

# WESTMINSTER QUARTERLY

Volume XIII No.2

April 2022



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I feel horror, reflecting on letting somebody into your *shul*, and then finding your life under threat. Many of us felt this, waiting and praying that Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and his congregants be freed safely, as they were held hostage in their Saturday morning service and then for almost eleven hours, presumably scared for their lives. I was frightened for them. Then we might think of ourselves too. We feel joy that they were freed, *and* the feeling of Jewish lives being under threat still remains.

It can be difficult to talk about anti-Semitism. Difficult because it has grown relevant and prominent again, when some of us thought it was of the past. Growing up, Jewishness was a positive part of my identity. As a child, teenager and student, the handful of comments and jokes to which I objected generally came from friends, and I quickly fired back. When, later, my life-partner, Leah, also a Rabbi, came here from the States, and was unhappy with some of what happened in my school, and the way our Jewish friends here sometimes joke about themselves, I explained that at school people sometimes enjoyed laying into *anything* they could, anything that's different (and maybe that's fine!?).

It can be difficult to talk about anti-Semitism because it comes from so many places; unreflective anti-capitalist and Israel discourse, on one hand, and the resurgent ethno-centrism, on the other, that saw people murdered in the Pittsburgh Tree of Life congregation. One might feel that to talk about anti-Semitism you need to pick a side, to be able to argue that this or that conflicting ideology or community is the main vehicle for this hatred, and we must devote ourselves to fighting it. Yet we can see that anti-Semitism, this social virus, mutates to diverse bodies - it always has - and we must treat it wherever it occurs.

It can be difficult to talk about anti-Jewish prejudice because some people believe that it's not significant, failing to see that it is a peculiar and effective

feature of anti-Semitism, or that prejudice is still prejudice when visited on racially diverse Jews, including white Jews. It is fundamentally difficult to talk about anti-Semitism because it is sad, serious and complex, and - maybe it is a particularly Rabbinic problem - but I generally want to address something when I know I can sort it (and well, anti-Semitism I'm not sure I can sort!). We can say that our security is excellent, as we liaise with the highest and most sympathetic local authorities; and that this is a place where you can come, or call and talk about a bad experience, and receive support.

I have been considering how we might need to hear right now that we are, as the *Torah* teaches us, an *am segula*, a treasured people. The *Mei Hashiloach*, the nineteenth century Chassidic Rebbe, brings two interpretations of this, that sit interestingly with each other. He first says that we are being told that we, as a people, are like a prized container, and so we can receive all the goodness and blessings. So, as a treasured people we have a great treasure in our Judaism, a treasure that is yours, and that needs you to be in this world. He does not itemise these *tovot* and *brachot* - goodnesses and blessings - but we might celebrate the joy which Judaism has given us in song and spirituality, the inclination to gratitude, cultivated through saying blessings for food and life, for this world, and nature, and all its wonder. One might treasure afresh the gift of *Torah*, this eternal body of wisdom that speaks to each of us personally and complexly, and that orients us to justice for all. One may think of the commandments inviting us to care for the other, and for ourselves. We are a treasured people and what this means is that we have a treasure, one that can invaluablely enrich our lives. This treasure we carry is valuable to the whole world, for it turns us to the world with love, care and responsibility, and allows us to embody an inspiring devotion to ethical wisdom, learning and action.

The *Mei Hashiloach's* other short, additional answer is that the Holy Blessed One, in telling the Israelites that they are an *am segula*, is telling them that God's love for them, like the love of a treasure, is *b'li shum ta'am* - without any reason! It is a pillar of our Judaism that every

human is made in the image of God, and, as such, is infinitely valuable, loved, equal, *and* different. We learn in being an *am segula* that a people can be intrinsically valuable too. With the responsibility to learn that which resonates today from ancient text, I want to learn that an *am* is *segula*, that any people, that all peoples, can be intrinsically and infinitely valuable. A people can be valuable for the way they turn to each other, and care for each other; for the community, love and pain that they share; a people is a treasure for the difference and variety they bring to the world, for the way they model what Rabbi Sacks, *zichrono livracha*, called 'the dignity of Difference'. The *Mei Hashiloach* insists that you, the people, are collectively loved without reason - you just are. In the *Torah*, this people freed from oppression and degradation might all the more need to know that they are an *am segula*, a treasured people. We are a treasured people, loved without reason!

Make one of your responses to anti-Semitism to love your Judaism more, being Jewish more. Don't for a moment allow hatred to make you less proud, or less committed to a reflective tradition. Make your response to anti-Semitism to have a love of Judaism and being Jewish, that is so much greater than anti-Semitism. One response to baseless hatred is baseless love. I hope we can all embrace and deepen our own positive differences. It's a living nightmare, to be held hostage by somebody who has come into a Service. I've also been reflecting on a converse picture of how a member who grew up in our community, and now helps to run it, told me that when he was a teenager he was suffering some anti-Semitism. So, he asked some of those classmates to come into this Synagogue with him one Saturday, and beautifully, they weren't anti-Semitic after this.

I'm a proud Jew. I'm proud to be a recipient of a Judaism that is invaluable to me and the world. I'm proud to serve a community, here in the centre of London, where everyone who comes in can leave more alive to the value of people and peoples, sharing invaluable difference.

**Rabbi Benji Stanley**

## Sabbatical Reflections

When I said, near the beginning of 2021 that I wanted to take some months of Sabbatical, Michele Raba, our Chairman, said it was well-deserved, and he added that I should go to the beach somewhere. As I developed my plans to study Torah full-time in Jerusalem for three months, Michele continued to advocate for a protracted beach break, increasingly mentioning the virtues and pleasures of beach volleyball, which, truthfully I would not enjoy, although I suspect Michele is quite brilliant at it.

What I really enjoy is learning Torah! I especially enjoy learning, surrounded by others who are learning and by brilliant committed teachers, with the audible buzz of people discussing text in twos in the house of study, and then coming together in class to clarify what we have learnt. The *Beth Midrash*, the House of Study, is arguably the Jewish institute *par excellence*, and it is my favourite. The terms *Beth Midrash* and *Yeshivah*, simply meaning 'sitting', are often used interchangeably, and have developed over thousands of years a love of learning, of parsing out the right way to behave in a given situation in conversation with a study-partner, teacher, and ancient dialectical wisdom.

During my Rabbinical training I discovered *Batei Midrash*, houses of study, in Jerusalem and New York that are fully egalitarian - with men and women playing equal roles - and focused on contemporary existence and questions. They gave me such a community, offering an answer to the loneliness I had sometimes felt in between English Literature tutorials at University. Here was a lived textual tradition, to be passionately debated, and personally enacted, and I loved it.

As Rabbi of Westminster, I accrue a month of Sabbatical for every year of service, to be taken after a minimum of three years. A year or two into the job, I thought I might never take it, because *B'nei Mitzvah* and wedding dates are booked more than a year in advance, and I wasn't sure when I could ever go, but

deep into the pandemic, with dates postponed, and the Synagogue successfully transformed to adapt and grow, I decided to return to my love of communal learning, to the buzz of the *Beth Midrash*.

Between October and December, I was an Advanced *Lishmah* (Learning 'for its own sake') Fellow at the *Conservative Yeshivah* - which is affiliated with the American Conservative and English Masorti movement - in the heart of Jerusalem, led by Rabbi Joel Levy (originally English) and Joshua Kulp. Most days began with the morning Service at 7.30. I then learnt *Talmud*, that sprawling, core, library of legal and narrative musings, for four mornings a week, between 9 and 12. One of these *Talmud* mornings focused on sections which raise striking issues: a section from *Chagigah* (on the Pilgrim festivals) that explores inclusivity and exclusivity within our Judaism; part of tractate *Shabbat* that touches upon whether anger can be constructive; some teachings in tractate *Eiruvin* about how best to spread learning and the potential of the Diaspora. Three mornings a week, we studied closely and slowly the third chapter of *Talmud*, tractate *Sanhedrin*, honing in on issues such as why and when a gambler cannot be a witness in a court of law - and when has somebody made amends for past habits and hurt. As well as being interested in what makes for a trustworthy person and viable justice system, I greatly enjoy reading closely, teasing out significant ambiguity, and approaching our texts with an attempt at the care and skill of those who have gone before me. There is a hope that such learning makes one simultaneously better able to listen carefully and still to make critical assertions and active resolutions - and then, too, I do find such learning fun.

One class that was particularly personally impactful for me was a weekly *Musar* class. *Musar* is an approach to moral self-development, through study, action and sharing with a group. We learnt the teachings of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (Italian eighteenth century) and then experimented with practical assignments in the week in between learning. One week when working on *zerizut*, alacrity, I was to greet everyone I saw first and with

enthusiasm, as well as rushing without procrastination to any positive responsibility that was open to me. The assignment was transformative! I only then realised how often I subtly avoid people, or leave a potential interaction up to chance. So this learning at least should be of practical usage for a warm Rabbinate.

*Shabbat* in Jerusalem is precious. I treasured visiting *Kol Haneshama*, the flagship Reform community in Jerusalem in which Rabbi Oded Mazor, who also came to my inauguration here, made me extremely welcome. I appreciated the fullness of their *Torah* reading and Service, and their warm informality. I attended *Kehilat Zion* most, in which Rabbi Tamar Elad-Applebaum peppers the Service with energetic, insightful Chassidic teachings, and there is a feeling that everybody's voice in the communal singing is valuable. Once a month on a Friday night, I was raised up by the *Nava Tehila* renewal Service, in which a core group of singers and musicians, with Ruth Gan Kagan, sit in a circle in the middle of the room and generate such enveloping energy that we each dive into *Shabbat* together with such spirituality. Someone visiting the Service with me from England asked if I thought we might be able to achieve something like that at Westminster....

There will be elements of my experience that can take root in, or influence, our community, and some that cannot; I am sure that vibrant learning can increasingly find a home in Kent House along with participatory Services. I have come back as refreshed and joyful as if I had spent three months on a beach - and it helped that Jerusalem was warm and sunny well into December. I hope our community is proud to have a Rabbi who loves learning and continues to learn, and that this might inspire others to develop their Judaism - and themselves - across their lives; our community will continue to develop too while becoming even more friendly, warm and non-judgmental. Leah and I also had some wonderful times when she could visit, including a couple of days in Jaffa, in which we almost made it to the beach.

**Rabbi Benji Stanley**

## Shadows of the Bible

### 4. Lilith



*Lilith, a woodcut on paper by Ernst Barlach, c. 1922. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.*

***Yesterday upon the stair  
I met a man who wasn't there  
He wasn't there again today  
Oh! How I wish he'd go away!***  
(Mearns)

The amusing but slightly sinister poem, *Antigonish* - of which this is the first verse - was inspired, apparently, by reports in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, of a roaming ghost. It was written in 1899 as part of a play by Hughes Mearns, an American professor. This poetic image was the first thing that sprang to mind when I was researching Lilith. She is so elusive, it is as if she is playing *hide and seek* among the reams of speculation written about her over the centuries.

In rabbinic literature Lilith is variously depicted as the mother of Adam's demonic offspring following his separation from Eve - or as his first wife.

The ancient name 'Lilith' derives from a Sumerian word for a female demon or wind spirit.

Lilith's enigmatic image as a dangerous demon appears in the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, where she is described as the first wife of Adam. In this version, she and Adam were created from the earth and she flies away after unsuccessfully demanding that she be treated as his equal. The *Alphabet of Ben Sira* is one of the earliest, most complicated, and most sophisticated Hebrew stories written in the Middle Ages, but the characterization of Lilith as a seducer or slayer of children has a long pre-history in ancient Babylonian religion.

In most manifestations of her myth, Lilith represents chaos, seduction and ungodliness. Yet, in her every guise, Lilith has cast a spell on mankind.

For 4,000 years she has wandered the earth, figuring in the mythic imaginations of writers, artists and poets. In his striking painting, *Fall of Man*, which is in the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo portrayed Lilith as a half-woman, half-serpent, coiled around the Tree of Knowledge.

Later, her beauty would captivate the English poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti. 'Her enchanted hair,' he wrote, 'was the first gold.' Irish novelist James Joyce cast her as the 'patron of abortions' in his book *Ulysses*.

Lilith's dark origins lie in Babylonian demonology, where amulets and

incantations were used to counter the sinister powers of this winged spirit who was believed to prey on pregnant women and infants. She next appears in the worlds of the ancient Hittites, Egyptians, Israelites and Greeks.

It is in the Middle Ages that she reappears in Jewish sources as the dreadful first wife of Adam. The Bible mentions Lilith only once, as a dweller in waste places - part of a description of the Lord's day of vengeance. (Isaiah 34:14).

We see the name לילית in the Hebrew, but the English translation reads 'the screech owl'. A cult associated with Lilith survived among some Jews as late as the seventh century CE. The evil she threatened was said to be counteracted by the wearing of an amulet bearing the names of certain angels.

Until the late twentieth century the demon Lilith's reputation was as a fearsome kidnapper and murderer of children and a seducer of men. However, with the advent of the feminist movement in the 1960s she acquired high status as a model for independent women. The feminist theologian Judith Plaskow's modern Midrash on the story of Lilith has played a key role in transforming Lilith from a demon to a role model for some women - an idea which I find unacceptable.

Much speculation and many fables have arisen over the years but, for me - and I suspect for most people - Lilith remains an unfathomable mystery.

**Claire Connick**



## Lord George Gordon: A Man in Two Acts



A satirical print of 1787  
British Museum

I recently reread *Barnaby Rudge* by Charles Dickens, and noted, second time round, the full title of the novel: *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of Eighty*; and this led me to read the details of the Gordon Riots that took place in London in June 1780. Dickens gives a vivid description of Lord George Gordon, the leader of the Protestant Association, in Chapter 37:

*A nobleman of somewhat quaint and odd exterior, the impression was confirmed this morning, and increased a hundredfold. Sitting bolt upright upon his bony steed, with his long, straight hair, dangling about his face and fluttering in the wind; his limbs all angular and rigid, his elbows stuck out on either side ungracefully ... his appearance ... stiff, lank, and solemn, dressed in an unusual manner, and ostentatiously exhibiting - whether by design or accident- all his peculiarities of carriage, gesture, and conduct, all the qualities, natural and artificial, in which he differed from other men; he might have moved the sternest looker-on to laughter, and fully provoked the smiles and whispered jests. And to add to this list of peculiarities the fact he converted to Judaism!*

Lord George Gordon, a Scottish nobleman, whose forebears had been Catholic for generations, was born in 1751. He went to Eton, joined the navy aged twelve, attained the rank of Lieutenant, was an MP, and held radical

views for his time, including strongly opposing Britain's involvement in the American War of Independence. He had a number of audiences with George III on various subjects, and the Monarch found him irritating and refused any further meeting. Protestantism was firmly entrenched in England, Scotland and Ireland, and there was still distrust of Catholicism, particularly since Britain was effectively at war with France and Spain - predominantly Catholic and absolutist monarchies. The 1698 Popery Act was designed to limit the influence of Roman Catholicism by proscribing priests from officiating at masses and furthering Catholic education, the penalties for which were imprisonment or exile. However, many Parliamentarians thought it timely to make a gesture toward greater emancipation of Catholics (Papist Acts of 1778), given that some were prominent members of society and many served in the armed forces. Those opposed to such liberal sentiments saw this as undermining the country's security.

Gordon spearheaded opposition to the Papist Acts and formed the Protestant Association to win public opinion to force Parliament to repeal the Acts. The protests culminated in a march on Parliament in May 1780, where Gordon handed in the petition, containing 45,000 signatures, demanding the rescinding of the legislation. The situation rapidly deteriorated and on June 2<sup>nd</sup> a vast crowd, estimated by Professor Mark Knight to be between 50,000 and 60,000, assembled at Southwark. From there, it moved to Westminster where attempts were made to storm Parliament, but without success. The crowd then turned to damaging property - Catholic chapels in foreign embassies were destroyed and the houses of prominent Catholics attacked. There was reticence on the part of some officials to read the Riot Act, and eventually Parliament ordered troops to quell this major disturbance, probably the worst riots the capital has ever witnessed. It is difficult to give accurate figures for casualties but nearly 500 rioters were either shot dead or wounded, with a similar figure being arrested. We know sixty-two were given the death penalty

and twenty-six were hanged. Lord George Gordon was charged with high treason, found not guilty and therefore acquitted.

It is the aftermath of Gordon's acquittal that makes for fascinating reading. In 1786 he was excommunicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury for refusing to give evidence in an ecclesiastical suit. The following year he libeled Marie Antoinette and the French Ambassador, and the administration of justice in England. He exiled himself in the Netherlands, returning to England in 1788, where he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in Newgate. He died there, aged forty-two, in 1793.

According to the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, before he was imprisoned, Gordon sent an application to Chief Rabbi David Tebele Schiff, at the Great Synagogue in London, to be accepted as a convert to Judaism. No doubt Rabbi Schiff considered Gordon politically and socially 'too hot to handle' and his request was turned down. However, Aaron Barnett, a learned *chazzan* of the Hambro Synagogue - the breakaway community of the Great Synagogue - contacted Rabbi Jacob of Birmingham. He taught Gordon Hebrew and arranged for *brit milah* and the *mikveh*. Gordon became a Jew in 1788, taking the Hebrew name Yisrael bar Avraham Gordon. In such an extraordinary case one is bound to ask questions. What was his motivation for conversion? Was it other



1780 Etching by R. Bran in the  
National Portrait Gallery

than for spiritual reasons? Did he hope to gain benefits from becoming a Jew? Was he planning a political comeback? I think the test of his sincerity lies in the life he led after conversion.

As an Orthodox Jew, Gordon arranged his prison life to accord with *Halachic* practice. He performed daily prayers, wore *tallit* and *tefillin*, and persuaded the prison authorities to allow him a *minyan* on *Shabbat*. According to Moshe Kahan, Gordon's *minyan* consisted of ten Polish Jewish inmates. Like some over-zealous converts, Gordon would only associate with pious Jews and refused to meet those he thought compromised *Torah*. Gordon had a *mezuzah*, ate only kosher food and fasted when Halacha prescribed it.

Apart from devoting a good proportion of his day to *tefillah*, he wrote letters on a range of subjects including denouncing the House of Commons for not abolishing the Slave Trade. Among his recipients were many famous men, Benjamin Franklin being worthy of note. His weekly visitors reflected his broad appeal - nobles, MPs, merchants and even an Italian barber! At these soirées, he entertained his guests by playing his violin or bagpipes (sources mention both, but Kahan states he played many instruments).

In 1793 Gordon's sentence was served and he appeared before the court for final discharge from incarceration. He was asked to remove his head-covering, which he refused to do, on the grounds that a pious Jew must cover his head in respect for God. His two Polish Jewish guarantors of his good behaviour were not recognised by the legal authorities and, for what was deemed by the justices as tantamount to contempt of court, he was sent back to Newgate. Gordon's family offered to stand his bail but he refused it. He returned to what was to be his death sentence, dying of Typhoid Fever that same year.

Dickens treats the character of Lord George Gordon sympathetically in *Barnaby Rudge*. He gives this account of the reaction to Gordon's death:- *though his means were not large his charity was great, and in bestowing alms among them he considered the necessities of all alike, and knew no distinction of sects or creed.*

What better way of expressing the essence of *tzedakah*?

Rabbi Pini Dunner concludes his short piece on Gordon with the words: *May his memory be a blessing*, but is this tribute appropriate?

Lord George Gordon, as the leader of the Protestant Association, was ultimately responsible for the outrages against Catholics, the loss of life and destruction of property. If that was the sum total of his life, then there would be little cause for respecting his views and actions; but that is not the whole man. He was a sincere, devout Jew who lived his life in accordance with *mitzvot*. He did not convert to Judaism to gain advantages whether they be financial or political. So how do we reconcile these two conflicting aspects of Gordon's character? By accepting that we are given the choice as to whether we follow good or evil inclinations, and if we do err, as is part of being human, there is a path back to righteousness and Gordon took it by becoming a *Ger Tzedek*.

Shortly after Gordon died a one penny token was issued depicting his profile. In the 1790s the lack of copper coins in Britain and the need for small change because of the Industrial Revolution led to numerous private token issues. Some used these coins to praise the achievements of the Industrial Revolution; others used them for political propaganda, such as those issued by the left-wing publicist Thomas Spence. The Gordon penny was one of those issued by Spence. What is fascinating is that it depicts Gordon as he looked as a Jew, with a hat and a beard.



Peter Beyfus

## Kehilat Gesher

### The Franco-American Synagogue in Paris

After a year of working, studying and praying amongst the renovations, construction delays, technical difficulties and financial pressures, Kehilat Gesher, the Franco-American Synagogue of Paris held a celebration. On 1<sup>st</sup> December, in the middle of Hanukkah, and in the presence of the Mayor of the 17<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, the doors to the new centre were officially opened. The hour-long ceremony was a chance to publicly bring together a Rabbi, an Imam and a Priest. The Ministry of the Interior subsidised 80% of the costs of the security precautions, including bullet-proof windows and man-trap security doors. Later, there will also be individual dedication ceremonies to name rooms in memory of loved ones.

A committee is now starting to consider the provision of a large divisible room for Talmud Torah classes or *Krav Maga*, pilates or dance classes, a teenager lounge (with a small sound-proof practice room next to it), an area for the youngest of the community, and a pantry storage room. There are also suggestions that, if they can afford it, a space could be found for a small *mikvah*.

They have also created the École Rabbinique de Paris, under the direction of Rabbi Tom Cohen's wife, Rabbi Pauline Bebe (the first woman rabbi of France). This was founded a little over two years ago. Currently, they have seven talented second career French students who are already making an impact as visiting student rabbis in smaller communities outside Paris or as rabbinic interns in the larger cities. Rabbi Tom is one of the instructors, as well as being responsible for the rabbinical literature department of the school.

Despite the anxiety about anti-Semitism in France, Rabbi Tom says that the overwhelming majority of French Jews feel secure.

We wish them every success in the future.

## A Jewish Head of House



It is strange running an institution where you know that when it was started in 1509, your family were pedlars in Poland or possibly further East towards the Middle East, and where you could not even have been considered as a Principal until the middle of the last century. The Universities Tests Act of 16<sup>th</sup> June 1871 was a significant step on this road.

Until 1932 there was compulsory attendance at chapel in my College. Even today, it would not be possible for me to become the Dean of Christ Church, who has many ecclesiastical functions, or head of some of the Permanent Private Halls which require a Christian at the helm.

It makes me more proud that we are now a tolerant inclusive institution and determined to keep it that way. But is being a Jewish Head of House any different from being a non-Jewish one? Of course, for many it will not be, but I hope I have put a particular stamp on my approach to the role by reason of my Jewish heritage. I grew up in the small Grimsby Jewish community and still go back for the Day of Atonement services, part of which I conduct.

I am by no means the first at Brasenose. There have been several of my predecessors who had at least some Jewish heritage. W.T.S. Stallybrass was the Law Fellow and the Principal between 1936 and 1948 and his name was the Anglicised version of

Sonnenschein. His father was a publisher from Germany. Far from disguising his origin by the change of name as he hoped it would, he was known as Sonners by everyone in the College! He was interestingly one of those pushing most strongly to abolish compulsory chapel.

Maurice Platnaeur the Principal between 1956 and 1960 came from a family which owned jewellery shops in Bristol and Birmingham until quite recently. He was a Classicist.

Herbert Hart was from an orthodox family and grew up in Harrogate. He moved well away from his origins religiously but was always proud of his Judaism. I well remember him addressing a meeting of the Oxford Jewish Society one Friday night when I was a student and ostentatiously (so it seemed) playing with the money in his pocket. His contribution to Jurisprudence was immense (the first three holders of the Professorship he graced were all Jewish) and his book *The Concept of Law* is still used by students some seventy years after it was written.



*Brasenose College*

Alan Bowman came from Manchester and was my immediate predecessor. He was a historian of the Roman period whose expertise is in reading and interpreting Greek papyri, ancient texts surviving in the dry conditions of the Egyptian desert. This found an unexpected but rich application in the Vindolanda Tablets, texts on wood including private letters related to the Roman garrisoning of its British northern frontier. A longstanding interest of his, closely intertwined with papyri, has been the nature of the Mediterranean economy under Roman control.

Ironically enough, I attend chapel more than most fellows or students, primarily because it is wonderful to hear the singing. It also provides a time for reflection in a usually busy week, and I like supporting the Chaplain, and the Director of Music in particular, and people of faith in the College community more generally. I do not join in in singing the hymns as this is not my religion but I love the place and the ambiance. I often read the Old Testament lesson (including in the virtual version we had to do during the coronavirus pandemic). The sermons are interesting too and there is a great atmosphere. I have my own 'stall' where no one else is permitted to sit! My late mother would be very proud.

I do not have to say grace in Hall; that is the role of the Bible Clerk and I am more grateful for his or her services than I can say, especially as the grace is long and in Latin. We do not have a choir school as does Worcester or Christ Church, but we do have a large number of Christian devotees.

We keep a *menorah* in the Drawing Room of the Principal's Lodgings and it has been present in several photos where those being photographed in front of it would not have the least idea what it is, or if they did might be hostile! We also have a *mezuzah* on all the doors of the Lodgings, one of which was put up and blessed by Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis who happened to be in Oxford on a visit.

We have had Friday night dinners in the grand Tower Bursary which is part of the Lodgings, and the large table there would be perfect for a Seder, although so far we have not in fact done this. When Chanukah is in term-time we arrange a Chanukah party. I am pleased that this has been taken up as an idea by some other colleges. We have doughnuts and latkes, and have to keep a cap on numbers because there is great interest.

We always hold a service in chapel on Holocaust Memorial Day. On 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019 our alumnus Rabbi Roni Tabick, Rabbi of New Stoke Newington Synagogue (of which my family are members), gave the Sermon. Few who were at the Service will forget his



*Brasenose College Chapel*

beautiful rendition of the Hebrew Lamentation for the dead *El Male Rachamim* in both Hebrew and English. With the lessons from the Holocaust all too obvious, Roni spoke about the difficult use of language to stigmatise ‘the other’ in society in a way that dehumanises. The choir sang a Yiddish song *Unter dayne vayse Shtern* which was written in the Vilna Ghetto by the poet Avraham Sutzkever. This was, I suspect, the first time that a Yiddish song was heard in a chapel service in our beautiful chapel.

On other years we had addresses from Rabbi Michael Rosenfeld-Schueler, Jewish Chaplain to Oxford University, and Dr Ed Kessler, the Founder Director of the Woolf Institute in Cambridge. The Rabbi of New North London, Jonathan Wittenberg, has also delivered a sermon in the chapel.

We have a few Jewish students but, so far, no issues on keeping kosher. My daughter got married in the College in a Jewish wedding in July.

I have spoken to the Oxford Chabad Society twice and I go to the Oxford Jewish Centre as much as I can. This is an unusual Jewish institution in that all sections of the faith are represented there, Orthodox, Progressive, and Reform in the one building.



*Oxford Jewish Centre*

I also gave a lecture for the Oxford Council of Christians and Jews at St Michael’s Church in Northgate. This is called the Harries Lecture, in honour of the former Bishop of Oxford Lord Harries, who is best known as - and still is - a frequent contributor to Radio Four’s *Thought for the Day*. I spoke about the protection of freedom of religion under the European Convention of Human Rights, and in particular the recent cases on headscarf, the veil, and the wearing of crosses.

I like to think that my background does influence the way I work in several subtle ways. I am more keen on widening participation than otherwise I might be. I try to take a particular interest in the needs of Muslim students too and, like many Jews, am drawn towards the study and practice of human rights law. I thank those Whigs who made it possible by the Tests Act for me to be a Jewish Head of House.

### **John Bowers QC**

*This article is the subject of a lecture given at Oxford in October 2021 celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of the Universities Tests Act.*



## **Sayings of the Rabbis**

The First Temple was destroyed because of the sins of idolatry, harlotry and murder. The second because of groundless hatred and this teaches us that groundless hatred is a sin that weighs as heavily as idolatry, harlotry and murder.



Man has two hands. If he steal with one hand, and give charity with the other, he shall not go unpunished.



It makes no difference whether you study in the Holy language, or in Arabic, or in Aramaic; it matters only whether it is done with understanding.



If there be no understanding, there is no knowledge, if there be no knowledge, there is no understanding.

## The Circus Blumenfeld



It is surprising to know that Jews were involved in the earliest days of the European circus - and have since then often been associated with such entertainment. Josephus tells in *The Jewish War* of the many Jewish prisoners taken by the Romans who were used as gladiators in the 'Circus Maximus' of the Coliseum, fighting wild animals - and each other - and participating in chariot races and exhibitions of human strength for the amusement of the Emperor and the crowds thronging the capital. One of the most famous of these Jewish entertainers was Rakeish Lakish, whose immense strength made him a favourite in the ring, having sold himself to the managers of a gladiator circus. He later became a Talmudic scholar.

In the early history of the circus, it seems that it was the travelling troupe, notably in Germany, that attracted Jewish performers, while non-Jewish circuses were mostly stationary entertainments. One circus in particular was that of the Blumenfelds, who could trace their circus ancestry back to the eighteenth century. Even earlier they were known as travelling jugglers and appear in the annals of the cities of both Frankfurt and Leipzig as 'tight-rope walkers' or a 'gymnastic troupe'.

It was not until 1811, however, that the Circus Blumenfeld started touring as a comprehensive circus entertainment, with its first founder Maurice Blumenfeld. Maurice was born Maurice Levi Cerf, owning a travelling menagerie, consisting mostly of birds and monkeys. He married into a Jewish family named Blumenfeld, and had nine children, many of whom started circuses of their own. Maurice

took his wife Esther's name, Blumenfeld, and once the circus got under way they added four horses and several artistes to the ensemble.

Although the Blumenfelds spoke mostly German and Yiddish at home, their circus, as happened quite often, had a language of its own, a mixture of French, Yiddish, Romance and technical circus terms. It was known as the Flower Field Language, interpreting the meaning of flower names, known as florioraphy, and was a cryptic method of communication, often called *Blumenfeldsprach*.

In 1834 Maurice handed over the circus to his son Emanuel, and as was usual in circus families, the son married into another circus family, amalgamating the two into one of the largest such organisations in the world. Emanuel concentrated on horse acts and all his children became talented equestrians. He expanded and modernised the displays until the circus was known all over Europe.



Circus Blumenfeld continued to flourish under Emanuel and his wife. By now other Jewish circuses were popular in Europe, often with unusual acts. The Warsaw Circus, for example, featured an exotic performer known as Takhra Bey who entertained crowds by piercing his face and body with needles and hanging weights from them. In real life, Takhra Bey was Moyshe Shtern, a local Jewish performer. The use of stage names hid the Jewish identity of his and many other performers.

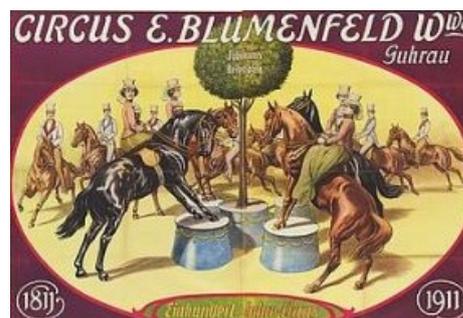
Emanuel had sixteen children, several of whom went into the circus business either as part of Blumenfeld's or starting their own company. The management of the circus passed first to Emanuel's sons Adolf, Hermann, and Simon, and then to



Simon's sons. They took on permanent premises in Silesia, and Emanuel's widow (his second wife) continued to run the circus after he died in 1885. It was large enough by then to have eighty horses performing, and by moving the troupe by rail instead of road they were able to remain longer in the cities they visited, with improved facilities for the animals. By the end of the century they had 130 horses, with their own orchestra, and audiences often amounting to some 4,000 visitors. Simon's son Alex had five Asian elephants in the ring, while he was playing the violin, riding on one of them (called Bubü).

When war broke out in 1914, most of Emanuel's sons enlisted in the German army and many of the horses were requisitioned for the fighting. However, once the war was over the circus came together again and resumed its performances. It moved its headquarters to Magdeburg in Germany with forty-five horses, two elephants, four camels, three llamas, and two bulls. War-torn Europe made travelling difficult and as Germany's financial state became precarious, Circus Blumenfeld became bankrupt.

In the 1930s, as Hitler rose to power the problem for Jews became acute, and Jewish circuses, along with other such entertainment, were closed down. In the ensuing Holocaust the family suffered



COMMUNITY

severe deprivation and several members were murdered or imprisoned, some in Theresienstadt or Auschwitz. Others emigrated to France but were deported to the Drancy assembly camp and from there to Auschwitz and Majdanek, where they were murdered. One, Jeanette, Simon's daughter, came to England.



Only Arthur survived World War II and was able to hide in Berlin. After the war he tried to revive the circus with his wife Victoria and performed in front of Allied troops and orphan audiences. However, in 1949 he had to sell the business to Circus Busch and he committed suicide in 1951. In the 1960s, Jack Blumenfeld, Emanuel's great-grandson, married Christine Busch and took over the management of Circus Busch, thus traditionally joining two great Jewish circuses once again.



The Blumenfeld Circus building was destroyed in the air raid on Magdeburg on January 16, 1945. At the former building site on Walter-Rathenau-Strasse, a series of *Stolpersteine* is a reminder of the family members murdered in the Holocaust. Some members of the Blumenfeld family are buried in the Israelite Cemetery in Magdeburg .

**Philippa Bernard**

**Purim through the years**

Our first Purim celebration in Kent House was in the spring of 1961 and that entertainment set the pattern for many that followed. We were fortunate to have in the community at that time a brilliant musician with a fine voice. Harold Lester was a professional harpsichordist, pianist and organist who played the organ for Services. He also had a great sense of humour. Another with a flair for comedy was Peter Blom. He and his wife Cynthia played an important part in the affairs of the Synagogue.

Peter had a flair for musical comedy and a formidable wit, and he and Harold formed a perfect pair writing, producing and performing a series of delightful comedy sketches. Much of the material was based on satirical skits about the better-known members of the congregation, the ministers, the wardens and leaders of the community. No-one objected to being laughed at - in fact those who were left out of the fun rather resented it!

When Harold Lester left, the 'musical direction' was handed on to Roger Stone, Raymond Fisher and Alex Knapp, and Philippa Bernard wrote many of the sketches. A new concert party was formed consisting of Renee Salamon, Ann Fischer, Vivienne Trenner, David Connick, and Miles Laddie, under the title of the Kent House Players. The songs and sketches were again based on the members of the community, always set to familiar tunes by such as Noel Coward, Richard Rogers, Arthur Sullivan or other writers of light music. Nothing was regarded as sacrosanct, even some well-known English hymns were used, such as *All Things Bright and Beautiful*:

*He shared out all the nations, the lands where they should toil,  
But the Jews got all the oranges, And the Arabs got the oil.*

Vivienne's rendering of *Over the Rainbow* made Kent House history:

*Somewhere on my computer, There must be.*

*A nice boy, tall, dark and Jewish, Who wants to marry me.*

When Rabbi Friedlander retired - succeeded by Rabbi Salamon - the ensemble recited a long poem, based on *You are Old, Father William*. ending:

*If I stay in the pink, and I'm able to think  
And the good Lord does not disinherit us,  
As long as he spares me, if anyone dares me,  
I'll stay on as Rabbi Emeritus.*

Rabbi Thomas also came in for the shows' sharp tongue.

*If you knew Thomas, like we know  
Thomas, Oh, oh, oh what a guy!*

Some of the songs were pointed at Jewish institutions: Noel Coward's *The Stately Homes of England* became *The Synagogues of London*, including

*The Liberal in St. John's Wood is really rather tame,  
It isn't on the Lords' side, but you'll find it just the same.*

More recently the Purim shows were usually based on well-known musicals adapted to tell the Purim story. By this time Debra Hauer, also a member and a professional theatrical producer, was directing the shows, giving them a more polished appearance. Professor Higgins sang,

*All I need is a damn good cook, One who's got the Nigella look,  
To make me some gefillte fish - Oh!  
wouldn't it be luvly.*

Although from the beginning the children in the community always enjoyed a Fancy Dress competition, it was the adults who were really the main participants. As time went on, with our former Education Head, Nick Young, writing the scripts, the children began to take part in the singing, forming the choruses and generally 'running the show'. As the congregation has developed so the entertainment has changed.

Purim at Westminster continues to be a night of laughter and delight, even though some of the older members rather regret the loss of the sparkling satire and the opportunity to have fun, particularly at the Rabbis' expense.

## Sir Leon Simon



The man who prepared the draft of the Balfour Declaration was a quiet, studious civil servant, but in 2005, his little document made history! The original draft was sold at auction by Sotheby's for \$884,000 to a New York buyer. It was written by Leon Simon on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1917, on stationery of The Imperial Hotel, and is the only known surviving handwritten draft of the declaration.

Leon also wrote the Hebrew version of the final Declaration. Lord Balfour, the new Foreign Secretary, had requested help from the leaders of the British Zionist movement to work on the wording of a document which would express the sentiments of the Zionist Organization, and the Zionist Political Committee's meeting at the Hotel produced the draft.

The final document that would lay the foundation for the establishment of the state of Israel was sent in the form of a letter by Lord Arthur James Balfour to Lord Walter Rothschild. Rothschild was to pass it on to the Zionist Organization headed by Dr Chaim Weizmann.

At first glance, the two pieces of paper, covered with Leon's scribbles, look like unassuming notes. In fact, they are drafts of a declaration that changed the course of world history. The draft declaration reads:

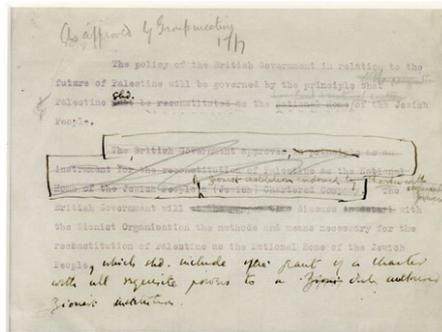
*H(is) M(ajesty's) G(overnment) accepts the principle that P(alestine) should be reconstituted as the Nat(ional) Home of the J(ewish) P(eople). HMG will use its*

*best efforts to secure the achievement of this object, and will discuss the necessary methods and means with the Z(ionist) O(rganization).*

Sir Leon Simon was the son of Rabbi Isadore Simon of the South Manchester Synagogue and Csisza (Kitty) Avner, both of whom had moved to Britain from Lithuania in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He went to Manchester Grammar School and read Greats (Classics) at Balliol.

Leon combined careers as a British Government official, and as advisor to the Government of Israel and was a recognized classical scholar in Greek and Hebrew.

He became a significant figure in a group of young Jewish intellectuals - the Manchester Zionist Association - that congregated around Chaim Weizmann. The group included Harry Sacher the journalist, Samuel Landman, Israel Sieff and Simon Marks - all of whom had also attended Manchester Grammar School.



They were part of the Manchester Zionist Association, where Leon and his brother Maurice would hold discussions in Hebrew. Together with Harry Sacher, Leon edited *The Zionist Banner* and he also edited *Palestine*, a Zionist monthly.

Leon Simon was a member of the Zionist Commission that visited Palestine in 1918 and he took part in laying the cornerstone of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

In 1904, Leon started working for the General Post Office, becoming Director of Telegraphs and Telephones in 1931. In 1935 he took up the post of Director of the Savings Bank, a position he retained until 1944. In 1931 he was honoured with a CB. He was knighted for his services when he left the Post Office.

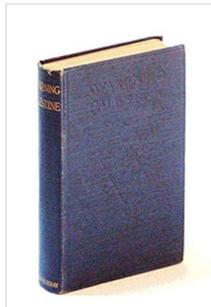
From 1945 to 1946 he was a member of the Commission of Inquiry into Jewish Education in Palestine, on behalf of the British government. The only Jew on the Commission, Simon objected to the decision that English should be the language of instruction in higher education. He lived in Jerusalem from 1946 to 1953. During that time, he also worked in the Israeli Ministry of Posts, laying the plans for the post office bank. He became chairman of the Hebrew University's Executive Council and was a member of its Board of Governors. After his return to England in 1953, he remained associated with several cultural projects in Israel.

Leon Simon was a brilliant writer in both English and Hebrew. He translated ancient Greek literature into Hebrew, and Hebrew into English. He published essays and articles in English on Zionism and Hebrew culture and literature. Some of his essays were collected in *Studies in Jewish Nationalism*. He also edited the anthology, *Aspects of The Hebrew Genius*.

An advocate of cultural Zionism and the revival of Hebrew language, he came under the influence of Ahad Ha'am (Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg), a leading figure of cultural Zionism, and went on to translate many of his works into English - as well as writing his biography. Leon also wrote the first translations into modern Hebrew of John Stuart Mill's *Essay on Liberty*, and of

several of Plato's *Dialogues*, work for which he received the Tchernichovsky Prize.

Another of Leon's books is *Awakening Palestine*. This has contributions by Leonard Stein - a Founder Member of our Synagogue - who wrote the definitive book on the Balfour Declaration. Albert Einstein included *Awakening Palestine* in the bibliography of his book *About Zionism*.



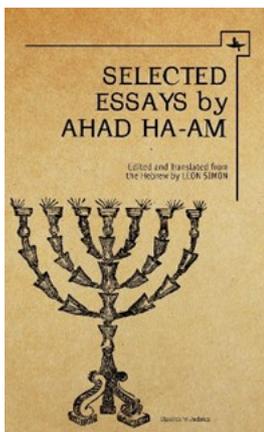
*Awakening Palestine*

by

Leon Simon  
&  
Leonard Stein

Leon Simon was married in 1916 to Ellen Umanski and they had two daughters. He died in London, aged eighty-four and is buried at Willesden Cemetery.

**Claire Connick**



**The Alphabet of Ben Sira**



This strange work, mentioned in our article about Lilith - which appears on page 5 of this issue - is believed to have been written in the Middle Ages, in Hebrew and Aramaic. It is a satirical work composed of proverbs, together with a biography of Ben Sira at a very early age. It explains, in some editions, how Jeremiah was the father *and* the grandfather of Ben Sira, his mother being Jeremiah's daughter. It tells of Ben Sira's miraculous conception and tells of his intellectual prowess.

The *Alphabet* derives from Sirach, an Apocryphal work, closely allied to Ecclesiasticus but not part of the Bible. It is not part of the Jewish canon, though some Jews in the diaspora considered Sirach scripture. The Greek translation made by Ben Sira's grandson was included in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Jewish scriptures used by Diaspora Jews, through which it became part of the Greek canon. Many of the manuscript fragments uncovered in the Cairo *Genizah* confirm its authoritative status among Egyptian Jewry until the Middle Ages.

There are twenty-two proverbs in each language with a *haggadic* commentary on them, enriched with fables and legends. Some appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The Aramaic proverbs include some which have passed into common language such as 'Cast thy bread upon the waters and upon the land, for thou shalt find it after many days'. Others have a humorous twist, very applicable to modern life. 'Rise quickly from the table and thou wilt avoid disputes', and 'thou mayest have sixty counsellors but do not give up thine own opinion.'

The Hebrew proverbs belong to the so-called second *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, quite different in character from the first and pertain to a much later period. It consists of twenty-two Hebrew proverbs with a commentary. Half of the proverbs are borrowed from the Talmud; and some of them are divided into several proverbs in order to preserve the desired number of twenty-two, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

Ben Sira's fame reached Nebuchadnezzar who called him to his court. He set out various tasks for Ben Sira who replied with twenty-two stories; some are derived from Christian legend and from the Hindu *Panchatantra*.

The only complete copy of the *Alphabet* is in the British Library, with a part translation into English. It was published in 1997 by The Valmadonna Trust Library and is a facsimile of the 1519 Constantinople edition.

**Philippa Bernard**

## London Synagogues of the Eighteenth Century

When the Jews returned to England in 1665, after the expulsion of 1290, they founded in London a small synagogue in Creechurch Lane, with a cemetery in Mile End. These early Jews were nearly all Sephardim, from Spain and Portugal or from Holland. In 1701 the congregation needed a new purpose-built synagogue, and constructed, a short distance away, the beautiful Bevis Marks synagogue, modelled on the synagogue in Amsterdam.

However, this form of worship was not to the taste of the Jews from Germany and Eastern Europe. They were of very different stock from their Sephardi co-religionists. Cecil Roth gives a succinct account of the differences. 'Their pronunciation of Hebrew was different, as well as their synagogue usages, their melodies, their cantillation, and details of their rite of prayer. They were hyper-orthodox in points of practice, cultivated Rabbinic scholarship with a passionate intensity, knew little of secular lore and spoke among themselves the Judaeo-German dialect.' They decided to build their own place of worship.



*The Hambro Synagogue*

The first synagogue to be built in London after Bevis Marks was known as the Great Synagogue (see *Westminster Quarterly*, October 2020), founded for the Ashkenazim in 1690; it was destroyed in 1941 during the Blitz on

London. The majority of these German-speaking Jews came from Hamburg, and they built their own synagogue, known as the Hambro. Not much is remembered of the building or its membership, but it was founded by a wealthy jeweller, Marcus Moses (also known as Marcus Hamburger). Marcus Moses wished to establish a small house of study and prayer (*Beth Hamedrash*) in a house in St. Mary Axe. The Great Synagogue was furious at the idea of a competitive congregation appearing almost next to their own, and with the support of Bevis Marks Synagogue, obtained an injunction from the Court of the Alderman of the City of London against the erection of this alternative place of worship. A dispute subsequently developed regarding a divorce, in which Marcus had publicly and scathingly criticised the ecclesiastical authorities; he was, as a result, excommunicated by the then Chief Rabbi of the Great Synagogue.

In 1707 he established his own congregation at his home in Magpie Alley, off Fenchurch Street and engaged a Chief Rabbi of his own, who dissolved the decree of excommunication. A burial ground was acquired in Hoxton in East London. There was still no synagogue building, the congregation continuing to meet at Moses' home.

Ignoring the injunction against him, Moses built a synagogue in 1725 in the garden beside his house. He had travelled abroad and made a great deal of money in the process, most of which he put towards the construction. In 1892 a new Hambro synagogue was built in Whitechapel and the old one demolished. It was apparently not an aesthetic success, though much larger. Its Holy Ark was set so high above the worshippers that 'it needed an exceptional flight of steps to reach it.' It was reunited with the Great Synagogue in 1936.

Another synagogue in London which was established in the eighteenth century was the New Synagogue. It was founded in 1761 in Leadenhall Street. It remained there until 1837, when it moved to Great Saint Helens in Bishopsgate. Following the movement of



*Entrance to the New Synagogue in Leadenhall Street*

a large part of its congregation into London's suburbs, the synagogue moved again in 1915 to Egerton Road, Stamford Hill. Its membership began to decline after World War II and in 1987 the United Synagogue sold it to the *Bobov*, a *Chasidic* community. The New Synagogue was one of the original five synagogues which grouped together to form the United Synagogue in 1870, and remained a constituent member until its sale.

The majority of Jews living in London after the readmission were confined to the City of London. They carried on their business, worshipped there - and they and their families resided there. This meant that they were either very rich, with financial houses dealing in gold or jewellery or lending money; or they were poor merchants, eking out a living where they could. They could not become Freeman of the City, so middle-class business was forbidden to them. The answer was to move further out to the East where life was neither comfortable nor easy, where immigrants lived in squalid conditions and poverty reigned. Or to accept a move to the west where Jewish life, synagogues and fellow religionists hardly existed.

In 1762 the Westminster Paving Act was passed. This removed the responsibility of paving the streets from the individual house owner to the government. Before the Act, occupants were responsible for

paving and cleaning a specified area before their residences, but once the Act came into being the whole region became cleaner, immeasurably more comfortable, and worthy of investment in houses, schools and new roads. Commerce expanded and the middle classes found themselves as shopkeepers, as well as customers.

For Jewish people the situation was ideal. They could set up businesses, send their children to school, and inevitably establish a Jewish way of life in attractive surroundings. They needed first of all a synagogue.

There lived in London at the time a German Jew called Wolf Liepman. Simon von Geldern, a writer and traveller and a relation of Heinrich Heine, describes him in his Memoirs as 'held in high repute, not only as a prosperous merchant but also as a generous patron of learning and culture and a beneficent philanthropist.' He lived in Great Poulteney Street where for some years he had sponsored, at his own expense, a *Minyan* which ultimately became the Holy Congregation of the Kenneseth Israel of Westminster in London, later the Western Synagogue - and for some of us the first Westminster Synagogue.

In 1797 the new congregation took a building in Denmark Court, off the Strand, now the site of the Strand Palace Hotel. It had been leased to the dramatist and musician, Charles Dibdin, as the *Sans Souci* Theatre and before that had been occupied as a picture gallery by the Royal Academy and by the Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Polygraphic Society. There the congregation remained until it moved to the Haymarket.

Several more moves followed: to a new building in Albert Place off Bedford Square, to Crawford Place in Marylebone and finally a merger in 1991 with the Marble Arch Synagogue. It still owns a hidden cemetery at Queens Elm on the Fulham Road. This was the first Jewish burial ground west of the City, then known as Brompton Cemetery. The cemetery closed in 1885, although burials in reserved graves continued until at least 1910. It became dilapidated after closure, but in 1897 Ellis Franklin paid for its

restoration, which was completed in 1898 and its maintenance was later provided for by the Adel Hopkins Estate. The cemetery remains hidden behind a high brick wall, but a number of taller monuments and its mature trees are visible.

In 1937 the Jewish Historical Society of London published an article by Cecil Roth on *The Lesser London Synagogues of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, which throws considerable light on some of the smaller houses of prayer that existed in London at the time, perhaps the only information we have. Most were based on voluntary associations for study, rather as the *Yeshivot* of the orthodox community are today. They met in members' houses during the week, or after *Shabbat* services on Saturday afternoons. They engaged a rabbi or learned Jew, had a library and still maintained membership of a fully fledged synagogue to take advantage of a cemetery and ceremonial rites.



*The Western Synagogue in Alfred Place*

One of these little associations was the Rosemary Lane Synagogue, established in 1748. Their Rabbi, Tobias Goodman, is said to have delivered the earliest English sermon ever heard in any synagogue in Britain. Rosemary Lane - sometimes known as Rag Fair - near the Tower of London, no longer exists, but was the centre of the Jewish old clothes industry.

It can therefore be assumed that the synagogue, though once described as a very fine synagogue, must have catered for poorer Jews. It moved later to Prescott Street in Whitechapel and finally merged with the Castle Street synagogue.

There was also at this time the Gun Yard synagogue in Houndsditch, sometimes known as Phillips' *shul*, after the Phillips family, its principal members. Most of the congregation were from eastern Europe, but there was also a synagogue known as the Polish Synagogue not far away, consecrated in 1804. Records maintained by the Great Synagogue show that it possessed some very beautiful silver and curtains, as well as a fine Commemoration Book, inscribed on vellum by the distinguished calligrapher Aaron of Lissa, the first Australian Rabbi.

It seems likely that there were more of these small synagogues springing up, mostly in the East End, in the time before the great influx of Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe. It is to be hoped that more information about them will come to light in the future.

**Philippa Bernard**

## Lord Joseph Duveen (1869-1939)



‘Europe has a great deal of art and America has a great deal of money.’ This was the maxim by which Joseph Duveen became the greatest art dealer of all time and acquired his vast wealth. Both his parents came originally from Holland but had settled in England where they married and where Joseph was born. They set up shop as antique dealers with a prosperous business in Hull, travelling frequently to the continent to buy Delftware, carpets and antiques of all kinds. They had thirteen children and moved to London in 1879. When his father died in 1908 Joseph and his uncle Henry took over the business and started to buy paintings.

Joseph, the eldest child, was sent to University College School in Hampstead. However, he dropped out of school to help in the family business and Henry went to New York, where he established an office and proceeded to found the American side of the company. He wrote back, ‘I like America – it is a first-class money-making country.’ The Duveens were already acquiring some of the wealthy clients who were to make their fortune, the Prince and Princess of Wales in England, and in America some of the great oil and commercial magnates – Andrew Mellon, William Randolph

Hearst, and John D. Rockefeller among them.

It was the great Bernard Berenson, art critic, Renaissance scholar, and writer, who helped to put Duveen’s activities on the map. He was able to authenticate many of the paintings Duveen was buying for his wealthy American clients. Many of these had no idea of the historical background or artistic value of the paintings they were buying, but Duveen was able to convince them that this was the way to find the rich, high-class society they were anxious to enter.

The old aristocratic families of Europe already possessed many of the greatest pictures ever painted and, in need of money to keep up their vast palaces, were only too willing to sell them to America for unimaginable sums of money. It was not only great works of art that passed through Duveen’s hands, but furniture, medieval tapestries, furniture, silver and *objets d’art*. He sold a Ghirlandaio to J.P. Morgan for \$1 million, a Rembrandt to the widow of Collis P. Huntington for \$2.5 million, and Gainsborough’s *The Blue Boy* for a similar sum. When it became known that *The Blue Boy*, one of the most famous pictures in the world, was leaving the country, there were demonstrations in the streets. The National Gallery put it on view, and queues to see it stretched round Trafalgar Square. It is now in the Huntington Library in California.

Joseph’s father was knighted, just before he died in 1908, and a few years later his son moved the business to New York, where he leased splendid showrooms at 720 Fifth Avenue on the corner of West 56<sup>th</sup> Street. Here he quickly became the greatest art dealer the world had ever seen.

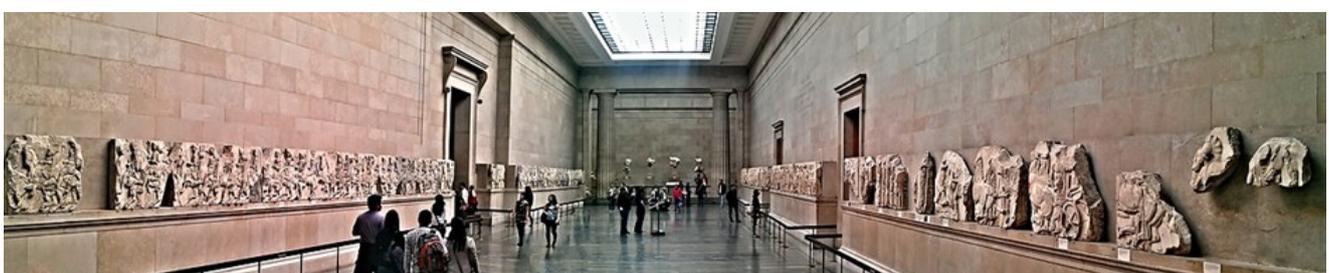
Duveen made it his business to know where all the great paintings of the world

were housed. He also knew which of the great American families were in the market for the ownership of these works of art. He was happy to pay out large sums to butlers and chauffeurs who might tell him of the pictures owned by their masters and mistresses. He was perfectly at home, too, in the famous hotels in the capitals of Europe, ‘happening’ to meet in their corridors those wealthy buyers with whom he might clinch a ‘bargain’. The story is told of how, when Andrew Mellon, whose collection later became the Washington National Gallery of Art, was staying at Claridges, his valet was propositioned by Duveen. The result was a ‘chance’ meeting by the two men in the lift. Duveen invited Mellon to join him in a visit to the London National Gallery, after which a long association was the result, ending in the establishment of one of America’s greatest museums. It has today more than two thousand objects – paintings, sculpture, prints and photographs - sourced by Duveen, whose architect also designed the gallery.



Cartoon by Peter Arno

Duveen’s method of trading was not always as scrupulous as it might have been. In 1921 he was sued by Andrée Hahn for \$500,000 following his comments questioning the authenticity of a version of the da Vinci painting *La Belle Ferronnière* that she owned and had planned to sell. The case raised questions about attributions by so-called experts, and how they come to their conclusions, thus affecting the status and value of



The Duveen Gallery in the British Museum with the Parthenon Marbles from the Acropolis, Athens.

# Amusement Arcade



*The Blue Boy by Gainsborough*

paintings. The case of Hahn vs Duveen went to trial in New York and attracted a large audience. The court case took seven years to come to trial and after the first jury returned an open verdict, Duveen agreed to settle, paying Hahn \$60,000 plus court costs. The status of the picture remains ambiguous. His judgement was also considered questionable in relation to some of the restoration methods used, when some Old Masters were damaged by his conservators. Today, some of the pictures he sold for vast sums are considered fakes - they are deemed to have been altered under his instructions to increase their value.

Perhaps Duveen's most important contribution to the art of the Western World, though one which is still under the greatest controversy, is his construction of the Duveen Gallery at the British Museum to hold the Elgin Marbles. Thomas Bruce, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Elgin, took particular interest in the Parthenon in Greece and began to commission artists to take drawings and casts of the marbles whilst still in place. However, in 1801, Elgin obtained a permit from the Ottoman Empire, who at the time ruled over Greece, to start removing many of the surviving Parthenon sculptures, after which he sent them back to London with the intention of having them displayed in the British Museum. Even at the time, it was a controversial acquisition. Once they were back in England in 1817, the Elgin Marbles were first housed in a prefabricated gallery designed by Robert Smirke. A permanent 'Elgin Room' was constructed on the west side of the Museum in 1832, and the collection remained there until the Duveen Gallery was built.

The Duveen Gallery, financed by Lord Duveen, was specially designed to house the Parthenon Sculptures. It was funded by Lord Duveen and designed by the architect John Russell Pope. However, further controversy arose when Duveen insisted on intensive cleaning of the marble, which he considered should be a clear shining white, rather than the warm stone of the original. Several incidents befell the sculptures, including one when two schoolboys knocked off part of a centaur's leg. The controversy continues as Greece struggles to restore the marbles to their original site at the Parthenon.

Many of the greatest art collections of America owe their origins to Lord Duveen, including those of Andrew Mellon, J. Paul Getty, Henry Frick, and Henry Huntingdon. He was known throughout the civilised world. He married Elsie Salomon of New York and they had one daughter. Lord Duveen died at Claridges in London and is buried at Willesden Cemetery.



*The Duveen Building in New York*

## Philippa Bernard

*Footnote:*  
**January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020:** Exactly one hundred years to the day since it left for New York, the Blue Boy has returned to London. The painting is to be exhibited at the National Gallery for a special showing. Before it left, the Gallery's then Director Charles Holmes wrote 'au revoir' on the painting's reverse, in the hope that the painting would return one day. Now that dream is coming true as the painting is being generously lent to the Gallery for this exceptional free exhibition.

## Vaccination Scene



**Nurse:** Which arm?  
**Shakespeare:** *As you like it*

**Nurse:** Was that painful?  
**Shakespeare:** *Much ado about nothing.*

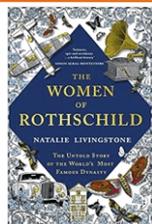
**Nurse:** You will need to have a second jab.  
**Shakespeare:** *Measure for measure?*

**Nurse:** So, how was the experience?  
**Shakespeare:** *A midsummer night's dream!*

**Nurse:** So, what do you think of the government's handling of Covid?  
**Shakespeare:** *it's a Comedy of Errors.*



## BOOK REVIEW



*The Women of Rothschild*

by  
Natalie  
Livingstone

John Murray 2021

*The Women of Rothschild*, by Natalie Livingstone brings to life the power and splendour of the Rothschild dynasty - but through the eyes of the women in the family who were even more extraordinary than their fathers, brothers and sons.

The banking clan was enlightened in many ways but was also deeply patriarchal. The founding father, Mayer Amschel Rothschild, dictated in his 1812 Will, that all women in the family were prohibited from having any share of the bank's wealth or role in its decision making. However, the pivotal role of women in the Rothschild story started with Mayer's own wife, Gutle (1753-1849), for, without her, there might never have been a Rothschild bank.

Gutle grew up in cramped conditions in the Frankfurt ghetto but she came from an educated family. Mayer married her at an opportune moment. He had plans to diversify his business and Gutle came with an ample dowry. She was pregnant, a wince-making nineteen times, with ten surviving children. Gutle was the family accountant, her children's tutor, advisor to her husband and a devoted mother. You can't help but feel that she must have been hurt by her husband's omission assigning the women to a potential 'footnote in history.'

Livingstone's book focuses on the English Rothschild lineage. In 1798, one of Mayer Rothschild's sons, Nathan Rothschild, met the fifteen-year-old Hannah Cohen (1783-1850), a member of a well-established Anglo-Jewry family in London. He may not have been the most refined suitor but he was clearly successful. While Nathan embarked on numerous risky, but successful, deals, Hannah dutifully gave birth to countless children. Hannah's skill at crafting glittering parties at their palatial Piccadilly home was the talk of the town, elevated the status of the family, and allowed Hannah to pursue a personal passion - Jewish emancipation. Nathan's

Will followed his father's example, handing the partnership to the four sons. There was, however, one notable difference. Hannah had a vote on all transactions and her sons were to consult with their mother before any significant transaction.

The next head of the family was Lionel Rothschild, and a new Rothschild woman, Charlotte (1819-1884), made her mark. Charlotte joined her husband on the campaign trail as he strived to become a Liberal MP. Her close relationship to Disraeli and her skills at managing the media of the day played a significant role in his success. As Livingstone notes, however, it's telling that in all the portraits of Lionel taking his oath as an MP his wife Charlotte, who did so much, is not there standing by his side.

Charlotte was also clearly her own person - when Lionel's sister, Hannah Meyer married 'out' and denounced her faith it was a scandalous event and divided the family. Despite this, Hannah and Charlotte remained close. It is a pattern that is repeated several times in the book where regardless of scandal, shame or tragedy the women stick together, maintaining sometimes forbidden communication, supporting each other, understanding and acknowledging the pressure of being a member of the dynasty.

Rothschild women had little say in whom they married. Marriage within, cousin to cousin, or even uncle to niece, was common and kept the wealth, the family and the faith intact. The men often saw the women as no more than an appendage. James Rothschild, in Paris, on marrying his niece Betty, described her as 'an essential piece of furniture.' Constance Rothschild (1843-1931) was one of several Rothschild women who endured unhappy marriages. Despite the shame of her husband's homosexual liaisons, she maintained a close relationship with Queen Victoria, and threw herself into philanthropic work to protect young Jewish East End girls from the sex trade, and took an active role in the debate on female franchise working tirelessly to improve the rights of women.

Two notable and vastly overlooked Rothschild women are Roziska (1870-

1940) and Dorothy/Dolly (1895-1988). While Walter Rothschild is indelibly linked to the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Livingstone's research showed that Chaim Weizmann reached out to the Rothschild women first. Eighteen months before Walter even met Weizmann, Roziska and Dolly approached politicians, including significant players in the foreign office, raised funds and persuaded other members of the family to join forces. Media savvy and wise to the world of lobbying, they coached Weizmann on how to interact with different audiences. Roziska juggled this work with raising four children and caring for a husband who suffered from acute depression. The children's accounts of the impact of their absent but loving father are very moving and had a huge bearing on their adult lives.

Roziska's daughters Liberty, Nica and Miriam, led wildly different lives and defied the definition of a typical Rothschild woman. Liberty, sadly, entered a mental institution after succumbing to her father's depression and schizophrenia. Nica, introduced to jazz by her father, ditched her married life to become 'Baroness Be-bop' in New York, patroness of jazz legend Thelonious Monk. Descriptions of her home, the 'Cat House,' where musicians could jam and take drugs, are both hilarious and tragic.

Miriam is one of the standout women in this book as the breadth of her achievements is extraordinary; a polymath, a brilliant zoologist who also translated German codes at Bletchley Park, an environmental role model, a campaigner for better understanding of schizophrenia, a contributor to the Woolfenden report and her extraordinary academic work that led her to being called the Queen of Fleas. Their mother Roziska's strong Jewish and Hungarian heritage gave the girls a profound sense of responsibility to help German Jews during the Second World War giving them refuge at the Rothschild homes.

Livingstone brings these women to life. They stay with you long after you've finished the book - shining bright as inspiring, resilient and daring. They are role models for the women of today.

**Caroline Levy**

## Leonard Montefiore (1889-1961)



A Jewish aristocracy began to develop in London with the arrival from Amsterdam of Levi Barent Cohen in 1770. With his six children eventually marrying the children of other prosperous Jews, what Chaim Bermant labelled 'The Cousinhood' in his book of that name, was established.

One of the scions of this group was Leonard Montefiore. He was an only child, born on 2 June 1889 to Claude Montefiore and Thérèse (née Schorstein), the granddaughter of a Polish Rabbi. Unfortunately, she died in childbirth and he was brought up by his grandmother, Emma Montefiore, who was from the wealthy Goldsmid family.

Claude was the founding President of the World Union for Progressive Jews. In his book, Bermant says of Leonard, *He did not adopt his father's religious radicalism. An active member of the Reform Synagogue, rather than the Liberal, he was something of a clergyman manqué and liked, when occasion permitted, to conduct services at the West London Synagogue.*

Leonard was educated at Clifton College and read History at Balliol College, Oxford. After graduation, he worked at Toynbee Hall, a settlement house established in an attempt to alleviate poverty and promote social work.

Montefiore joined the Royal Hampshire Regiment in WWI. He was promoted to the rank of Captain and was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1918.

In 1924, at West London Synagogue, he married Muriel Jeanetta Tuck, daughter of the greetings card magnate. They had two sons, Alan and David.

Like his father before him, Leonard was a natural philanthropist. In 1933, he and Neville Laski founded the Joint Foreign Committee of the Board of Deputies and in 1941 he became President of the Association of Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. He was also a founder of the Wiener Library and was its President. Fluency in the German language enabled him to study the oppression of Jews in Germany in great detail; he wrote pamphlets, letters and articles which he eventually published - notably *Exiles from Germany*.

Montefiore's philanthropy benefitted many people during WW2. He was a leading figure in the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF) and the substantial monetary contribution that he made to the fund ensured that the British Government could accept Jewish refugees from Germany without draining government finances. The fund, which changed its name to World Jewish Relief, rescued and rehabilitated over 700 child Holocaust survivors of the concentration camps.

He was the chairman of the Committee for the Care of the Concentration Camp Children and the driving force in arranging for 'The Boys' to be brought to the UK. He wrote to Anthony de Rothschild suggesting that the CBF should persuade the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) to fly children from Displaced Person's camps in Europe to the UK. Amazingly, his suggestion worked, and they were flown to England by the RAF - in heavy bombers!



*Unusual air travel*



*Happy faces of the new arrivals*

The rescued Jewish children were known as 'The Boys', although nearly 200 of them were girls. They were initially brought to Windermere in the Lake District, and later to other hostels around the country, where they were given education, training, language skills and psychological assistance to help them integrate into British society. A film about this was dramatized as *The Windermere Children* and broadcast by the BBC in 2020 for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.



*Enjoying lessons in the open air*

Leonard visited the hostels regularly, taking a personal interest in the children's development. Eva Kahn-Miden who was a nurse at Windermere, described him as 'A remarkable man' with 'intelligence, compassion and financial freedom'.

Leonard Montefiore died in 1961, aged 72

**Claire Connick**

## The English Pissarros



*Sand on the floor of the Synagogue on the Island of St. Thomas*

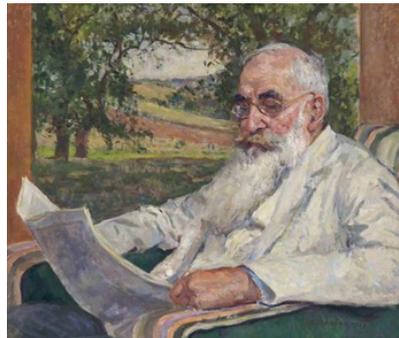
The little island of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands is not very well-known. Its most famous son is Camille Pissarro, the Danish/French Impressionist painter. The Virgin Islands were bought by the United States in 1915, having previously been owned by Holland, then by Denmark. After 1673, when slavery was introduced, the Island became one of the chief sugar producers of the Caribbean and was extremely prosperous. In 1801 and again in 1807–15 the British held St. Thomas, but it was afterward restored to Denmark. As happened with several of the Caribbean nations, a Jewish population settled there, encouraged by the local inhabitants, and enjoying a freedom not always granted to them elsewhere. Most were *conversos* from Spain and Portugal, speaking Spanish and Hebrew. The capital city of Charlotte Amalie is the home of the St. Thomas Synagogue, the second-oldest in continuous use in the American territories, and one of only five in the world that features sand-covered floors dating back to the Inquisition-era custom of using sand to muffle forbidden prayer.

Frederic Pissarro (Camille's father) relocated to the island from Bordeaux where the family had taken refuge, and in 1826 married Rachel, his uncle's widow. The announcement in the *St. Thomas Times* declared the union 'according to the Israelitish ritual.' But the rabbis of St. Thomas sent a letter to the paper, declaring that the wedding took place 'without the knowledge of the Rulers and Wardens of the Synagogue, nor was the Ceremony performed according to the

usual custom,' as the Bible prohibits sexual relations between a man and his aunt.

In 1830, when Camille was born to this suspect union, he was officially registered at the town's Synagogue, with the names Jacob Abraham Camille, but it took three years after Camille's birth for the rabbis to accept his parents' marriage. This might explain why Frederic and Rachel sent Camille to an all-black school that was part of the Moravian Church. When Frederic died, his will granted large and equal parts of his fortune to the local Synagogue and Church.

Camille went to Paris where he took up painting as a full-time career, becoming one of the great Impressionist painters of the time. In England, he married Julie Vellay, his mother's maid, and they returned to Paris where they had seven children, all but one following in their father's footsteps to become great artists.



*Lucien Pissarro by James Manson Manchester Art Gallery*

The eldest child of Camille and Julie was Lucien. He was born in 1863 and visited England when he was seven years old, staying with relations in Upper Norwood. He returned to the family in Paris but was again sent to England to learn the language. This time he stayed in the Holloway Road, working for a music publisher. At the last Impressionist exhibition in 1886 he exhibited with his father. Back again in Paris he was introduced to his father's contemporaries, among them Van Gogh, Signac and Seurat. Van Gogh dedicated his painting *Basket of Apples* to the young Pissarro.

Lucien greatly admired the work of William Morris and the English Arts and Crafts Movement, and on his next visit to England decided to make his permanent

home here. In London he met Esther Levi Bensusan, a wood engraver and designer, who had studied at the Crystal Palace Art School. The couple were married in a civil ceremony in Richmond on 10 August 1892. Although both Esther and Lucien came from ancient Sephardi Jewish families, they were not practising Jews. Lucien claimed to be an atheist - though his father Camille was very shocked by the Dreyfus affair in France. Their honeymoon was first spent in Rouen and then they stayed for eight months at Camille and Julie Pissarro's new house in Eragny, in the countryside north-west of Paris. Lucien continued to visit the Eragny home regularly over the years, and the name of the little town became the title of the Press they founded later.



*Orovida Pissarro self portrait*

In England Lucien and Esther bought a house in Epping where their daughter Orovida was born. It was at the Epping house that Lucien and Esther set up the Eragny Press, in collaboration with their friends Charles Shannon and Charles Ricketts who had founded the Vale Press to publish and illustrate books in the style of the Arts and Crafts School. They also produced a magazine *The Dial*, to which the Pissarros contributed. One of their principles was that they would accept original print-making but not reproductions. Lucien wrote to his father, 'Ricketts told me that the English are not interested in engraving . . . Ricketts will soon have his typographic press and we are all going to work on prints.' The Pissarros' work owed much to the influence of William Morris, creating the antique feel of wood-cut printing, specialising in classical and antiquarian tales, such as Grimm's stories, Biblical verses and poetry, owing much to the printing styles of the Renaissance, with decorative borders and the black and white printing of earlier times.



*The Book of Ruth and Esther*

The Eragny Press printed some thirty-two books, Lucien hand-printing and often illustrating the output of the Press, linked with his socialist beliefs, and collaborating with the anarchist press in London and Paris. One of the most beautiful of the Press books is *The Book of Ruth and Esther*.

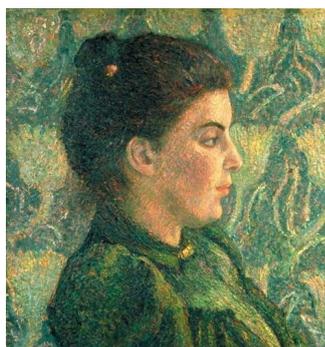
Unlike some other book designers of contemporary private press books, the Pissarros were not wealthy, in spite of Esther's family being prosperous merchants. Camille, too, never earned a great deal from his paintings until he was well established later in life. Lucien wrote to his friend, the artist James Manson, 'Hand-made paper printing is a very difficult thing to do, it is there where the machine falls short of the old-fashioned presses, because the paper having to be used wet cannot support the rough handling of the machinery.' But the results were among the most attractive private press books ever produced. Camille wrote to his son, 'Your book arrived. Very beautiful, very polished, the first page with the ornament of Salome, the typography, etc., has the stamp of a master.' Lucien is now renowned as a pioneer in the use of colour in wood-engraving.



*The Pissarros' house in Chiswick*

Lucien suffered a serious stroke in 1897, but was able to continue painting, with Esther's help, and the family moved to Chiswick. In 1904 he exhibited at the New English Art Club, and was invited to join Walter Sickert's Fitzroy Street Group, which in turn was largely responsible for the formation in 1911 of the Camden Town Group, whose name has become synonymous with a distinctive period in the history of British art before the First World War. Named after the area of north London, where a number of the artists lived and worked, the group aimed to reflect the realities of modern urban life. It included such artists, besides Sickert himself, as Spencer Gore and Harold Gilman, whose works relate to broader social and cultural aspects of the Edwardian period and later.

In 1916 Pissarro became a British citizen. From 1922 to 1937 he painted regularly in the south of France, interspersed with painting expeditions to Derbyshire, south Wales and Essex. From 1934 until his death in 1944 he exhibited at the Royal Academy in London. The family rented a crumbling cottage in Fishpond - from where Pissarro painted several pieces, including 'The Heather Patch' and 'High View, Fishpond', finally settling in a handsome property in the secluded hamlet of Hewood. He died there on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1944.



*Portrait of his wife, Esther by Lucien Pissarro*

After Lucien's death Esther continued painting and print-making. She established an archive of the Pissarros' work at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and died in 1951. Orovida's work turned away from the Arts and Crafts style of her parents, but after Esther's death she continued print-making and oil



*Pastoral Scene by Esther Pissarro*

painting. She is buried in the Pissarro family burial site in Paris.



*Pissarro family grave Père Lachaise Cemetery Paris*

## Philippa Bernard

### Footnote:

On February 18<sup>th</sup> - after this article was written - the Ashmolean Museum Oxford opened an exhibition called *Pissarro: Father of Impressionism*. It runs until June 12<sup>th</sup>.

In the July 2019 issue of this publication, we ran an article about a proposed statue of Licoricia of Winchester. On 10<sup>th</sup> February this year, the impressive figure, which was erected in Jewry Street where she had lived, was unveiled by Ephraim Mirvis. Christian, Muslim, Sikh and Buddhist community leaders were there to show their support for the project. Engraved on one side of the statue are the words 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', in English and Hebrew.

Prince Charles had been due to attend the event but was prevented from doing so after testing positive for Covid-19. His statement that he was 'desperately disappointed' not to be there was read aloud to the large crowd. In his own speech, Mirvis spoke of the 'horrific persecution of Jews in this country, leading ultimately to their expulsion in 1290.' He went on to say, 'within those exceptionally trying times, there was an extraordinary lady committed to her faith ...who built a successful enterprise and gave a contribution of inestimable value to her country.' Later Simon Sebag Montefiore, a patron of the Licoricia of Winchester Statue Appeal said 'She has real resonance for today. She was a woman in a man's world, an ethnic minority at a time of great racism and prejudice and persecution'.

The statue was designed by Ian Rank-Broadley, who created the statue of Princess Diana. He revealed that he modelled Licoricia and Asser on his daughter and grandson.

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In a small room in the basement of Kent House, Olaf Lopri is hard at work turning old fabric face masks into Yarmulkes, since we are no longer mandated to cover our faces when we attend Services. It is proposed to make a second wall decoration of these in the entrance hall, matching the existing artwork. However, If you would like to acquire some of these colourful accessories – do get in touch.

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*Sylvie Hammerson writes:-*

Not many members know of the existence of the Westminster Synagogue Columbarium, a three sided brick structure containing the ashes of deceased members, in the Hoop Lane Jewish Cemetery.

In March 2015, Jeffrey Ohrenstein and I chose a beautiful mature 80-year-old Olive tree, and I organised and supervised its installation. This heavy tree, which needed three men to carry it from truck to site, was planted in a bed in the middle of the Columbarium and it is surrounded by Rosemary, Camomile daisies and Sage plants. Over the years, the tree has thrived, despite it being in a shady, east-facing plot - and the cemetery staff assuring me that it would never survive!

On either side of the Columbarium are two plaques containing the names of Jews murdered in Horažďovice and Přeštice - towns in the Czech Republic - whose rescued Scrolls are held by the Memorial Scrolls Trust. Every November, our Synagogue arranges an event to remember their lives.



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

## SEASONS

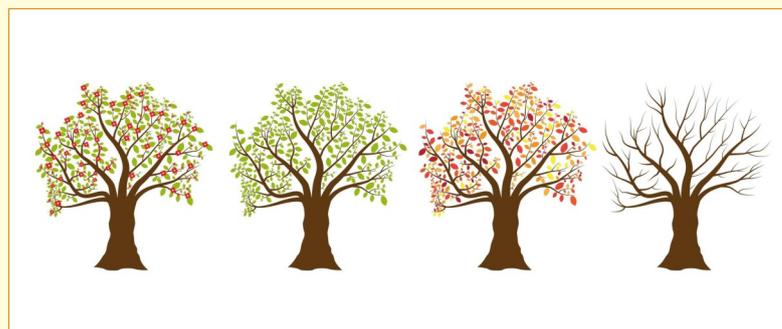
As if from a distant promontory  
As if weightlessness is upon me  
I see life's linear trajectory  
Transcending time's circular motions.

I see life carried forward  
Through the rounded cycle of seasons  
Through time's circular conveyor belt.  
Spring, summer, autumn, winter  
Nature's phases, rounding the year;  
Birth, youth, maturity, death  
Man's phases, spanning time

And as I try to hold the image  
To integrate it into my limited perspective  
I realise that life moves forward  
Through time's circular trajectory.

And it dawns on me  
That time, through which life exists,  
Results from the earth's motions  
Which take man on its circular journey  
In and out of this world  
In and out of life  
Regardless

Colette Littman





## Planning Your Diary

### Seder Night

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> April

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

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April

### Pesach Last Day

Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> April

### Erev Shavuot

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June

### Shavuot

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June

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