



*Utnapishtim and the Babylonian Flood—the Epic of Gilgamesh*

**Fables of the Flood**

**The War Scroll**

**Harold Laski**

**The Kitchener Camp**



I felt very much a changed person after *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, renewed and refreshed and looking forward to the joyous festivals of *Succot* and *Simchat Torah*, and to the building of our communal *Succah*. I always like the celebration of the stories and wisdom of the *Torah* in the Book of Genesis, but in addition this year, to what I hope is a new chapter in our lives as our society opens up to some sort of normality, learning to live with this Covid virus as well as we can.

I am already enjoying doing many things which were prohibited to us all for such a long time - seeing people in person, enjoying some of the cultural life in our beautiful city, and even travelling abroad. I officiated last month at a *Bar Mitzvah* in the Czech Republic, and two weddings - one in Greece and one in Portugal. But I'm always conscious of the risks and threats still facing us, knowing at the same time that our way of life is different, at least for the moment.

So back to the *Torah*, and the wonderful and instructive stories of the Book of Genesis. I am always excited to read about the creation of our world and the development and growth of a new nation. I am fascinated by the way the Book of Genesis deals with the way our world was created. One would have expected the writer simply to state that the world was created. But that is not the case. We see a progression from one day to the next, indicating the timing of the world's creation. We find two different stories of how human beings were created, in Chapters 2 and 5.

I shed tears at some of the sad and difficult stories, such as how God tested Abraham, telling him to sacrifice his son Isaac. It is very difficult to accept how a father could mislead his son and his wife about a matter as serious as sacrificing their one and only son. I found it fascinating in the story of the sending away of Hagar and her son Ishmael, to

note that God promised greatness to both Isaac and Ishmael. God was able to listen to the argument put forward by Abraham, when he was trying to save Lot, his family and the people around him. Although Abraham did not win that battle, at least he managed to save the lives of Lot and his close family, only to be disappointed at Mrs Lot turning into a pillar of salt because she looked back.

Why did she turn into a pillar of salt, I ask myself. Was she hankering for the old world or was she curious as to what had happened? One view is that it was a punishment for disobeying the angels' warning, that by looking back at the 'evil cities', she betrayed a secret longing for that way of life. Another view explains that she turned into a pillar of salt 'at the sight of God,' descending to rain destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Whatever the reason, the story tells us something about human beings, always enquiring and sometimes listening to gossip - such a bad thing for us all.

Continuing to examine the Book of Genesis, I note the passages of the *Lech l'cha* portion. Abraham is told to leave his father's home, ostensibly to build a new nation with a belief in the One and only God. Then in *Vayeira*, he welcomes the angels who predict the birth of Isaac where the disbelieving Sara laughs. This gives the couple inspiration to name their son Isaac, the root of whose name means laughter. This is followed by the *Torah* portion called *Chayei Sara* - the life of Sara - where we learn of her death at the age of 127. The *Midrash* tells us that she died of grief on hearing the news that Abraham was to sacrifice their son. We also read of Abraham's great love and respect for his wife, when he pays an extraordinarily high sum for a plot in which to bury her, at the Cave of Machpela.

*Toledot*, which follows, is the story of the beginning of conflicts between the nations and the struggles of the twin brothers - Esau entitled to his first-born birthright and Jacob plotting with his mother to take it from him. The sibling rivalry started then and sadly never ceased, and we know how that destroys families and creates much trouble in the world.

We then progress to *Vayetze* where we learn how Jacob dreamed of the angels going up and down a ladder and how he fell in love with Rachel but was cheated by her father Laban into marrying her older sister Leah. It was Jacob who became the father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel through his twelve sons. Jacob very much loved his daughter, who was brutally abused by the sons of Shechem - only to be revenged by her two brothers Simon and Levi, who duped the males of the tribe and brutally killed them. However, we also witness the mercy mission of Jacob who eventually made peace with his brother Esau. I often wonder why the angels were going up and down as opposed to down and up the ladder. The answer is that we all walk with a shadow, possibly a guardian angel, by our side so perhaps the angels were there to provide protection to Jacob and his family. Then we read in *Vayishlach* that it was Jacob who single-handedly rolled back the stones from wells to provide water for his brother, to bring about a peaceful solution to a conflict which he originally had created.

The compelling story of the sons of Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, the animosity and the triumph, the sadness, melancholy, tears and pain are all seen in the portion of *Vayeshev*, and in *Miketz* we read of the dreams of Pharaoh, which Joseph interprets - having risen to the post of the vizier of Egypt; how hatred is defeated and love is victorious when the brothers come together, helping one another rather than being triumphant in revenge. Once more, the *Torah* is teaching us that from bad, good can emerge, from negative, positive outcomes can happen. I think that there is some truth in the saying that everything happens for a reason, and it's our attitudes and behaviour which dictate which way things will go.

And so goes the Book of Genesis and the last portions *Vayigash/Vayechi* showing Jacob's fight with the angel, but really with himself, and then how Jacob analyses and instructs his sons, telling each of them of their faults as well as their good points, explaining to them who he is, who they are - and what will become of them, perhaps warning them that change can happen at any time.  
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The beauty of the *Torah*, particularly the Book of Genesis, is its ability to teach complex issues through simple stories, showing us the behaviour of human beings in a way we can relate to, and urging at every step kindness, goodness and justice. But above all, it shows us human frailty and our ability and willingness to change and to show compassion.

This year Genesis became part of our *Chanukah* celebrations, the Festival of Lights, where the miracle of the burning of a small amount of oil for eight days celebrates peace. *Chanukah* is a universal story of moral and spiritual victory, reflected by light prevailing over darkness - not unlike the stories of Genesis.


And as we remembered at our Annual Czech Memorial Service, the Jewish communities of Bohemia and Moravia who perished in the horrors of the Second World War, we also realized that, even in places of such destruction, there can still be life and a future.

We joined with the Jewish community of Prague, led by Rabbi David Maxa, who was brought up in this current atmosphere of freedom and liberty. The Bible and the stories of the book of Genesis and the entire *Torah* ring true showing the victory of goodness over evil.

May that continue as we progress from lockdown to freedom, from darkness to light, from the shining of the moon to the warmth of the sun, from the darkness of Antiochus IV to beauty and life, celebrating the existence of Israel.

Fear not mankind in these difficult times, the desire for a better future is stronger than anything else and we can, and do, have HOPE.

With all good wishes,



**Emeritus Rabbi Thomas Salamon**

## Fables of the Flood



*Deucalion and Pyrrha from a 1562 version of Ovid's Metamorphoses.*

The epic story of a flood that threatens to destroy the whole earth together with all of mankind, appears in the history of many civilisations, dating from earliest times. We are perhaps most familiar with the account that appears in the Hebrew Bible, in the Book of Genesis. But almost all cultures, extending back into Bronze Age and Neolithic prehistory, have such stories. These accounts depict a flood, sometimes global in scale, usually sent by a deity to destroy civilization as an act of divine retribution.

In a myth of ancient Greece, Deucalion, the son of Prometheus, reigned over the region of Phthia, and was forewarned of an imminent flood by his father. Deucalion was to build a chest or ark and provision it carefully (no animals are rescued in this version of the flood myth), so that when the waters receded after nine days, he and his wife Pyrrha, daughter of Epimetheus, were the only surviving pair of humans. Their ark touched solid ground on Mount Parnassus. Once the rain had stopped, after nine days, Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha, consulted an oracle about how to repopulate the earth. He was told to 'cover your head and throw the bones of your mother behind your shoulder'. Deucalion and Pyrrha understood that 'mother' is Gaia, the mother of all living things, and the 'bones' to be rocks. They threw the rocks behind their shoulders and the stones formed people. Pyrrha's became women; Deucalion's became men.

Perhaps as well known as the story of Noah's Ark, is the famous tale of the flood of Gilgamesh. It took place before that told in the Bible. The account is part of

the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, a poem from ancient Mesopotamia, regarded as the earliest surviving written literature. Gilgamesh is a demigod of superhuman strength who befriends the wild man Enkidu. Together, they embark on many journeys. Gilgamesh becomes afraid of his own death and visits the sage Utnapishtim, who tells him a story from centuries past.

The gods were angry with man, so they sent a flood to destroy him. The god, Ea, warned Utnapishtim and instructed him to build an enormous boat to save himself, his family, and 'the seed of all living things'. He did so, and the gods brought rain which caused the water to rise for many days.

When the rains subsided, the boat landed on a mountain, and Utnapishtim set loose first a dove, then a swallow, and finally a raven, which found land. The god Ishtar created the rainbow and placed it in the sky, as a reminder to the gods and a pledge to mankind that there would be no more floods. Clearly the writer of Genesis was aware of the Epic, as his story of Noah is very similar.

God's regret that he had made the earth and all living things, leads to his proposed destruction of the world. Only Noah is saved, and there is a very full description of how the Ark is to be made, to save Noah and his family, together with two of every creature. The flood story is an important part of the Hebrew Bible, and of the history of religion.

Many attempts have been made to date the Flood precisely, both from the religious point of view, following the Bible, and from the geological perspective. James Ussher, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland between 1625 and 1656, was a prolific scholar and church leader. His chronology dates the Creation to 4004 BCE, with the 'Great Deluge' to 2348 BCE. However modern geologists have determined that the Earth is approximately 4.54 billion years old. The time between the Creation and the Flood is usually known as the antediluvian period. The term was coined by Thomas Browne, the English polymath, known particularly for his work *Religio Medici*.

Most parts of the world, and most religions, have their flood story. In India a flood is part of religious history. Matsya (the incarnation of Lord Vishnu as a fish) forewarns Manu (a human) about an impending catastrophic flood and orders him to collect all the grains of the world in a boat. In some forms of the story, all living creatures are also to be preserved in the boat. When the flood destroys the world, Manu – in some versions accompanied by the seven great sages – survives by boarding the ark, which Matsya pulls to safety.



*Matsya as a Fish*

In North America many Indian tribes have their own legends of the great flood. Many are similar to the Biblical story, though they vary considerably in detail, most arising from the god or gods displeased with man through his disobedience. The Navajo tribe believe that a series of floods caused people to emerge on earth from the underworld. The final flood was sent by 'Water Monster' as revenge when 'Coyote' stole his child. When the child was returned, the waters receded.

The Choctaw people have always had a tradition of the Deluge. They tell that there was total darkness for a long time over the whole earth; the Choctaw doctors or mystery-men looked for daylight, until at last they despaired of ever seeing it, and the whole nation was very unhappy. At last a light was discovered in the North, and there was great rejoicing, until it was found to be great mountains of water rolling on, which destroyed them all, except a few families who had expected it and built a great raft, on which they were saved.



*Crees*

The Crees, too, tell how their ancestors built a dam across a stream, in an attempt to capture the Great Beaver as it left its lodge. They waited all day until finally, at dusk, the huge creature swam towards them. The Great Beaver possessed powerful magic and stopped the Cree leader as he prepared to spear it. Though spared, the Great Beaver was angry and wanted revenge. When the Crees dismantled their dam across the river, they were amazed to see that the water level had not gone down even though the stream was now flowing freely. Even more strange, the water level continued to rise higher and higher. The Great Beaver had worked powerful magic indeed; the entire world was flooding. For two weeks the Great Beaver and the little beavers kept busy making all the waters of earth to rise until not one spot of dry land could be found. The Crees built a raft of logs and took many animals aboard with them. The water continued to rise for yet another two weeks. Finally, they grew moss all over the raft, magically expanding it until the raft was a vast land mass. However, to this very day, water springs up through holes in the ground - cracks in that original raft.

In China, Nüwa is the mother goddess of Chinese mythology. She is credited with creating humanity and repairing the Pillar of Heaven. As creator of mankind, she moulded the upper-class individually by hand with yellow clay, and as she grew tired, she used instead a string to pull up the clay faster and form the lower-class. A great battle broke out between deities that broke the pillars supporting Heaven and caused great devastation. There was great flooding, and Heaven collapsed. Nüwa was the one

who patched the holes in Heaven with five coloured stones, and she used the legs of a tortoise to mend the pillars and the flood disappeared.

The Philippine people tell the story of one year, when the rainy season should have come and it did not. When the river dried up, the people dug into its grave, hoping to find the soul of the river. They struck a great spring, which angered the river gods. It began to rain, and the river overflowed its banks. The resulting flood wiped out all of humanity save for two survivors, Wigan and Bugan, who repopulated the earth once the waters had receded.

Many are the myths that have arisen around the story of the flood. It is easy to understand why huge volumes of water should bring about such terror. In our own time, floods such as the Tsunami in Indonesia caused 230,000 deaths and if climate change is coming, we will, in all probability, suffer floods more frequently - as happened in this year and last. The worst flood in Britain was in 1928 when a disastrous flood of the River Thames affected much of riverside London on 7<sup>th</sup> January, as well as places further downriver. Fourteen people died and thousands were made homeless when floodwaters poured over the top of the Thames Embankment and part of the Chelsea Embankment collapsed. It was the last major flood to affect central London, and helped lead to the implementation of new flood-control measures that culminated in the construction of the Thames Barrier in the 1970s.

Many explanations have been put forward for the Great Flood. Isaac Newton thought it was the Comet that brought it about. Modern geologists say that the melting of the ice as the Ice Age was ending caused the oceans to rise.

Whatever the reasons, the story of Noah and the flood, the building of the Ark and the imagery of the Dove of Peace have lasted for thousands of years, a part of Jewish history

It is to be hoped that no such tragedy will occur in our lifetime, or indeed ever again.

**Philippa Bernard**

## The War Scroll



Often known as the War Scroll, this remarkable document is a manual for military organisation and strategy, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in Cave 1 at Qumran in 1946/7. Its full title is *The War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*. It was acquired, with the other scrolls, by the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and is now held in The Shrine of the Book, a purpose-built hall in the Jewish Museum.

The story of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, has been told many times. They are usually believed to have been written by the Essenes, the mystic Jewish sect, during the Second Temple period. Josephus records that Essenes existed in large numbers, and thousands lived throughout Roman Judaea, but they were fewer in number than the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

The Essenes lived in various cities but congregated in communal life dedicated to voluntary poverty, daily immersion, and asceticism (their priestly class practised celibacy). Most scholars claim they seceded from the Zadokite priests. The first reference to the sect is by the Roman writer Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*. He explains that the Essenes possessed no money, had existed for thousands of generations, and that their priestly class did not marry. Unlike Philo, who did not mention any particular geographical location of the Essenes - other than the whole land of Israel - Pliny places them somewhere above Ein Gedi, next to the Dead Sea.

The cave at Qumran was found by shepherds, and investigated by leading scholars, including Yigael Yadin. Work continues on the dating, authorship and examination of the hoard of scrolls. The texts have great historical, religious, and linguistic significance because they include the second-oldest known surviving manuscripts of works - later

included in the Hebrew Bible canon - together with other Biblical manuscripts which preserve evidence of the diversity of religious thought in late Second Temple Judaism.

The War Scroll, nominated 1QM when the contents of the Scroll were indexed, is considered by some scholars, including Yadin, to date to the Seleucid period, from the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt of 165 BCE. Others believe it to come from the later Roman period from about 50 BCE to some hundred years later. The author of the Scroll is unknown. It may have been written by one scholar or several - perhaps as a practical treatise for those engaged in military affairs - or is possibly an apocalyptic text, describing or prophesying the complete destruction of the world, in the form of the struggle between good and evil. It reflects a belief that in the end, evil would be eradicated by the Power of God and his Sons of Light. It also indicates a belief that the times in which the Scroll was written were merging with the end of days. This concept forms part of the Biblical tradition found in Ezekiel and Revelations. This was part of a constant concern that Judgment Day was not far off and that man should prepare himself accordingly.

### Whoever was responsible for the composition of the War Scroll was clearly much influenced by other books found in the collection

The text of the Scroll begins with a quotation from *Higalut* (Revelations) referring back to the book of Genesis: *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Yeshua, the Messiah*. Then it enumerates the participants in the war. The Sons of Darkness are listed as the Army of Belial (the Devil or Darkness), Edom and Moab (the Israelites'

traditional enemies), together with the Sons of Ammon, the Sons of the East, i.e. the Amalekites, the Philistines, and the Bands of Kittim, together with 'those who violate the Covenant'. The Kittim, believed to come from Cyprus, are perhaps an embodiment of Rome, the constant enemy, representing always the power of evil. The Sons of Light comprise the sons of Levi, the sons of Judah, the sons of Benjamin and the 'exiled of the desert.'

Whoever was responsible for the composition of the War Scroll was clearly much influenced by other books found in the collection of scrolls, such as the writings of Enoch - Noah's great grandfather - and the book of Daniel. There was a certain stressful confrontation between the sect at Qumran and the nation surrounding it, the Essenes considering themselves 'on God's side' and more akin to God's true purpose than other Jewish communities. As an apocalyptic sect they felt themselves more capable of carrying out the true form of Judaism, and thus standing against the evil in the world. When God took action against non-believers, they would stand as his army, fighting for his new kingdom on earth.

In the War Scroll there is described a confrontation in seven stages between the two sides. The Sons of Light are led by the Prince of Light, Michael, the Archangel, and the Sons of Darkness by the Kittim and the evil god, Belial. The other members of the evil army include Edom, who was descended from Esau - 'whom God hated', and who had plundered Jerusalem and slaughtered the Judaeans; the Moabites, born of Lot and his daughter; Ammon, born of the union of Lot and his younger daughter, conceived while the father was drunk, a nation always at odds with the Israelites; the Amalekites, 'who licked blood' and who had attacked the Israelites, 'smiting all who were feeble' and always known for their tyranny; the traditional enemy, the Philistines, descended from Noah's son Shem; Ashur (possible Assyria), also a long time enemy, was also a son of Shem. The two leaders of the opposing armies were God (Angel of Light) and Belial (Angel of Darkness).

There is much mystical symbolism in the account. Most apocalyptic writings rely heavily on the interpretation of numbers. The War is presupposed to last forty-nine years, the magic number seven multiplied by itself, the span between the Jubilee years, i.e. every fifty years. At that time slaves and prisoners would be freed, debts cancelled and God in his mercy would look after his people, as Leviticus promised. After this period the War would be won by the Sons of Light and services in the Temple, together with the necessary sacrifices, would be restored.



*Dead Sea Scrolls*

The Scroll goes on to describe in detail how the 'Sons of Light' would fight the battles, what the banners were to look like, with their sizes and descriptions, which weapons were to be used and what form the trumpets were to take. The forward battle line would be composed of a thousand men: seven forward rows to each battle line, one man behind his fellow. All were to have bronze shields 'polished like a face mirror'. The shield would be bound with a 'border of woven work and a design of loops, the work of a skilful workman, consisting of gold, silver, and bronze bound together, and jewels in a multi-coloured brocade'.

Each man would be armed with a sword and a lance, each decorated in gold, silver and copper. All of these metals had a symbolic significance, gold was purity and redemption, silver wealth, bronze strength. There follows a minutely detailed description of each weapon, its size, composition and decoration. They each bore an inscription: the first 'Flash of a spear for the strength of God', the second 'Missiles of blood to make fall the slain by the wrath of God', and the third

'The blade of a sword devours the slain of wickedness by the judgment of God.'

After the foot soldiers, would come the cavalry, six thousand men, five hundred per tribe, riding stallions that are 'swift, responsive, unrelenting, mature, trained for battle.' No young men or women were permitted to fight or to go into the camp, nor any man who was crippled or with 'a blemish on his skin.' The priests who tended to the army are fully described. They wore fine linen garments, consisting of a linen tunic and linen breeches, girded with a linen sash of twined fine linen of violet, purple and crimson and a multi-coloured sign and decorated caps on their heads. They were instructed to blow trumpets to guide the men in battle. The text gives the musical directions of the trumpeters.

There follows a comprehensive account of how the battle is to be fought, using a pincer movement with towers in such a way that the enemy 'might become discouraged.' The towers were to bear the names of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, Seriel and Raphael.

The High Priest then addresses the army, encouraging them to fight for the glory of God. He blows on the trumpet as the signal for the battle to begin. 'The Levites and all the people with rams' horns shall blow a battle signal, a loud noise.' The infantry take the signal as the order to advance, while the trumpets continue to blow. There are seven separate engagements, though three accounts are not legible from the scroll. However it is the seventh engagement that is crucial, when 'the great hand of God shall be lifted up against Belial and against all the forces of his dominion for an eternal slaughter'.



*The Shrine of the Book; a white dome symbolising the Sons of Light and a black basalt wall symbolising the Sons of Darkness.*



*The Qumran caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered*

Interpreters of the War see two aspects of the fighting. The battle description is of soldiers in battle, such as the Israelites might behave in physical warfare. But there is also the Scroll's apocalyptic portrayal of a forty-year 'holy war' between the forces of good and evil, which involves heavenly as well as earthly soldiers. The elect of Israel are joined by an angelic host, while the devil and the evil angels fight alongside other nations of the Earth. The victory of the forces of light was to signal the final destruction of evil, after which the God of Israel would rule eternally in justice.

After the battle, which is fully described in the Scroll, the Priest gives thanks for victory and there is a ceremony in the camp the following morning, when 'they shall come to the place of the battle line, where the mighty men of the Kittim fell as well as the multitude of Assyria, and the forces of all the nations.'

This fascinating piece of ancient Jewish history sheds much light not only on the military customs of the Israelite nation, but also on how much early Jewish thinking relied on metaphysical and symbolic belief. Numerology was important to the interpretation of the Scriptures as was the presence of God in their daily lives. The War Scroll reveals much of the way in which our ancestors lived their lives, their attitude to God and their determination to pursue the religious ethics they held so dear.

**Philippa Bernard**

## Vera Atkins CBE (1908-2000)



Vera Atkins, the English agent working during World War II for the SOE, was born in Romania, in the small town of Galati outside Bucharest. Her name then was Vera Marie Rosenberg, the daughter of Max and Hilda Rosenberg, both Jewish, her father German and her mother British. Max and Hilda met in South Africa where Max had a prosperous business. They were married in London at the Central Synagogue, and had two sons, born in South Africa. Max was a wealthy entrepreneur with large estates in Romania.

Before World War II, the Jewish community in Galati had twenty-two synagogues, a kindergarten, two elementary schools for boys and one for girls, a secondary school, a trade school, a hospital, an orphanage, an old-age home, and two *mikvot*. A cultural-religious society, a Zionist society, a youth organization (Zeirei Zion) and a 'culture' club also existed for Galati Jewry.

Following the outbreak of World War II, the Kingdom of Romania, under King Carol II, officially adopted a position of neutrality, but on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1940, it received a Soviet ultimatum with an implied threat of invasion in the event of non-compliance. Under pressure from

Moscow and Berlin, the Romanian administration and the army were forced to retreat from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to avoid war. This and other factors prompted the Romanian government to join the Axis powers.

Between 1941 and 1944, Romania was responsible for exterminating approximately 300,000 Jews, giving it the sinister distinction of ranking second only to Germany in terms of the number of Jews murdered during the Second World War. However, World War II persecution did not totally obliterate Galati Jewry; there are still some 250 Jews there with a synagogue, a kosher butcher and a cemetery.

As European Jews were threatened by the ever-increasing Nazi menace, Max Rosenberg was declared bankrupt in 1935 and died the following year. Young Vera stayed in Romania with her mother, enjoying the cosmopolitan life of Bucharest. She was sent to Paris to study at the Sorbonne, and then to Lausanne to finish her education. Speaking perfect French as well as Romanian, German and English, she went with her mother to England in 1937, where she took her mother's maiden name of Atkins. In Romania Vera had come to know several diplomats who were members of British intelligence, and once in London they helped her to apply for British citizenship. She took a job with an oil company as a translator.



*The remaining Synagogue in Galati*

In the spring of 1940, Vera travelled to Holland to offer a bribe to a German officer to get her cousin out of Europe, but when the Germans invaded she was stranded there, and escaped back to England only by the efforts of the Belgian resistance. Once back in London

and living in Chelsea, she volunteered for the ARP (Air Raid Precautions), and became a member of SOE (Special Operations Executive) in 1941. She served in a civilian capacity until, in August 1944, she was commissioned as a Flight Lieutenant in the WAAF, before being made head of the French Section.



It was in the early years of 1940 that Colonel Maurice Buckmaster set up SOE in London, with its headquarters in Baker Street at the Head Office of Marks and Spencer. Winston Churchill had instigated the move, saying that he wanted to 'set Europe on fire'. Buckmaster made Vera his secretary. Her code name was Intrepid. It was said that she was the power behind the throne. Among the ten first members of the group were Leo Marks who controlled communications between the British agents in France and SOE HQ in London. He was the son of Ben Marks, the owner of the famous bookshop at 84 Charing Cross Road. In order to keep the Germans from understanding their secret messages and to hide their codes, Leo composed poems which, because they had never been published, were unknown to the enemy. One has become a well-known feature of modern English literature. It begins:

*The life that I have  
Is all that I have  
And the life that I have  
Is yours.*

Other members were Lewis Gielgud, brother of John, Odette and Peter Churchill, Patrick Leigh Fermor, and Noor Inyat Kahn. As the unit expanded it included men and women from all walks of life: a chef, a banker, a music-hall drag artist, a racehorse trainer and many more. Their work was to do all

they could hinder the Germans by subversion and sabotage, and to help the inhabitants of the occupied countries of Europe to survive the appalling conditions under which they were living. The French Section (Section F), where Vera worked, sent 470 agents into France, of whom thirty-nine were women.

Vera involved herself in every aspect of the work, interviewing recruits, organising their training, and planning their journeys to France and their reception there. She would take care of the 'housekeeping' related to the agent, such as checking their clothing and papers to ensure they were appropriate for the mission, sending out pre-written innocuous letters at regular intervals, acting as SOE's liaison with their families and ensuring they received their pay. Atkins would often accompany agents to the airfields from which they would depart for France and would carry out final security checks before waving them off. She always attended the daily section heads meetings chaired by Buckmaster and would often stay late into the night at the signals room to await the decoded transmissions sent by agents in the field. She would usually arrive at F Section's Baker Street office around 10.00 am.

Although not popular with many of her colleagues, she was trusted by Buckmaster for her integrity, exceptional memory and good organizational skills. She made herself familiar with every aspect of French life under German control - rationing, transport, regulations and curfews - as well as making sure that all the agents spoke perfect French. Vera coordinated the preparation of more than four hundred secret agents who were to be dropped into France. She had knowledge of every secret mission, shared in the handling of each agent in the field, and had sole responsibility for the personal affairs of every one of her 'friends,' as she called the agents. She was most intimately associated with the women agents, her 'girls'.

In its obituary of Vera, *The Guardian* wrote, 'Atkins's remarkable efficiency and intelligence was accompanied by deep humanity and sense of responsibility to those whom she was sending to possible death. She was often business-like and even severe - "immaculate, every hair in

place" with a "detached and seraphic smile" as one agent put it'.

It was reported later that Vera was recruited before the war by Canadian spymaster, William Stephenson of British Security Coordination. He sent her on fact-finding missions across Europe to supply Winston Churchill with intelligence on the rising threat of Nazi Germany. After her death, Stephenson wrote a book about her: *Spymistress: The True Story of the Greatest Female Secret Agent of World War II*.

## she also interrogated Rudolf Hoess, the German commandant of Auschwitz, who had been living disguised as a farmer

When the war ended, Vera Atkins committed her time and energy to finding out what had happened to every single one of her agents who did not return. She went to France and Germany repeatedly to interview local people, Germans who worked in the prisons and concentration camps, witnesses who were in the camps, and the Nazi guards and leaders (including participating in the trials at Nuremberg), until she was able, to the best of her ability, to piece together the details of what happened to each one of them. After the war, she was assigned to investigate each of the 118 cases of the missing agents. She traced 117, all dead, and brought their surviving killers to war crimes trials. The 118<sup>th</sup> had been, unknown to her, a compulsive gambler who vanished not far from Monte Carlo while carrying three million francs of Secret Service money.

Atkins displayed formidable skills as an interrogator. Hugo Bleicher, the *Abwehr* officer who had wrought havoc among the French Resistance, judged her interrogation to be the most skilful to which he had been subjected by his captors. In March 1946 she also interrogated Rudolf Hoess, the German commandant of Auschwitz, who had been living disguised as a farmer. When asked whether it was true that he had caused the

deaths of 1.5 million Jews, he indignantly protested that this was wrong: the real figure was 2,345,000. She committed herself to making sure the families knew - and were properly compensated, - and to having the missing and murdered agents remembered with ceremonies and monuments.

The French awarded her the *Croix de Guerre* in 1948 and the *Légion d'Honneur* in 1995. The British, by contrast, waited until 1997 to honour Vera Atkins, finally making her a Commander of the British Empire.

Several books have been written about Vera and the work she did during and after the war. Her character appeared in the film, *Carve her Name with Pride*, about Violette Szabo, in which she was employed as advisor. The film, *A Call to Arms*, is inspired by the true stories of three women who worked as spies in World War II. It stars Sarah Megan Thomas as Virginia Hall, Radhika Apte as Noor Inayat Khan, and Stana Katic as Vera Atkins.

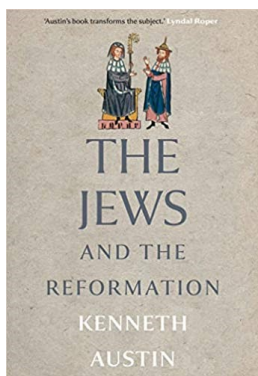
Vera is said to have been Ian Fleming's inspiration for the character of Miss Moneybags in the James Bond films, and is the basis for the character Hilda Pierce in *Foyle's War*.

Vera died at the age of ninety-two in Hastings. A memorial plaque, which she shares with her brother Guy, is in the northern wall of St. Senara's Churchyard in Zennor, Cornwall where her ashes were scattered.

## Philippa Bernard







*The Jews & the Reformation*

by

Kenneth Austin

Yale University Press

Published 2020

This account of the influence on the Jews of the Reformation is a remarkable and much-needed addition to the historical evaluation of religious events in the sixteenth century. The author distinguishes between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, a nineteenth century term. The development of the theological differences between Judaism and Christianity is shown by a consideration of both the Old and the New Testament. After all, the early Christians were originally Jews, versed in the conventions of the Hebrew Bible.

The importance of the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council in the treatment of Jews in the thirteenth century includes its insistence on the physical recognition of Jews by a mark on their clothes, together with a review of Jewish life before the Reformation came into being. A growing interest in the Hebrew language, accompanied by debates - often between Jewish and Christian philosophers - about the meaning of the Bible, together with growing literacy among the middle and upper classes, brought the presence of the Jews into public awareness.

Austin's research is formidable. He investigates the relationship between Jews and Christians from the beginning of the Catholic Church, particularly regarding the virulent writings of Martin Luther, the instigator of the Reformation, and the accounts of a growing hatred of the Jewish people and the actions taken against them, include a graphic picture of the Spanish Inquisition and the events leading up to it.

The English Reformation is seen as a part of the whole movement, with an interesting review of the dissenting and radical groups, including the Quakers, and their millenarian expectations. The return of the Jews to Israel was an important feature of Protestant theology. Austin writes, concerning a series of phenomena by which the impending millennium would be signalled, that this model involved the collapse of the Catholic Church, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem, all of which would be followed by the arrival and spread of the kingdom of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

This highly readable, yet most scholarly work, serves as an essential addition to previous work on the period and on the religious happenings of the time. The Jews found the Reformation brought them much suffering and humiliation, though on a different plane.

## the Jews as the ancestors of both sides of Christianity

The book is full of new insight and fresh analysis. It explains the complicated position of Reformed Christians toward Jews as they, in being persecuted by Catholics and Lutherans alike, identified themselves with the small persecuted remnant of ancient Israel, and yet at the same time claimed to be the inheritors of the Israelite covenant with God.

The extensive bibliography and full reference notes are a gift to scholars and ordinary readers alike, and the book forms an excellent background to any new work on the subject. As the author explains in his introduction, 'the relationship with Judaism has been fundamental to Christianity since its inception', and new claims to be the 'chosen people' by Protestants and Catholics alike, leave the Jews as the ancestors of both sides of Christianity whichever way they worship.

Kenneth Austin is a senior lecturer in early modern history at the University of Bristol and the author of, among other works, *From Judaism to Calvinism: The Life and Writings of Immanuel Tremellius*. His research lies in the field of late medieval and early modern European history, more specifically in the intellectual, religious and cultural history of this period, and especially the connections between the worlds of the Renaissance and the Reformation. The *Financial Times* said of his new book 'Austin's examination of Christian attitudes to Jews during the Reformation throws fascinating new light on the turbulent history of early modern Europe.'



*Title page of Martin Luther's On the Jews and their Lies, 1543*

**Philippa Bernard**



## Shadows of the Bible

### 3. Huldah the Prophetess

Asked to name a Hebrew Prophetess, you would probably think first of Sarah, Deborah, Miriam or Hannah. You might mention Esther - or even a sixth, Abigail. But would you, I wonder, think of a seventh - Huldah? However, in II Kings 22: 14 she is consulted by no fewer than five important men.

*So Hilkiah, the priest, and Ahikam and Achbor and Shaphan and Asahiah went unto Huldah ... and they communed with her.*

They had been sent by the King Josiah to settle a vexed question.

We know very little about Huldah except that she was the wife of Shallum. Shallum was the son of Tikvah and grandson of Harhas, the keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in the school for women which she had founded in Jerusalem. We do know that she was a relative of Jeremiah.

The question which needed an answer centred on a *Sefer Torah* which had been discovered hidden in the ruins of the first Temple. The Scroll was taken to King Josiah who was deeply upset by a prophecy it contained: that The Temple would be destroyed - as would the city of Jerusalem.

*And it came to pass when the King had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.*

Josiah commanded the five men to decide what should be done to redeem the House of Israel. So they went to get an opinion from Huldah.

Her answer was that the Jews would be punished for abandoning God. She said the disaster was about to strike because they had worshipped idols. She told them to tell Josiah that because he been so distressed about the warning in the Book,

he would go to his grave in peace and would not see any of the evil which the Lord intended to bring upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

Because of her prophecy, the King set about cleaning up the House of Israel:

*And Josiah took away all the abominations out of the all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel.*

So Huldah's influence played an important part in the spiritual revival of the Jewish people. Her opinion that the finding of the Scroll was a direct message from God, had been instrumental in provoking Josiah's response. She deserves our respect – and to be more widely known.



*Huldah's Gate in Jerusalem, from where traditionally she is said to have prophesied.*

**Claire Connick**

## Purim

*Looking ahead to March, we print below a piece written by Rabbi Harold Reinhart in 1952.*

### THE EXCEPTION

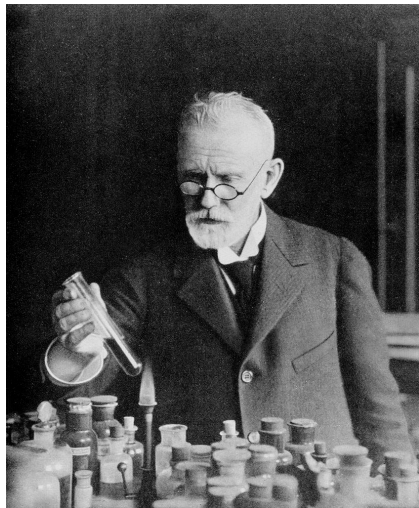
Purim is the indispensable luxury, the exception that proves the Jewish rule. Judaism is a life-pervading and all-demanding religion. Its obligations and its opportunities, its moods and its messages are many, and as varied as the days in its calendar. But everywhere, the sense of Heaven abides; and never can duty and purpose be forgotten. So, although through all the year there is wealth of wit and not a little jollity in the contemplation, the exercise, and the celebration of life, there is little frivolity or irresponsibility. The pattern is possessive. Pursuit of the divine Will, source of meaning and value, provides that determination of powers and pleasures which is at once the constraint and the release of individual personality. Within this grand process, there is infinite variety; but through all the diversity, the pattern holds.

Purim is the exception. No pattern, no plan, no purpose can contain it. Release! Anti-reason and anti-restraint, anti-direction and anti-system shall have their hour! On Purim, let him who will, maintain that futility is futile! Purim denies it. Purim admits no rules and no justification, no place in the patter which it defies.

But somehow the urge is too great; the moral element insists. The message – being Jewish always the most modern – implied in Purim, its 'overriding directive', is: Amidst the fears and confusions, the portents and frustrations that obtrude, loom, overshadow, bewilder and distress – *thou shalt relax!*



## Paul Ehrlich (1854-1918) Scientist and Visionary



We have learnt a great deal about the COVID-19 virus since it impacted our lives in 2020; and the development of vaccines with breathtaking speed has impressed both the scientific fraternity and all of us who have little knowledge of the esoteric field of immunology. It seems appropriate in this issue of the *Westminster Quarterly* to pay tribute to Paul Ehrlich, one of the pioneers of immunology and a major contributor to other medical advancements, specifically hæmatology, cancer research and chemotherapy; it was Ehrlich who coined the phrase ‘magic bullet’.

By necessity, this biographical thumbnail sketch cannot do full justice to his many discoveries and the enormous debt later generations owe to Ehrlich and his collaborators who followed the trail blazed by other epidemiologists: John Snow, Louis Pasteur, Joseph Lister and Erlich’s contemporary and friend, Robert Koch.

Paul Ehrlich was born on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1854 into a prosperous Jewish family. Home was the country town of Strehlen in Prussian Silesia, near what is now Wrocław in Poland, but was formerly Breslau. He was the only son of Ismar Ehrlich, an innkeeper and distiller and prominent member of the Jewish community, but who was regarded as

eccentric. Paul’s mother, Rosa Weigert was noted for her intelligence and industry. In 1860 Paul attended the local elementary school and from there went to the Gymnasium in Breslau. He was an able student - conscientious, but far from being a child prodigy. He matriculated in 1872 and studied medicine at various universities including Breslau, Strasbourg, Freiburg and Leipzig, receiving his medical degree from the latter university in 1878. He became a very good friend of his mother’s cousin, Carl Weigert who became a renowned pathologist.

It may have been Carl’s influence that stimulated Paul’s interest in histology and the use of chemicals to examine human cells. Although he had little formal training in Chemistry, he devoted much time to studying the subject and applied its techniques in his research. In 1883, Ehrlich married Hedwig Pinkus, with whom he had two daughters. While he was working at the Charité medical school and teaching hospital in Berlin, he caught tuberculosis, apparently contracted in his laboratory. He and Hedwig went to Egypt in 1889 to help treat the condition.

He returned to Berlin after a year, received Koch’s tuberculin treatment and never had a recurrence of the disease. In December 1914 he had a mild stroke and was advised to give up smoking cigars and to modify his diet. His health did not improve, however, and having spent a short time in a sanatorium, he died of a second stroke on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1915, aged Sixty-one. He is buried in the Jewish cemetery in Frankfurt.

### So, what were the clinical achievements of Paul Ehrlich, Nobel Laureate?

So, what were the clinical achievements of Paul Ehrlich, Nobel Laureate? His scientific life can be divided into three phases, all of which were influenced by his deep understanding of the principles of chemistry and molecular interactions in various biological systems. In the primary stage of Paul Ehrlich’s research,

dating from 1878-1890, he established the fundamentals of modern hæmatology and immunology. This involved identifying distinct classes of leucocytes, white blood cells, that are our main defence against infectious diseases. Along with developments in hæmatology, he classified a wide range of bacilli. In his early career he worked closely with his cousin, Carl Weigert, a pathologist who was experimenting with aniline dyes, a product of coal tar. Ehrlich began using these to stain biological tissue and researched selecting specific dyes to react with various organs, tissues and cells.

Having found that dyes reacted with components of blood cells, he speculated that perhaps there could be a therapeutic spin off, namely applying dyes to kill harmful bacilli. His results in using methylene blue to kill the malaria parasite were encouraging. Methylene blue is used to treat *methemoglobinemia*, a condition in which the blood loses its ability to carry oxygen through the body.

In the secondary phase of Ehrlich’s work, 1891-1897, using the dye-staining technique, he formulated his side-chain theory (1897). Essentially, Ehrlich explained the interaction of antibodies in the blood and, importantly for modern immunology, how antibodies are produced. He proposed the concept of receptor-ligand bonding. This biochemical interaction at the molecular level explains how cells communicate. An example is when glucagon, a hormone secreted by the pancreas, binds to the receptor adipocyte, a fat storing cell, to produce fatty acids.

In the tertiary period of Ehrlich’s studies, he was working on chemical compounds of arsenic that killed the parasites that caused sleeping sickness. It was one of those serendipity moments in science, when in 1909, Ehrlich and Sahachiro Hata, his Japanese bacteriologist assistant, found compound 606 (*arsphenamine*) that proved to be effective in treating the scourge of many centuries: Syphilis. And unlike other treatments it had little or no side effects. This became, of course, the trade name drug Salvarsan, and was used extensively until the discovery of penicillin in 1940.



*Ehrlich with Sahachiro Hata*

Apart from being awarded jointly with Élie Metchnikoff the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1908, Ehrlich received many other awards and tributes, a selection of which follows: he was made a full Honorary Professor of the University of Göttingen; in 1914 he was awarded the Cameron Prize of the University of Edinburgh; and as a lasting memorial the Institute for Serum Research and Serum Testing, originally in Berlin, was renamed Paul Ehrlich Institute in 1947. The Institute, these days located in Frankfurt, is a WHO collaborating centre for quality assurance of blood products.

**Peter Beyfus**



*The grave of Paul Ehrlich in Frankfurt. His daughter Marianne is buried in the same plot.*

**The Memorial Scrolls Trust**



*In his latest report, Jeffrey Ohrenstein, the Chairman writes:-*

Participating in a *Hachnassat* celebrating the loan of one of our Czech *Torahs* is always a privilege, however our most recent *Hachnassat* was exceptional. After months of careful restoration work in London by *Sofer Benarroch*, followed by a long period of delay caused by Covid-19, *Sefer Torah* MST#1052 was finally ready to be taken to Prague.

On Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October, we re-opened our museum for the first time in over a year, to welcome Andrew Keene, Vice Chair of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, who made a special stop *en route* to Prague.

That Sunday morning, our Project Manager Donal Savage, Andrew Keene and I accompanied the *Torah* to Prague, a journey for which it had its own seat. On arrival we met Sonja Geuntner, Chair of the European Union for Progressive Judaism, who had flown in for the occasion.

The *Hachnassat* was held at the Charles University in Prague with a full house of dignitaries including H.E. Anna Azari, the Israeli Ambassador to Czechia. This unique and moving occasion was streamed on Facebook with an estimated audience of over 1,500 people. This *Torah*, allocated to a nascent Reform community, is the second one we have allocated in the Czech Republic. The first was loaned to Zidovska Obec Olomouc in 2017. After the ceremony, the Scroll was taken to its new home with Congregation Ec Chajim, a Progressive Jewish community in Prague.



*The Scroll in its new home*

## Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894)



Almost everyone will recognise the Church music of Palestrina, Purcell, Bach and Handel. However, apart from the well-known *Kol Nidrei* by Bruch, I wonder how many of us have given a thought to the composers who have given us such beautiful liturgical compositions for our Synagogue Services.

One who stands out is Louis Lewandowski, born in Poland. As a result of his mother's death and the family's extreme poverty, he arrived in Berlin penniless, at the age of twelve. He started off as just another boy soprano in an informal synagogue ensemble, but Louis's talent enabled him to rise quickly through the ranks. During his time there he had the good fortune to be introduced to Alexander Mendelssohn - a cousin of Felix - who became his patron. Within a few years the synagogue had a modern four-part choir, and he was appointed its conductor. Louis's talent also secured him a scholarship, at the request of Mendelssohn, to study at the Berlin Academy of the Arts. He was the first Jew ever to be admitted to that prestigious conservatoire, where he studied violin, piano and voice. While at the Academy, Lewandowski studied with Rungenhagen and Grell, two of the foremost composition teachers of his time.

However, his studies were interrupted by a debilitating nervous illness that lasted for several years. During his illness,

Lewandowski attended a concert of a famous *chazan* Hirsch Weintraub, and was so impressed by his liturgical arrangements that he decided to refocus his efforts on synagogue music.

After graduating from the Academy with high honours, Lewandowski was appointed, in 1840, choirmaster of the Old Synagogue in Berlin, and was able to concentrate on the development of music for synagogue ritual. He then went to the New Synagogue in 1866, where he was given the title of Royal Musical Director. Whilst there, he composed the entire musical service. He also taught at the Jewish Free School and the Jewish Teachers' Seminary and many of his pupils became prominent cantors. He was a founder and manager of the Institute for Aged and Indigent Musicians.

On September 5<sup>th</sup> 1866, the New Synagogue of Berlin - the Oranienburgerstrasse Synagogue - was dedicated, with an elaborate ceremony, in the presence of Count Otto von Bismarck, then Minister President of Prussia. With seating for 3,200, it was the largest synagogue in Germany, and it boasted one of the finest pipe organs in the city.

Lewandowski's music was greatly influenced by his contemporary, Felix Mendelssohn; the style is firmly rooted in the classical/romantic choral tradition. The organ accompaniments are often indispensable but sometimes optional - the composer wanted to ensure that his compositions could also be performed in venues where no organ was available. Perhaps his best known work is his setting of Psalm 150, the joyful and celebratory

הללו-יה: הללו-אל בקדשו;  
הללוהו, ברקיע עזו

*Hallelujah! Praise God in his Sanctuary.* Lewandowski's arrangements of traditional Hebrew melodies for choir, cantor, and organ are considered masterly productions, characterised by great simplicity and a profound religious sentiment.

Lewandowski's music did for a long time form a central part of synagogue services and was sung across the world from

Europe to Australia and America to South Africa. Most orthodox synagogues across the world refrain from a mixed choir or instrumental music, so much of his music has been arranged for a *capella* male choirs. Even in communities without choirs, one can hear the melodies of Lewandowski either chanted by the cantor or in communal unison.

Some time ago, the famous Zemel Choir released an album of the works of Lewandowski, according to their original settings, entitled *Louis Lewandowski - Choral and Cantorial Works*. In 2011 in Berlin, an annual international choir festival was inaugurated under the auspices of the mayor. It was called the *Louis Lewandowski Festival*. The choir of the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue in Berlin uses much of Lewandowski's music in its *Shabbat* services every Friday night and Saturday morning - as does London's Belsize Square Synagogue. In 2020, Deutsche Grammophon Records released the world premiere recording of his *Eighteen Liturgical Psalms*, recorded by the Hungarian Radio Choir.

Lewandowski died in Berlin in 1894. He and his wife Helene are buried in the Weissensee Cemetery. On their gravestone is inscribed: "*Liebe macht das Lied unsterblich!*" (Love makes the melody immortal!) A daughter, Martha, died in Terezin, in 1942, at the age of eighty-two.

Perhaps mention should be made of other composers who have influenced our Services. For example, the names of Charles Salamon, Julius Mombach, Eliezer Gerowitsch, Max Janowski and Edward Hart come to mind. Most relevant to Westminster Synagogue, are Synagogue Members Harold Lester - our organist for many years - and the late Roger Stone, whose beautiful setting of *Yigdal* we sing on *Kol Nidre*.

### Claire Connick

*I am grateful to Dr. Alexander Knapp for picking me up on a couple of points before this went to press.*

## Aaron of Lincoln (c1125-1186)



Foreign names have been topping the *Times Rich List* for the past few years. Had such a publication been in existence in the twelfth century, the catalogue might have contained the name of Aaron of Lincoln.

Believed to have been the wealthiest man in England at the time, Aaron of Lincoln amassed a vast fortune by lending money at interest - a practice forbidden to Christians. It is estimated that his wealth exceeded that of the King. His name appears for the first time in the English Pipe roll of 1166 as Creditor of King Henry II for sums amounting to £616 12s 8d, which would amount to about £72,000 today. The Pipe rolls - sometimes called the Great Rolls, or the Great Rolls of the Pipe - are a collection of financial records maintained by the English Exchequer - or Treasury - and its successors. The earliest of these date from the twelfth century.

Far from being the epitome of a grasping Jew - the grotesque character of an archetypal greedy Jewish moneylender as depicted by anti-Semites to this day - he used part of his great wealth to support charitable endeavours, most notably the rebuilding of Lincoln Cathedral following an earthquake. By the time of his death, he had debtors spread throughout the country, and was owed over £15,000 - a huge sum in today's reckoning. When Aaron died, his property was confiscated by Henry II.

So great were Aaron's complicated financial enterprises, that it was considered necessary to set up a special office, known as 'The Exchequer of Aaron',

to administer the collection of his debts. Its remit was later expanded to regulate taxes and legal cases relating to Jews, and it became an important division of the Court of Exchequer in Westminster. This Exchequer was also the subject of an article in the *Westminster Quarterly* of April 2018.

Aaron especially lent money for the purpose of financing the construction of abbeys and monasteries. Among those built were the Abbey of St. Albans, Lincoln Minster, Peterborough Cathedral - and no fewer than nine Cistercian Abbeys. These were all founded between 1140 and 1152, and at Aaron's death they were all deeply in his debt, bringing them into the power of the King. Aaron not only advanced money on land, but also on corn, armour and houses, and in this way acquired an interest in properties scattered through the eastern and southern counties of England

### I doubt that any of the grand mansions acquired by today's millionaires will survive to be a quarter of the age of Aaron's house.

The actual cash treasure accumulated by Aaron was sent over to France to assist Henry in his war with Philip Augustus, but the vessel containing it went down on the voyage between Shoreham and Dieppe. However, the indebtedness of about 430 of the smaller barons and knights remained, to be acquired by the King.

The house of Aaron of Lincoln still exists. It is probably the oldest private stone dwelling in England. Originally the house had no windows on the ground floor; this was probably in order to increase the protection of its resident.

I doubt that any of the grand mansions acquired by today's millionaires will survive to be a quarter of the age of Aaron's house.

**Claire Connick**



## Sayings of the Rabbis

Despise not any man, and discard not any thing, for there is not a man who has not his hour and there exists not a thing which has not its place.



There are three crowns: the crown of the Law, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of royalty, but the crown of a good name surpasses them all.



It is not in our power to explain either the prosperity of the wicked or the tribulations of the righteous.



A man is not honest just because he has had no chance to steal.



## John Braham – Tenor (c1777-1856)



Portrait by Samuel de Wilde

Little or nothing is known of his early life but it is fairly certain that John Braham was left an orphan when he was very young. There are stories of him selling pencils in the street as a little urchin, in order to survive (a common trade for the Jewish poor at the time). But the child had a beautiful soprano voice and somehow he became an assistant Cantor to Michael Lyon, the *Chazan* at the Great Synagogue in London.

Michael Lyon was also an operatic tenor at the theatre at Covent Garden where he used the name Michael Leoni, and it is likely that he put Braham's name forward to sing at his (Leoni's) Covent Garden Benefit concert in 1787. It was Braham's first stage appearance. He sang Thomas Arne's *The soldier tir'd of war's alarms*. He next sang at the Royalty Theatre in 1788 - again with Leoni.

After 1788 there doesn't seem to be any public performance until Braham appeared at Bath under the aegis of his teacher, the counter-tenor Venanzio Rauzzini in 1794. Braham was trained by Rauzzini from 1794 to 1796. The years between 1788 and 1794 would have coincided with the departure of Leoni - and probably also with Braham's voice breaking. It also therefore suggests a birthdate of around 1774 or 1775, rather

than the 1777 date given by nearly all modern sources. At this time he was supported by the Goldsmid family, influential financiers and prominent members of the Great Synagogue. Most probably the Goldsmids paid for him to be articulated to Rauzzini, who was a leader in Bath's musical society. After his first performance at Bath in 1794, the *Bath Chronicle* eulogised him as 'a sweet singer of Israel'. Rauzzini's pupils included the celebrated Irish tenor Michael Kelly. Braham certainly benefited from Rauzzini's influence and promotion.

This 1794 performance also marked Braham's first encounter with the Storace family. Stephen Storace (1762–1796), the son of an Italian musician based in Dublin, was an accomplished composer; and his sister Anna, known as Nancy (1765–1817) - formerly also a student of Rauzzini - was a talented soprano. They had already had much experience in Italy and in Vienna, where, in 1786, Nancy was the first person to sing the role of Susanna in Mozart's *Figaro*, and both had been friends of that composer.

In Vienna Nancy had married the psychopathic English composer John Abraham Fisher, from whom she soon separated. At Braham's début, which was the first concert of the season at Bath, Nancy also performed as a soloist and in a duet with him. It was the starting-point of a liaison which was to last for over twenty years, during which Nancy bore Braham a son, Spencer.

Storace invited Braham to take the lead role in his new opera, *Mahmoud*, in 1796; Braham triumphed at the première. Later that year he sang lead roles, also to acclaim, at the Italian Opera in London - an extraordinary attainment for a British singer. In 1797 he appeared in the role created for his mentor Leoni, as Carlos in Sheridan's *The Duenna* at Covent Garden. The long triumphant phase of Braham's career was now in full swing. In its early years it saw him and Nancy singing in every major continental house, as well as in Britain. In 1797, Napoleon was in the audience in Paris and he also heard him sing in Livorno. Braham became the first

English male singer to establish a European reputation. In 1809 he sang in Dublin at the unheard of fee of 2,000 guineas for fifteen concerts - an indisputable sign both of his fame and popularity, and of the growth of music and entertainment in this period.

In a letter of 1808, Charles Lamb, in effusive but rather patronising vein, wrote: *Do you like Braham's singing. The little Jew has bewitched me. I follow him like as the boys follow Tom the Piper. He cures me of melancholy as David cured Saul ... Braham's singing when it is impassion'd is finer than Mrs. Siddons' or Mr. Kemble's acting & when it is not impassion'd it [is] as good as hearing a person of fine sense talking.*

In his published essays however Lamb, whilst continuing to profess admiration for Braham, allowed his prejudices to show. In his essay 'Imperfect Sympathies' published in 1821, he wrote: *B-[raham] would have been more in keeping if he had abided by the faith of his forefathers. There is a fine scorn in his face, which nature meant to be of Christians. The Hebrew spirit is strong in him, in spite of his proselytism. He cannot conquer the Shibboleth. How it breaks out, when he sings, "The Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea!" The auditors, for the moment, are as Egyptians to him, and he rides over our necks in triumph. There is no mistaking him. B- has a strong expression of sense in his countenance, and it is confirmed by his singing. The foundation of his vocal excellence is use. He sings with understanding, as Kemble delivered dialogue. He would sing the Commandments, and give an appropriate character to each prohibition.*

In 1815, having fallen out with - and abandoned - Nancy Storace, Braham travelled to France with a Mrs. Wright, whose husband sued him and eventually was awarded the sum of one thousand pounds. While the suit was pending - and no doubt because of it - Braham had the unusual experience of being hissed during a performance of Handel's *Israel in Egypt*. When that happened he stepped forward and spoke to the audience as follows:



Poster by Richard Dighton advertising one of Braham's appearances

*I am now before you in a public character. If, in that situation, I have given you offence, you have an undoubted right to call for an apology or defence; but if I have erred as a private individual, the nature of that error cannot with discretion come under your notice. It will probably be investigated by a court, constituted to hear both the accuser and the accused, and where justice only can be done.*

Braham's Jewishness remained a prominent feature of his career until his marriage in 1816, to the non-Jewish Miss Bolton of Manchester, and as the most famous English Jew of this period he became a significant incarnation of 'the Jew' in the British consciousness. He also regularly supported Jewish charities and causes. However, following his marriage, Braham seems to have brought to a close any overt identification with the Jewish community.

**Lady Hamilton....was reported to have been so overcome that she suffered a fit of hysterics and had to leave the theatre.**

Notwithstanding, the Goldsmids maintained their friendship with Braham later in his career and also employed him as an entertainer at their soirées. Their neighbour and occasional guest there was Horatio Nelson, whose heroic fate was later to prompt Braham's greatest song-writing success, *The Death of Nelson*. It first appeared in the opera *The Americans*, at the Lyceum Theatre in 1811. Lady Hamilton, who was in a private box for the performance, was reported to have been so overcome that she suffered a fit of hysterics and had to leave the theatre.

Despite the dip in public support when he broke with Storace, Braham's reputation remained strong until at least the mid-1820s, when he created in London the role of Huon in Weber's opera, *Oberon*. He sang in Mozart's *Requiem* at Weber's funeral service in June 1826. In 1840, he sang in Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* at Birmingham - with Mendelssohn conducting. Some time later he went on a performing tour of America with his son Charles Braham.

He also worked as a singing teacher. Two of his notable pupils included mezzo-soprano Adelaide Kemble and soprano Fanny Corri-Paltoni.

His last public performance was given in London in March 1852 (that is, when he was probably seventy-eight years old). He died on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1856.

Most notable of his children was his eldest daughter Frances (1821-1879) who became Countess of Waldegrave and who was the subject of an article in the October 2021 issue of the *Quarterly*. Her wealth enabled her to bail out her father and her siblings on various occasions when they ran into debt.

But Frances's marriages were not the family's only social coup. Her niece, Charles Braham's daughter Constance, was married, with some encouragement from her aunt, to Edward Strachey, who later became the first Baron Strachie.

This much we know about the little Jewish orphan who rose to fame and left his stamp on the world of music - and on British society.

**Claire Connick**

## Amusement Arcade



Two Jewish mothers meet for coffee.

'Well, Ruthie, how are the kids?'

'To tell you the truth, my Rubin has married an awful girl. She doesn't get up before eleven o'clock, then she's out all day spending his hard-earned money on goodness knows what - and when he gets home after a hard day's work, does she have a nice dinner waiting for him? Not on your life! She makes him take her out to dinner to a posh restaurant.'

'Oh! I'm sorry to hear that. But how is your daughter?'

'Ah! Esther has married a saint. Such a wonderful husband! He brings her breakfast in bed, he's given her a gold card so she can buy whatever she wants - and in the evening he takes her to dinner at a smart restaurant, so she doesn't have to cook!'





## The Kitchener Camp



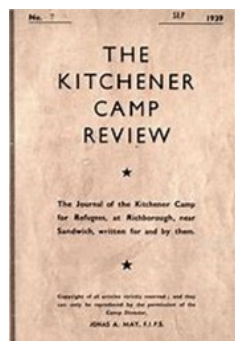
In our issue of October 2021 we wrote about the Jewish women who managed to get to England at the time of the Nazi persecution in Europe. They found jobs - often menial - to enable them to be saved from the terrible fate besetting most of the Jews of German and other Nazi occupied countries. Another rescue operation, less well known, was established for men in the same situation who found sanctuary in a temporary refuge in the Kentish town of Sandwich, under the title of Kitchener Camp Rescue.

This was a British-run operation resulting from the events of *Kristallnacht*, the pogrom which took place in November 1938, when German Jews and their property were violently attacked. On that night about 30,000 Jewish men were rounded up and taken to Dachau, Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald concentration camps.

The Central British Fund (CBF), a Jewish aid organisation in the UK, was set up in 1933 by Yvonne de Rothschild, to rescue the oppressed Jews in Europe and bring as many as possible to Britain. It is now known as World Jewish Relief, and was able to persuade the British government to admit some refugees. Adult men were brought to the UK on condition they would not be granted UK citizenship, they must not work, and they must emigrate onwards to the US, Australia and elsewhere, once they had obtained visas, with priority given to those expected to leave within a year.

The camp was established at a former Army camp in Richborough, on the outskirts of Sandwich in Kent. The Central British Fund oversaw the transport, maintenance and general care of the men. With nothing available but derelict buildings, the CBF had to transform the site. It soon resembled a small town, with forty-two accommodation huts, shower and toilet blocks, two synagogues, a medical clinic, a post office and shops. A 1,000-seat cinema was constructed with money donated by Oscar Deutsch, the founder of the Odeon chain.

Kitchener was run by two Jewish brothers, Jonas and Phineas May. They had experience running summer camps for the Jewish Lads' Brigade, but this was a much more demanding task - to run a camp for 4,000 traumatized men, most of whom had had to leave behind their families in the Third Reich. In spite of the possibility of rescuing the children on the *Kindertransport* and the women on 'Domestic visas', most families were not able to get out of Germany in time, and they were killed during the Holocaust.



The rescue began in February 1939, and by the time war broke out seven months later, about 4,000 men - mainly German and Austrian Jews - had arrived by train and boat. The life of the men in the camp was made as pleasant as possible in view of the fact that most were mourning the loss of their loved ones, ignorant of the

fate of those left behind. The men were not interned; they could request a pass to leave the camp. They played football against local teams, visited nearby beaches - and some illicitly worked for cash on Kent farms. Nine editions of a newsletter, the *Kitchener Camp Review*, were published.



*The camp musicians*

The visitors were on the whole made welcome by the local inhabitants. Hundreds of people attended concerts performed by refugee musicians, and local children visited the camp to play table tennis.

One member of the camp later wrote, 'At around 9pm we arrived in the camp... We were welcomed with jubilation. After supper we were taken to our huts; Hut 37/II. I chose an upper bunk. One hut sleeps thirty-six men. The beds are surprisingly good. One sleeps as if in a cradle.'

Most of the men hoped - and expected - that their families would follow them to England, but apart from the few women who were granted visas to work in domestic service, not many were able to do so. Most men in the camp were labelled 'friendly aliens', and their passports were stamped 'Refugee from Nazi oppression'. Those termed 'enemy aliens' were interned, often on the Isle of Man. Some eight hundred joined the Pioneer Corps, a labour and logistics section of the British Army, and formed part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to continental Europe at the start of 1940. They were brought back in unarmed boats from St. Malo, about three weeks after the main Dunkirk retreat. Many report having to relinquish their



*The camp as it was in 1940*



guns before being allowed to board the 'little boats' back to Britain.

After the fall of France in May/June 1940, it was thought too risky to keep a group of German-speaking refugees - or 'aliens', as they were called - so close to the English Channel and the ports. Anyone speaking German was likely to be labelled a spy or enemy agent. Subsequently, Kitchener camp - as a refugee camp and as a Pioneer Corps training camp - was closed down.

The refugees who had enlisted remained in the British Army, but were moved to Devon; many were sent to internment camps. Those who had not joined the British Army were sent to Canada or Australia.

On Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019, in commemoration of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kitchener Camp opening, the Association of Jewish Refugees was delighted to unveil a blue plaque in Sandwich, Kent. Guests at the ceremony included Kitchener Camp descendants and the Mayor of Sandwich. The plaque was unveiled by Robert May and Adrienne Harris, whose fathers were brothers and who were both Directors at the camp, along with AJR Trustee, Frank Harding, who devised the commemorative plaque scheme.

**Philippa Bernard**



## Shemini Atzeret



I would like to add a few points to your short description of *Shemini Atzeret* in the October issue of your interesting magazine. Of course, there is much to write about *Shemini Atzeret* – whole books – but here is just a little more:-

After the Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylon with Nehemiah, they celebrated *Succot* for the first time in many years. It is in the Book of Nehemiah, Ch. 8 v. 17-18

*'The whole community that returned from the captivity made booths and dwelt in the booths - the Israelites had not done so from the days of Joshua, son of Nun, to that day - and there was very great rejoicing.*

*He read from the scroll of the Teaching of God each day, from the first to the last day. They celebrated the festival seven days, and there was a solemn gathering on the eighth, as prescribed.'*

The Hebrew word *atzeret* is generally translated as 'assembly' but shares a linguistic root with the word *atzor*, meaning 'stop' or 'tarry'. *Shemini Atzeret* is characterized as a day when the Jewish people 'tarries' to spend an additional day with God at the end of *Sukkot*.

Rashi cites the parable of a king who invites his sons to dine with him for a number of days, but when the time comes for them to leave, he asks them to stay for another day, since it is difficult for him to part from them. According to this idea, *Succot* is a universal holiday, when seventy sacrifices were proffered, correlating to the seventy nations of classic antiquity, but *Shemini Atzeret* is only for the Jewish people. Moreover, *Shemini Atzeret* is a modest holiday, with no special ceremony (until it was joined to *Simchat Torah*) just to celebrate God's special relationship with His beloved nation.

Here is just one of the midrashim expressing this idea-

*'This may be compared to the case of a king who made a banquet for seven days and invited all the people in the province during the seven days of the feast. When the seven days of the feast were over he said to his friend: 'We have already done our duty to all the people of the province, let us now rejoice together, you and I, with whatever you can find – a pound of meat, fish, or vegetables.' In a similar manner the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: 'On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly; let's rejoice together with whatever you can find; with one bullock, one ram'. (Bamidbar Rabbah 21:24)*

And that's just a beginning!!

**Michael Benson**

## HAROLD LASKI (1893-1950)



‘He was still in his late twenties and looked like a schoolboy. His lectures on the history of political ideas were brilliant, eloquent, and delivered without a note’. This description by Kingsley Amis encapsulates Harold Laski’s early career, but he was far more than a youthful - looking Don at the London School of Economics.

Harold Joseph Laski was born in Manchester to Jewish parents from Lithuania. His older brother Neville also had a distinguished career, attending Clifton College and then Oxford University, later to become a renowned lawyer and President of the Board of Deputies. Harold was sent to Manchester Grammar School and spent a year in London studying eugenics at University College. His tutor there was Frida Kerry. He caused some distress to his family by marrying Frida in 1911 (she was not Jewish), and even more by refusing to believe in God, and by abandoning his faith. Frida was an active supporter of women’s suffrage and birth control. She later converted to Judaism but remained a confirmed atheist like Harold. Their only child, Diana, was born in 1916.

Laski then went up to New College, Oxford, where he graduated with a First, winning the Beit Memorial Prize. While at Oxford he attended few, if any, lectures, and said that he attached little importance to this mode of imbibing knowledge. His own students did not share this view. They were

all impressed by his vast knowledge, and even more so by his warm humanity, his passion for justice, his fearless and challenging search for truth. While an undergraduate, he and a friend placed a bomb in the men’s lavatory at Oxted station, in the cause of women’s suffrage. The bomb exploded but caused little damage and no injuries.

When war broke out in 1914 Laski tried to enlist but failed his medical tests. He worked for a short time for the *Daily Herald*, continuing his studies and was a voracious reader in many fields. He once said, ‘Sir, the fact that the book is in a public library brings no comfort. Books are the one element in which I am personally and nakedly acquisitive. If it weren’t for the law I would steal them. If it weren’t for my purse I would buy them.’

In 1916 Harold and Frida went to Canada, where he was appointed lecturer in Modern History at McGill University. His brilliant work there attracted the attention of both Harvard and Yale where he became a Visiting Lecturer, and was briefly involved with the founding of The New School for Social Research in New York. While he was in America, the police in Boston went on strike against poor working conditions and low pay. Laski supported them, as he usually did for those working people whom he felt were badly treated. But his efforts were severely criticised, which only served to strengthen his left-wing tendencies, ultimately resulting in his joining the Communist Party of Great Britain.

### Laski tended to claim friendship with many distinguished men of his day

In Boston he became a close friend of Oliver Wendell Holmes, who served as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Holmes was a physician, a poet and polymath, acclaimed by his peers as one of the best writers of the day. The two corresponded for many years and their letters were subsequently published. Laski tended to claim friendship with many distinguished men of his day, though he was believed often to have exaggerated

his achievements. His wife commented that he was ‘half-man, half-child, all his life’.

During this period he wrote *Authority in the Modern State* (1919) and *The Foundations of Sovereignty, and Other Essays* (1921). In both works he attacked the notion of an all-powerful sovereign state, arguing instead for political pluralism. In his *Grammar of Politics* (1925), however, he defended the opposite position, viewing the state as ‘the fundamental instrument of society.’

The Laskis returned to England in 1920 and Harold began teaching Government at the London School of Economics. In 1926, he was made Professor of Political Science at LSE. Laski was an executive member of the socialist Fabian Society from 1922 to 1936, and in 1936 he co-founded the Left Book Club along with Victor Gollancz and John Strachey. He turned down the offer of a seat in Parliament and cabinet position by Ramsay MacDonald and also a seat in the Lords.

He was a prolific writer and produced a number of books and essays throughout the 1920s and the 1930s. He had become an active worker in the Labour Party election campaign of 1923, and during the Great Depression his doubts about the eventual implementation of reform by the ruling class led him to embrace Marxism. He argued that the economic difficulties of capitalism might lead to the destruction of political democracy. He came to view socialism as the only possible alternative to the rising menace of fascism in both Germany and Italy.

In 1937, he was involved in the failed attempt by the Socialist League - in co-operation with the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain - to form a Popular Front to bring down the Conservative government of Neville Chamberlain. He was elected as a member of the Labour Party’s National Executive Committee and he remained a member until 1949. In 1944, he chaired the Labour Party Conference.

He was a brilliant lecturer, though impatient with his audience, particularly those who questioned what he was saying. One of his students, Ralph Miliband, father of the present-day politicians, David and

Ed, said of him, 'His lectures taught more, much more than political science. They taught a faith that ideas mattered, that knowledge was important and its pursuit exciting... His seminars taught tolerance, the willingness to listen although one disagreed, the values of ideas being confronted. And it was all immense fun, an exciting game that had meaning, and it was also a sieve of ideas, a gymnastics of the mind, carried on with vigour and directed unobtrusively with superb craftsmanship.'

One of Westminster's Founding Members, Ivor Connick, while a student at LSE, attended one of Laski's lectures which he found fascinating. However, some years later he again visited the College to hear another. He was disappointed to find it to be identical to the first - even to the inclusion of the same jokes in the same places!



Cartoon of Laski by David Low

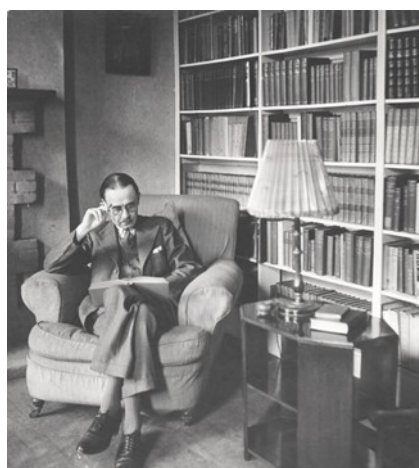
During World War II Laski continued to lecture throughout England, and was appointed assistant to Clement Attlee, then deputy to Churchill. When the Labour Party was elected to power in 1945 he was chosen as Party Chairman. However he was not an easy leader and when Attlee became Prime Minister he suggested to Laski, 'A period of silence on your part would be appreciated.'

In spite of his refusal to commit to Judaism, Harold Laski was a convinced Zionist and always felt himself a part of the Jewish nation, though he viewed the traditional Jewish religion as restrictive. In 1946, Laski said in a radio address that the Catholic Church opposed democracy, and said that 'it is impossible to make peace with the Roman Catholic Church. It is one of the permanent enemies of all that is decent in the human spirit'.

While speaking for the Labour candidate in Nottinghamshire on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1945, Laski said, 'If Labour did not obtain what it needed by general consent, we shall have to use violence even if it means revolution'. The next day, accounts of Laski's speech appeared, and the Conservatives attacked the Labour Party for its chairman's advocacy of violence. Laski filed a libel suit against the *Daily Express* newspaper, which backed the Conservatives. The defence showed that, over the years, Laski had often banded about loose threats of revolution. The jury found for the newspaper.

Laski was by now losing any political influence. He had quarrelled with Attlee after a particularly outspoken criticism of the way the Party was run. Attlee rebuked him, 'You have no right whatever to speak on behalf of the Government. Foreign affairs are in the capable hands of Ernest Bevin. His task is quite sufficiently difficult without the irresponsible statements of the kind you are making ... I can assure you there is widespread resentment in the Party at your activities.'

He never regained the admiration he once had, though his ideas have remained vital for any student of political science. It was said of him by a biographer, 'Convinced that the problems of his time were too urgent for leisurely academic reflection, Laski wrote too much, overestimated his influence, and sometimes failed to distinguish between analysis and polemic. But he was a serious thinker and a charismatic personality whose views have been distorted because he refused to accept Cold War orthodoxies.'



Blue Plaque at 5 Addison Bridge Place W14

However, Laski had a major long-term impact on support for socialism in India and other countries in Asia and Africa. In 1926 he met Krishna Menon who studied with him at LSE. Through his friendship with Menon, Laski became closely involved with the India League. He was a staunch supporter of India's move towards independence and argued for the country's right to self-determination. He taught generations of future leaders at the LSE, including Jawaharlal Nehru. It is mainly due to his influence that the LSE has a semi-mythological status in India. In his memory, the Indian government established The Harold Laski Institute of Political Science in 1954.

Harold Laski died of influenza in 1950, and was cremated at Golders Green. In its obituary the *Jewish Chronicle* wrote, 'His interest in human beings around him was deep and warm and his sense of justice as keen and lively in dealing with immediate personal problems as with great causes. It is these qualities more than anything else that account for the great and enduring influence he exercised on all those who came in contact with him.'

## Philippa Bernard

**It is with the greatest delight that the Congregation, or some members of it, are able to worship again in our beautiful building. Despite the fact that the windows are all open, that most of us are still wearing masks and that the Scrolls' procession around the Sanctuary is somewhat curtailed, we are encouraged by the warmth and inspiration that Kent House has always brought to our lives.**

**With Rabbi Benji on his sabbatical, it has been heart-warming to experience the number of members who have stepped up to take Services and study groups, deliver sermons, and read from the *Torah*. The Congregation has much in which to take pride.**

**The hard work and devotion of all our staff have been instrumental in maintaining the tranquillity and smooth running of our Services. Their good humour and loyalty have made the past months easier to negotiate. Our gratitude is due to them all.**

**Grateful thanks too, to Wynne Rooms for sewing a new set of Shabbat silks for No.2 Torah Scroll.**

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Janet Surkin and Bob Stillman write:-

**After almost two years without visiting our friends in London because of the pandemic, we finally made the trip to London from our home in Chicago in October for a several week visit.**

**Westminster Synagogue was an important part of our lives when we lived in London (2003-2012) and we've made a point of attending Services at Kent House anytime we've visited London since then. So, needless to say, Saturday morning Services at Kent House were high on our to-do list for our recent visit, and we were able to attend Services twice during our stay.**

**Even though the signs of Covid are still present – seats at a distance, singers behind a shield, windows open, many people masked – it was great to be back. We've always loved the Services at Westminster; we find them very comforting. Plus, we had a chance to chat before and after the Services with many old friends, as well as with some newer members. All in all, the Congregation seems to be thriving, which is very nice to see.**

*Melissa Chavin writes:-*

**Thank you so much for the gift of the article on Artur Rubinstein! He is a cousin of my maternal grandfather - from Lodz. My grandfather immigrated from Poland around the same time as Rubinstein as a child - but to Montreal. I look forward to reading the article more closely, and all the rest of the quarterly. Great work!**

## Religious Faith

**Faith charts the unknown**

**Structures chaos**

**Rationalises irrationality**

**Explains the inexplicable**

**Abolishes doubt**

**Combats fear –**

**Instinctive, insulating faith,**

**Man's spiritual shield.**

**Faith, unconditional love**

**Absolute trust**

**Blind obedience**

**Repressions of accusations**

**Gratefulness for the unacceptable –**

**The unacceptable of life.**

**God's gift, binding Giver and receivers**

**Life transient, eternal.**

**Colette Littman**





## Planning Your Diary

### Erev Purim

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March

### Purim

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March

### Seder Night

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April

### Pesach 1<sup>st</sup> Day

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April

### Pesach Last Day

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> April

### Erev Shavuot

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June

### Shavuot

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June

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

