The Spanish Inquisition
David Bomberg
The Salamons in Barbados
A Bar Mitzvah in New York
Westminster Welcomes its New Members

Bella Gavin
Joshua & Micah Siva
Nick & Magda Kling
Shari Landa
Samah Bushra
Roxane Barsky
Maria Pastore
Abigail Cohen & Graysen Wright
Jemimah Steinfeld & Simon Reynolds
Charlotte Nichols
Laura Rowland
Paul Ainsworth-Taylor
Shawn & Ebba Wexler
Gregory Lassman & Romina Richardson
Patrick Skipworth

Births

Atlas George Fogelman – a son for Leigh & Amy on 7th February
Ori Rasin – a daughter for Wendy & Guy on 15th February
Arden Maccabee Doeh – a son for Max & Melis on 25th March

Infant Blessings

Ari Doeh on 25th April
Ori Rasin on 26th April
Zephaniah Steinfeld - Reynolds on 12th May

Bar Mitzvah

Max Rosenfeld on 25th May

Marriages & Blessings

Steven Mandel & Maria Goryaeva on 16th February in Miami
Rebecca Bossick & James Cooper on 5th May
Vikki Scott & Jonathan Humble on 12th May

Deaths

Sara Pinto on 17th February
Norman Moss on 23rd March
Geoffrey Charatan on 13th April
Bernard Asher on 15th April (Memorial Service on 2nd May)
Daniel & Amelie Linsey on 21st April
Robert Berg on 22nd May
David Sieff on 27th May

Condolences
We offer sincere condolences to
Angela Charatan and family on the death of Geoffrey
Batia Asher and family on the death of Bernard
The Linsey family on the deaths of Daniel & Amelie
Gillian Berg on the death of her husband Robert
Jeni Sieff and family on the death of David

Corrections to last edition - with humble apologies to
Philippa Samii-Rosenschein & Ivan Rosenschein
Mc Donald (Don) Valledor
Amelie Linsey, fifteen years old, and Daniel Linsey, nineteen years old, were killed along with more than 250 other innocent people in the attacks in Sri Lanka on Sunday 21st April. Their father Matthew returned home himself from Sri Lanka the day afterwards to his wife Angelina and their two other children, David, who is twenty-one, and Ethan who is twelve. On your behalf as a community, I have spent much time with them, guiding them through these extraordinarily difficult grieving rituals, and we continue to support them, helping them with whatever they need, and simply being present and available.

We will always remember Amelie and Daniel and aspire to live by the light of their examples. Daniel at age nineteen was enthusiastically learning, developing and helping others. Just last Purim he came in during the day, before the evening of the service and celebration, to ask me questions based on his research of the festival and to read about festivals in our library. He was then very keen to help our professional team set up for the evening. He loved animals and was always keen to help people. He had volunteered in an orphanage in Ethiopia. He had worked especially hard to go to university and was looking forward to this prospect.

Amelie celebrated her Bat Mitzvah a year and a half ago, reading from one of our Czech Scrolls and giving her thoughts on the Torah portion. She did so with great insight, poise, and maturity. As I got to know her, she talked to me about her love of her family and her love of reading, especially of history, and how she valued the logic and perspective that reading can give you. She was a sharp thinker and was willing to challenge herself and others on issues that matter, including discrimination and animal rights.

Amelie and Daniel were both enthusiastic members of the community, and most of all, loving, thoughtful, supportive family members- children and siblings. They epitomised the value that Aaron and his descendants are said to have brought to the world. Hillel says: Be among the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and bringing them close to Torah (Pirkei Avot 1:12). It is their qualities that we need in the world and in our lives more than ever right now, and that we, as a community, will bring in their honour.

It was poignant that the first Shabbat after their loss brought the annual Torah reading Acharey Mot, meaning ‘after death’ that the Torah portion takes places after Aaron loses two of his children in a cruel and violent way. Aaron’s immediate response is silence. The Kotzer Rebbe in the nineteenth century taught that ‘nothing screams out like silence’ and indeed this silence in the middle of The Five Books shouts out to us. It speaks of inexpressible shock, grief, loss - and love. The Torah acknowledges that extreme difficulty comes without easy answers. We must recognise this and offer to be together in times of trouble. Indeed, after Achrei Mot comes Parshat Kedoshim, the section on Holiness, and our tradition teaches us that sanctity exists when we come together.

I am grateful to this community. I am grateful for all your letters of support to the family, and for your encouragement and support of me and our team. I am grateful for your genuine care and love. I am grateful for the way members have supported the family, bringing their expertise to specific requests the family made. I am grateful for the way lay leaders have stepped up to create a space in which our older children could ask questions in confronting this. I appreciate having such a dedicated professional team and Executive here that we prioritised and shared everything that needed to be done. I am most of all full of admiration for the courage of Angelina, Matthew, David and Ethan in facing what has happened, and living with the beautiful memories of Amelie and Daniel.

Never has community been so important. In the face of such brutality and hurt, our values are all the more needed. We must truly and authentically believe that love, care, peace, and community will prevail. We must stand together and gather others in the world to stand for these values too. This community has never been so important. We support each other during joyful and difficult times. As El Male Rachamim, the ancient prayer for the deceased says, ‘let their souls be woven into the weave of life’, bitzror ha’chayim. For anyone still wanting to contribute to the foundation set up in memory of Amelie and Daniel to help families whose lives have been overturned in Sri Lanka you can do so here, https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/amelieanddaniel

Rabbi Benji Stanley
Jews in the City 1
Bernard Waley-Cohen
(1914–1991)

The two families from whom Sir Bernard Waley-Cohen took his name were among the prominent long-standing Anglo-Jewish families often known as The Cousinhood. Nathaniel Cohen had married Julia Waley, and his son Robert was the first to put the two names together, though Robert’s son, Bernard, added the hyphen. In his book The Cousinhood, Chaim Bermant wrote, speaking of Robert who was, he said, not an observant Jew but liked to say the Priestly Blessing, ‘with his Prayer Shawl over his head and arms outstretched, he looked like some dark avenging angel, except that angels in Jewish lore were created to receive orders, whereas Cohen believed he was born to give them. He was nature’s own managing director.’

Robert was educated at Clifton College, in Polack’s House - founded by his great-uncle Lionel Cohen - to which he later sent both his sons; he had married Alice Beddington of the wealthy Moses family. Alice was a keen horsewoman, an interest of both families and their descendants, but according to the biographer of her husband, Robert Henriques, ‘had no notion of keeping house and could scarcely look after herself.’ She turned out to be an inveterate gambler.

Bernard Waley-Cohen and his twin sister Hetty, were Robert and Alice’s first children, born in 1914. Robert, usually known as Bob, was by now working for Shell for whom he later became Managing Director. He was knighted in 1920, after Shell had played an important part in the war. He bought for his growing family the large house in Hampstead, neighbouring Kenwood House, Caen Wood Towers, and later a country home near Exmoor.

After Clifton, Bernard went to Magdalene College, Cambridge, reading Modern History, and then joined Lloyds, becoming an underwriter. He was a broad-shouldered, athletic young man, with aspirations to join the Navy, but an eye accident while out riding put an end to that. Instead he had to earn a living, in spite of his family wealth. Unable to enlist because of the injury, when war broke out he became an executive officer attached to the Port of London Emergency Service and also Commander of the Exmoor Patrol of the Home Guard. He was one of the few descendants of the Cohen dynasty to marry within the faith – the Rev. Ephraim Levine later recalled that his father was overjoyed; ‘he came dancing into the room to tell me the news, and to see Sir Robert dancing was quite a spectacle’. He married Joyce Nathan, daughter of Major Nathan, a senior partner in a city law firm; she was a highly intelligent woman, went to St Felix School, Southold, and Girton College, Cambridge, and then worked at the Ministry of Fuel and Power, where Bernard was also employed alongside Harold Wilson. They had met at London parties before she went to Cambridge and his friends said he wooed her until she was old enough to receive his proposal.

Bernard was appointed vice-chairman of the Palestine Corporation and the Union Bank of Israel

After the war he turned to banking, a field in which he made both his name and his fortune, combining his life in the City with his love of country life. He spent as much time as possible on his farm in the West Country, and became chairman of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds. This was later to lead to many confrontations with those opposed to hunting and blood sports, the Press joining in avidly with unflattering portraits and accounts of his business transactions.

Not long after he had resumed his city life, Bernard was appointed vice-chairman of the Palestine Corporation and the Union Bank of Israel. His distinction as a City servant led to his election as Alderman of the Portsoken Ward and then at the early age of thirty-five, as a lieutenant for the City of London, leading to his appointment as Sheriff. He referred proudly to his ancestor Sir David Salomon, the first Jewish Lord Mayor, following in Sir David’s footsteps when he too was created first KBE and then Lord Mayor himself, the seventh Jew and the second youngest individual to hold the post. During his term of office, he introduced a Midsummer Banquet, now an important and enjoyable part of the City calendar.

Joyce Waley-Cohen proved herself to be one of the most distinctive Lady Mayoresses, holding elegant parties at Mansion House, always beautifully dressed and a most gracious hostess. She coped efficiently with her duties in the City, her home in Somerset and that in London, while bringing up their four children. She believed strongly in a full education for girls (though she was in favour of single-sex schools), holding many posts in the educational field including the presidency of the Independent Schools Information Service. At the same time she was chairman of Westminster Children’s Hospital and a
J.P. Like her husband, she rode to hounds, was a keen gardener and loved country crafts.

The duties of Lord Mayor of London suited Bernard Waley-Cohen, demanding the full extent of his energies, not only in the City but abroad, in order to pursue the links between London, the Far East and New Zealand and Australia. Wherever he went he took with him his mayoral chain of office and his robes, to show his respect for the position he held. At the end of his term he was created the first Baronet Waley-Cohen.

This was by no means the end of Bernard’s public service. He became chairman of University College, London, the first university to accept Jews, Master of the Clothworkers Company, on the Board of Clifton College, with a serving interest in the College of Arms, the St. Paul’s Cathedral Appeal and the Marshall Aid Commemorative Commission. He also managed to find time to breed and win prizes for pedigree Devon cattle. Bermant says, ‘His eyes light up and his voice softens at any mention of country life or country pursuits’.

Bernard Waley-Cohen was not a particularly devout Jew, but he always held his religion and his ancestry in the highest esteem. He believed strongly in loyalty to the Jewish cause, and at the same time paid much attention to interfaith relations. Not a particularly attractive figure in his later years, he was respected greatly in the City with an affable and compassionate personality. He and Joyce had four children: Rosalind Burdon, married to businessman and former New Zealand politician and Cabinet Minister, The Hon. Philip Burdon; Sir Stephen Waley-Cohen, a theatrical producer who inherited the title; Joanna Waley-Cohen, an academic and specialist in China, and Robert Waley-Cohen, an entrepreneur and chairman of Cheltenham Race Course, whose son is the amateur jockey Sam Waley-Cohen.

Sir Bernard Waley-Cohen died in 1991 in Somerset so ‘his friends could be brought together to remember me and speak of me not in any mournful sense but more in the sense that they have enjoyed my friendship as much as I have enjoyed theirs’.

Philippa Bernard

Other Jewish Lord Mayors of London:

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>David Salomons</td>
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<td>1865</td>
<td>Benjamin Phillips</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>Marcus Samuel</td>
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<td>1943</td>
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<td>1998</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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In 1942 an extraordinary election took place for the 1943 Mayoralty between two Jewish Sheriffs, Sir Samuel Joseph and Sir Frank Pollitzer. Sir Frank had earlier withdrawn due to his age, but was encouraged to stand again. There was a certain amount of crude anti-Semitism voiced during the election, but Sir Samuel won. He was the father of the Cabinet Minister Sir Keith Joseph.

Philippa Bernard

Late one night in a prestigious law firm, a new trainee discovers the Senior Partner standing in front of the shredder, holding a document and looking puzzled.

‘Can you help me to work this thing?’ enquires the stereotypically technophobic Partner.

‘Of course’ beams the eager trainee - desperate to impress.

The trainee feeds the document into the shredder and they both watch, smiling, as it descends into the stationery afterlife.

At this point, the Partner turns to the trainee, ‘Right, I'll just need two copies please...’

Morris and Sam are sitting at the back of the Shul. Every few minutes, Sam shuffle his feet and winces in pain.

‘What’s the matter?’ whispers Morris.

‘My feet are killing me. My shoes are too small’

‘My son crashed my car, my daughter has abandoned her studies, even though it cost me a fortune to send her to University and I am about to be made redundant. But when I take my shoes off, life feels wonderful!’

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David Bomberg (1890-1957)

Cubist, Abstract Expressionist, Vorticist, Modernist, Futurist, Fauvist, this extraordinary artist was expelled from the Slade School of Art in 1913 because he refused to conform to any particular genre. One wonders what drove him. Despite his many friends he was basically an isolationist, turning down an invitation from Wyndham Lewis to become a formal member of the Vorticists group. Bomberg was one of the most audacious of the exceptional generation of artists who studied at the Slade. Born in Birmingham, the fifth of eleven children of Polish Jewish parents, David Bomberg’s work was neglected in his lifetime, probably because he was unclassifiable. Today, he is recognised as one of the leading British artists of the twentieth century, with a prolific output. In 1885 his family had moved to Whitechapel and in 1905, at the age of fifteen he was apprenticed to Paul Fischer, a lithographer. However, he left him in 1908 to join the City and Guilds School for evening classes and also Westminster School of Art where he was instructed by Walter Sickert. When he was twenty-one, he was awarded a place at the Slade with the help of John Singer Sargent and the Jewish Education Aid Society. He was one of the most audacious of the exceptional generation of artists who studied at the Slade. In 1885 his family had moved to Whitechapel and in 1905, at the age of fifteen he was apprenticed to Paul Fischer, a lithographer. However, he left him in 1908 to join the City and Guilds School for evening classes and also Westminster School of Art where he was instructed by Walter Sickert. When he was twenty-one, he was awarded a place at the Slade with the help of John Singer Sargent and the Jewish Education Aid Society. He was one of the Whitechapel Boys, a group of Jewish artists most of whom had attended the Slade. Among his contemporaries there were Mark Gertler, Paul Nash, Christopher Nevinson and Stanley Spencer. His pencil portrait of his friend, the poet and artist, Isaac Rosenberg, won him the Henry Tonks Prize. He also produced his most ambitious and innovative painting so far, Vision of Ezekiel. He worked as a life model in order to earn his keep and was able to travel to Paris in 1913 after his expulsion from the Slade because of his increasingly radical style, influenced by Cubism and Futurism. In Paris he met Picasso, Modigliani and Kisling. His early paintings were very angular and geometric.

He became a member of the London Group in whose first exhibition he showed five of his works. He also organised the Jewish section of a show at the Whitechapel Gallery – Twentieth Century Art: A Review of Modern Movements.

The outbreak of the First World War brought an abrupt end to a dynamic phase in British Art. Partly prompted by financial circumstances, Bomberg enlisted in the Royal Engineers in 1915 - transferring to the King’s Royal Rifle Corps the following year - and his experiences of the horror of war profoundly changed his perspective. The death of his brother in the trenches, as well as that of Isaac Rosenberg, affected him deeply. His work became less angular, softer and more rounded. The following year he married Alice Mayes - about whom there is little or no information. He received a commission from the Canadian War Memorial Fund for a large painting, Sappers at Work, which he completed in 1919 and which is in the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.

David Bomberg was demobbed in 1919 and in 1922, he and Alice went to stay in Lugano with Ben and Winifred Nicholson. But the trip was a ‘great fiasco’ according to Alice: ‘David hated being hauled out in the snow on painting expeditions, expected to play the maestro and teach them how to paint. Finally, there was a show-down and they paid our fares home, glad to get rid of us!’

He decided to go to Palestine in 1923 where he and Alice stayed for four years and settled in Jerusalem, where they remained until the autumn of 1927, renting a house in the hills. This period was a crucial turning point for him, painting landscapes in the open air. Whilst there, he went on a six-month expedition to Petra. He embarked on a focused study of the scenery in and around Jerusalem. He developed a love of working directly from nature, and landscape painting became the major part of his output for the rest of his career. A one-man exhibition of paintings of Palestine and Petra followed. At this time, he and Alice separated.

His wanderlust then took him in 1929 to Spain; here he spent most of his time in Toledo. After a short while back in England he visited Cuenca, Ronda, the Asturian mountains, Morocco and Cyprus - his greatest period of painting and drawing in landscape. He returned to London, ill with jaundice. He then took up with Lillian Holt, a painter and later a founding member of the Borough Group.

At about this time Bomberg was introduced to Arthur Willey who was buying pictures for three collectors in Bradford. Willey bought many paintings from Bomberg; this was one of the rare times that he ever had any substantial patronage or sales during his lifetime. It was these sales that made possible the ensuing trips to Russia and Spain. He spent six months in Russia and eighteen months in Spain. This seems to have imbued his work with a more vigorous style with looser brushwork.
Encouraged by his sister Kitty and her husband James Newmark, both Bomberg and Lillian joined the Communist party in 1933. Bomberg painted banners for demonstrations and attended mass unemployment rallies. In July they visited Russia for five months and gradually grew disillusioned with the Communists’ effect on art. On their return to London they resigned from the Party.

In 1934, he and Lillian went to Spain, living first at Cuenca and then Ronda in Andalucia. This was an ideal place for Bomberg, who wanted to define nature’s fundamental dynamism. Here, Dinora, his only child was born. However, the onset of internal dissensions in Spain became so alarming that the family rushed to Santander in time to catch a boat for England just before the outbreak of the Civil War.

He held a one-man exhibition at London’s Cooling Gallery in the June of 1936, which was treated with disdain by most critics - and which did not sell anything. He then started painting portraits of himself and his immediate family. In 1940 he and Lillian married.

Although his application as a War Artist had been refused twice, Bomberg finally became an official War Artist during World War II. He was commissioned by the War Artists Committee to produce a painting of an underground bomb store. Fascinated by the bombs stacked in the disused mines, he produced a large number of images, all showing his consciousness of the bombs’ destructive purpose. The painting was rejected by the Committee - but they did then accept three bomb store drawings. Bomberg suffered increasingly from long periods of depression, during which he was unable to paint, but encouraged by Lillian, he began a series of flower paintings. He also taught drawing to gun crews in Hyde Park, and held various part-time teaching posts at Hammersmith, Battersea and Clapham.

After the War his career was dominated by teaching and his inspirational drawing classes at the Borough Polytechnic from 1943 to 1946 attracted many young students, including Leon Kossoff and Frank Auerbach. However, he felt bitter that he was unable to obtain a teaching post in any of the most prestigious London art schools. In 1944 he went on a painting expedition to Exmoor and South Devon before returning to the Polytechnic. He also taught drawing, one day a week, at the Bartlett School of Architecture.

David Bomberg was a complicated character and in 1952 he went to stay with his daughter for a year, having fallen out with Lillian. While he was there, he painted Mother of Venus. Then, reconciled, he and Lillian moved back to Ronda where they tried to found a school of painting and drawing – this did not succeed and Lillian returned to London without him.

his art remained overlooked in Britain

In his final years Bomberg resented the fact that his art remained overlooked in Britain, despite the fact that his landscapes and figure paintings included some of his most powerful works. He continued to live in Spain - with remittances from his wife and his sister - until 1957 when he collapsed. He was taken to hospital in Gibraltar and from thence to St. Thomas’s Hospital in London where he died penniless - tragically unaware that he would later become known as one of Britain’s foremost artists.

Claire Connick

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Claire Connick

Bomb Store 1942

The Knesset is the Israeli parliament. The word ‘Knesset’ does not appear in the Bible but we see it later in the Koran in the Arabic language. Their word was Kinshtain which, in Aramaic, means a gathering or assembly. Today, the members of the Israeli parliament are called Members of the Knesset.

The name Knesset was chosen because the founders of the State of Israel saw a great resemblance between their own generation and that of the people who came back from Babylon after the exile. According to tradition, the Great Knesset was founded then. Writing in the Israeli newspaper Ha’aretz, Elon Gilad remarks that the Great Knesset was not established at the time of the return from the Babylonian exile or else that it was perhaps given another name.

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah there is no mention of the Great Knesset. The Sanhedrin, not the Knesset, was the name of the rabbinical institution after the destruction of the Second Temple. It was founded by Yochanan ben Zakkai who left Jerusalem and obtained Roman permission to establish a Pharisaiac academy at Yavneh. The academy at Yavneh was recognised by Rome as the official leadership of the Jewish people.

The sages took practical action to implement a post-Temple, non-priestly form of Judaism. The emphasis was on education, steadfast love and knowledge of God and not on sacrifice. The title Rabbi came into general use.

It was the historical form of assembly that influenced the founders of Israel, after the British took over Palestine. The first cycle of elections took place and the first assembly was in 1920, when the committee, under the British Mandate, represented a form of government of the pre-State of Israel.

Ilana Alexander
The Spanish Inquisition

Although 1492 is usually considered the year of the commencement of the Spanish Inquisition, the oppression of the Jews of Spain actually began much earlier. After the destruction of the Second Temple, many Jews fled eastward, escaping Roman control, and settled in the Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish community in the Middle Ages was the largest in Europe. It was composed of a well-ordered, wealthy group of Jews, educated, cultured and of intellectual distinction.

By the eighth century, the Berber Muslims had conquered nearly all of the Peninsula. Under Muslim rule, Spain flourished, and Jews and Christians were granted the status of dhimmī - a historical term referring to non-Muslims living in an Islamic state with legal protection. Though this still did not afford them equal rights with Muslims, during this ‘Golden Age’ of Spain, Jews rose to great prominence in society, business, and government. The conditions in Spain improved so much under Muslim rule that Jews from all across Europe came to live there during this Jewish renaissance. Here they flourished in business and in the fields of astronomy, philosophy, mathematics, science, medicine, and religious study. The same period also witnessed a resurgence of Hebrew poetry and literature from a traditional and liturgical language to a living language, able to be used to describe everyday life.

Among the early Hebraists of the time were Yehudah HaLevi who became known as one of the first great Hebrew poets, and Menahem ben Saruq who compiled the first-ever Hebrew dictionary.

The intellectual achievements of the Sephardim enriched the lives of non-Jews as well. In addition to contributions of original work, they translated Greek and Arabic texts, which proved instrumental in bringing the fields of science, medicine and philosophy - much of the basis of Renaissance learning - to the rest of Europe. However, gradually Muslim control began to turn upon the Spanish Jews, and in 1066, a date important for Spain as well as for England, a Muslim mob stormed the royal palace in Granada, crucified the Jewish vizier Joseph ibn Naghrela and massacred most of the Jewish population of the city. More than 1,500 Jewish families, numbering 4,000 persons, were murdered in just one day.

Gradually the Jewish population of Spain began to realise that their only hope of release from oppression and violence was to become Christian, at least in name. These converted Jews were sometimes known as New Christians, in contradistinction to the original Old Christians, or as Marranos. This name may owe its origin to various interpretations of Hebrew, Arabic or Spanish, but it certainly at one time meant ‘swine’, considered an appropriate epithet for a converted Jew. As the action taken against Jews increased the number of conversos grew until they often outnumbered even the old Christians. With the populace as well as the authorities aware of their origins, even a generation later, these converted Jews found themselves the objects of terrible violence.

The tragedy of 1391, when many Jews were killed, would not have been possible without Ferrand Martinez, Archdeacon of Ecija, a province of Seville, whose actions ignited this appalling outbreak against the Jewish people. Martinez used political anti-Judaism to stir up the people against them, and Henry of Trastamara - who became King of Castile when he killed his half-brother, Pedro I - tried to control Martinez but little notice was taken of his efforts. The death of the King left Martinez free to resume his efforts. He ordered the synagogues of Seville to be destroyed and claimed that the Crown had no authority over him and that he was subject only to the Catholic Church. He ignored orders to rebuild the synagogues and to stop preaching against the Jews. Violence finally erupted on June 6th when around 4,000 Jews in Seville were murdered, their houses attacked and destroyed; those who weren’t killed were terrified into converting in an attempt to avoid the slaughter.

This violence against the Jews originated in Castile, and acted as a catalyst for further violence continuing through other cities and towns within three months, as city after city followed the example set in Seville, and Jews faced either conversion and baptism or death. As this fanaticism and persecution spread throughout the rest of the Kingdom of Castile, there was no accountability held for the murders and sacking of the Jewish houses, and estimates claim that there were 50,000 victims. Many of the Marranos, apparently converted to Christianity, continued to preserve their Jewish traditions and family customs, and to worship in secret.

Although the persecution of Spanish Jews had been a feature of the Catholic church in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, it was not until 1478 that Pope Sixtus IV issued the Bull Exigit sinceras devotionis affectus (Sincere Devotion Is Required). In 1499, Prince Ferdinand of Aragon had married his cousin, the Castilian heiress Isabella. Five years later, Isabella ascended her
country’s throne. It was a formidable alliance, both of personalities and of political destinies.

The Bull authorized the King and Queen to choose a team of higher clergy as well as laymen, for the purpose of conducting investigations regarding matters of faith. The first two Inquisitors - both Dominicans - were appointed two years later, and the Grand Inquisition started in Seville. The purpose was the need to root out heretics who ‘daily return to the superstitious and perfidious sect of the Jews. Not only have they persisted in their blind and obstinate heresy, but their children and descendents do likewise’.

Many of the Marranos were wealthy, a feature much to the taste of Ferdinand, and they included many of the nobility who had intermarried with the original Jews. Many fled to Cadiz, hoping to avoid the first pogroms, but orders were sent out to all dukes, counts, grandmasters, knights and alcades (magistrates) to surrender all Marranos in their lands and to confiscate their property. Any who refused were threatened with excommunication and their properties seized. At the castle of Triana near Seville the Tribunals began. In 1483, Ferdinand and Isabella established a State Council to administer the Inquisition, with the Dominican Friar Tomás de Torquemada acting as its president.

The most brutal feature of the Inquisition was the establishment of the auto da fé (act of faith). It involved a Catholic Mass, prayer, a public procession of those found guilty, and a reading of their sentences. A session usually began with the public proclamation of a grace period of forty days. Anyone who was guilty or knew of someone who was guilty was urged to confess. If the accused were charged, they were presumed guilty. Officials could apply torture during the trial. Inquisitors were required to hear and record all testimony while proceedings were kept secret, and the identity of witnesses was not known to the accused.

Preparations for an auto-da-fé began a month in advance, and only occurred when the Inquisition authorities believed there were enough prisoners in a given community or city. An all-night vigil would be held with prayers, ending in Mass at daybreak and a breakfast feast prepared for all who joined in. The ceremony of public penitence then began with a procession of prisoners, who bore elaborate visual symbols on their garments and bodies. These symbols were called sanbenito, and were made of yellow sackcloth. They served to identify the specific acts of treason of the accused, whose identities were kept secret until the very last moment. In addition, the prisoners usually had no idea what the outcome of their trial had been or their sentencing. The prisoners were taken outside the city walls to a place called the quemadero or burning place. There the sentences were read. Prisoners who were acquitted or whose sentence was suspended would fall on their knees in thanksgiving but the condemned would be punished by burning at the stake. The auto-da-fé was also a form of penitence for the public viewers, because they too were engaging in a process of reconciliation and by being involved were given the chance to confront their sins and be forgiven by the Church. The wealth of those condemned to death was seized by the royal treasury.

A dispensation was offered to all Marranos who were observing Jewish customs to appear before the court voluntarily in return for which they were promised absolution and their life and property held safe. But when they did so they were ordered first to betray their fellows and then were finally dragged into the prisons of the Inquisition. A list of ‘sins’ was issued by which these Marranos might be recognised. They included celebrating the Sabbath, eating meat during Lent, not eating on the Day of Atonement, celebrating Passover with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, marrying as Jews and giving their children Jewish names, circumcising their sons, and many other Jewish traditions even including blessing their children and not eating pork.

The cruelties of the Inquisition grew even more violent after the appointment of Torquemada. His name has ever since been associated with torture. In 1492 at Torquemada’s urging, Ferdinand and Isabella issued an edict giving Spanish Jews the choice of exile or baptism; as a result, more than 160,000 Jews were expelled from Spain, many moving to Holland - a safe haven - and some secretly to England (where Jews were not permitted to live.)

The number of Jews killed during the Inquisition varies considerably. It was only formally abolished in the early nineteenth century, and many urban myths have arisen since. It is usually assumed that between 3,000 and 5,000 were put to death, but varying numbers have been put forward ranging from millions to a few hundred. The Church has at various times attempted to justify its actions, claiming that it was its Holy Duty to do away with heresy. So has the Jewish community in Spain, in going ‘underground’ to avoid the persecutions.

A book published in 1995 by Benzion Netanyahu (father of the Prime Minister of Israel) developed a theory according to which the Marranos converted to Christianity, not under compulsion, but out of a desire to integrate into Christian society. However, as New Christians they continued to be persecuted due to racism, and not purely for religious reasons, as was previously believed. He argued that what was new in the fifteenth century was the Spanish monarchy’s practice of defining Jews not religiously, but racially, by the principle of limpieza de sangre, purity of blood; which served as a model for twentieth century racial theories. Netanyahu rejected the idea that the Marranos lived double lives, claiming that this theory arose from Inquisition documents. The many debates and discussions about the Spanish Inquisition may have tended to obscure one of the most infamous persecutions in history against the Jewish people, outdated in horror only by the Holocaust.

Philippa Bernard
The Hidden Jews of Mallorca - A Story of Discovery and Renewal

What does a few days in Mallorca conjure up for you? Relaxing by the pool, walks along the beach, lazy lunches and afternoon siestas for sure, but discovering a little known and fascinating history of a Jewish community that is enjoying a revival? Probably not. This is the story of how my family connected with a lovely and inspiring New Jersey man who has made Mallorca his home and the Jews of Mallorca his passion.

It all started when my sister Caroline and I booked an Airbnb for a few days away over half term with our families. I spotted an advertisement for a tour of Jewish Mallorca. Of course, I knew about the illustrious history of the Jewish community in places like Toledo, Seville and Cordoba. But I had never heard of a Jewish community in Mallorca. Intrigued, we got in touch with our guide and reserved our places.

The day dawned bright and sunny and we headed from our poolside retreat to Palma. We were greeted by a smiling American guy, Dani Rotstein. How did a man from New Jersey come to find himself giving tours of a Jewish community on a small island off the coast of Spain? He explained how his love of Spain had started with a Junior Year Abroad. After years in the rat race of New York City, he decided to return to Spain in search of life at a slower pace. He landed an interview with a TV production facility in Mallorca. He had visited the island before the day of his interview. Armed with a job offer, he relocated. He learned of a tiny Jewish community of other expats and then discovered to his amazement the story of native Mallorquins who can trace their roots to the medieval Jews of Mallorca. He fell in love with his new surroundings and with the people of the Jewish community that had a very particular and little-known story to tell.

Our very first stop brought to life both Mallorca’s important historical role and the way in which the Jewish community had played a central part in this history. Dani brought us to the statue of Jafuda ben Cresques. Jafuda came from a family of cartographers. Together with his father, Cresques ben Abraham, they probably produced one of the most famous medieval maps, the Catalan Atlas. At the time, Mallorca was a major stopping point on the trading routes, dating back to Roman and Phoenician times, so a skilled cartographer would have been much in demand.

The history of Jews in Mallorca dates back a thousand years. Indeed, in its early days, Mallorca was seen as a place of refuge from the persecutions on mainland Spain in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The thirteenth century Spanish rulers actually protected the Jewish Community, who were allowed to follow their own customs and to work as usurers without fear of retribution either from the King or from attacks by other communities. At the time, Christians were not allowed to lend money and charge interest to other Christians. Therefore, the King allowed the Jews to become the Crown’s money lenders and this was one of the many reasons that they were protected.

This all started to change towards the end of the thirteenth century when two German Christians who had been refused the possibility of converting to Judaism elsewhere, were accepted for conversion by the Mallorcan community. The local Bishop was furious and fined the Jewish community heavily and confiscated some of their goods.

Things settled down for a while, but the mounting indebtedness of the Christian community to the Jewish community due to usury, caused tensions to rise again. On 2nd August 1391, 300 Jews were massacred and even Christians who were sheltering Jews were killed. Despite that calamity, things settled for another generation as the community settled back into a comfortable life, well integrated with the local people. But persecution came back with a vengeance. In 1435, a rumour was spread that Jews had crucified a Saracen during Holy Week. This was used as the catalyst for attacks and forced conversions that saw the Jewish community effectively wiped out.

Faced with forced conversion or death, the Jews were gathered together by the Rabbi who led them to be converted as a group. This mass conversion took place at the Church of Santa Eulalia which we saw on the tour. As a result of the conversions, in the year 1435, Mallorca was the first place in all of Spain to abolish the practice of Judaism. In 1492, when the Catholic Monarchs decreed that all Jews had to leave Spain, there were no more Jews living in Mallorca.

Since the community had converted principally for survival reasons rather than due to a change in religious belief, these new converts continued to follow the ‘Law of Moses’, as it was called then, in secret at great personal risk. Dani showed us courtyards hidden behind big gates that allowed them to carry on some of their practices. However, they were constantly being watched by the Mallorquin Inquisition, set up in 1488, whose headquarters sat in the same place as the current Plaza Mayor until 1823. For example, the authorities used to walk through the neighbourhood on Shabbat looking for chimneys that hadn’t been lit – a sign of a Jewish family observing this day of rest. Just next to the Plaza, where the Black House used to stand, one can see a very small sign that says ‘Slope of the Inquisition’ in Spanish, alluding to the stairs which the condemned used in the ‘Law of Moses’, as it was called then, in secret at great personal risk.

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The community members’ efforts to hide their Jewish activities were not enough and in 1688 they were discovered and denounced. About forty members of the...
The crypto-Jewish community led by their honorary rabbi at the time, Rafael Valls, tried to escape with an English captain and his boat. A terrible storm came up that evening making it impossible for them to set sail. Upon re-entering the city they were caught and forced to implicate the rest of their community members who had decided to stay behind. For three years the group that had tried to escape were tortured in the secret prisons of the Inquisition until 1691 when they were all burned at the stake outside the city underneath the Bellver Castle in a place called Plaza Gomila.

This past August, the City Hall finally erected a small but poignant memorial in their memory. Three martyrs on that fateful day of 6th May, 1691 decided not to renounce their faith and kiss the cross offered to them and were subsequently burned alive in front of 30,000 people. Their names were Rafael Valls, Caterina Tarongi, and her brother Rafael Tarongi. In May 2018, a street was named in Caterina’s honour in what Dani described as a moving ceremony by the City Hall. After their execution, the last names of those murdered were hung in the Santo Domingo Church for generations of families to come and remember them. These fifteen families were identified - fifteen last names that are still associated with these ‘fake Catholics’ - and to this day are known and singled out for particular attention.

Once they had been discovered, the remaining crypto-Jews recommitted to the Catholic faith and went out of their way to demonstrate their commitment to Christianity. They became known as the Chueta or Xuetas - a word that means pork eaters - to mark their commitment to sever all ties with their Jewish roots. Dani showed us a culinary example of this commitment - ensaimades. These were originally a Jewish cake, made with olive oil, but they switched to using pork fat or saim to signal that in all aspects of their lives, they were renouncing their heritage. To this day, it is almost impossible to find ensaimades made without pork fat. But Dani told us that, with a few days’ notice, he could get one for us. As another signal of their determination to move away from their Jewish faith, the Chuetas would make a point of working during Shabbat.

To this day, ‘doing Sabbath’ is local slang for having to do chores. Despite their determination to demonstrate their commitment to the Catholic faith, these fifteen Chueta families, were not accepted by the Christian Community. They were ostracised and marked out to the extent that they could only marry within their own community of approximately 20,000 people. Dani told the story of a leading member of the Chueta community who married a non-Chueta. His non-Chueta wife’s family came to the Church service dressed entirely in black.

These native Mallorquins were always treated as the other for not having pure blood. In fact a list was produced during the Holocaust and the entire group was almost sent to Germany even though they were some of the most devout and practising Catholics. Luckily, the Mallorquin clergy intercepted the request. They massively inflated the number of Chuetas to the extent that one third of the community was linked to them – at which point the threat of deportation was dropped.

Around thirty years ago, some of these Chuetas started to reconnect with their Jewish heritage. Some of them reconverted back to Judaism formally, but others felt that there was no need to convert as they were direct descendants of Jewish forebears. This sentiment was reinforced by part, but not all of the orthodox Jewish community.

Dani told us all these stories and many more on a magical three-hour walking tour of the quiet streets in a beautiful area of Mallorca. He showed us where the synagogues had been – including one hidden behind a bakery, with two exits for safety, and another now converted into a beautiful church. We ended the tour at a small and very poorly sign-posted museum. Along the way, Dani regaled us with tales that wove together centuries of history and the minutiae of day-to-day life.
A is for the **ATLANTIC OCEAN** at Bathsheba, one of a few Jewish names to be found on the Island. The east coast is much wilder than the west Caribbean coast, with big waves to surf (for those who do) and wonderful long walks on the beaches or along the cliffs. The **ANIMAL FLOWER CAVE** is to be found at the northern-most tip of the Island and whilst we didn’t actually go down into the cave (you take your life in your hands walking down the very steep steps) the views were spectacular and worth the one-hour drive on winding lanes through the sugar cane fields.

**ADOPT A SHELTER.** Ian Gilbert, the son of a Nidhe Israel Synagogue (NIS) member told us about a friend of his from school who, as a young man, convinced the Government to let him upkeep all the bus shelters on the Island and in return, he sells advertising and keeps the profit - so enterprising!

B is for the **BOARDWALK** at Hastings Beach, about 2 km long and which we tried to walk most days. **B** is also for **BRIGHTON FARMERS MARKET** on Saturday mornings, a fete and social gathering where eating breakfast at 7 am is equally important to the weekly shop. The local and indigenous **BREADFRUIT**, made into mash pies or fried and eaten like (yummy) chips, and for **BARBADOS BLACK-BELLY SHEEP** that look very much like goats. And for **BANKS BEER**, the local brew, very welcome on a hot day.

C is for the **CARIBBEAN SEA** at **CARLISLE BAY**, for **CHEFETTE**, Barbados’s version of fast food, and for the **CLIFF**, very likely the most expensive restaurant on the island and a celeb spot. It’s also for the colourful **CHATTEL HOUSES**, wooden dwellings strongly associated with Barbados’ heritage, **CUTTERS** (Bajan sandwiches), **COCONUTS** and **COCONUT WATER** which you can buy by the roadside, and for **COCKERELS**, which are to be seen and heard everywhere you go on the Island. **D** is for **DOVES** of all colours, and **DRIVE-IN** movies, which we actually didn’t get to experience (yet!).

E is for **EARTHWORKS**, a wonderful local pottery, owned and run by a member of the Jewish community, David Spieler. It’s a great place to visit and to buy beautiful pieces that truly reflect the beauty of the island.

F is the National **FLAG** of Barbados. The blue represents the sea and sky, the gold the sand of the island’s beaches. The central symbol represents the Trident of the mythical sea god, Neptune, its shaft is broken, symbolising Barbados’ break from Britain. Also for **FLYING FISH**, the National Bajan fish, and lots and lots of other **FISH** we’ve never eaten, such as Barracuda, Marlin, Congolese, Mahi Mahi; and for the 2019 **FILM FESTIVAL** where we were lucky enough to go twice and where we heard the Barbados Prime Minister speak.

**G** is for the local **GREEN MONKEY** which came to visit us every day on our porch between 4.30-5.30. Also for **GARRISON**, the historic British military base, home to the famous Savannah race course where plantation owners used to race their horses. It is also for the **GRAPEFRUIT TREE**, thought locally to have been first developed in Barbados.
H is for HUNTE’S GARDEN, an enchanting place to explore. The legendary horticulturalist Anthony Hunte sometimes even greets visitors himself, with welcoming stories and a refreshing glass of rum punch. It’s also for HUMMINGBIRDS and for Bajan HOT PEPPER SAUCE which is smothered on to most food. I is for INDEPENDENCE. Barbados has enjoyed independence from British colonial rule since 1966. J is for the JEWISH COMMUNITY in Barbados, who welcomed us so warmly, and the Barbados JEWISH MUSEUM which traces the history of the Bajan Jews back to the 1600s and the earliest days of settlement on the Island.

K is for the KENSINGTON OVAL STADIUM and the ‘Windies’ v England Test match which we were lucky enough to attend – although the result wasn’t what we hoped for. L is for LA CUCARACHA, the taxi-horn blasts heard at all times of the day and night ... and for LOUIS ARMSTRONG’S What a wonderful World, very much the theme and motto of our hosts, the Orans, President of the Barbados Jewish Community.

M is for MASSY, the local supermarket where you can buy virtually any Waitrose product! and for the scary MAN-O’-WAR we found on the Atlantic coast. It’s also for the local MONGOOSE. We were told it’s good luck to have one scurry across the road in front of you. N is for NIDHE ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE in Bridgetown, a historic building renovated by the Community in 1987 to its past glory, and used by the Community during the height of the tourist season.

O is for OISTINS, the fish market and restaurant strip in the south of the Island. Friday nights rock! P is for PLANTATIONS, PALM TREES and POTHOLES - beware, they are deep and numerous. Q is for QUEENS PARK where the magnificent Baobab Tree, one of the largest trees on the island, is located. QUAYSIDE CENTRE in Hastings where Thomas enjoyed a good Espresso and Renee a Frappacino.

R is for RUM and also for the RUM SHOPS. It is likely that the Island is the birthplace of the drink; the sugar cane crop is documented from the mid 1640s. There are many Rum Museums to visit and local shops (rum stores) where you can enjoy a tipple. And ROUNDABOUTS, so many on the Island! S is for SPEIGHTSTOWN, the second largest town on the Island, where the Bridge of Tides mural is to be found. Research is currently being undertaken on a Lost Synagogue from the 17th Century.

T is for the beautiful Hawksbill and Leatherback TURTLES and the Barbados Sea TURTLE Project, which has been involved in their conservation for the past twenty-five years. It’s also for TUK BANDS - usually brightly attired musicians playing a bass drum, kettle drum and penny-whistle.

U is for UMBRELLA and for the Bridgetown UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE, which also incorporates the most beautiful Jewish 17th Century Mikveh and Cemetery, where skull-and-bones tombstones can be found. V is for VACATION and good VIBES. Barbados is the perfect holiday destination for R&R and to recharge the batteries. We are the living proof!

W is for our visit to the George WASHINGTON HOUSE in Bridgetown, the home of GW during his short stay on the Island when he was in his late teens. Y is for the Barbados members-only and famous YACHT CLUB, and Z is for ZEBRA CROSSINGS which, unbelievably, are often to be found immediately upon exiting the numerous roundabouts!
The West London Synagogue, then under the leadership of Rabbi Harold Reinhart, played an important part in caring for refugees in the terrible years of the Holocaust. Rabbi Reinhart was responsible for offering homes and ministerial positions to the German Rabbis deprived of their homes and their congregations. Many of the Reform Synagogues in this country owe their existence to those ministers finding sanctuary here. The efforts of the members of Upper Berkeley Street concentrated particularly on the children. The unimaginable traumas that they had experienced at such a young age would take years to fade. Rabbi Reinhart spoke privately to many of his members. This was not a job for a committee; it needed a personal touch. What was essential, Reinhart felt, was a house in a quiet neighbourhood, not too far from London, with a capable, caring woman to act as Matron, where these damaged boys and girls could begin to pick up the pieces of their interrupted lives. The Council agreed to vote the sum of £6,000 for the purchase of a hostel, but it was Sir Benjamin Drage who came to the rescue. He offered his beautiful house, Weir Courtney, near Lingfield in Surrey, for the use of some of these war-torn children. It was a large house set in fine gardens and it came to represent safety and sanctuary for the refugees.

The British Government had decided, even before the war had ended, to allow some 1,000 children who had survived the camps, to come to Britain under the auspices of the Jewish Refugee Movement and the Central British Fund. 850 were chosen to come and assembled at Prague Airport, where nine British bombers were waiting to take them to safety. They landed at a remote airfield in Wales, where they were met by Alice Goldberger and Leonard Montefiore, and were cared for to begin with, at Troutbeck Bridge near Windermere in the Lake District; then it was felt that small groups of houses or hostels would be more suitable.

The children who came to Lingfield were very young, from about four to nine years, many of them very damaged. They had been on the last bomber to leave Prague; two or three had come from Displaced Persons Camps, where they had hoped to be found by relatives, and some had spent their first years in Terezin. They came from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Italy and Poland. Most had lost their parents and were totally without any means of comfort or support. Harold Reinhart found in Alice Goldberger the perfect answer to their needs. Born in 1897, she was a German refugee herself and had worked there before the war in several child centres. She came to Britain in 1939 and was interned as an enemy alien on the Isle of Man where she set up a children’s facility. When released she was appointed superintendent of Anna Freud’s War Nurseries, helping to look after the children of British working mothers. As Matron of Lingfield she gave the children the affection and care they so badly needed. She was helped by a Catholic refugee, Sophie Wutsch, who became her right-hand woman and stayed with her for most of their lives.

At West London funds were urgently needed to maintain the home – it was the only one not under the direct control of the Central British Fund - and a Hostel Committee was now set up under the chairmanship of Mrs. Gladys Pinto, which established the yearly Lingfield Bazaar, a joint effort which took place every November in the Synagogue’s Stern Hall, raising many thousands of pounds.
When Lingfield House finally closed, the Annual Bazaar continued raising funds for the charities supported by the congregation. Alice Goldberger stayed with ‘her’ children, and in 1948 they took a house nearer London at Isleworth in Middlesex and renamed it Lingfield House.

In October 1978, Alice appeared on BBC Television’s *This is Your Life* with Eamonn Andrews as host, when several of the children appeared on the programme. Rabbi Hugo Gryn also took part. He had not lived at Lingfield but had often visited and took a particular interest in the children. Many tears were shed by those who took part in that programme and by those who watched. Two Italian sisters were rediscovered by their mother because of the publicity.

Alice took the children to worship at West London every Sabbath and High Holy Day Festivals, and will always be remembered, not only by the children she cared for but by all those who knew her. When the children were older and began to disperse, West London Synagogue installed Alice (and Sophie) in a large flat in Hampstead. She moved finally to Osmond House, the Jewish care home, and died at the age of eighty-eight in 1986. In the obituary printed in the *Synagogue Review*, Rabbi Hugo Gryn wrote of her that she became parent, teacher, play leader and ‘best friend’ to all of the Lingfield children, and to the end of her life she stayed in touch, worried about and, more than anything else, loved them.

Lingfield House and the children who lived there have now passed into the West London Synagogue’s history, but those who remember the children, the Annual Bazaar and especially the work of Alice and her helpers, will always derive comfort from this small corner of light in the darkness of the Holocaust.

Beatriz Nuñez

It is often assumed that during the 360-odd years between the banishment of the Jews from England under Edward I in 1290 and the resettlement in 1665, there were no Jews in this country. This is not so. We know that some stayed on, living quietly as Christians. Not many of these shadowy figures are known to us. But one Jewish woman flits through the pages of Anglo-Jewish history and has left behind a brief glimpse of how she lived through this difficult time.

Beatriz Nuñez was a member of a distinguished Jewish family. Born Beatriz Fernandes in 1568, she married Henrique Nuñez, a physician, who set up home in Bristol, with a small community of his fellow-religionists and held services in his house. Great care was needed as these were secret Jews, unable to admit their faith to the outside world. Henrique and his family kept in touch with their relatives overseas and were thus able to find out the dates of the Festivals and to celebrate them accordingly. Sephardi Jews, they welcomed any other Jews in England who had need of shelter and association with like-minded Jewish families.

Beatriz kept an observant home and taught the newly-arrived Marranos about Jewish observance and history, as well as prayers in Hebrew. She herself was strict in her observance of the Jewish tradition. If she needed to travel to London, where others of her faith and family were living – also secretly – she informed the innkeepers at the taverns where she was to stay and paid for new cooking utensils to be purchased so that she would not infringe any dietary laws. At Pesach she made the *matzos* for the whole community, and held a *Seder* in her home for anyone in Bristol wishing to attend.

Beatriz and her family left England to live in France and there is a record that a Beatriz Nuñez was martyred at an *auto-da-fé* in Madrid, a sad end for a noble Jewish housewife.
Anglo-Jewish History

Baron d’Aguilar of Starvation Farm

Lady Ashburton

When Lady Ashburton bought Kent House, or rather the derelict site where the first Kent House had stood, in about 1870, few of her noble friends and relations knew that she was the great granddaughter of one of the most eccentric Sephardi Jews in London, Baron Ephraim Lopes Pereira d’Aguilar was the second Baron d’Aguilar, a Barony of the Holy Roman Empire. His father, the first Baron, was Portuguese, having left that country because of religious persecution. In Vienna he handled the duties on tobacco and made a great deal of money out of it. He was appointed treasurer to the Empress Maria Theresa who granted him his title. He took his son, Ephraim, by now nearly twenty years old, along with his eleven other children, with him when he came to London in 1756. They became members of the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue, which benefited handsomely from the immensely wealthy D’Aguilar family.

Ephraim played a leading part in the affairs of the Bevis Marks Synagogue. He held the offices of Parnas (warden) and Gubbay (treasurer), donating handsomely to the congregation. Unfortunately his later behaviour and eccentricity caused him to quarrel with the leaders of the community and he relinquished his affiliation.

Soon after their arrival in London the Baron died, his son inheriting the title and a large estate. He became naturalised and married Sarah, the daughter of Moses Mendes da Costa, who brought to the marriage another large fortune. They had two daughters, Georgina and Caroline, but after five years Sarah died, and Ephraim soon married again, this time to Rebecca, widow of another da Costa. She too had a huge fortune from her previous marriage.

The D’Aguilar family lived well. They had a handsome home in Broad Street Buildings, near Liverpool Street, cared for by twenty servants, with several carriages. Ephraim also had a country home at Twickenham. However he had invested heavily in America and the coming of the War of Independence caused the Baron heavy losses. He decided to change his way of life, leaving the luxurious home the family had enjoyed, much to the chagrin of his wife. There was still ample money available, and they moved to Bethnal Green. The house there was hardly used as D’Aguilar was becoming increasingly moody and unpleasant. His wife and daughters found him difficult to live with, and a separation soon followed.

But although Twickenham too was shut up, like the house at Bethnal Green, Ephraim was not short of somewhere to live. He had another country estate at Sydenham, a town house in Aldersgate Street, and another in Camden Street in Islington. Not far away he bought a piece of land near to where Camden Passage is now, which he turned into a farmyard.

By now the Baron had abandoned any pretensions to his life as a gentleman. He was slovenly, even ragged, in his appearance, dirty and bedraggled as he went about the farm. The place was in terrible condition, like its owner, and his neglect of his animals earned his property the name of Starvation Farm. The cows were thin and in a poor state, ill fed and little cared for. The farmyard was never cleaned and the pigs often had to consume the poultry to obtain a decent meal. Ephraim himself, in spite of being brought up as an orthodox Jew, saw no reason not to use the plentiful bacon and pork for his own consumption. Passers-by shouted insults at him when they saw the state of the animals, though he took no notice. He preferred to see to the animals himself or at least to watch as his servants did. He loved to think of himself as master of all he surveyed, though the produce of the farm brought him little in the way of reward, financial or otherwise. It was described in a contemporary account as ‘a perfect dunghill’.

No self-respecting woman could be expected to tolerate such behaviour or such living conditions — for the house was almost as badly kept as the farm — so his wife and daughters soon left him to find a more congenial way of life. There was no shortage of money and they wanted for nothing. But the head of the household would permit no interference in his affairs. For some inexplicable reason he continued to contribute to the welfare of his fellow Jews, in spite of never spending a penny on himself. He was a liberal patron of public institutions and had the curious habit of offering shelter in his own home to homeless women and children, clothing and feeding them, offering them a wage if they wished to earn their keep as his servants. What else went on in the dilapidated farm house is not recorded.

To the amazement of the D’Aguilar family, after twenty years’ estrangement, the Baron suddenly decided to call on his wife. He visited her on several occasions and finally, suggesting a reconciliation, he moved in with her. But it was not long before he reverted to his old habits, behaving to his wife and daughters with his old arrogant uncivilised habits. He ordered his wife’s servants about, behaved with cruel treatment to the women refusing to listen to any words of complaint. On one occasion he locked his wife in her room, forcing her to escape through a window. Finally she could take no more and left to take up residence with relatives in Hackney.
Lady D’Aguilar sued for divorce and the case came before the King’s Bench. The case is of particular interest as it was the first petition for divorce between Jews to come before the English court. The case was heard before Lord Justice Stowell. Objections were made that the marriage was illegal as it had not been performed in church, but Lord Stowell upheld the validity of the marriage and granted the divorce. His remarks concerning the rights of Jews in English law laid a precedent which had considerable bearing on later litigation. He said, ‘The marriages of the Jews are expressly protected by the Marriage Acts and persons of that persuasion are as much entitled to the justice of the country as those of any other. Jews have the same rights of succession to property and of administration as other subjects.’

The Baron was present in court, though he made no intervention during the proceedings. The case was decided unanimously in favour of his wife, and her husband was judged to have behaved outrageously even to show his face in the court room. Finally he had the temerity to ask that costs should be shared equally between the plaintiff and the defendant. ‘Pray, gentlemen,’ he said, ‘make her pay half the expenses, for I am a very poor man, and it would be cruelty to distress me!’ Needless to say his plea was refused.

In an account of Baron d’Aguilar the Jewish Chronicle called him ‘a most singular character. A combination of vice and virtue; of misanthropy and benevolence; of cruelty and kindness; of avarice and liberality’. He gave his daughters no religious education, and he married them off with no regard to their religion or upbringing. Both married into the English nobility.

The Baron’s daughter Georgina married Vice Admiral Keith Stewart of Glasserton MP, with whom she had four sons. Their third son, James Alexander, also a Member of Parliament, married Margaret Mackenzie. It was their younger daughter Louisa who married William Bingham Baring, second Baron Ashburton, and became the chatelaine of Kent House, a very different home from Starvation Farm.

Philippa Bernard

From the Third Floor

Early in the history of the Czech Memorial Scrolls Trust, the Treasurer of the London Library, Lewis Golden, a distinguished member of Westminster Synagogue, presented the Library with a Scroll from the collection from Czechoslovakia. It was cared for, catalogued and - although kept in the safe - was available for anyone who wished to see it. However, its use was limited and the Library decided to return it. On 9th April a small group of representatives of the Library and of the Trust gathered at the Library’s home in St. James’s Square for the ceremonial return. Several of the Library staff were present, together with Jeffrey Ohrenstein, Head of the Trust and some of those involved with the project. It was a moving occasion, and the Trust will pass the Scroll on to another deserving home.

The Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, has accepted the gift of a Scroll from Westminster’s collection of Czech Scrolls. The Scrolls Trust was delighted that the leader of the Orthodox Community in this Country has accepted for his own use a Scroll, rescued from the former Czechoslovakia by Westminster Synagogue - preserved and restored to its original glory - which is now fully kosher. On 22nd May some forty guests gathered at Chief Rabbi Mirvis’s home in Hendon for the presentation. Several members of Westminster Synagogue, including the Chairman of the Czech Memorial Scrolls Trust, were present; so too were both of our Synagogue’s Rabbis and several Rabbis from other Progressive Synagogues, as well as members of the Chief Rabbi’s staff and many friends. The Chairman, Jeffrey Ohrenstein, explained to the guests something of the history of the Scrolls and Chief Rabbi Mirvis told of his absorbing interest in the project; he frequently encourages others to visit the Scrolls. He recounted his visit to Kent House to see for himself. Then guests were invited to see Scroll No. 1458, laid out in its new home in St. James’s Square for the ceremonial return. Several of the Library staff were present, together with Jeffrey Ohrenstein, Head of the Trust and some of those involved with the project. It was a moving occasion, and the Trust will pass the Scroll on to another deserving home.

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The B’nai B’rith

B’nai B’rith (Sons of the Covenant) is the oldest Jewish fraternal organisation in the world. It was founded in 1843 in America by a small group of German immigrants who met in Sinsheimer’s Café on the Lower East Side in New York. They spoke Yiddish, calling their newly formed association Söhne des Bundes, and their original aim was to improve the ‘deplorable condition of Jews in this, our newly adopted country’. They based the structure of the rapidly growing organisation on the masonic system of lodges and their first action was to introduce an insurance policy which would award members’ widows the sum of $30 towards funeral expenses and a grant of one dollar a week for the rest of their lives. Their children also received an allowance and their sons were taught a trade.

The new group’s purpose, as described in its constitution, called for the setting up of the traditional functions performed by Jewish societies in Europe, such as visiting the sick, helping widows and orphans, and communicating with other Jews around the world. They soon adopted English, instead of Yiddish, as the group’s language, changing their name accordingly.

In 1851, B’nai B’rith erected Covenant Hall in New York City as the first Jewish community centre in the United States, and also what is widely considered to be the first Jewish public library in America, soon followed by the Maimonides Library and later the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Home.

Although originally confining their work to matters concerning American Jewry, it was not long before the group’s leaders became aware of oppression and tragedy of Jews in other countries, the cruel treatment of Jews in Romania, a cholera epidemic in Palestine and disabilities in Switzerland. The movement spread to Canada, then Egypt and to Jerusalem. Discussions took place regarding the group’s expansion to Britain, and the First Lodge of England was founded in 1910 at the home of Charles G. Montefiore in the City of London. Two years later another was established in Manchester with Israel Sieff and Chaim Weizmann on its council; they were to have considerable influence on B’nai B’rith’s attitude to Zionism. Throughout the First World War, the organisation continued its charitable and philanthropic work, with the number of lodges expanding throughout the country, and by 1925 there were six lodges and District 15 – the umbrella body – was created, later to become B’nai B’rith UK.

With the suffrage movement having achieved votes for women in 1929, B’nai B’rith too opened its membership to women - though with their own lodges. They finally found equality in the setting up of unity lodges and all forms of Judaism - with their rabbis - are welcome. The last barriers were finally overcome with the setting up of the B’nai B’rith Youth Organisation in 1940, so that young people too could participate in the aims and ideals for which the movement stands.

With the coming of war there was much for Jewish organisations to do. By now there were eighteen lodges in Britain with more than a thousand members. Help was offered to refugees, particularly children, coming to this country from occupied nations in Europe. Composed mainly of German refugees, the ‘1943 Section’ was later renamed the Leo Baeck Lodge. Rabbi Leo Baeck arrived in London in July 1945 from Theresienstadt. He was welcomed with open arms and agreed to become Honorary Life President of the new Lodge. Leo Baeck was not only an academic, but also a businessman and that is why he chaired the B’nai B’rith Rehabilitation Fund, which was supported by other German-speaking Lodges in New York, Israel, Switzerland, South Africa and Australia.

The work continued after the war and when the movement in Britain celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1960 there were twenty-seven lodges with 2,500 members. It created the B’nai B’rith Housing Society and the B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation. Over those years it had played an important part in helping Jews in many different fields. In its early years it lobbied Parliament on Sunday Trading, helped to found the Anti-Defamation Committee, supplied food to Jewish internees on the Isle of Man, helped in setting up the Balfour Declaration, and sent banned publications to Russian scientists.

As the years went on, more assistance was needed. A lecture committee was established to provide lecturers on Jewish matters to the general public, kosher meals were offered to students at Oxford and the group participated in the Jewish Day School Movement, the Discharged Prisoners’ Aid Society, the B’nai B’rith Music Festival and the Enterprise Scheme of 1989. The work goes on and new members of all ages are always welcome. The movement believes it is vital to promote Jewish heritage and culture, to advocate and defend the rights of the Jewish people in the UK, in Israel and throughout the world and to support their own charities. The British President, Alan Miller, says, ‘B’nai B’rith has a long and well-established history which focuses on advocacy, human rights, charitable work and Jewish Culture and Heritage, not only in the United Kingdom, but also in Europe and worldwide. Our social activities play an important part in the life of our Lodge membership and provide the basis for our wider activities. B’nai B’rith offers a warm welcome to those who join our family, whatever your age, be it younger or older or whether you are single or married or just good friends. We are an inclusive membership organisation that brings together Jews from across the whole spectrum’.

Philippa Bernard
LIFE’S FUNDAMENTAL PARADOXES

Paradise and Time

The sky is always clear, always deep there
Always the same, the same blue
Always still, unlike the sea...
The sun and the moon are side by side there
Time does not separate them over there
Paradise beyond Time where nothing evolves
Paradise beyond the inevitability of death in the reality of time
Paradise, the constant present Adam is expelled from
Punished for an irreversible, momentous betrayal
A traumatic climax but one which awakens to consciousness
Allowing to reach the moral ground justifying one’s creation
And Adam, now mortal, expelled from Eden
The childlike world of immature life
Discovers the world subjected to Time’s laws
The world where man dies and life goes on...

Colette Littman
Dr Louis Loewe
1809-1888

Some distinguished men and women - scholars in their own right - are remembered by the memoirs they have written about others. James Boswell is an obvious example, known today for his biography of Dr. Johnson. Another is Dr. Louis Loewe who edited and published the two volumes of the Diaries of Sir Moses Montefiore and his Wife. Dr. Loewe, however, was a brilliant scholar, linguist, theologian and numismatist. He was also the first principal of Jews' College in London.

Louis Loewe was born in 1809 in Prussian Silesia, to a family of orthodox Jews. He had an excellent education, both in Jewish subjects at the Yeshivah of Lissa and later in secular colleges, learning German, French, Latin, Greek, Spanish and Italian, and finally obtaining his doctorate at the University of Berlin. He was also by this time a considerable scholar of numismatics.

Apart from his knowledge of European and Classical languages, he was anxious to learn Oriental languages, coming to London in 1835 where he was sponsored by the Duke of Sussex, whose interest in Jews and Judaism was well known. This led to introductions to a circle of aristocratic and scholarly friends, which in turn enabled him to study and research into public as well as private collections. He spent some time at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge where, being a Jew, he was unable to take a degree or hold a teaching post. He was the first Ashkenazi Jew to preach in the Bevis Marks Synagogue. He then went to Paris where he was able to improve his not inconsiderable knowledge of Arabic, Coptic, Nubian, Turkish, Persian and Circassian, though he turned down the offer of the post of Rabbi at Kassel, a rapidly growing community where a new Synagogue had just been built, accommodating more than a thousand worshippers.

Loewe’s first important visit to the Middle East took place in 1836 when he travelled under the auspices of the Duke of Sussex and Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. He visited Greece and Palestine as well as several North African countries, including Egypt where he was able to help the Viceroy, Mohammed Ali Pasha, with the translation of an inscription, in return for which he was granted leave to undertake any research he wished. At one time he was obliged to dress as a Bedouin to avoid possible assault. He later told how his children, at Purim, would play ‘Bedouins’ in memory of that occasion.

After this three-year excursion Loewe went to study in the Vatican Library, and it was in Rome that he celebrated Passover with Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore. They had met before, at the Montefiores’ home at Ramsgate. It was to be the beginning of a fruitful and fascinating series of journeys - eleven in all - to Palestine, Russia, Constantinople, Romania and Rome, with Loewe acting as interpreter and secretary.

The friendship between the two men grew rapidly, until Loewe was almost ‘one of the family’. Montefiore appreciated not only Loewe’s skill in language, but also his similar wishes to improve the living standards of his fellow Jews, most particularly in Palestine. Loewe was frequently invited to dine with the Montefiores both at Ramsgate and in London. In The Century of Moses Montefiore, edited by Sonia and V.D. Lipman, the essay on Loewe by his great grandson, Raphael Loewe, says that while Loewe was of a retiring nature, Montefiore’s diary makes it clear that the older man was ‘glad to have as his colleague someone who, whilst accepting substantial delegated responsibility, was in no way concerned to steal the limelight.’

Montefiore was very much against the possibility of reform in English Judaism (his was the casting vote against, when the West London Synagogue was refused admission to the Board of Deputies), and he found Loewe much of the same mind - hardly surprising in view of his orthodox upbringing and education. In fact when Loewe was put forward for the position of Chair of Hebrew at University College, he was not appointed, due to the intervention of Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, a leading founder of the College who was much in favour of reform and no friend of Montefiore.

The correspondence between Loewe and Montefiore was extensive, and one of Loewe’s duties, apart from editing the Diary, was to preserve and archive the letters - Raphael Loewe notes the existence of a ‘kind of diplomatic bag travelling between London and Ramsgate, presumably by rail rather than simply through the Post Office.’

One of the most important missions on which Loewe accompanied Montefiore was the visit, in 1840, to Damascus on behalf of the British government. This was the subject of the accusations of blood libel against the Jews of Damascus, and even after the matter appeared to have died down, they travelled there again in 1847 - apparently at short notice - for Montefiore wrote, ‘I hope you will not be inconvenienced for the short time you have to prepare for the journey - we can arrange the papers as we travel as I believe with you there is not a moment to be lost.’ They wanted to remove a notice on the wall of the Capuchin church implying that the libel had been true, and having failed, Montefiore continued to dwell on the subject, writing to Loewe, ‘I shall ask Lord Palmerston (Foreign Secretary) to grant me an interview . . . pray give me your advice as to what I should say to him and what to ask him for’.

Montefiore relied greatly on Loewe’s advice on many occasions, sometimes at his offices at the Allied Insurance Company where he was President, and sometimes at the dinner table, with both their wives present. Sometimes he asked for letters to be written in Hebrew or Russian or Arabic, depending on the recipient, and Loewe was charged with administering some of Montefiore’s generous financial gifts, being entrusted with large sums of money with which he was scrupulously efficient.
On the occasion of Sir Moses' one hundredth birthday, Louis Loewe was in charge of the elaborate arrangements at the country home in Ramsgate. He describes in the Diary, 'There, in the right-hand corner of a large high-backed, old-fashioned chintz sofa sits a patriarchal figure supported by pillows. This impressive picture of age, tended by love and respect, is lighted from the right by a stream of sunshine, which pours through the upper panes of a large angular bay window and rests gently upon a grand head, full of character, fringed with a short, closely cut, snow-white beard. One hand of Sir Moses is thrown negligently across a tall arm of the sofa, the other rests upon the ample skirts of a purple silk dressing gown.' When Sir Moses lay dying in 1885, he asked Loewe to promise never to leave him. He promised, remaining in Maida Vale. He became a Trustee, and later Principal, of the Lady Montefiore College in Ramsgate. The women, living, after Louis's naturalisation, in Maida Vale. He became the head of the grave.'

In 1844 Loewe had married Emma Silberstein. They had four sons and four daughters, living, after Louis's marriage, in Maida Vale. He became a Trustee, and later Principal, of the Lady Montefiore College in Ramsgate. Among other works he compiled A Dictionary of the Circassian Language and A Series of Conversations at Jerusalem between a Patriarch of the Greek Church and a Chief Rabbi of the Jews, concerning the malicious charge against the Jews of using Christian blood. His edition of the Montefiore Diaries is still an important source of material about Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore.

Dr. Louis Loewe died in 1888 and is buried in Willesden Cemetery.

**A Bar Mitzvah in New York**

Every Synagogue has its own minhagim (customs). Ours is no exception. For instance, we do not walk across the Sanctuary in front of the Ark but prefer congregants to use the appropriate corridor entrances. I have recently attended two B’nei Mitzvah - one in this country and one in America - with the celebrations encompassing slightly different minhagim in each of them.

At the first one, held at Alyth Gardens, the Torah Scroll was handed to the Bar Mitzvah’s father who passed it to the boy’s mother who then gave it to the Bar Mitzvah. Then it was he who had the honour of parading the precious Scroll through the congregation. At the most recent one, the parents were instructed to drape the Bar Mitzvah’s Tallit around his shoulders - this being the first time he would wear it. Both these ideas touched me deeply - this tradition of handing on from one generation to the next; the passing on of a very special sense of belonging – going back through the ages.

This second Bar Mitzvah took place in a very interesting Synagogue. As the oldest liberal Reform Synagogue in the Queens area of New York, the Free Synagogue of Flushing has served its community for over 100 years. Its building is listed on the New York State Register and the National Register of Historic Places - which I suppose corresponds to our English Heritage listing. It was founded in 1917, by the Hebrew Women’s Aid Society, on the lines of the philosophy of the first Free Synagogue - the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in Manhattan. The women wanted equality in participation and leadership and the pursuit of social justice. As here, at Westminster Synagogue, before the Shabbat service, there is a session to discuss the day’s Torah reading, while enjoying a cup of coffee and a croissant.

Also, as with WS, there is a thriving morning school (theirs is on Sunday). The children have an hour of Hebrew, followed by an hour studying Jewish thought, culture, history and tradition. During this second hour, parents are invited to join in and absorb the topics that the children are learning. Sadly, the Tots programme does not have a sufficient number of little ones to warrant a class at present. However, they are hoping to restart this - as Tiny Scholars - very soon.

The Free Synagogue of Flushing occupies a glorious Victorian-style building. The stained-glass windows were made in what was then Czechoslovakia, and the magnificent domed ceiling is also of stained glass and has a Magen David at the centre. The interior is decorated in warm tones and the Aron Kodesh is very imposing.

As with many cities, the demographics have changed. The Free Synagogue of Flushing, once in the centre of an area mainly populated by Jews, now finds itself totally surrounded by China Town – a China Town which is even larger and busier than the famous China Town of Manhattan! I sincerely hope that notwithstanding, it will continue to thrive - and if the American branch of my family has anything to do with the outcome, it certainly will.

**Claire Connick**
A section of the recent Venice Biennale was shown in the Venice Jewish Museum, in the Canton Scuola of the Ghetto. We were particularly interested to read about this installation, mounted by Edmund de Waal, the distinguished potter and author of *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*. Mr. de Waal visited Westminster Synagogue some time ago to talk about his book, the history of his family, the Ephrussis, who lived in Vienna before the war and lost so much after the Nazi invasion of Austria. For the Biennale Mr. de Waal constructed a porcelain pavilion coated with gold leaf, on which are inscribed the names of the lost libraries of the world, including that of his great-grandfather, Viktor von Ephrussi. In a future edition of the *Quarterly* we hope to feature more about these lost libraries, which include those of Timbuktu, Aleppo, Mosul and Alexandria.

The Synagogue has been presented with a most beautiful *Haggadah* by a member of Or Chadash, Niklas von Mehren. A dedication will be placed in the front and then this fine gift will be added to the *Haggadah* section in the Reinhart Library. There is an English translation throughout the *Haggadah*, as well as a *Dear Torah / Commentary* at the back, in English. The handsome illustrations throughout the book are by Yaeli Vogel. Yaeli is an Israeli-born artist, now based in New York, who brings her unique contemporary artistic vision and expressionistic technique to a wide variety of subjects including weddings, Jerusalem, Biblical images and nature. Yaeli works across multiple media including acrylics and watercolours. This *Haggadah* is a fine example of her work.

We hope our readers will enjoy the amusing piece about their trip, sent to us by Renee and Thomas. We think it brings a welcome light-hearted touch to the *Quarterly*.

There were some amusing responses to our April Fools’ piece. We reproduce a couple here.

Valery Rees writes:

Reading all the way through another wonderful edition of Westminster Quarterly, I am delighted to learn that I have been selected, by virtue of my current office, to membership of the newly formed rowing team. We shall no doubt all develop the strength required for extra special *hagbah* of the heaviest scroll. And any troublesome congregants can be invited to join the crew on short expeditions to make a nice splash on the Thames.

Please pass on a special welcome to the coach, who must have recently joined us, though I have no recollection of his application for membership coming before the Executive. But perhaps he is related to Raol Pilfo?

and this from Jon Zecharia:

Hahaha! I definitely chuckled with this one! Will start getting the Westminst-oars ready!
Community Matters

Education Report

Nick Young
Head of Education

My commitments to work, family and to Manchester United leave me little spare time, so it suits me perfectly to be able to watch TV on demand and to be highly selective. However, over recent months I have found three excellent original Israeli dramas that have been available on Netflix, each of which offers the opportunity to tap into the zeitgeist of modern-day Israel. As we head towards the summer holidays, a period when you have a little more time to switch off from the day-to-day routine to seek out something to enjoy on a screen at your leisure, I wanted to share those recommendations with you.

The first is Shtisel, which is essentially a drama set amongst the Ultra-Orthodox Haredi community in Jerusalem’s Geula district close to Mea Shearim. The series follows the fortunes of the fictional Shtisel family anchored around patriarch Shalom Shtisel, recently become a widower. We also get to know his children, grandchildren, friends and associates but especially focusing on his youngest son Akiva, who is yet to marry or settle into a job but happens to be a prodigiously talented artist. The premise of a family drama based on the Ultra-Orthodox may not sound especially appealing, but this show has by now charmed a considerable following throughout the Jewish world and beyond.

The characters are beautifully drawn and the plots intricately constructed out of the everyday dilemmas that they face regarding personal relationships, family, money - the kind of situations that we can all relate to. There is also humour as well as great poignancy. One of the highlights has to be the character of Shalom’s feisty mother, (a doting great-grandmother and Holocaust survivor with whom Shalom communicates in Yiddish) and her continual verbal sparring with a somewhat hubristic Rebbitzin who is a neighbour at the care home in which she resides.

Undoubtedly part of the show’s broad appeal and value is in providing a window onto a world that is poorly understood, even within the Jewish community. The number of Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews who love this show is testament to its sensitivity and authenticity. There are two series to watch on Netflix, and an American adaptation coming soon, but such has been the response since the show arrived on Netflix, that there is a clamour for a third series, five years since the second series was made. Star Michael Aloni (who plays Akiva) recently said that the cast are all ready for a third series, so I hope it will happen.

The second television show, Fauda, is one that I’ve told many people is simply the best TV show that I’ve ever seen. ‘Fauda’ means ‘chaos’ in Arabic, and is a show that follows the fortunes of a special unit of the Israeli army that works undercover in the Palestinian territories. The story begins as Doron Kavilio (played by Lior Raz) is persuaded to return to the unit that he formerly led (which still includes his brother-in-law) for one final mission to hunt down a Hamas arch-terrorist known as ‘The Panther’ and whom he thought he had killed years previously. The story was written by Raz himself, along with Avi Issacharof, based on their experiences in the Israeli Defence Force and this show has been commended for its unsparing authenticity which is widely acknowledged to have been the key to its huge popularity amongst both Israelis and Palestinians. Wikipedia lists it as being a political thriller, an espionage thriller, a psychological thriller and action-packed. It is all of that and more. It is utterly compelling and raw, with the only thing preventing me from shunting aside all other commitments to devour a complete series in a day, being that each episode is so powerful that one needs time to process it.

There are two series currently on Netflix, but the good news is that a third is currently in production and scheduled to air later this year. I can’t wait!

The third show, Hostages (B’nei Aruba, in Hebrew), begins the night before a life-saving operation on the Prime Minister of Israel. Four masked men enter the house of the surgeon due to operate, holding all family members hostage at knife point before demanding that she kills the PM. The action unfolds over ten episodes full of twists and subplots as one discovers the link between the family, the kidnappers and the Prime Minister. As the drama unfolds, one is able to identify with the hostages and with those who are holding them - and nothing is as straightforward as it seems. This series is probably the closest of the three to being a ‘page turner’ novel that you simply can’t put down. Acclaimed actress Ayelet Zurer is enthralling as the surgeon and matriarch who shows extraordinary bravery and humanity in the most challenging of situations, while Jonah Lotan plays the leader of the kidnappers who is far more than he appears, with charisma and nuance.

There are also two series of Hostages available and, like Shtisel, this has been adapted for US TV.

We are spoilt for choice when it comes to entertainment on the small screen, but I can say that even for the most discriminating, all three of these Israeli dramas are highly entertaining, to varying extents educational, definitely enriching and entirely worth watching!

As you may be aware, I am leaving the Synagogue at the end of the academic year to take on new challenges. It has been a great privilege to serve, and there will be a sense of personal sadness when I leave, having developed relationships that I cherish throughout the community. My heartfelt thanks go to Claire Connick and Philippa Bernard for creating this exceptionally enriching publication for us every quarter, which has also proven to be a valuable channel of communication for me down the years. Of course I also send huge thanks to the membership and the staff of the Synagogue for their wonderful support, and warmest wishes for the future.

Nick
Planning Your Diary

Selichot
Saturday 21st September

Erev Rosh Hashana
Sunday 29th September

Rosh Hashana
Monday 30th September

Kol Nidre
Tuesday 8th October

Yom Kippur
Wednesday 9th October

Erev Succot
Sunday 13th October

Succot
Monday 10th October

Erev Simchat Torah
Wednesday 16th October

Simchat Torah
Thursday 17th October

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Evenings and weekends:
please call +44 20 7052 9710. Leave a message and a member of staff will promptly return your call.

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