is provisionally ascribed to eleventh century Phoenicia. From the tenth, our oldest complete abjad was unearthed at Tel Zayit, south-west of Jerusalem. The Ophel potsherd found near the Temple Mount and a calendar at Gezer, twenty miles away, could be either proto-Canaanite or paleo-Hebrew. Latterly however, bronze arrowheads with their owners' names in Phoenician were dated to the end of the twelfth century. Talmudic scholarship holds that the Law was inscribed in paleo-Hebrew (Libona'a), but the date bracket for the Covenant is closed by the mention of Israel on a late thirteenth century stele extolling Pharaoh Merneptah. That suggests that paleo-Hebrew script developed before the Collapse, likely refined by educated Moses, and the Phoenicians later adopted it; and that the acts of God leading to the Collapse and the Exodus were possibly related.

The Collapse ended Mesopotamian, Anatolian (Hittite) and Egyptian control of Canaan, and no Egyptian artifacts of the next two centuries have been found north of the Sinai. The Israelites were able to settle the decolonised land, and their unfortunate tendency to adopt local gods and ways doubtless included the script. Phoenicians carried it northwest to the Luwians of Anatolia, attested by eighth century bilingual inscriptions in Turkey, and westwards by sea-trade. Significantly, the Aramaeans of Syria adopted it and would spread it throughout Mesopotamia.

Despite genocidal Biblical descriptions of Canaanite settlement, the Phoenicians must have lived peacefully with the Israelites, and in June 2023, archeologists reported a tenth century joint venture near Haifa for the production of purple dye.



*Proto-cuneiform administrative account concerning malt and barley groats*

Solomon entered an alliance with King Hiram of Tyre, surely by marriage. (1 Kings 1 reports that he had seven hundred wives) but his successors inherited more appetite than skill: Ahab wedded Jezebel of Tyre, which ended when she was thrown to the dogs, not unlike English royal marriages.

Meanwhile, Phoenician ships created trading posts throughout the Mediterranean and down the African coast on which Carthage would build the Punic empire – fortified Cadiz and Agadir are named from the Phoenician ‘gader’ for wall.



*The Pyrgi Tablets, laminated sheets of gold with a treatise both in Etruscan and the Phoenician language*

An inscription from Nora in Sardinia tells of Tyrian King Pygmalion, grandnephew of Jezebel. His sister Elishat married the rich high priest who buried his wealth away from Pygmalion’s sticky fingers. When he was mysteriously murdered, Elishat filled the sacks with sand, threw them into the sea to honour him, and sailed away with her gold, of which a medallion inscribed to Pygmalion was found in Douīmès, a Carthaginian necropolis. After a stopover in Cyprus for her men to take wives, they moored in the bay of Tunis. The local king conceded as much land as she could enclose with an ox hide, so she cut one to ribbons which, end to end, closed off the promontory hill still called Byrsa – Oxhide in Greek. There she built Qart Hadasht (‘New Town’) and reigned as Dido until she fell on the sword that Aeneas left her. Unromantic historians cast doubt; but at its height, Carthage ruled hundreds of city-states with a maritime dominance that made Punic Phoenician the mercantile *lingua franca*.

Neo-Assyrians conquered Mesopotamia and in 722 BCE overran the Northern Kingdom. Aramaeans were deported from Syria and Aramaic nominated for imperial administration, completing the language shift from Akkadian. Paleo-Hebrew survived in Judea, found on pottery pieces from Jerusalem and a Siloam (Shiloh) inscription marking Hezekiah’s tunnel to bring water from the Gihon spring. The Babylonian Diaspora effectively ended paleo-Hebrew in Israel, apart from some Samaritan survivors’ scriptures. Our fullest inscription is on a Moabite stone of 840 BCE recording King

Mesha’s conflict with the House of Omri (2 Kings 3). Despite damage by Arabs angry at Ottoman plans to give it to Germany, the stele remains a ‘cornerstone of Semitic epigraphy’.

Aramaic remained the language of office, and Belshazzar’s inability to read the writing on the wall is mystifying (in old Aramaic, *teth* is used for the /sh/ in *shekel*). Under the later Achaemenids, returning Jews brought it to Judea.

Debate surrounds the text of The Tanakh assembled during the Second Temple period, boosted by discoveries like paleo-Hebrew Leviticus among the Dead Sea Scrolls; but the ‘square’ Hebrew of our scrolls, Ktav Ashuri ‘script of Ashur’, came from Aramaic. From the third century, a version used by the Nabataeans of Petra would father Arabic; and a later cursive version in Palmyra produced Syriac. With Islam, Arabic became the second most widespread world script.

With the Persians, Syriac sired Central Asian Sogdian and Indian Malayalam, shaping many alphabets from Tibetan to Khmer and old Manchu.

Greek adoption of Phoenician characters occurred in the ninth century. Even mythology ascribes it to a Phoenician, Cadmus, slayer of dragons, who came in search of his sister Europa abducted by the bull and founded Thebes. Every city developed its ‘epichoric’ script, like Athenian seen on the eighth century Dipylon vase. Euboea may have been first to adopt the script and carry it to Italy, attested by a ‘Nestor’s Cup’ on Ischia in the Gulf of Naples. Scripts were unified in

402 BCE when Athens voted for Euclid’s proposal to abandon Attic for a standardised Ionian.

Western European and Scandinavian alphabets are variants of Latin; Cyrillic forms derive directly from Greek. Latin replaced runes, written left to right or in boustrophedon, which evolved separately in the early Common Era from ‘Old Italics’ of Northern Italy. The most widespread was Etruscan which wedded Greek to sire Latin, our oldest example an alphabet from 700 BCE in Marsiliana, Tuscany. It resembles the Euboean Greek in Ischia, including the ‘f’ which evolved from the *vav* via the ‘digamma’ not used

in Ionian. The oldest Italian historical documents are three golden plaques from Pyrgi from the start of the fifth century, dedicated to Astarte in both Etruscan and Phoenician, showing the influential presence of the latter.

Greek has no pharyngeal sounds, unlike Hebrew. Unneeded letters were re-used for new consonants or vowels, like *yod* becoming *iota*, known as ‘matres lectionis’ (mothers of reading). Their mutation helps track the spread from proto-Canaanite. *Alpha* comes from Phoenician *aleph* from proto-Canaanite from the oxhead hieroglyph, since in Hebrew, ox is ‘eleph’ (It is a Hebraic glottal stop, like the unvoiced consonant in English ‘Uh-oh!’). Greek had no use for stops; nor does English even though myriad stopped consonants and dropped ‘hitches’ litter the newscasts on BBC Radio 4. Some feel that English so discouraged might fairly be represented by a new ‘mater lectionis’ acrophonically extracted from a bull.

A	B	D	K	L	N	English
A	B	Δ	K	Λ	N	Greek (& cursive)
α	β	δ	κ	λ	ν	
𐤀	𐤁	𐤃	𐤅	𐤆	𐤎	Etruscan (Marsiliana)
𐤀	𐤁	𐤃	𐤅	𐤆	𐤎	Hebrew “square”
𐤀	𐤁	𐤃	𐤅	𐤆	𐤎	Phoenician & paleo-Hebrew
𐤀	𐤁	𐤃	𐤅	𐤆	𐤎	Proto-Sinaitic /Canaanite
Alp Ox	Bayt House	Dalt Door	Kap Hand	Lamd Goad	Nahas Snake	

Jonathan Footerman



## Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women



Founded in 1885, this charity was originally named the Jewish Ladies' Society for Preventive and Rescue Work. At that time, the sensitive issues of child prostitution and white slavery were brought to public knowledge by national scandals and journalistic exposés. An English newspaper editor and investigative journalist, W. T. Stead, accused immigrant East European Jews of trafficking in prostitutes and corrupting English girls and women. Of course, this fanned existing anti-Semitic prejudice.

One never has to look far into Jewish philanthropy to come across the name Rothschild once again. Lady (Constance) Battersea was the daughter of Anthony and Louise Rothschild. She first learned about the desperate plight of London's Jewish prostitutes from an English missionary. With the support of her cousin, Nathaniel, 1st Lord Rothschild and his wife Emma, Constance managed to involve many among the liberal leadership of Anglo-Jewry in the fight to rescue Jewish prostitutes. The mixture of Jewish traffickers and Jewish victims, she believed, demanded the creation of a distinctively Jewish organisation, and she had a fight to overcome the resistance of many who were reluctant even to

admit there was Jewish prostitution in England.

The Association took a multifaceted approach to aiding young Jewish immigrant women who had been, or were at risk of being, forced into prostitution. It aided newly arrived women at the ports, founded boarding homes for at-risk women, and provided occupational training. The charity, which lasted until after the Second World War, eventually involved some of the most prominent Anglo-Jewish families and British Parliamentarians, and collaborated with the League of Nations after the First World War to combat the sex trade.

The organisation was composed of a network of prominent Anglo-Jewish women closely connected to women's temperance, suffrage and educational campaigns. As a result, they had entrée to, and worked closely with, feminist and inter-denominational anti-white slavery organisations. Founding the JAPGW launched these Anglo-Jewish women into organised English feminism and established the roots of an Anglo-Jewish women's movement seventeen years before the founding of the Union of Jewish Women. Constance, continued to lead the JAPGW and to represent the Association at international meetings until the early 1920s. In late 1943 the decision was taken to amalgamate with the Jewish Board of Guardians.

At the time of its founding, the JAPGW was the first British Jewish organization to tackle a controversial issue. Prostitution was endemic in London at the end of the nineteenth century, and a syphilis epidemic had made the issue a pressing public health concern. Poor women and immigrants were especially vulnerable to recruitment into the sex trade, either willingly or coercively. To the extent Anglo-Jewish community at the end of the nineteenth century was aware of this problem, it was hesitant to address it, particularly as there was a common tendency among persons of all faiths and backgrounds at the time to paint victimised women as morally bankrupt. To publicly acknowledge Jewish prostitution was seen by some as tantamount to publicly acknowledging the

broader Jewish community as morally deficient. Further, with the wave of mass immigration to Britain that began at the end of the nineteenth century, many established British Jews were hesitant to associate themselves with newly blossoming racialised stereotypes of Jewish criminality, which, by the 1880s had already spawned various anti-Semitic anti-immigrant movements.

The first meeting of the new society was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1885, with the first official meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1885, with Emma Rothschild as its President. At that meeting it was decided that there would be two aims for the society: to establish a home for 'fallen Jewish girls' and to carry out vigilance work at the docks in London's East End. With the realisation that the problem of 'fallen Jewish girls' was not as serious as first thought, it was decided to focus all of their resources and time into preventing young Jewish immigrant girls from being lost in the depravity of the East End of London. The organization soon included a 'gentlemen's committee,' headed by eventual organization chairman and founding father of Liberal Judaism Claude Montefiore, which supervised the direct work with newly arrived immigrant women at the ports. (At the time, the environments of the ports where immigrants were arriving was considered too dangerous for the ladies of the Association; one purpose of the gentlemen's auxiliary was to do physical aid work considered unsuitable for women. This work included offering aid to women immigrating alone, who often fell prey to offers of lodging or employment that proved to be covers for sex trafficking. The JAPGW instead assisted these women in making contact with friends or relatives in London, or with legitimate boarding establishments, including those run by the Association itself.

The JAPGW had socially prestigious origins from the beginning. In her personal diaries, Constance describes how she initially founded the organization, broaching the subject at dinners and social gatherings at the homes of London's Anglo-Jewish elite

and her husband's gentile political acquaintances. She also built on her ties to the already well-established Jewish Ladies' Association, which some consider a predecessor to the JAPGW. In her memoirs, Lady Battersea also described how she felt the organisation served a specific need, after hearing of two Jewish prostitutes who were unable to find any refuge not explicitly tied to Christian religious organizations.



*Constance Rothschild, Lady Battersea*

Although always a Jewish organization in both name and spirit, the JAPGW from the first understood the importance of mobilising non-Jews interested in the cause, including members of parliament, many of whom were already familiar with Lady Battersea, in particular, through her husband, Cyril Flower, Lord Battersea. It also promoted anti-trafficking Bills, including the so-called White Slave Traffic Bill of 1912, part of the greater Edwardian moral panic around so-called 'white slavery,' or sex trafficking.

Although the JAPGW heavily supported it, the Bill was controversial among Anglo-Jewry, as it was used to explicitly target Jews as agents of vice while falsely claiming that trafficking victims were English gentiles. The JAPGW published literature in 1922 'exposing anti-Semitic lies' and contradicting this message, while celebrating its role in passing the Bill, claiming that the organization, and the

broader awareness it raised amongst Jewish volunteers, had heroically stopped foreign trafficking of prostitutes. The JAPGW also worked with the League of Nations in tracking cases of international sex trafficking after the First World War; the League of Nations tracked cases by the origins and heritage of all parties involved, and the JAPGW was pleased to note the declining number of Jewish cases.

The dwindling instances of Jewish involvement in sex trafficking, as well as the more pressing matters regarding Jewish refugees following the Second World War, eventually led to the dismantling of the JAPGW in the 1940s. However, the legacy of the JAPGW, both as an organization in itself and as an example of Jewish involvement in the late Victorian era's distinct flavour of charitable action, remains to this day.

Constance had worked tirelessly to bring Jewish women into the English women's movement, thereby helping to lay the basis for the formation of a distinctively Jewish women's movement in England.

The JAPGW had identified itself with women's movement goals, becoming the first Jewish organization to publicise the exploitation of prostitutes and rescue women forced into white slavery. In the process, it became the first Jewish organization to bring sensitive issues of concern to women to the popular consciousness. Constance Battersea became a link between English and Jewish feminism, as she convinced numbers of upper- and middle-class Anglo-Jewish women to join English feminist groups and encouraged them to create Jewish women's organizations, such as the Union of Jewish Women, which allied themselves with the women's movement.

**Claire Connick**

## Serendipity (After a visit to The Cairo Genizah Collection at Cambridge University)

Here,  
on this yellowed vellum,  
the Rambam's own bold hand,  
true servant of his fearless mind,  
and here, wrested from time's stomach  
with great tenacity, learning and  
delight,  
the sweet songs of an unknown poet  
stand shy as a bride under the *chuppah*.

Decaying scraps, sheltered  
from mob and war, in a half-forgotten  
sepulchre. Wormed out by thieves  
and revealed to Schecter,  
who alone understood their worth.  
Was this serendipity?

**Jeremy Solnick**

September 2023



## The Jews of Northampton

The ancient town of Northampton has had a Jewish community since the twelfth century. It was one of the few towns where an *archa* was kept, the official chest, provided with three locks and seals, in which a counterpart of all deeds and contracts involving Jews were deposited, in order to preserve the records, indicating that Jews lived there with the King's permission. The old medieval Synagogue was discovered only recently, when in 2012 the site, together with parts of the ancient walls, was located under a kebab shop, near the centre of the town.

The old Synagogue, together with part of the staircase, seems to have survived not only the destruction and expulsion of the community in 1290, but also the appalling fire which destroyed much of the town in the seventeenth century.

Once the Jews were expelled from Northampton, the Synagogue and the communal buildings around it, fell into ruins, though some part of them was turned into municipal offices. A contemporary description of the building says it was of a considerable size 'with a stately hall at the entrance down some stone stairs on the right hand, which hall was very large and open to the roof, as many great houses were in England, the windows on the outside of the house were very small and strengthened with iron bars.' It seems to have been half sunken into the ground, following perhaps the German tradition of synagogue architecture.

At the time of the expulsion, Northampton had one of the largest communities in England. It had its own cemetery located on the site of Phipps and Sons' warehouse in the Guildhall Road. The site was known as The Jews' Garden. The Synagogue's remains are cared for by the Muslim owners of the shops around it.

This tombstone is the only surviving example of a medieval Jewish tombstone in England and one of only two surviving medieval Jewish inscriptions in this



country. It was identified as from the (then) lost Northampton Jewish cemetery in the style of Jewish tombstones from the Rhineland. The stone is now in the Northampton Museum.

The original community settled around Sheep Street, in the financial area of the town, with about ten houses, some sort of communal hall and probably a Talmud Torah, as records show the presence of learned Jews, among them Rabbi Isaac ben Perez. His pronouncements were highly valued by the Jewish scholars of his time. He interpreted the saying of blessings over food, especially over bread, such as whether the blessing was valid at a large gathering if it could not be heard by all those present; or the choice between a brown loaf baked by a Jew and a white loaf baked by a non-Jew, and whether such a blessing could be said over other flour-based products such as vermicelli or pancakes. He spoke too on the credibility of a non-Jew giving evidence concerning the death of a Jew. Also mentioned in the early records of the town is a Magister Aaron, who seems to have been the leader of the Jewish school.

The majority of Northampton Jews in the Middle Ages were involved in finance, lending money to local dignitaries, the aristocracy and even the Church, though many of their clients came from ordinary townsmen. They were involved in the wool trade, a useful source of income when in 1275 they were forbidden to engage in money-lending. Many held property outside the town, coming in only for the Sabbath, though in 1237 this was forbidden and they had to live within the city walls.

The situation for the Jews of Northampton in these early days was worsening, as it was for many other towns, and when in 1190 the town of Stamford was set upon and the Jews' houses destroyed, nearby Northampton was put in considerable danger.

The principal looter was a man known as John of Stamford, who escaped to Northampton and was murdered there. The local Jews were blamed for his murder and rioting broke out, only restrained when St. Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, threatened excommunication to the rioters.

Nearly a century later, a case of blood libel broke out in Northampton, when a boy was found murdered in a local churchyard. The Jews were again blamed and many were brutally murdered. A contemporary chronicler reported: *'The enemies of the Jews did not tire of forging new charges against them. It was reported that the Jews of Northampton had crucified a Christian child. For this alleged crime many Jews in London were torn asunder by horses and their corpses hung on the gallows (April 2, 1279).'* Some of the community had left to live in London, but even here they were not safe, as some from the town were accused of coin-clipping and were imprisoned in the Tower.

With the Edict of Expulsion in 1290, Northampton was emptied of its Jews. Little is known of a Jewish presence during the years before the readmission, though one of the largest landowners in the county, Sir James Bampton, was of Jewish birth, but he had converted to marry into a wealthy local family. A few other names of Jewish ancestry appear in the records,



George Leopold Michel



though there does not seem to have been anything resembling a community until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Northampton is well known for its leading place in the boot and shoe industry. It was a German Jewish manufacturer named George Leopold Michel who was largely responsible for the introduction of the commercial making of footwear. Michel settled first in London, coming to Northampton in the 1850s where he established two large shoe factories. He married a Jewish woman and together they set up a small Jewish community, worshipping, to begin with, in their home in the town.

These early Northampton Jews were mostly working in the leather industry, working on Saturdays, and with too few adherents to attain a *minyan*. But Michel's background was in the early Reform movement in Germany, so he felt able to organise the Services in a way suitable to this small community, until the growing numbers could form, in 1888, the Northampton Hebrew Congregation.



*Northampton Hebrew Congregation Synagogue*

In 1890 the congregation purchased the former Jerusalem Temple in Overstone Road. This corrugated iron building was used until 1964, when it was demolished and replaced in 1965 by the present Synagogue which was built on the same site. In 1902 it obtained a part of the municipal cemetery as a Jewish section. Michel was a leading Freemason in Northampton and became a British citizen in 1880.

Anti-Semitism persisted in Northampton in the latter part of the nineteenth and



*The synagogue in Overstone Road which was built in 1965-1966*

into the twentieth century. A book, written in 1914 by a local schoolmaster, helped to encourage this. He wrote that on Good Friday the Jewish community was rounded up, forced to church to hear a virulently anti-Jewish sermon, when the congregation 'quietened any qualms of conscience they may have felt for their sin in allowing such a detestable race to exist in a Christian country.'

The boot and shoe trade was suffering as a result of the expansion of the Italian and French footwear fashions, but the workers of Northampton frequently blamed their Jewish proprietors for closing down some of the factories.

The Jewish population of Northampton was at its height during the Second World War, when several hundred were evacuated to Northampton from London. The local community provided kosher meals for the evacuees, and for soldiers on leave. Most returned to London after the war. Northampton is still a small but flourishing Jewish community with a long history of Jewish occupation.

**Philippa Bernard**

## Ritual Objects

### 2. The *Rimonim*



*Seventeenth Century Dutch Rimonim*

*Rimonim* are the finials placed on top of the two wooden rollers around which the *Torah* Scroll is wound. The word *rimon* is Hebrew for pomegranate, the shape of the finial. It is usually of silver, and is hollow so that it fits on to the wooden handle of the roller, the *Etz Chaim* ('Tree of Life').

The *Rimonim* are often beautifully decorated, frequently hung with jewels, precious stones, or tiny bells which tinkle as the Scroll is carried round the Synagogue, thus enabling the congregation to hear exactly where the *Torah* is.

The *Rimonim* can be engraved with, say, a *Magen David*, or another Jewish symbol such as a flame, a lion or a crown. Some carry the names of the Jewish tribes, or phrases from the Hebrew Bible.

The idea behind the decoration of the *Rimonim* is to praise God, and to link His name to Jewish ritual. The material used can also be of wood, decorated with silver or gold, or it can be painted.



*Wood and Ivory Rimonim in the Jewish Museum of Greece*

**Philippa Bernard**

**We apologise profusely to Peter Beyfus. His name disappeared from his article on Fritz Haber, in the October issue. We blame the gremlins!**

**As founder members of Westminster Synagogue, which started life with a group of just eighty determined people, we are deriving much pleasure from compiling page two of this Quarterly. As we list the swelling number of new members and friends and record the joys and sorrows of this vibrant congregation, we think back to the beginning.**

**We recall the warmth and friendliness that existed then and realise that this atmosphere of inclusion has stayed with us. The existence of so many new arrivals is evidence of that feeling. We are delighted when new members tell us how they were welcomed into the community.**

**With so much that is going wrong in the World, there is a feeling of satisfaction that here, at least, we can achieve something of value.**

---



*Lillian Hochhauser CBE writes:*

**I have just received the October edition of the Westminster Quarterly. It is by far the best of any synagogue magazine around. I read all of the Quarterlies from cover to cover without losing interest.**

*Caroline Burnett Hodd writes:*

**I have just had the time to read your magazine. I particularly enjoyed the article on Mr Haber, as we studied that at school and were always told it was the most important chemical process for humanity. I look forward to seeing the next issue.**

**Editors: Philippa Bernard and Claire Connick**

Please submit letters and articles for the *Westminster Synagogue Quarterly* to the Synagogue office or e-mail to [editor@westminstersynagogue.org](mailto:editor@westminstersynagogue.org)

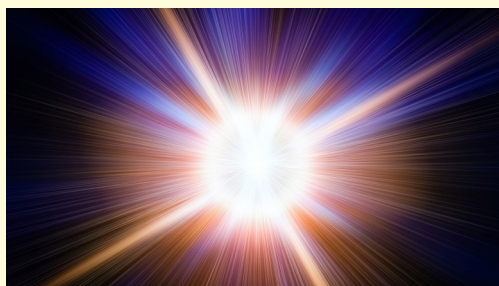
## THE BIG BANG

I know that the Big Bang  
The birth of Creation and time  
The explosion of that infinitesimal atom  
Which contained the universe  
Is locked in every fibre of my body.  
I was part of it when it happened,  
In ways impossible to imagine.

I know I have experienced it at birth  
I know I will experience it at death  
Entering and leaving the world of time,  
For the universe and life evolve  
In close partnership with time.

I am part of the universe  
Made of the same components  
Part of its recycling process  
Save for my soul.

Colette Littman







## Planning Your Diary

### Erev Purim

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March

### Purim

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March

### Seder Night

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> April

### First Day Pesach

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April

### Seventh Day Pesach

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April

## Contacting the Synagogue

RABBI	Benji Stanley	rabbibenji@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 107
EMERITUS RABBI	Thomas Salamon	thomas@westminstersynagogue.org
SECOND RABBI	Kamila Kopřivová	kamila@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 122
CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE	Debra Hauer	chairman@westminstersynagogue.org
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Gary Sakol	gary@westminstersynagogue.org. T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 103
DIRECTOR OF ADULT EDUCATION	Yael Roberts	yael@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 108
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING & OPERATIONS	Jon Zecharia	jon@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 104
HEAD OF YOUTH EDUCATION	Daniela Rotbande	daniela@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 106
EVENTS	Louise Wendel	louise@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 105
MITZVOT & KIDDUSHIM	Hilary Ashleigh	hilary@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 101
MEMBERSHIP	Hilary Ashleigh	hilary@westminstersynagogue.org : T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 101
LIFECYCLE ENQUIRIES	Julieta Kunik	julieta@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 117
PA TO THE RABBINIC TEAM	Guy Ronen	guy@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 116
CZECH SCROLLS MUSEUM	Jeffrey Ohrenstein	info@memorialscrollstrust.org T: 020 7584 3740
COMMUNITY WELLBEING MANAGER	Ben Fromson	ben@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953 Ext 111
GENERAL ENQUIRIES		admin@westminstersynagogue.org T: 020 7584 3953
EMERGENCIES	Monday to Friday: In the first instance, please call the Synagogue Office: 020 7584 3953  Evenings and weekends: Please call 020 7584 3953 and press 9, then leave a message and a member of staff will promptly return your call.	

