



The **Ashkenazi Haggadah** represents a very interesting example of Hebrew manuscript from Southern Germany, possibly Ulm. It is also known as The **Londoner Haggadah**.

The Art of the Haggadah

The Exchequer of the Jews

The Golem

The Strange Case of Hermann Cohen



When I was twelve and at St Anthony's School, where we called our teachers by their first names, our English teacher, a burly Irishman called Con, started our lesson in an unexpected way: 'Now,' he said, 'I think all of you know that my father recently passed away, and now I'm back here already at work teaching you again. You could think that means that I didn't care about my father, that I'm not very upset. Well, you should know that's not the case. Now, back to the lesson'.

At the time I was slightly embarrassed. It seemed to me in that twelve year old moment a little personal - *he* certainly wasn't meant to be the topic of our lesson and I wasn't sure why he was telling us this at all. Now I know that this small interjection, this two- or three-line story, was the most important thing that Con taught me. I have no idea what books or poems Con taught me that year, or indeed over many years (and he was a good teacher) but I do know that he cared about his father. He taught me that and he taught me the power of sharing personally.

This *Pesach*, I would like us each to think about what our personal stories are, and to try sharing them. We might try sharing them with our children, or our students, our friends and family, and initially ourselves. You are obligated to tell a powerful story with yourself at the heart of it.

When we are uncertain about the possibility of hope and change in our lives and in the world, it is stories rather than abstract lessons and arguments that allow us to truly know that change is possible. Indeed, our Torah not only expresses itself as a story but it insists that we must continue to tell our stories. You may have thought that the central activity of *Pesach* was eating matzah, or

shlepping to Kosher Kingdom, or getting lost in the text of the Haggadah. The central commandment of this festival that we're in now is, in fact, one of imagination and storytelling. The Mishnah, in Tractate *Pesachim*, teaches us: 'In every generation you have to see yourself as if you yourself left Egypt, as it says in the Torah (Exodus 13) *you must narrate to your children on that day, saying, it is because of this that the Merciful did for me in my leaving Egypt*'. Why must we see ourselves individually as having come out of Egypt, and how can we tell a story about being present, when we're not sure that we were? Say: *it is because of this that the Merciful did for me in my leaving Egypt*.

The Seder may be over, but we can each still tell our story. What kind of story? One that has you at its heart. *Adonai Asah li*, that the Merciful did for *me*. A story of gratitude. It is a story like this, and the act of telling it, that can change the way you see yourself, as if you've left Egypt; a story that you can recall, feel and share.

For me, it's because of this. It's because my mother wouldn't let us out on Friday nights, and developed a *hamishe* Jewish cuisine from risotto recipes and Ottolenghi. It's because of this that *Shabbat* is at the heart of my Judaism, because of this that I'm trying to apply the creating of priorities. It's because I saw the power of *Shabbat* to punctuate my life and bring together people at times of stress, and anxiety and illness and loss, and also much, much joy.

It's because of this that the Lord did for me. It's because six months after having met Leah, of wanting to spend all our time together, of learning from her and being intrigued by her, I had the courage to say to her at dinner 'when this year ends and you have to study in LA and I have to study in London I hope we can stay together'. And it's because of this that I now have the love to enjoy hard weeks, and the love to know that work must be an important part of my life, but not all of it.

It's because of this. It's because of choosing to study for a year in in New York City at a very observant Yeshiva and discovering that, compared to others, I

didn't know as much as I wanted to. It's because of this that I'm determined to continue to find time to learn and to practise as well as teach.

Excuse me talking about myself. I only do it because 'we all have a story of self'. So let's each continue to articulate ours and live ours. Tell a story to remember what you're grateful for and what you're committed to. *It's because of this that was done for me*.

Abraham Joshua Heschel was invited in 1953 to a Jewish Educators' Conference. He may have surprised some teachers there by explaining: '*The teacher is not an automatic fountain from which intellectual beverages may be obtained. He is either a witness or a stranger. To guide a pupil into the promised land, he must have been there himself*'.

Have you been there? When? What was it like? How did you choose to get there? How are you choosing to return? To get to the promised land, to experience the power of change and growth we may need to be courageous, while trying not to be reckless; to articulate and pursue our own passions and self-interest, without being selfish; to avoid conformity without lapsing into extremity.

I have the privilege of a job in which I hear people's stories. Let's sit and hear each others'. If you can gather a group of people together I'll be there to get to know you all. Tuesday evenings are good for me, and if those don't work for you then let us know what wo uld work. To arrange to meet up just email me at r_abbi@westminstersynagogue.org.

Tell your story. It's because of this, because of overcoming nerves in burgeoning love, because of risotto and missing out, because of overcoming self-doubt. Tell these stories to our community and to yourself - so you know that you're leaving Egypt.

Pesach Sameach, Happy *Pesach*.

Rabbi Benji Stanley

The Art of the Haggadah



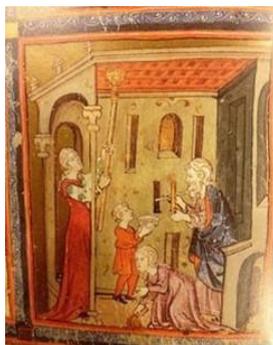
Cairo Geniza Haggadah

‘And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which the LORD did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.’ These words from the book of Exodus, which we recite every year at the Seder table, are the inspiration for some of the most beautiful illuminated manuscripts that the Jewish people possess. The word Haggadah, meaning narrative or telling, represents the story of Jewish freedom and is very precious to all Jews, regardless of their origin or affiliation.

The earliest Haggadot to be preserved were found in the Cairo Geniza and are now in America. One dated to about 1000 CE, which is almost complete and is one of the earliest Hebrew manuscripts written on paper, is now in the Annenberg Research Institute at the University of Pennsylvania. Another, almost as old and also found in Cairo, is in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

However it was in the Middle Ages that the great illuminated manuscripts were written, known today for their wonderful illustrations in bright colours, silver and gold. Although Jewish tradition forbids the representation of the human figure, the Haggadah was mainly intended for use at home, and its purpose was educational, so Jewish scribes and artists felt free to illustrate it with scenes of the Jewish men and women in the stories of the Bible. Indeed it was traditionally the most lavishly decorated of all Jewish sacred writings, giving well-to-do Jews of the middle ages a chance to demonstrate their wealth and good taste as well as their piety.

The Golden Haggadah



The family for whom the 'Golden Haggadah' was made must have been rich indeed. It was created in Barcelona in about

1320, by two artists working together, and stylistically is an example of both Jewish and Gothic art. Artists at that time, of whatever faith, were exchanging ideas and techniques. This cross-cultural borrowing of artistic styles happened throughout Europe, but was especially strong in medieval Spain, where Jews, Christians and Muslims lived together for many centuries. The Golden Haggadah, now in the British Library, is bound in brown Morocco calf of about 1600, blind tooled, with the remains of its original clasps still visible. It is written in Sephardi 'square' script on vellum. It was acquired by the British Museum in 1865 together with 322 other early Hebrew manuscripts for the sum of £1000, and is today worth many millions. It has fifty-six illustrations; the first twenty-seven scenes are from Genesis starting with Adam naming the animals, the next twenty-six show the Exodus story and the final three depict medieval domestic Passover scenes. All are painted in shining colours on a gold background. There is a facsimile in the Reinhart Library.

The Sarajevo Haggadah



Almost contemporary with the Golden Haggadah is the Sarajevo Haggadah, owned by the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. It is

believed to have been taken out of Spain by Spanish Jews escaping from the Inquisition and to have been hidden until it was finally sold to the National Museum in Sarajevo in 1894. The story of its flight was told in the novel *The People of the Book*, by Geraldine Brooks. During World War II, the manuscript was hidden from the Nazis by the Museum's Chief Librarian, who at risk to his own life, smuggled the Haggadah out of Sarajevo. He gave it to a Muslim cleric in Zenica, where it was hidden under the floorboards of either a mosque or a Muslim home. During the Bosnian War, the manuscript survived a museum break-in and it was discovered on the floor with many other items thieves believed were not valuable. It survived in an underground bank vault during the Siege of Sarajevo by Serb forces. The President of Bosnia presented the manuscript at a community Seder in 1995. In October 2012, the Haggadah's future was in doubt after funding for the Museum dried up. However, the Haggadah was again on display by September 2015, following the National Museum's re-opening.

The Sarajevo Haggadah is also handsomely illustrated. It is illuminated in copper and gold, and opens with thirty-four pages of illustrations of scenes from the Bible from creation to the death of Moses. Its pages are stained with wine, evidence that it was used at many Passover Seders.

The Darmstädter Haggadah



One of the earliest Ashkenazi Haggadot is the Darmstädter of about 1430. It is decorated with initial word panels and two full page miniatures.

It also adapts medieval Christian illustration to show the importance of study and discussion at the Seder table. One miniature shows every figure – men and women - holding a book and reading the Passover story. Others show teachers

and students, or country and hunting scenes. The original is in the Darmstädter University Library.

The Bird's Head Haggadah



Some scholars consider this Haggadah to be the earliest surviving Ashkenazi illuminated manuscript. Human figures are painted with birds'

heads. It comes from Germany, written about 1290, and is now in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The illustrations are in the margins, brightly coloured, and showing scenes from Exodus and from Jewish ritual. There is much humour in the pictures, a boy with a bulbous nose, angels with blank faces and Egyptian soldiers in helmets with the visors down.

The Ashkenazi Haggadah



Held by the British Library, this Haggadah of the fifteenth century is unusual in that the artist is known. His name appears at the end of

the book: 'I am Joel ben Simeon Feibush, illuminator: My heart counsels me to reply to him who asks and says, who painted these [pages]? I shall answer him: I am he, Feibush, called Joel.'

Living in Germany, Feibush illustrated the book of ninety-eight pages with marginal miniatures, illuminated initial letters and other ornaments. The little drawings are of domestic scenes, animals and other creatures as well as the conventional Seder stories. The text was written by Eleazar of Worms. A fine reproduction was written by David Goldstein in 1997 and published by Thames and Hudson.

The Sister Haggadah



Known as the Sister Haggadah because of its resemblance to the Golden Haggadah, the illustrations in this book show women at the Seder table. One

presides over the table while others are clearly taking part in the ceremony. However, only the men hold books, which to some commentators suggests that women of the time could not read. The book was written in the latter half of the fourteenth century in Catalonia and has many similarities to the Golden Haggadah. The biblical miniatures in both manuscripts were most likely based on a common model, but the iconography here is simpler and less sophisticated. It is in the British Library.

The Washington Haggadah



This Haggadah was also decorated by Joel ben Simeon and given to the Library of Congress in Washington. It was probably written in Northern Italy in about 1478 and is

illustrated in the margins, showing the four sons, the roasting of the Passover lamb, and other pictures of the Seder meal. The calligraphy is particularly fine with birds and beasts woven into the writing. The figures wear the typical medieval dress of country folk, in bright colours, and this book too has wine stains from a Seder of long ago.

The Szyk Haggadah

The art of writing a Haggadah has not disappeared. A very handsome Haggadah was illustrated by the Polish-Jewish artist Arthur Szyk between 1934 and 1936. There are forty-eight full page watercolour



and gouache illuminations with pictures and text on the same page. The book has an interesting history. As the Nazis moved into Eastern

Europe the artists took out some political allusions, such as the swastikas on the armbands of Egyptian soldiers, though he left the Hitler moustache on the Wicked Son. He could not find a European publisher to take it on, and it was eventually published in London, Szyk travelling there to supervise the production. It was reviewed in *The Times* as 'worthy to be placed among the most beautiful books that the hand of man has produced.' The 1940 edition was limited to 250 numbered copies, and dedicated to King George VI. This Haggadah has been reproduced many times since with a new luxury limited edition, produced by digital printing and with an updated translation and commentary published in California in 2008.

The Interfaith Haggadah

In 2008 the West London Synagogue



published an Interfaith Haggadah, sourcing texts about freedom from other faiths. It was designed and written by Tina Elliott. 'As an Interfaith Haggadah, it was felt important to include

quotations and commentary from other faiths, in particular the sons and daughters of Abraham (Christians, Muslims and Jews),' the Introduction reads, and goes on to say, 'It is our hope that this Haggadah will enlighten, educate and excite all participants at a Seder and just as we hope to live in a world without barriers so too has this Haggadah been designed without any borders or barriers.'

Chaim Soutine (1893-1943)



Portrait by
Amedeo
Modigliani

Towards the end of 2017 there were two significant exhibitions of the works of Jewish artists who were friends, Modigliani - whose story we published in the October 2017 issue of this *Quarterly* - and Soutine. Their friendship was slightly surprising as they were very different characters and came from contrasting backgrounds.

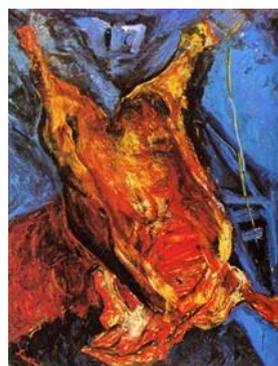
Chaim Soutine's father was a very religious tailor. Chaim and his ten siblings grew up in Russia in the predominantly Jewish village of Smilovitchi, in what is now Belarus. A talented artist from an early age, he drew a portrait of a neighbour, whose sons beat him for disobeying the Talmudic injunction forbidding the creation of a 'graven image'. Because of the beating, Soutine's mother demanded - and received - compensation for the attack and with the money, young Chaim aged only sixteen travelled to nearby Minsk and then to the Vilna Academy of Fine Arts, which was one of the very few academies that would accept Jews.

When he was nineteen he went to Paris and enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux Arts where he studied under Fernand Cormon. He used to spend hours at the Louvre absorbing the works of Goya, El Greco, Tintoretto, Ingres and Courbet. However the paintings of Rembrandt had the greatest impact on him and he made several trips to Amsterdam and apparently slept on a bench outside the Rijksmuseum in order to spend more time with the Rembrandt collection. There is a story, which may or may not be true, that he

spent two weeks staring at Rembrandt's *The Jewish Bride*.

In 1915, living in a residence for other struggling artists in Montparnasse, Soutine was introduced to Amedeo Modigliani and they became close friends. An older, more sophisticated man, Modigliani helped Soutine, who was shy and rather gauche, to gain confidence in himself. Modigliani's art dealer, Leopold Zborowski, impressed with his work, offered to represent Soutine.

Inspired by Rembrandt's still life of a carcass - *The Slaughtered Ox* - Soutine enraged his neighbours in the residence by keeping an animal carcass in his studio so that he could paint it. After hanging the side of beef which he bought at a Parisian slaughterhouse, he had someone fetch a bucket of fresh cow's blood every few days so that he could regularly pour it over the carcass to ensure that it stayed the bright colour of newly-cut meat. He had to keep fanning away the flies and his neighbours complained to the police about the awful stench. Health inspectors had to be persuaded to let him complete the painting before carting the beef away. However, they taught him to inject the meat with formaldehyde in order to arrest the decay. There is a story that Marc Chagall saw the blood from the carcass leaking out into the corridor outside Soutine's room and rushed out screaming that someone had killed Soutine! There are many stories about Soutine's bad temper and poor personal hygiene. One anecdote tells that a severe earache was found to be caused by a bedbug that had lodged in his ear and had to be removed by a doctor.



The Carcass
of Beef

In the early 1920's - the 'roaring twenties' - Soutine became fascinated by the cooks and waiting staff of French hotels and

restaurants. The recent exhibition at the Courtauld Gallery - *Cooks, Waiters & Bellboys* - provided powerful images of humble folk in boldly coloured uniforms.



The Pastry
Chef

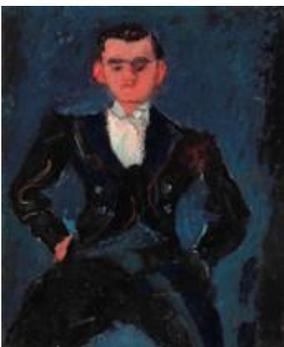
Their expressions leave one in no doubt about their personalities. The little downtrodden pastry chef makes one wish to be able to comfort him, while the arrogant head waiter stares out at the world with ill-disguised disdain. All the paintings are executed in thick impasto and give the impression of having been done with great passion but also with a deliberate desire to send a message about these people and their condition. He distorts the features and concentrates on the eyes, and in doing so he seems to tell a whole story of the sitters' condition. It is as if his bad temper and his depression are poured into the paint which he layers on the canvas. His whites are full of different shades and yet really white, his reds are a vibrant blood-colour. He captures the *essence* of the sitter. Each painting tells a story. One KNOWS the person, their pride, vulnerability, melancholy and awkwardness. Even the chairs become an integral part of the tale. Perhaps his early experience of religious persecution had an influence on his personality and his art.

After World War I, the art dealer Paul Guillaume began to champion his work. At a showing which he arranged, a painting from this series, that of a pastry cook, was seen in 1923 by an American collector, Albert C. Barnes. He demanded to see more paintings by Soutine and bought some fifty works on the spot. This helped lift Soutine out of his desperate circumstances and brought him to greater prominence. It enabled him to stay in good hotels and to eat in the restaurants where he found new models for his paintings. His portraits of hotel and restaurant workers became especially prized by other collectors and today are



considered among his greatest achievements.

Soutine produced the majority of his works from 1920 to 1929. From 1930 to 1935, the interior designer Madeleine Castaing and her husband welcomed him to their summer home, the mansion of Lèves, becoming his patrons, so that Soutine could hold his first exhibition in Chicago in 1935. He seldom showed his works, but he did take part in the important exhibition *The Origins and Development of International Independent Art* held at the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in 1937 in Paris, where he was at last hailed as a great painter. Soon afterwards France was invaded by German troops. As a Jew, Soutine had to escape from the French capital and hide in order to avoid arrest by the Gestapo. He moved from one place to another and was sometimes forced to seek shelter in forests, sleeping outdoors. Suffering from a stomach ulcer and bleeding badly, he left a safe hiding place for Paris in order to undergo emergency surgery.



The Head Waiter

As Rembrandt and Goya greatly influenced Soutine, so in his turn did his work influence, amongst others, Bacon and de Kooning. De Kooning said of him that he 'distorted the picture but not the people'. He is also quoted as saying 'I've always been crazy about Soutine - all of his paintings. Maybe it's the lushness of the paint. He builds up a surface that looks like a material, like a substance'.

Chaim Soutine died in 1943 from a perforated ulcer and was interred in the Cimetière du Montparnasse. Some years later, Roald Dahl placed him as a character in his short story *Skin*.

CC

The Reinhart Library



The Reinhart Library was established in memory of Rabbi Dr. Harold Reinhart, Minister of Westminster Synagogue from its inception in 1957 until his death in August, 1969. The collection of books reflects the diverse backgrounds and interests of our congregants. Our library is probably one of the most up-to-date Jewish libraries in London. In addition to the main library, we also maintain Rabbinic and Reference libraries which are available to our members by appointment, as well as the Children's Library.

Library Thing is a useful resource to browse the titles - books and DVDs - we have in our collections. You can do so online via www.librarything.com/profile/kenthous or download the *LibraryThing* app. With this one can look for titles by category and search the catalogue by title or author.

I am absolutely delighted to have taken over the role of Librarian. Over the years I have enjoyed going to and participating in riveting discussions at the Mayfair Library and JW3 book clubs respectively. I have also had the pleasure of contributing to the Westminster Weekly newsletter *Book of the Week* segment, with recommendations and reviews of publications available in our library. I was previously immersed in the publishing world, working at Hodder & Stoughton, John Murray Press and Headline, firstly, in the editorial arena and later in legal, contracts and permissions. In addition, I have spent a little over a decade as a freelance writer in print, digital and more recently radio.

understatement yet I can't quite decide what excites me the most about them. From the crumpled edges of a thoroughly read novel, to old books with the familiar musty aroma that clings and lingers. Perhaps it is their extraordinary ability to bring people together, allowing us access to a variety of epochs and different worlds. Whatever it may be, the power of the stories and of the people lift off the page and continue to keep us all inextricably linked.

The library is open to members every Saturday morning, and weekdays by appointment. To reserve a book, send an e-mail with the title and author to admin@westminstersynagogue.co.uk and we will reserve it for you. If you can't find a book you are looking for, please let us know what it is by email and the Library Committee would be delighted to investigate the possibility of obtaining a copy.

As we continue to celebrate the Sixtieth Anniversary of our congregation why not help us to add sixty books to the Reinhart and Or Shabbat Libraries. We are looking for new or nearly new fact or fiction, both adult and children's books with Jewish content and/or a Jewish author.

There are many ways for you to support the library. Firstly, with our *Adopt a Book* initiative whereby you can sponsor a book on our *Wishlist*. Please feel free to check the *Wishlist* to select one, or if you have a book in mind e-mail the Library Committee who will be in touch with you. Secondly, volunteer your time - there's always something to do in one of our four libraries at Kent House.

Most of all, please come and browse the shelves of your library and borrow a book for yourself or a member of your family. If you have any suggestions or want to talk about a book or author, do let us know.

My vision for the future of our library honours the past and ensures that we enjoy the full potential of our collections. By introducing a book club, literary salon and showcasing our members that are authors, I very much hope that you will enjoy the projects.

MK

Jewish Poets 2 Siegfried Sassoon

(1886-1967)



Siegfried Sassoon's father, Alfred, was one of the three children of Rachel and Reuben Sassoon. Reuben died when Alfred was only six and his mother spoiled him outrageously. He was a promising musician, though the family somewhat disapproved when she presented him with *two* Stradivarius violins. Rachel was heartbroken when he became the first Sassoon to marry a non-Jewish woman, and apparently rushed to the synagogue (Bevis Marks) to curse any children they might have. She never mentioned his name again. Alfred Sassoon's wife, Theresa Thornycroft, came from an old English family, which included the distinguished sculptor Thomas Thornycroft and she was herself an artist, painting several pictures of the Royal family. Nevertheless when Siegfried was born in 1886 he was technically not a Jew. Later, during the First World War, when most of his best poetry was published, he wrote in *The Old Huntsman*,

Religion beats me. I'm amazed at folk
Drinking the gospels in and never scratching
Their heads for questions. When I was a lad
I learned a bit from mother, and never thought
To educate myself for prayers and psalms.

The marriage was not happy, and Alfred left home a few years later, leaving his three sons, Michael, Siegfried and Hamo, who was killed in Gallipoli, to be brought up by their talented mother. Her love of

the countryside and of country pursuits was to have much influence on Siegfried's later writing.

He seems to have had a somewhat miserable childhood; his mother was determined to bring him up as an aristocratic gentleman, sending him to preparatory school and then to Marlborough. He made few friends, preferring music and poetry to team sports, often feeling awkward and lonely. He went up to Clare College at Cambridge but left without taking a degree, aware of his homosexual orientation when he met David Thomas, who died in the 1914-18 war, and with whom he lived briefly.

Siegfried was already writing poems, though most of his time was spent riding to hounds, playing cricket and collecting books, as recounted vividly in the first volume of his autobiography, *Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man*, published after the war in 1928. Before war was he declared he said, 'France was a lady, Russia was a bear, and performing in the county cricket team was much more important than either of them'.

When war came in 1914, Siegfried joined the Sussex Yeomanry and the following year was commissioned into the Royal Welch Fusiliers, where he met Robert Graves, and was sent to France. He showed great courage in battle (it earned him the nickname Mad Jack), and was awarded the MC, with a commendation for the VC which was unsuccessful. His war poems are among the greatest of English descriptions of the horrors of war, one of the best known being *Attack*:

Lines of grey muttering faces, masked with fear,
They leave their trenches, going over the top,
While time ticks blank and busy on their wrists,
And hope, with furtive eyes and grappling fists,
Flounders in mud. O Jesus, make it stop!

In April 1917 he was wounded and sent back to Britain. Here he made his famous protest against war, writing to his commanding officer, 'I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it.' The letter was read out in the House of Commons, and he was deemed to be suffering from shellshock. He was

sent to Craiglockhart Hospital near Edinburgh, where he became friendly with Wilfred Owen, whose war poems have been compared favourably with Sassoon's. Once recovered he decided to return to his unit, (though before doing so he threw his Military Cross into the Thames) and was posted to Palestine.

He seems to have been much influenced by the country, probably because of his Jewish ancestry, writing from there,

On the rock-strewn hills I heard
The anger of guns that shook
Echoes along the glen.
In my heart was the song of a bird,
And the sorrowless tale of the brook,
And scorn for the deeds of men.

Returning with his old battalion to France, he was again wounded and came back to England for good. Two books of war poems were published: *The Old Huntsman* and *Counter Attack*. He now turned to a literary career, being appointed the first literary editor of the *Daily Herald*, when it was reconstituted after the war. Among the distinguished writers he commissioned to contribute to the paper were Arnold Bennett, Charlotte Mew, E.M. Forster and Osbert Sitwell. He also met William Walton who dedicated his *Portsmouth Point* overture to him. He became involved in Labour politics, though he was not active in Parliamentary affairs. He went on a brief lecture tour in America, but came back to London where in the ensuing years he published several more books of poetry.

All his life Siegfried had kept diaries, describing his life as a young man-about-town and then as a soldier. These were later published in the form of novels as *Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man*, where he assumes the personality of George Sherston, to be followed by *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, and then *Sherston's Progress*, the first volume winning both the James Tait Black prize and the Hawthornden Prize.

Although he became friendly with many distinguished writers, poets and musicians, he seemed still to be seeking happiness in his personal life. He had several affairs, notably with Ivor Novello, Glen Byam Shaw and the Hon. Stephen Tennant, but in 1933 he went to live at

Teffont Magna in Wiltshire; he married Hester Gatty and they had a son, George, buying Heytesbury House, near Salisbury. However, the marriage ended in 1945 and Siegfried continued to live there for the rest of his life.

He continued to write, this time in the form of autobiographies: *The Old Century and Seven More Years*, *The Weald of Youth* and *Siegfried's Journey*. He was still writing poetry, publishing *Collected Poems* in 1947. But it is clear that he was still seeking the companion he had never found. He wrote:

The hour grows late, and I outlive my friends,
Remaining, since I must, with memoried mind,
That for consolement deepeningly depends,
On hoarded time, enriched and redesigned.
So is it with us all. And thus we find
Endeared survivals, that our thought defends.

He finally found peace and satisfaction where he least expected it – in religion. In 1957 he was received into the Roman Catholic Church at Downside Abbey, much encouraged and helped by the nuns of Stanbrook Abbey. The Abbey Press later published fine editions of some of his poetry, including the collection he wrote in acknowledgement of his gratitude for the warmth and happiness he found there, *The Path to Peace*.

Siegfried Sassoon died of cancer at his home in 1967, having kept fit and well almost to the end, playing cricket, writing and in touch with many of his distinguished friends. He was appointed CBE in 1951, and received the Queen's Medal for Poetry in 1965. In 2010, *Dream Voices: Siegfried Sassoon, Memory and War*, a major exhibition of Sassoon's life and archive, was held at Cambridge University.

His obituary in *The Times* said, 'All his life he had been deeply spiritual: and when he discovered a means of expressing a faith, fortunately for him it did not drive him from the world but brought him into it. More than ever was he happy to see - indeed he had always been at his best with - one or two chosen friends.

PB

The Strange Case of Hermann Cohen (1820-1871)



Hermann Cohen (not the German-Jewish philosopher of the same name) was born in Hamburg in 1821 to the prosperous Jewish family of David Cohen and his wife Rosalie. The family belonged to the Reform synagogue in Hamburg, and young Hermann was taught the basics of Hebrew and the Jewish faith. As a child he showed early musical promise and his father arranged concerts for him when he was only seven years old. He was a precocious child, already learning the bad habits (gambling and getting into debt) which were to pursue him through his early life.

In 1834 his mother took him and her other children – against her husband's wishes – to Paris to help him in his musical career and to keep him out of harm's way. He was forbidden as a foreigner from joining the Paris Conservatoire, but Rosalie persuaded Franz Liszt to take him on as a pupil where he became something of a prodigy. He was introduced to Liszt's distinguished circle of friends, including George Sand who was much taken by the handsome young man. He was also befriended by a young priest, the Abbé de Lammenais, who had been excommunicated for publishing a radical document questioning belief.

Cohen then joined Liszt in Geneva, where although only thirteen, he played in several public concerts and began teaching pupils himself. He was also taken under the wing of Liszt's lover, the Countess Marie d'Agoult, and returned with them to Paris. But his debts were mounting and he was already leading a dissolute life, where his gambling threatened to ruin his career.

It was while Cohen was playing in the church of St. Valère in Paris that he experienced an overwhelming belief that for him conversion to Catholicism was the only way that he could live his life. He

took instruction in the faith from the Abbé Legrande and was baptised under the name of Marie-Augustin-Henri. Immediately he began to study for the priesthood, but was refused by the Benedictine Order and turned instead to the Carmelites, especially that more austere branch, the Discalced (barefoot) Carmelites. They owe their origin to the beginnings on Mount Carmel in Israel under the prophet Elijah.

A successful concert enabled Hermann to clear his debts and a visit to Rome obtained the dispensation necessary for a newly converted postulant. He entered the Carmelite monastery at Le Broussay in Rions and took the religious name of Augustine Marie of the Blessed Sacrament. He became a priest in 1851 at the age of thirty. He was a popular preacher, addressing audiences all over Europe and took an active part in restoring the Carmelites to France, founding several priories in France. He renewed his friendship with Liszt who was himself now in Holy Orders.

In 1862 Hermann Cohen, or rather Father Augustine Marie, came to London at the invitation of Cardinal Wiseman, to revive the Carmelite order. Catholic life in England was reviving and in 1850 Wiseman had been appointed Cardinal by Pope Pius IX. Hermann re-established the Discalced Carmelite Church in 1866. It was designed by Pugin and dedicated by Cardinal Manning. The priory adjoined it. It was destroyed by bombs in 1944 but a new Church, designed by Sir Giles Scott was opened in 1960.

Hermann returned to France. When Germans were banished from France in the Franco-Prussian War he went to Geneva, but moved to Berlin to minister to French prisoners in Spandau Prison. As prison chaplain he worked to help them in terrible conditions, but caught smallpox and died in 1871 at the age of fifty. He was buried in St. Hedwig's Church in Berlin.

The cause for Hermann Cohen (Father Auguste Marie) to be canonised as a saint of the Holy Church has been accepted for investigation by the Holy See. A book about him - *A Life of Hermann Cohen – From Franz Liszt to St. John of the Cross* by Timothy Tierney - is in the Reinhart Library.

Women of Worth 3 Sarra Copia (1592-1641)



The Venice Ghetto in the seventeenth century was a place of culture, intellect and beauty where women were encouraged to participate in the world of art and literature in which they lived. One prominent Jewish family was that of Simon and Ricca Coppia, whose daughters, Rachel, Esther and Sarra were educated intelligent women playing an important role in family life and with a good knowledge of Jewish practice and history, as well as being versed in several languages. Sarra, born in 1592, married Jacob Sullam, a wealthy business man and leader of the Jewish community.

She was introduced to an Italian drama, *L'Ester*, written by a monk from Genoa, Ansaldo Cebà, and wrote to him expressing her admiration and her spiritual love. She told him that she slept with the book under her pillow.

There began a long correspondence, verging on the sexual, though they never actually met. They exchanged sonnets and pictures, writing of their friendship as if it were a romance. He told her that her name, spelt with two p's and meaning 'couple' in Italian, meant that they would indeed be a couple when they met in heaven. She removed the second p from her name, but sent him a sonnet with a portrait of herself:

**This is the image of one who in her heart
Bears only thine image carved,
Who pointing to her bosom tells the world,
Here I wear my idol, let all adore him.**

It soon became clear that the purpose of Cebà's attention was to convert her to Christianity and the long exchange came to an end. His letters to her have been maintained in a Venice Library, but of hers to him no trace remains.

This association between the young Jewess and her Christian correspondent was followed by another between Sarra and Baldassare Bonifacio, deacon of Treviso and later Bishop of Capodistria. He had often attended the glittering salons that Sarra held in her Venetian home but in 1621 he published *A Discourse on the Immortality of the Soul*, in which he accused her of heresy and of not believing in the soul's immortality, an intrinsic belief for both Jews and Christians. This was a threat to the Jewish community as well as to Sarra's own intellectual and religious integrity. She replied at once in a lengthy Manifesto, denying Bonifacio's claims and accusations. It begins with a poem,

**O Lord, Thou know'st my inmost hope and thought,
Thou know'st whene'er before thy Judgment throne
I shed salt tears, and uttered many a moan.
'Twas not for vanities that I besought,
O turn on me Thy look with mercy fraught.**

Sarra's scholarship – she used both the New and the Old Testaments to back her theories, as well as references to Dante, Josephus and Aristotle – marked her out as not only a woman and a Jewess, but the possessor of a formidable intellect, hardly known in contemporary Venetian Jewish circles. She sent a copy to Cebà, but he failed to reply for seven months, and then without sympathy. Their friendship ended.

Another visitor to Sarra's salon was a Frenchman, Fra Angelico Aprosio, who had heard of her 'Academy' and attended with enthusiasm. But this apparently innocent friendship was also betrayed, this time by Sarra's teacher, Numidio Paluzzi. Jealous perhaps of Aprosio's presence, he accused Sarra of plagiarising some of his writings, including the Manifesto and published his theory, much of which was believed. He also absconded with some of her money, forging a letter from Aprosio declaring his love for Sarra; the money

was ostensibly to buy presents and a portrait for Aprosio.

Paluzzi was dismissed from his post as secretary to a Venetian nobleman, to be rescued by Sarra who saw that he was properly clothed and housed, with a regular income. But again he deceived her, helping himself to her possessions and money, and escaping to Friuli. On his return he approached her again, and again she stood by him until finally he and his accomplices bled her dry and she denounced them to the authorities.

After Paluzzi's disgrace and death, Sarra continued to write poetry and to hold her salons for the intelligentsia of Venice. Her literary accomplishments seem to have stood the Venetian Jewish community in good stead, raising its reputation among contemporary writers. Some of her work has been republished in anthologies of Italian literature. She is mentioned in Giorgio Bassani's *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. Although she and her husband had no children she is often spoken of as being a woman of grace and beauty, generous to her friends, and always acknowledging her Jewish inheritance.

Sarra died in 1641. The Hebrew inscription on her grave stone reads (in English):

**This is the stone of the distinguished
Lady Sara, wife of the living
Jacobbe Sullam
The exterminating angel loosed
his dart
Mortally wounding Sara.
Wise among wives, the support
of derelicts,
The wretched found in her a
companion and friend.
If now she is given irreparably in
prey to the insects
On the Predestined Day the good
Lord will say:
Return, return, O Shulammitte,
She passed away on the sixth day
(Friday)
5 Adar 5401 of the Jewish era.
May her soul enjoy eternal
Beatitude.**



The Exchequer of the Jews



*The Jew's House, Lincoln
by Samuel Hieronymus
Grimm circa 1784*

Aaron of Lincoln, a Jewish financier born about 1125, was believed to be the wealthiest man in England. He lent money to the King, Richard I, to the nobility and to the monastic houses, including those of St. Albans, Lincoln and Peterborough Cathedrals. He used agents, set up throughout the country, and has been considered by some to have been England's first banker. An ancient house in Lincoln, believed to be Aaron's, is one of the earliest extant town houses in England. It is situated on Steep Hill in Lincoln, immediately below Jew's Court.

In early England, the Jews were at the beck and call of the King, who virtually 'owned' them and their possessions. When Aaron died in 1186, Richard claimed his assets and the money owed to him; so great were Aaron's complicated financial enterprises, that it was considered necessary to set up an entirely new department of the Court of Exchequer to deal with them. Called 'Aaron's Exchequer', it needed a treasurer and a clerk working solely on Aaron's affairs, which were vast, extending overseas, and including loans for corn, property, armour and any other commodity which might serve as surety for advances of money.

Official documents detailing such loans were kept in *archae* or chests, with the paper record (chirograph) torn in two, lender and borrower each retaining one half which, when matched up, served as proof of ownership.

At the time of the coronation of Richard I in 1189, the Jews suffered appalling violence at the hands of the London mob

and much of Jewry was destroyed. The following year came the massacre at Clifford's Tower in York after which papers and documents relating to the loans made by the Jewish community were burned in the nave of York Minster. The destruction of the records caused considerable confusion in the affairs both of the Jews and of those indebted to them, and in 1194 the King ordered that duplicates should be made in future of all such transactions. The special division known as 'Aaron's Exchequer' now had to expand to deal with other Jewish affairs and was called the Exchequer of the Jews.

Four justices of the Jews were chosen to administer the new division, two Christian and two Jewish. They were barons of the Exchequer, under the Chief Justice and the Treasurer. The two first Jews to hold the office were Joseph Aaron and Benjamin de Talemunt. Their duties were to oversee any quarrels or disagreements between Jews and Christians mainly to do with finance, check on repayments and ensure that all transactions were fairly recorded, in all the larger towns across England where there was a Jewish community.

As time went by the Exchequer expanded to control more of Jewish life, to include supervision of where Jews might live, so that any Jewish family who wished to move house or transfer to another town, had to ask permission, pay a fee, and notify the Sheriff of the town to which it was going. In 1275 Edward I passed The Statute of the Jews which detailed more specifically exactly the requirements of the community regarding its status in the country. By now the Court had practically milked dry the wealth of most of the Jews; if they were no longer able to lend money at interest, their value to the King was limited, and the new Statute included strict regulations on their behaviour. Usury was outlawed in every form and debtors of Jews were no longer liable for certain debts. Jews were not allowed to live outside certain cities and towns, and any Jew above the age of seven had to wear a yellow badge of felt on his or her outer clothing, six inches by three inches. All Jews from the age of twelve had to pay a special tax of three pence annually. Christians were forbidden to live among Jews. Jews were licensed to buy farmland

to make their living for the next fifteen years, so Jews could thenceforth make a living in England only as merchants, farmers, craftsmen or soldiers, not professions to which they were traditionally accustomed.

It was the duty of the Exchequer to execute these rules, and they had to present their accounts regularly. They also had to ensure that when a Jew died there should accrue to the King one third of the value of his goods, of his outstanding debts and of the value of his house or property.

The Exchequer of the Jews also acted as a Court. If a Jew found himself at odds with a neighbour regarding land rights, or indeed with another Jew, the Court convened to hear the case. Its judgment applied, too, when a Jew converted to Christianity or was convicted of a crime, in which case the King had claim to his possessions, as if he had died. Every time a Jew was involved in a criminal case, the Exchequer could exercise its right to supervise the outcome of the case, particularly where appeal by a Jew was concerned.

However, most of the cases which came before the Exchequer involved financial dealings, often relating to land deals between Christian and Jew. Where it was a Jew suing a Christian for repayment of a debt, the local sheriff had to make sure that for two Sabbaths running announcement of the circumstances was made in the synagogue calling for him to appear at the Exchequer on a specific date to state his case.

With no advantages accruing to the Court from the now impoverished Jews, the King - Edward I - took the final step of ordering the expulsion from Britain of all the Jews in the kingdom. In 1290 they were forced to flee, not to return for more than 350 years.



*The
Jew's
House
today*

A Dual Heritage

...‘see, my son, all this is ours but we have to leave it all behind and run! I want you to look at it for the last time!....’

A toddler of three years old could not grasp the meaning of the words of his mother as he stared at the family’s wealth. That night the young widow Anghel twenty-three years old, her three-year old son Ara and two-year old daughter Archaluis, got into a carriage in the middle of the night and fled their home knowing that their hours of life were counted. ‘The Young Turks’ were on a rampage to kill all Armenian families in Turkey. A couple of days earlier, her husband Mihran, and all the men in the household, had been taken and savagely killed.

We are in Chorun, Northern Turkey in the spring of 1915.

Anghel and her children were travelling by night, hiding by day, witnessing the horrors of the massacres, of decapitated men hung on trees, scraping for food with only their bodies to keep them warm in the cold nights. It took months before this young family found refuge in Greece. Ara was placed in an orphanage and his mother and sister in another refugee camp. Twelve years of struggle went by before a miracle happened: a Swiss family was taking young Armenian refugee boys in a small school near Geneva. Anghel’s prayers were answered and she accompanied her treasured son on the boat that would carry him first to Marseille, then on a train journey to Switzerland, knowing it could be the last time she would ever be able to hold him.

Ara arrived in Begnin, a small village near Geneva, with no belongings except for the determination to succeed. Very rapidly he got accepted for the university in Lausanne, aiming for a doctorate in theology. He was studying Latin, Greek and German by night and in order to pay for his room and board, he privately tutored young students.

During all those years, he was on his ultimate quest for the absolute Truth. After graduating and being offered a

parish, (which he refused), he felt deeply in his heart, that the God he was taught from the pulpit was not the God he read about in the Bible, the God of the Hebrews. In his letters to his mother, he was expressing doubts and rebellion.

It took him twenty-five years to have a spiritual revelation and know for certain that the Bible was divinely inspired and the supreme authority was God. By then he had founded a school, become a successful businessman and married the grand-daughter of Elkan Heinemann, a German Jewish banker. He was then inspired by his strong personal daily relationship with God and started a religious movement to bring Christians to repentance before God and the Jewish people and bring them to full *Teshuvah* for the sins of anti-Semitism. Obviously, this created quite a storm in the international Christian world.

How does this story relate to Westminster Synagogue? Ara was my father and Elkan Heinemann was my maternal grandfather and his Jewish wife Frederique was from Prague.

Every *Shabbat*, before entering Westminster Synagogue, the Turkish flag at the end of the street is an ever-present reminder of my painful Armenian heritage and at the same time, the Czech Torah Scroll is a tangible reminder of my Jewish heritage related to my great maternal grandmother. Being a Jew and an Armenian is a rare and heavy burden or should I say a rare heritage. Last year, April 24th was Yom Ha’Shoah, it fell on the same date that all Armenians commemorate the Genocide of 1.5 million men, women and children slaughtered by the Turks. That day, the dual pain had a double weight of intensity.

My Jewish roots have always been clear, that’s who I am, the immense sense of belonging to the family and land of Israel. What about the other side of my heritage? Why was my father so intensely connected with the Jews to the point that he was saying that his existence was for Israel? It must have been more than because he had married my mother z”l. Being Armenian is part of my history, my painful past, my open wound, and a deep yearning for a land inaccessible for generations. After the passing of both my



parents, I felt the necessity to discover the country of Armenia, the other part of my roots and finally to see Mount Ararat, its majestic twin peaks, our legendary mystical mountain, the resting place of Noah’s Ark.

Ararat is mentioned four times in the Bible: First in Genesis 8:4 – *And the Ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month upon the mountains of Ararat.* The second and third times are found in Kings II 19:37 and Isaiah 37:38, where it translates Ararat into the Land of Armenia where Adam-Melech and Sharezer, sons of Sanheriv fled and found refuge after murdering their father in Nineveh. The fourth time Ararat is mentioned in the Bible is in Jeremiah 51:27, here it interestingly mentions the kingdoms of Ararat and their fight against Medo-Persia: *‘Set you up a banner in the land, blow the shofar among the nations, prepare the nations against her, (Bavel) call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz, appoint a captain against her, cause the horses to come up as hairy locusts.* Ashkenaz was one of the sons of Gomer, the grandson of Japhet, becoming one of the kingdoms of the land of Armenia.

Like the land of Israel, dating as far back as the times of Babylon, Armenians have been at war against pagan nations. Kingdom after kingdom, invasion after invasion, they still remained a separate entity, never totally swallowed into the Caucasian pagan people.

Noah prayed and prophesied in Genesis 9 that Japhet would one day be enlarged and blessed but under the tents of Shem. Since Armenians proudly continue to state that they are one of the missing tribes, then maybe they should reconsider their spiritual allegiances, and worship God under the covering of that tent. It

seems that they had a sense that this tent would be their protection. Similarities link Jewish history to Armenians as we just saw how it relates to Ashkenazis in the land of Armenia, we can trace the tribe of Benjamin back to Armenian Jewry. Stories from the Middle Ages describe them as the 'Free Jews'.

During the first century, the Armenian King Tigran II took Jews captive from Israel and brought them to Armenia. King Shapur II, during the fourth century C.E, deported Jews back to Persia and since then Persian dynasties successfully invaded Armenia until the Bagratid feudal dynasty restored the Kingdom of Armenia and claimed King David as their ancestor.

Trading was prolific on the Silk Road during that time, gold, precious stones and luxurious carpets were a dominant part of commercial activities. In 1375 the Mamelukes conquered Armenia and since then there were no more traces of Armenian Jewry. Some were assimilated in Kurdish communities and it took nearly five centuries for them to reappear.



During my first visit to Armenia, while crisscrossing the country and visiting historical monuments, I was stunned to see so many Magen David in church ornaments and architectures. Since ancient times, Armenians represented the Wheel of Eternity inside a Magen David. This wheel is one of the most important symbols of its religious culture. Obviously, most of the world associates the six-pointed star with Judaism dating back to the seventeenth century but nothing much was said of its utilization by the Armenian culture.

Since the dawn of ages, Armenians were known to be strong mathematicians, architects and artisans. They were highly skilled in geometry and astronomy and could predict astronomical phenomena.

Interestingly enough, one of the most ancient observatories in the world is located in Armenia; Karahunj dates back 7,500 years. The other one of Metsamor is 2,800 years old and permitted our Armenian ancestors to develop geometry at such a high level that they could actually measure latitudes and longitudes, develop the theory that the earth was round, and to predict solar and lunar eclipses long before the Egyptians. Armenian architecture resisted tremendous earthquakes and wars, mostly due to its use of geometry in the construction of fortified cities and temples. Its complex systems of squares, rectangles, circles and straight lines crossing motifs, rendered buildings as strong as modern-day technology. As in Judaism, knowledge was key and without it no one could understand the laws of nature. Armenians considered geometry to have magical powers, the key to survival and the revelation to the secrets of the universe. Convinced that the six-branched star had magical powers, they incorporated the wheel of immortality in the Star of David and included those symbols in numerous decorations of churches, monuments and sacred art. That is why most churches were constructed with the geometrical shape of the hexagon to sustain their domes or simply to protect them with sacred powers.



It is only recently that traces of an ancient community were discovered. Prof. Michael Stone, head of the Armenian studies programme at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, led a team of researchers to a site in southern Armenia where a random excavation revealed inscriptions engraved on tombstones, they were quotations from the Bible and Hebrew names. The Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Eastern communities and Israeli Antiquities funded the expedition. All the necessary permits were produced by the Armenian

Church for dealing with Antiquities, the site covered a large area near the southern bank of the Arpa River which feeds into the Araxis, the largest river in Armenia in the Ararat valley. The inscriptions on the tombstones had no other letters than Hebrew and were written on beautiful granite stones, obviously the Jews of the region knew Aramean and one inscription marked the death of a community member dating to the equivalent year of 1289 CE. The team of researchers were convinced that it was not a passing community but a well-established thriving one, a new-found diaspora, according to Prof. Stone, one that probably arrived by foot from Persia, not far from the Silk Road.

The Mongols invaded Armenia, Georgia and Persia in the thirteenth/fourteenth century. The rulers of the region did not fight but surrendered wisely, allowing the community to continue to grow and flourish. Again, according to the Hebrew University team, the community must have lasted a few centuries. More recently, Armenia attracted Jews from the Soviet Union during WWII, a place relatively free from anti-Semitism. But the economic difficulties resulting from the independence of Armenia from the USSR and the war with the neighbouring state of Azerbaijan caused most of the Jews to move to Israel. Today, the small community of about 250 people is led by a Chabad Rabbi and maintains good relations with Armenians.

Each *Yom Hashoah*, we should remember that the Armenian Genocide paved the way to Hitler's Final Solution as he said in 1939: 'Who after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?' Winston Churchill described it as an administrative holocaust and noted: 'This crime was planned and executed for political reasons. The opportunity presented itself for clearing Turkish soil of a Christian race'. The world was silent then, leading to the Shoah, the worse crime of the human race.

As we sadly face recurring anti-Semitism, we remember our past and know that our Deliverance comes only from the Shield of Avraham.

SS

The Dubrovnik Synagogue



At the end of a glorious week cycling in Croatia, Bettina and I spent a day exploring the fascinating city of Dubrovnik. Having walked the city walls early to beat the huge cruise ship and *Game of Thrones* crowds, we searched out the Synagogue before scuttling back to the serenity of our hotel.

Our orienteering skills are not the best, so even armed with the address and a map we were pleasantly surprised to find the street we were looking for after only three complete tours of the vicinity!

The Synagogue in Dubrovnik is the oldest *Sephardic* synagogue still in use today in the world and the second oldest Synagogue in Europe (after the one in Prague). It is said to have been established in 1352 but only gained legal status in the city in 1408. It is in a street called Zudioska Ulike – the Jewish Street. This is directly off the main high street and now looks like any other street in the old town. In the beginning, though, it was a ghetto, so the alley was closed at the top and at the lower (main street) end, access was controlled by a gate. In ghetto times, Jews were only allowed to live in this particular street so the entire community existed in this one enclosed road.

A little way up the terraced road is the entrance to the Synagogue; a pretty but unobtrusive entrance (we missed it on the first pass!) with various books and small items on display outside, including a beautiful very old *Haggadah*.

A narrow flight of stairs leads directly to a place where entrance tickets to the museum are sold for a token fee, the desk managed by a very friendly and knowledgeable non-Jewish woman. The walls of the museum hold old photographs and documents, including a list of the earthquake victims of 1667 and many more items related to the Jewish history of Dubrovnik.

More steps lead up to the sanctuary. Three wide arches divide the room and the huge *bimah* into front and rear areas. The women's area was historically at the back but later was accommodated in a gallery created by annexing a room from the third floor of the adjacent building. A very dainty decorative latticework separates it from the area below.



The Synagogue is not large but was probably adequate for the Dubrovnik Jewish community, whose numbers peaked between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries at about 260 members in 1830.



The doors of the Ark are quite exquisite. Sadly they were locked so we couldn't see inside it. However, we were told that it held several Scrolls, one of which is said to have originated in Spain in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries and been brought to Dubrovnik after the 1492 expulsions.



Today, the Jewish community in Dubrovnik is very small, approximately thirty people, although only seventeen officially registered in the 2001 census. Because of the small numbers, the *shul* does not have a resident Rabbi. Whilst the *shul* holds services on High Holydays, it is only able to hold *Shabbat* and other services intermittently, when a Rabbi from a neighbouring community visits to officiate.

I am not sure what it was about the *shul* that was so moving; perhaps its history. Or, maybe its delicate beauty. Or its aura of prayer. Or the feeling that comes from it being so sadly under-used. Maybe a mixture of all of these and more. Whatever it was, it was certainly a very emotional visit and one we will not easily forget.

DC



DEFINING MEMORIES

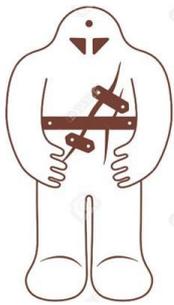
Memories; what are memories? Invisible,
soundless, three-dimensional Intangible
records of transient moments Emotionally
subjected therefore unique Fleeting images
encapsulating space and time Undefinable
memories encompassing life
Its joys, its poignancy, its spirituality, its mystery
Memories ephemeral and lasting, transient and recurring
Memories reversing Time's forward motion
Re-aligning the past, trailing nostalgia
Memories will we part you and me?

I shall take away with me
The love given me
And the smiles I shall not see
I shall take away with me The
light which guides me And
the wind from the sea
The wind; less transient than me

CL



The Golem



Jewish Golem.

Medieval city legend from Prague.

Giant clay monster.

‘Great men were once capable of great miracles.’ Isaac Loeb Peretz tells us so, to open his version of the best-known Golem story set in Prague, short enough to fit on a single page. In the sixteenth century Rabbi Loeb ben Bezalel created the Golem from clay to destroy our enemies, but reversed his act of creation when the Golem’s devastation got out of hand, and stored the lifeless clay in the attic of the Altneu synagogue in Prague where no-one may look upon it, especially not pregnant women. Now nobody knows the Name he whispered to bring it alive. ‘What are we to do?’ asks Peretz.

There are fuller versions, by Isaac Bashevis Singer among others, many Golems from elsewhere than Prague, and no shortage of great men of the past, reputed to have known the secrets of animating the clay. Its influence on other fiction, and the allegories and lessons it offers, have grown with our technology, especially since the animated image became the medium of popular storytelling. As Peretz’s closing question signals, the mystery of how to switch it on is irresistible.

The Golem was a creature modelled in clay or mud and magically brought to life by Jewish savants. (A Golem was made of wood and door-hinges by eleventh century Solomon ibn Gabirol of Malaga, but he was suspected of fornicating with it and made to destroy it. The golem is an ersatz form of life since, crucially, it has no soul which only God can convey – golem means unfinished or half-formed, a term used just once in the Bible in Psalm 139. However, it is a very ancient idea. The Talmud tells of Golems, always with the limitation that they could not speak, such as Jeremiah’s. In Sanhedrin 38b, it

describes Adam as a golem for the period before the spark of life passed to him from God. In the world of animated imagery, Michelangelo’s vision of Adam’s awakening was brought to life for Melvyn Bragg’s South Bank Show using Lloyd Webber’s Variations on a Paganini caprice.

Compiled in the first Diaspora, the Talmud has passed down a concept from at least five centuries BCE. Biblical angels, demons and stories like Noah’s find analogues in Zoroastrianism with which the Jews lived in Diaspora, but not the Golem. Theorists have suggested that it stemmed from the far older Egyptian practice of burying figurines with the dead as servants in the afterlife, animated by the characters depicted on them. However, the Israeli historian Gershom Scholem observed that there is little account of deeds or movement of the earliest Golems – they were clay figures around which rituals were performed, which were then destroyed, their role merely to potentiate the mystical rapture of the ritual. The Golem as saviour/destroyer is a much later development.

It is most significant that the Talmudic creature was mute. In Judaism, the essence of creation is in the Word of God: ‘and God said *Let there be light*’. To make the point, one Jewish source remarks that abracadabra derives from *avra k’davra*, Aramaic for ‘I create as I speak’, although the translation is approximate. Later, Christianity characterised the messiah as the ‘Word made flesh’, another mysterious phrase to be understood in a non-verbal sort of way. The Sefer Yetzirah, ‘*Book of Creation*’, composed in the first half-millennium CE, provides instructions for the animation of a Golem, from which the critical information is interpreted in various ways by later rabbis. This method involves singing and dancing; one suggests the preliminary burial of the creature, another the use of a special container. Undoing the spell consisted of performing the ritual in reverse. Rabbi Loeb whispered His Name, *hashem*, into the ear of the doll, and perhaps he also said *avra k’davra*.

Whatever the method, no authority explains why the practice did not fall foul of the Deuteronomic interdiction of

witchcraft and necromancing. The ability to inspire the clay was not just anybody’s – it demanded high accomplishment in mysticism and Kabbalah, a test of the scholarship of the protagonist, and took place in trance-like ecstasy. To this extent it is comparable with the ‘japa’, a mantra in Buddhism and Hinduism consisting of low-voiced repetition of the Name to engender a ‘higher state’ of consciousness and ‘communion with the Divine’. Here at least is a similarity with Zoroastrian priestly practice which consisted of mumbled repetition of the *avestas* – but then that method of learning scriptures by heart exists in Jainism, Sikhism and many other faiths, with a Christian analogue in the repetition of Hail Mary, Paternoster and so on, programmed by worry-beads.

The Word is axiomatic, but it may be written, and processes emerged from Kabbalistic numerology and alphabetic symbolism. In one version, the letters *aleph*, *mem* and *tav* were written on the Golem’s forehead or on parchment placed in its mouth, spelling *emet*, truth. Erasing the *aleph* changed the word to *met*, death, and the creature collapsed. The Golem of Chelm, a seventeenth century Polish town mocked for its foolish inhabitants, outgrew Rabbi Eliahu who created it. He slyly ordered it to kneel to remove his boots and was able to erase the aleph on its forehead, but it collapsed upon him and killed him.

The unthreatening older Golem persists in the Mishnah, the meaning extending to ‘uncultivated’, and in modern Hebrew unintelligent and clumsy

As well as mute, the Golem in these stories is crude – it is not Michelangelo’s David, and illustrations of it are barely refined. Megalithic power is symbolically contained by moulding it into anthropoid form. Perhaps its very shapelessness makes animation permissible, patently a product of human imperfection in no

danger of breaching the second commandment against idolatry; whereas animating a creature in His image would be to usurp God's creative prerogative. In the story of Jeremiah's Golem, the prophet wrote *Elohim emet* on its forehead, but the creature erased the *aleph* changing 'God is truth' to 'God is dead'. With newly-acquired speech, it lectured the prophet on just such usurpation and hubris.

The second commandment is easily understood before the seductive beauty of ancient Greek statuary. However, it also conjures an idea of hugeness with limitations, very much like the Golem, as in Psalm 135: 'They have mouths but they speak not, eyes have they but they see not...' Both may be understood to teach the dangers in symbolism. A third characteristic of the later Golem is that it continues to grow until it is too big to be reined in. Allegorically, the symbol grows and takes over from the complex reality for which it was initially only a metaphor. Its adherents commit to the symbol which thinly exemplifies and simplifies the perceptions that gave birth to it – and they are taken over by its moral and intellectual limitations: as the Psalm continues, 'those that bow down to them shall become like unto them'. The idea of an amoral Golem force spiralling out from initial satisfaction to growing anxiety and horror has a wide allegorical reach, to Faustian hubris, to the abuse of power, to the negation of personal responsibility by allegiance, to the corruption of violence, and much more.

The unthreatening older Golem persists in the Mishnah, the meaning extending to 'uncultivated', and in modern Hebrew unintelligent and clumsy. It is overshadowed by the proliferation of stories of an ungovernable creature in the 'early modern period' as observed by Scholem, who dates the period's beginning to the Iberian expulsion of 1492. That heralded a diminution in rabbinical authority and a rise in Kabbalistic study, leading to eighteenth century Chasidism aiming to bring that mysticism to the wider Jewish population (like Chabad today). The metamorphosis into saviour/destroyer, and the lament in Peretz's final question, are easy to understand against the

insecurity and poverty of *shtetl* life. The coincidence of dates with the advent of printing and the European renaissance is also to be expected. Jakob Grimm, of the fairy-tale Brothers, published his *Teutonic Mythology* in 1835, but in 1808, in his *Journal for Hermits*, he had reported on Golems created by Polish Jews: unable to speak, brought alive by a cypher, growing ever larger until destroyed by erasing a letter.

In the world which hatched the Golem, wise men dealt cautiously with God and magic, knowing that power can spin out of control. Sermons on youthful recklessness were conveyed in children's tales like Grimm's, echoed latterly by Mickey overwhelmed in *Fantasia*, to Paul Dukas's music, *L'Apprenti Sorcier*. That music was written in 1897 as a symphonic setting for the poem *Der Zauberlehrling* from exactly a century earlier, by whom else but Goethe. 1797 was also the date of birth of Mary Shelley, and her story of Frankenstein was published only twenty years later. It has no demonstrable ancestry in the Golem, but its parts were assembled on the banks of Lac Leman as Lord Byron and the Shelleys read German ghost stories to one another to fill dark evenings, and we feel entitled to presume that it emerged from the same Mittel-European culture. Likewise, Goya's uneasy paintings of the shapeless Colossus are from the same early nineteenth century, influenced no doubt by Napoleon's Spanish campaign but portraying the same foreboding.

By the twentieth century, the Golem had moved beyond Jewish culture and begun to represent the perceived dangers of science, latterly turbo-charged with artificial intelligence. Meyrink's novel *The Golem* in 1915 had enormous success. Karel Capek's 1920s play *Rossum's Universal Robots* introduced the term which came to represent manufactured anthropoids, and Asimov invented three rules for their control. (Gollum in *Lord of the Rings* is a red herring.) Loss of control became the major theme, as in the *Terminator* film series, the TV series *Humans*, and the film *I, Robot*. Forgotten was the modesty of the early concept, the scholarly attempt to grow closer to the divine, and

the ecstasy of creation – the Golem was no longer mute. The moral now concerns megalomania or irresponsible technical overreach, but not its hubris.

The century also brought a science of mind to explain the Golem's origin. Jung's 'shadow', the dark unconscious of struggling primal fears and impulses, was also the source of creativity, to be tapped into by young teenagers as the 'Dark Side' in Star Wars. The 'collective unconscious' reflected cultural phenomena in the individual, generating shared fantasies. Latterly, the Golem has even been analysed as a form of birth bypassing woman, with all the socio-political significance now attached to gender issues – but not much of Judaism.

Before the Hypertext Transfer Protocol powered up the Web, the Trivial File Transfer Protocol could spin out of control just like the apprentice's broomsticks, transferring more and more buckets of information until it crashed the Internet – a loop known as the Sorcerer's Apprentice Syndrome. Now, well into the day of artificial intelligence in robotics, many of us are worried that like the Golem or the broomsticks, there is vast interest in the magic word to make them go; but do we really know how or when to make them stop?



The Sorcerer's Apprentice from Disney's 'Fantasia'

JE

The Jews of Pompeii

Browsing through the shelves of the Reinhart Library, a thin book bound in silvery card caught my eye. The title read *The Jews in Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae and in the Cities of Campania Felix*. Did this refer to the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 C.E.? Could there have been Jews living in those ancient Italian cities, decimated by the huge flood of hot lava, and preserved almost in their entirety for subsequent generations to gaze at? Indeed there were. One year after the extermination of those cities an anonymous Jewish author ascribed the tragedy to God's vengeance for the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which happened nine years almost to the day before Vesuvius erupted. He was the first to tell the story.

There had been Jews living in Rome and Naples even before Jerusalem was destroyed. Alexander the Great had conquered Judaea, and all around the Mediterranean Jewish communities had sprung up: along the North African coast, in the Greek archipelago, in Egypt and Babylonia, and then in Italy.

The Jewish population of Rome grew rapidly, swelled by Jewish soldiers returning from war, and the capital itself was becoming a sophisticated cosmopolitan city with good opportunities for commerce and financial enterprise. The Jews were useful to Julius Caesar who granted them privileges, including freedom of worship, of self-jurisdiction and the right to form communities of their own. But in 19 CE with changes of government they aroused the enmity of the Senate and were banished from Rome, losing all their ritual property, their books and sometimes their lives. They were sent to one of the most unhealthy and uninhabitable parts of the country, Sardinia. However, when Tiberius's anti-Semitic minister Sejanus fell, the Senate allowed them to return.

The Jewish War broke out in 66 CE, when Jews living in Palestine rose up against their Roman masters, protesting against

crippling taxation and repression. In 70 CE the Temple fell and many Jews returned to Italy, finding homes in towns and cities up and down the mainland. Many were of the lower orders of society, especially the slaves who served in the armies and the prisoners who in Rome were put to building the great Colosseum. Some of the exiles settled in Naples and the other towns of the Campania region, including Herculaneum and Pompeii.

During the years before the fall of the Temple several natural phenomena disturbed the people of the region. Jewish commentators ascribed them to a forthcoming disaster in Palestine: a comet had been seen in the heavens, tracing the sky for six months; a devastating earthquake, not unusual in the area, had destroyed much of the surrounding countryside. One soothsayer foretold that sometime after the Temple fell 'fire from the bosom of the earth would be flung into the infinite space of the heavens, falling in the form of a rain of fire on many cities in Italy.'

There had been Jews living in Rome and Naples even before Jerusalem was destroyed.

One of the most important cities of the Campania region was Puteoli, now Pozzuoli, an important port for Rome and a great trading post for the area. It is known that there was a Jewish community there. Josephus visited the city and mentions in his *Antiquitates Judaicae* that Puteoli's Jews were tricked into believing that a visitor to the community was Alexander, the son of Herod. They welcomed the impostor with open arms and great merrymaking. The Jews played an important part in the commercial activities of Puteoli; they manufactured glass, fabrics and purple dye. Some of the inscriptions found after the eruption bear Jewish names, including a gravestone reading *Hic requiescat in pace Benus filia Rebbetis Abundantis* (Here lies in peace Benus, daughter of Rabbi Abundantis). She was seventeen years old. There were Jews too

in some of the smaller towns, Nola, Bacoli and Capua.

In Herculaneum, the small prosperous town where many wealthy Roman landowners made their homes, there are traces of the remains of Jewish slaves, on tombstones and inscriptions and even in witnesses to court cases. In Pompeii, however, there are signs that a more commercially minded Jewish community made its presence felt. One, Youdaikou, was a wealthy wine merchant, who sold both best quality wines as well as everyday table wines, to the local inhabitants. He was sufficiently rich to have slaves of his own. He sold wine to the owner of a large inn in the town, who may also have been Jewish, his name – A. Cossius Libanus – indicates a mountain in the Palestine/Syria area, while Cossius may derive from the Cush area of Ethiopia in Africa, mentioned in the Bible. Another Libanus served in the Villa of the Mysteries. A few inscriptions in Hebrew have been found etched into the walls of houses overwhelmed by the hot lava of the eruption.

It is however the sculpture and paintings that indicate most clearly the presence of Jews in the towns destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvius. Remembering that this took place only sixty years after the death of Christ, it is possible to imagine that paintings depicting Old Testament scenes may well have been instigated by Jews, if not their own work. Sodom and Gomorrah, Jonah and the Whale and the Judgment of Solomon have all been identified when the buildings of Pompeii were revealed. The Solomon painting is believed to be the oldest existing Biblical painting.

The book referred to above is difficult to read in English; it is haltingly translated and full of typographical errors. Frequent references are made to further archaeological work being done on the site (it was first published in 1979), so it may well be that there is more to be found in this fascinating story of a Jewish presence in the ruins.

PB



Educational Consultant



Exploring Overseas University Options

The process of applying to university is possibly the most important chapter in any teenager's life. Deciding *where* to apply has an impact on the kinds and range of educational, extracurricular and employment opportunities that the student will have access to, as well as determining the network of friends he or she will get to build in these formative years. With the changing landscape of higher education, an increasing number of students are considering universities overseas. According to the Institute of International Education, for instance, the number of students going to the States from the UK has increased by 25% over the past five years. Having worked with hundreds of students over the last decade, I can confidently say that the process works best if the student and the parents are well informed about the different options that are available, in order to make decisions that best fit the student's interests and goals.

As an educational consultant, I specialize in providing guidance for American college and university applications. With over 4,000 colleges and universities, the students have a wide spectrum of higher education institutions to choose from in the States. Unlike the UK system, there is no strict limit to the number of applications one can submit. Furthermore, the American system gives students much more flexibility while

choosing the area in which they wish to major. The liberal arts curriculum in particular, offers students two years in which to explore different fields before declaring their specific major.

Another draw is the emphasis on extracurricular activities that help the students to build connections with others while learning valuable skills outside the classroom. These activities range from community service and volunteer programmes to sports and arts, among others. The strong and vibrant residential life on campus thus allows students to bond over co-curricular pursuits beyond the classroom walls.

Students will also find an active Jewish life on campus at many universities, with the Hillel organization embracing the range of Jewish backgrounds and experiences from all around the world. Hillel is represented in more than 550 colleges and communities throughout

Students will also find an active Jewish life on campus at many universities

North America and globally, fostering an inclusive community that offers many opportunities for involvement, such as planning social action events, leading *Shabbat* services and cultivating lifelong friendships. There are also other clubs and organizations such as the Jewish Student Union and the Jewish Students Association which help students to explore and celebrate their Jewish identity. Universities vary in the range and kinds of Jewish life events that they offer, so this is an important criterion to consider and get advice on from your counsellor while researching best fit post-secondary institutions.

Just as education extends inside and outside the classroom, the application process to American universities evaluates both the academic and the extra-curricular profile of each student. In addition to high school grades, standardized test scores and recommendation letters, students are

also asked to list their activities and write essays that reflect their co-curricular passions and pursuits. In the holistic application review process, the student is evaluated as a whole individual, beyond just their academic qualifications.

The student should be open to navigating the educational offerings of different countries before resolving on where to apply. For Jewish students seeking a welcoming environment on campus, it is also recommended that they explore the plethora of universities in countries such as Canada, Israel and across Europe. Particularly in Israel, there has been a recent increase in undergraduate programmes offered entirely in English, where students also benefit from having easy access to Hebrew courses.

While determining the student's university path, the cost of education also constitutes an important component of the decision-making process. It is important to keep in mind, however, that there is a difference between the quoted price and the actual amount families need to pay. In the States, for example, there are both generous merit-based scholarships and financial aid opportunities for successful students, which can even cover the full cost of education. It is critical to learn about the nuances between the price advertised on the websites and the financial aid that the student is qualified to apply for, in order to be able to make an educated decision.

DA

Debbi Antebi is the Co-Founder and Director of College Counseling at College Sense Ltd. She works with high school students who are applying to universities in the States and across the world. Her contact details are debbi@collegesense.co.uk

University Chaplain



It is my fifth year doing this work, and the series of excerpts which follow are some of the more interesting examples of the kind of work I do. These will give people an insight into my work in a fun and diverse way.

Excerpts from the Autumn Diary of a University Chaplain for the Alliance of Progressive Judaism

30th September Leeds JSOC Lunch & Learn

Kicking off the first week of university term, I was invited by Leeds JSOC to teach at their weekly Lunch & Learn for guest speakers. I grabbed coffee and conversation with a Progressive student leader first, and then twenty students and I packed into the JSOC *sukkah* for two hours to read and debate Jewish thinking on the meaning of Jerusalem and Zion. Students from across the spectrum attended: Liberal Jewish students whom I know well from two summers as Welfare Officer on Liberal Judaism's Kadimah summer camp through to an ex-charedi young woman. The Progressive student leaders then kindly accompanied me back to the train station, as I continued to hear about their lives on campus.

Shabbat, 3rd October Sukkot Resettlement Action, Norwich Liberal Jewish Community

Along with my student and young adult work, I am the rabbi of the thriving Norwich Liberal Jewish Community in Norfolk, with upwards of seventy members, where I also liaise with the small University of East Anglia JSOC and its students. As part of a campaign of similar actions led by other Liberal communities

around the country, I am so proud to say that tiny NLJC gathered more than 130 people, including at least twenty students from the UEA, together for a *Sukkot* Service in our community-built *sukkah* where a multi-faith Sanctuary Norfolk delegation asked Norfolk County Council to finally commit to welcoming fifty Syrian refugee families to Norfolk. The momentum created by this campaign, of which our event was a part and for which one of our congregants was a founding member, eventually led to Norfolk County Council's agreement!

30th-31st October Durham JSOC weekend visit

As university students finished their first full month of term, Chief Executive Danny Rich and I visited Durham University together for the last *Shabbat* in October. On the Friday evening, we hosted a warm Middle Eastern food *Shabbat* dinner for the JSOC, a regular group of about twenty students. On Saturday, I met with an LJ student leader and then the former JSOC president, a Progressive student running for National President of the UJS, before hosting a bagel Lunch & Learn with a dozen students. I also presented current Durham JSOC President Simon Zeffertt with our new LJ Students *Shabbat* kit.

5th November Songs of Praise filming for Interfaith Week

In an early project filmed for Songs of Praise about Interfaith Week, I was part of a Jewish/Christian team making food to go to the homeless shelter at King's Cross Methodist Church. LSE's main chaplain for students and one of my London chaplaincy counterparts, Reverend Dr James Walters, as well as Christian and Jewish students and young adults, were on hand to help make traditional Jewish strudel and Christmas mince pies. Interfaith work is an important part of being a student chaplain on Britain's multicultural campuses, especially as the Jewish Societies interact with the larger religious student body on campus.

20th-21st November Cambridge Egalitarian Minyan and JSOC weekend visit

As part of LJ Students' support of Progressive Jewish life on campuses, we annually funded a small budget for Cambridge Egalitarian Minyan, a

progressive Jewish society for students. I was invited by their co-coordinator, a Liberal Jewish Synagogue member, to teach and spend *Shabbat* with the students. I gave the *dvar torah* at their Friday evening service and met many other students at Cambridge JSOC's *Shabbat* dinner, then taught on *Shabbat* day. As I keep finding with my campus visits, the students are so happy to have a chaplain visit, especially a young, Liberal one.

26th-27th November Sent out 200 Chanukkah packs to Great Britain, Ireland, Israel, and Europe

As part of the overall programme for students and young adults at LJ, I send out yearly student packs three times a year - on *Chanukkah*, *Purim* or *Pesach* (depending on when student Easter break falls), and Exam Stress Packs in May. I think perhaps our *Chanukkah* packs are the most loved, as they provide everything needed for students to celebrate a warm *Chanukkah* far from home: a *chanukkiah*, candles, dreidel, and *gelt*/gold coins. This year we sent out 200 packs to students across Great Britain, covering literally dozens of different universities, as well as to students far from large Jewish communities in Ireland and Europe, and to our LJY gap year student in Israel.

27th-28th November Union of Jewish Students Training Summit

For perhaps the first time ever, the UJS invited two chaplains to its yearly Training Summit for incoming JSOC committees all across the country - and one of them was a Liberal rabbi. For every Orthodox service over the *Shabbat*, we had between fifteen and twenty five Progressive students praying in our 'Egal' service next door, including the Chief Executive of the UJS, David Brown, and the then UJS National President, Hannah Brady. The UJS also themed much of their Training Summit around inclusivity, which included much discussion and learning about the denominations in Judaism - and many questions directed to me - and Keshet UK coming in to speak about LGBT inclusivity in the Jewish community.

Rabbi Leah Jordan

Rabbi Jordan is the wife of Rabbi Benji Stanley.

בהרו נרוקר

Hebrew Corner

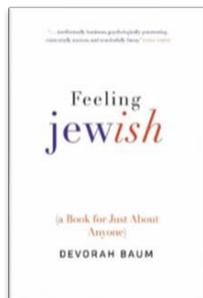
Ayalon Gilad, in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, notes that near Mosul in Iraq, archaeologists found in Nineveh, Assyria, lists of trees that were used for sacrifice by the king of Assyria, Ashurbanipal. One of them was *bedolach* which came later to be called *bdellium*. This word appears twice in the Bible. First in Genesis, describing the Garden of Eden: *'and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium.'* In the Book of Numbers, when God sent manna to the Israelites during their wanderings, we read; *'Now the manna was like coriander seed, and the appearance thereof as the appearance of bdellium.'*

From the Greek translation of the Bible to the Latin version, the word came to be called *bdellium*, meaning aromatic resin. In the Midrash it was decided that it meant a precious stone. Rabbi Saadia, the Gaon, called it a pearl and so did Judah Halevi and Don Isaac Abravanel. However, Rashi determined that the word mean crystal. Other rabbis followed him, such as Rabbi Joseph Caro, the author of the prepared Table of Jewish Laws called in Hebrew the *Shulchan Aruch*. During the Jewish Enlightenment period of the nineteenth century, the word was adopted as Rashi had interpreted in the twelfth century, meaning crystal. Others followed until the present times.

The word can be used as a surname, such as Dr. Veksler-Bedolach. You may like to know that she heads the archaeological team which recently found a seal around the *Kotel* (the Western Wall) dating from the first Temple 2,700 years ago.

IA

Book Review



by
Devora
Baum

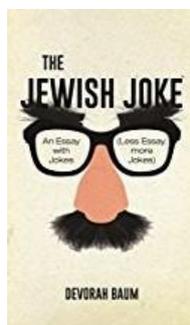
Published
by
Yale
University
Press
2017

Why is this book different from all other books? Because while being an in-depth examination of the Jewish psyche, it is also written with great humour – and contains some amusing quotations.

The Author has tackled an interesting subject with great clarity and a lightness of touch. She explores the emotions and passions that are engendered in the soul of the Jew when she explains in her inimitable way what *feeling Jewish* means.

Whilst being intellectually stimulating, Dr Baum's book gives us cause to think about how we regard ourselves in the context of our Jewishness. She has researched her subject deeply and quotes many well-known names to support her interpretations. In each chapter she examines the negative feelings that we can experience – under such headings as Guilt, Envy, Mother love, Self-hatred and Paranoia.

Devorah includes a few apposite and very funny jokes along the way to reinforce her conclusions. It is an absorbing subject expertly handled .



Also by this author, is *The Jewish Joke: An Essay with Examples (less Essay, More Examples)* which is a delightful bedside book containing many familiar and some unfamiliar jokes.

Both these books are in the Reinhart Library.

CC

Devorah Baum lectures in English Literature at Southampton University. She is also a researcher in the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations at the Parkes Institute – a part of that University.

Amusement Arcade

Solly Jacobs is on his deathbed and knows the end is near. His nurse, his wife, his daughter and two sons, are with him.

He asks for two witnesses to be present and a camcorder be in place to record his last wishes, and when all is ready he begins to speak:

'My son, Bernie, I want you to take the Mayfair houses.

'My daughter Essie, you take the apartments over in the East End.

My son, Josh, I want you to take the offices in the City Centre.

Sarah, my dear wife, please take all the residential buildings on the banks of the river.'

The nurse and witnesses are blown away as they did not realize his extensive holdings, and as Solly slips away, the nurse says, 'Mrs. Jacobs, your husband must have been such a hard-working man to have accumulated all this property'.

The wife replies, 'The bastard had a paper round.'

Sent in by CR



Why is this cookery book different from all other cookery books?

DC found this in a Paul Hollywood Baking Book. Spot the (deliberate?) mistake. We are not sure if this is Paul's April Fool's joke, or if he was misinformed by his friend!



From HS

Recently, together with his two great nieces and his great niece-in-law (Julia Shelley, Emma Hussey and Cindy Shelley), I was invited to a Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony to honour Otto Schiff*, and seven others, for their humanitarian work during the Nazi era.

The event was organised by the Department of Housing and Communities and took place in the Grand Locarno Suite at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Speakers included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chief Rabbi and the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson.

A 'British Heroes of the Holocaust Medal' was awarded to a representative of each person honoured.

It would seem as if this was a catch up of awards which might well have been given in earlier years, although Otto Schiff was awarded the CBE in his lifetime.

**His story appeared in the January issue of this magazine –Ed.*



Education



by
**Nick
Young**
*Head of
Education*

One question that every Synagogue is dealing with, and generally precipitates much gnashing of teeth and pulling of hair, is how to engage teenagers after they become *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* at the age of thirteen. We have been working on this for some time, and we have been delighted to offer our teens the chance to train as young leaders at Or Shabbat, or to become Czech Scroll Museum Guides. However, although we have tried to form youth groups in the past in various guises, most recently in collaboration with Habonim Dror in 2013/14, we have never managed to create a programme that a group of our teenagers commit to at the Synagogue over a sustained period. Or at least we haven't succeeded until now!

In October we began our first ever *Kabbalat Torah* group. *Kabbalat Torah* literally meaning 'Acceptance of Torah' is essentially closest to a *confirmation* programme. The students commit to two years in a programme that enables them to strengthen the friendships made with their peers during the *B'nei Mitzvah* Programme, to extend their Jewish learning, and to give back and participate in the community in various ways.

How exactly does it work? Essentially the group gathers monthly on a Friday night for sessions with their mentor, Harriet Rivkin. The learning sessions cover Jewish topics of interest and relevance for young adults including, for example studying leadership at *Chanukkah* time, modern slavery around *Pesach* time and the lessons of the Holocaust around Holocaust Memorial Day. Harriet, having herself grown up at Westminster Synagogue, taught at Or Shabbat, and with her wisdom gained from having

lived and studied abroad including spending the last two years in America working on a city literacy project in a deprived inner city environment, is an excellent role model and educator for the group. Rabbi Benji and I will also work with the group from time to time, as well as bringing in guest speakers as we did in November when Holocaust survivor Janet Singer Applefield came.

For the community service element, we work to find ways in which all members of the group can contribute to Synagogue life. The whole group were ushers at our Czech Scrolls Commemorative Service in November. Some are working with the children of Or Shabbat as Help Teachers. Others are Museum Guides. All will be involved in lay leading during the course, which this year will culminate in them leading a Friday night service, and next year they will graduate by leading a Saturday morning service together.

The possibility for running this programme first arose because we have a group of boys and girls who are *B'nei Mitzvah* graduates who wanted to maintain contact with their group. They were already meeting up and staying in touch outside of the Synagogue, and we were delighted to explore the possibility of providing a space for them in Synagogue, as well as giving them the opportunity to further their Jewish knowledge and to remain engaged with the community. As of January 2018, we have nine students in the class aged between thirteen and fifteen, which is a terrific number for our first group. And, we hope that more will join in September from our most recent BM cohort (meaning that we may need to run parallel groups).

We imagine that a highlight of the course will be the trip to Budapest which we are planning for November. We have run this trip twice before, with other Liberal and Reform Synagogues, and it has proved to be a fantastic way for the students to encounter the experience of Central European Judaism during the 20th century pre- and post-war, and following the Cold War. They have also been able to connect to a broader network of Jewish teens and have Jewish experiences that will stay with them for a

lifetime.

Our *Kabbalat Torah* group is not the only teens programme that we are very excited about at the Synagogue. After lying dormant for two years without takers, this year also sees the return of our GCSE group. The GCSE group, comprising four students, meets once per week after school to study the two religions of Judaism and Christianity alongside each other. You may be aware that the previous GCSE curriculum enabled students to focus only on Judaism, but the progressive movements in this country have welcomed the new government requirement to study two religions as it broadens interfaith understanding alongside deepening the knowledge of Judaism.

The course includes religious history and practice, core beliefs and ethics of the two religions, and the comparative element really enables our students to sharpen their analytical skills. The teacher of the course is Janet Berenson who is hugely experienced, works closely with the examination boards and has a track record of enabling our students to achieve the absolute best of their potential over the years which in many cases has meant A and A* grades (or grades 7-9 in current GCSE parlance). The fact of taking the exams a year early, in year 10, also serves as excellent preparation for the students for year 11 when they do the bulk of their GCSEs at school.

As I write this, we are coming to *Pesach* and the Spring break, when thoughts begin to turn to the next school year (once all of those exams are out of the way). Well, now for our teenagers we have some excellent post-*B'nei Mitzvah* options. Please do be in touch if you would like more information at nick@westminstersynagogue.org and encourage any teen that you know to come and join us!

I wish you *Pesach Sameach*.



Westminster Quarterly

Planning Your Diary

Erev Yom Hashoah

Wednesday 11th April

Yom Hashoah

Thursday 12th April

Erev Yom Ha'atzmaut

Wednesday 18th April

Yom Ha'atzmaut

Thursday 19th April

Erev Shavuot

Saturday 19th May

Shavuot

Sunday 20th May

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Please send letters, articles, photographs or other items of interest for publication in the Westminster Synagogue Quarterly directly to the Synagogue office or e-mail to editor@westminstersynagogue.org

