

W ESTMINSTER QUARTERLY

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The Great Choral Synagogue of Kyiv, Ukraine

The Jews of Ukraine
Bishop Trevor and the Sons of Jacob
George & Ira Gershwin
A Gem in Cavallon



I am delighted that our community is now searching for an additional Rabbi to support me and our Emeritus Rabbi Thomas - and also the excellent team of professional and lay leaders who work with us. I'm really pleased that this reflects how our community that has grown in size, endeavours to grow in purpose and participation. We are now more than 900 individuals, with over sixty new members joining last year. We have found increased purpose and participation in expanding adult learning, in improving learning for our youth, in engaging more members in acts of *chesed* (lovingkindness) - calling and visiting others, bringing members closer through one-to-one encounters and cultural events, and in greater participation in Services.

Over these months, stunned by the war in Ukraine, we have also found how, at Westminster Synagogue, in the face of shock and potential hopelessness, we unite for community, support, hope and ways to act together. It would have been easy to give in to despair, but despair is the tyrant's friend. We have been praying for those fighting or fleeing for their lives in Ukraine. I can understand wanting to turn away, to avoid the news, to switch off entirely, but instead we turn towards the vulnerable and innocent, and redouble our commitments to contribute to a better world.

To find a framework for ongoing commitment, we can look at the Book of Exodus, and ask, where is the heart of this foundational text of ours? The ending would have been so much happier, and more dramatically powerful, had it concluded with the Exodus itself. We might have ended with our people singing of their salvation having passed through the Sea, oppression and violence defeated, never to return - but this is not

where our story and world have stopped. Immediately after the Song of the Sea, we learn that not all forces in the world are amenable to the Merciful. Pointedly, Amalek appears, preying on the vulnerable, and in response, the Eternal articulates that there will be a *perennial* struggle. It would have been such a happier ending had the story concluded with celebrating salvation.

Instead, the narrative teaches us that our task now is to build a community, a society, and a world which are the positive opposite of Egyptian oppression. We are taught that this work will not be easy, that the struggle will be ongoing. Much of the rest of the Book of Exodus describes our building of that home through kind compassionate law, and through the construction of the Sanctuary itself.

The heart of the story is not just the Exodus, it's not glorying in the assumption that oppression and injustice are defeated, nor is it solely in the building of the Divine home; the heart is partly in the contrast between these two elements, in the building of a world that is the opposite of Egypt.

The people assembled, all together, all essential, and "*Kol Nediv Libo*", everyone whose heart is moved, contributes to the Sanctuary. The Book of *Shemot* tells us to believe in the possibility of a world in which human flourishing is more powerful than human degradation; in which everyone is encouraged to contribute. The heart of our book is partly your heart, that of every Israelite, moved to maintain hope in the face of pain and difficulty, contributing to a more divine world, a more just and caring one, resisting helplessness.

It could've been a happier ending, But the story we have is one that asks for our *ongoing* contribution to building God's home on Earth. Let us each maintain our sense of what the world could be, of what the world *should* be, while also paying attention to what it is. This dissonance can be painful, it could overwhelm your heart. Instead make it the heartbeat that moves you, that compels you to make a difference. Don't allow yourself to be helpless. Turn your attention to those who may feel helpless. We are builders of

a different world from that of Egypt, and the persistent requirement of the world that we occupy is to turn to the vulnerable.

Seeing such war on innocents, on the vulnerable, we pray today and every day to *El hagadol hagibor v'hanora*. The Ultimate - great, heroic and awesome. Looking to such a force we pray that mercy and compassion will somehow be stronger than cruelty and violence. We pray that this violence will end, and the lives threatened will be long and meaningful. If praying to such a force - great, mighty and awesome - sounds as if we are over-valuing militaristic strength, then we do well to remember the lines of *Torah* that this Divine address recalls. The one time in the five books that God is described in this way as 'great, mighty and awesome', is in Deuteronomy as Moses tells the people 'your Ultimate is the great mighty and awesome who takes no bribe, who loves the widow, the orphan and stranger, so you should love them too.' The address thus expresses that the greatest power is to care for the powerless. We pray for them, we care for them. We will continue to do so.

Don't give up on the world as it should be. And do give. I appreciated how many of you gave to the World Jewish Relief campaign - including by coming to our Quiz - and how many of you offered to home a refugee, and how many of you are now doing exactly that.

One could want to look away, could give in to hopelessness. Yet, though it's not our responsibility to finish the work, we're not free to desist from it. So, we place compassion, responsibility and community at the heart of our world, doing what we can to build the opposite of violence and oppression, and maintaining a vision of the world where all peoples will gather, and 'nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.'

Rabbi Benji Stanley

George & Ira Gershwin



The grandfather of Ira and George Gershwin was born in Odessa in Ukraine; his name then was Jakov Gershowitz, later Gershwine, which his grandsons changed to Gershwin. Jakov's son Moishe as a young man fell in love with Roza Bruskina, and when she and her family went to America to avoid the Jewish persecutions in Ukraine, he followed her. She changed her first name to Rose and he changed his to Morris; they married in 1895. They had four children, three boys and a girl. Ira was born in 1896 and George (originally Jacob) in 1898, followed by Arthur and Frances. The family moved to an apartment in Brooklyn, growing up in the Yiddish-speaking district, often visiting the local Yiddish theatre, where George occasionally appeared as an extra.

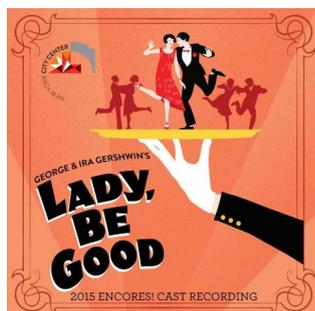
Ira was the quieter of the two elder boys; he went to a school for gifted children, was fond of music - particularly Gilbert and Sullivan - and went on to college, though he dropped out before graduating. He got a job working as a cashier in his father's Turkish Baths, but became involved in the music business when he was signed up to write songs for Abraham Erlanger's show *Two Little Girls in Blue*. Meanwhile his younger brother was wilder, running about the streets with his friends. It was not until George was about ten years old that he showed any interest in music. When he attended a concert where his friend Maxie Rosenzweig gave a violin recital, he was captivated and insisted on playing the piano originally bought for his older brother.

It was soon obvious to his family that George's musical talent needed

professional guidance and he was introduced to Charles Hambitzer, whose great-grandfather was a violinist in the Russian royal court and whose father owned a music store in Milwaukee. Hambitzer taught piano, violin and cello at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. In 1908, he moved to New York City where his main claim to fame was that he taught piano to George Gershwin, introducing him to the European classical tradition, taking him to concerts and explaining musical theory and technique to the young boy.

George started composing, using jazz as well as classics as a background to his music. His first published piece was *When you want 'em, you can't get 'em*. *When you've got 'em, you don't want 'em*, for which he was paid forty cents! He then got a job with the Aeolian Company, a firm making musical instruments, whose products included player organs, pianos, sheet music, records and phonographs. George's job was recording music for piano rolls, some of which were his own compositions. This was the heyday of Tin Pan Alley, a collection of songwriters and music publishers in New York City which dominated the popular music of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It originally referred to a specific place: West 28th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues in the Flower District of Manhattan; a plaque on the sidewalk on 28th Street between Broadway and Sixth Avenue commemorates it.

In 1916 George achieved his first success, the song *Swanee*. It was heard in a bar by Al Jolson who sang it in one of his shows (he was already a Broadway star) and it became an instant hit. *Swanee* sold a million sheet music copies, and an estimated two million records. It became the biggest-selling song of Gershwin's career.



In 1924 the brothers collaborated on their first Broadway hit, *Lady Be Good*. The title song has never lost its attraction, but others, particularly *Fascinating Rhythm*, were equally successful, and the show was made into a film starring Eleanor Powell. The show title was used on an American B-24D Liberator bomber that flew out of North Africa for the United States Army Air Force during the second World War. The *Lady Be Good* bomber disappeared on April 4, 1943, during a raid on Naples. It was found virtually intact in the Libyan desert in 1958.

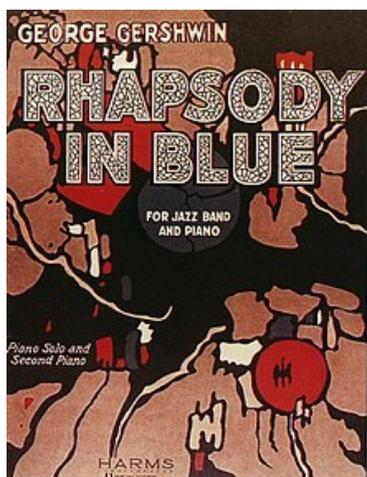
It was in that same year that George Gershwin wrote what many have claimed to be his masterpiece, the classical/jazz composition *Rhapsody in Blue*, for orchestra and piano, said to be the most-performed and most-recorded orchestral composition of the twentieth century. It premiered in New York with Paul Whiteman's Concert Band. It was Paul Whiteman who actually commissioned the work. He asked Gershwin to write a concerto-like piece for an all-jazz concert in honour of Lincoln's birthday. Gershwin initially declined Whiteman's request on the grounds that, as there would likely be a need for revisions to the score, he would have insufficient time to compose the work.

Soon after, George Gershwin and lyricist Buddy de Sylva were playing billiards. Their game was interrupted by Ira, who had been reading the *New York Tribune*. An unsigned article entitled 'What Is American Music?' about an upcoming Whiteman concert had caught Ira's attention. The article falsely declared that George Gershwin was already 'at work on a jazz concerto' for Whiteman's concert. George was puzzled by the news announcement as he had politely declined to compose any such work for Whiteman. In a telephone conversation with Whiteman the next morning, Gershwin was informed that Whiteman's arch rival Vincent Lopez was planning to steal the idea of his experimental concert and there was no time to lose. Gershwin was thus finally persuaded by Whiteman to compose the piece. The rest, as they say, is history.

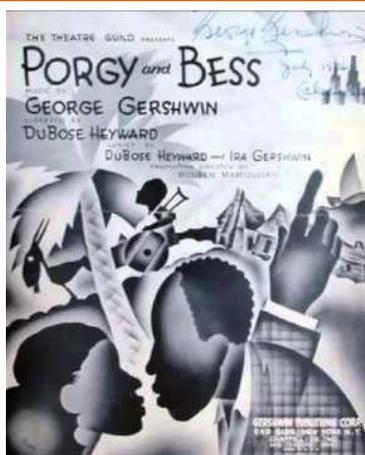
An account of that remarkable evening states that many of the early numbers in

the programme reportedly underwhelmed the audience, and the ventilation system in the concert hall malfunctioned. Some audience members were departing for the exits by the time Gershwin made his inconspicuous entrance for the Rhapsody. The audience apparently was irritable, impatient, and restless until the haunting *glissando* on the clarinet that opens *Rhapsody in Blue* was heard. Those ready to leave returned to their seats and the rapturous applause at the end ensured that *Rhapsody in Blue* would always retain its place at the forefront of modern musical expression.

A year later another great classical jazz piece by Gershwin had its first performance, the Piano Concerto in F, with George himself as soloist. The New York Symphony Orchestra, under its conductor Walter Damrosch, performed the piece - which had been commissioned by Damrosch himself - who had been present at the *Rhapsody* concert. The conductor described Gershwin as 'the Prince who has taken Cinderella [jazz] by the hand and openly proclaimed her a princess to the astonished world, no doubt to the fury of her envious sisters.'



The Gershwin brothers collaborated on musical shows that have continued to thrill audiences, with hummable, exciting numbers sure to keep feet tapping wherever they are performed: *Strike up the Band*, *Embraceable You*, *The Man I Love*, *They Can't Take that Away From Me* and many more. George's visit to Paris in the mid-20s brought *An American in Paris*, not much appreciated on its first performance at Carnegie Hall, but later a



great success. He had wanted to study composition there with Nadia Boulanger or Maurice Ravel but both turned him down. 'Why become a second-rate Ravel when you are already a first-rate Gershwin.' Ravel told him.

Viewed by many as George Gershwin's greatest work, *Porgy and Bess* is, according to George himself, a folk opera. He wrote, '*Porgy and Bess* is a folk tale. Its people naturally would sing folk music. When I first began work on the music I decided against the use of original folk material because I wanted the music to be all of one piece. Therefore I wrote my own spirituals and folksongs. But they are still folk music - and therefore, being in operatic form, *Porgy and Bess* becomes a folk opera.' The origin of *Porgy and Bess* is DuBose Heyward's 1925 novel *Porgy*. Heyward produced a play by the same name with Dorothy Heyward.

In 1933 Gershwin and Heyward signed a contract with the Theatre Guild to write the opera. In 1934 Gershwin and Heyward went to Folly Beach, South Carolina, where Gershwin got a feel for the locale and its music. He worked on the opera there and in New York. Ira Gershwin wrote lyrics to some of the opera's classic songs - most notably *It Ain't Necessarily So*. Most of the lyrics, including *Summertime*, were written by Heyward, who also wrote the libretto. There was some feeling against the opera and its black performers but it was a great success on Broadway and in Europe. It is performed regularly all over the world, and many distinguished singers and actors have taken part, including Leontyne Price, Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier (his singing voice was

dubbed). Its first performance was not a success but it is now considered an American classic. After the opera was not received well, George moved to Hollywood, writing music for films such as *Shall We Dance* with Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire.

For ten years George Gershwin had an affair with Kay Swift, but as she was not Jewish his mother disapproved and they never married. In 1937 he complained of headaches and was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour. This affected his piano playing and he stopped playing in public. He moved in with Ira and his wife Leonore, but as his illness progressed he needed increased care. He collapsed in July 1937. He was operated on but died the next day. A memorial concert was held at the Hollywood Bowl at which Otto Klemperer conducted his own orchestration of Gershwin's *Three Preludes*. He is buried in Hollywood's Westchester Hills Cemetery.

After George's death Ira waited nearly three years before writing again. Then, with his reputation as a lyricist already made, he teamed up with well known composers such as Jerome Kern and Kurt Weill. He took some of George's songs which had never been published, including the lyrics for Billy Wilder's 1964 film *Kiss Me Stupid*, and *The Man Who Got Away*, for Judy Garland in *A Star is Born*. In 1966 he received a Doctor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Maryland, confirming the judgment of so many of his literary admirers - writers such as Dashiell Hammett, Lillian Hellman, Dorothy Parker, S. N. Behrman, P. G. Wodehouse, W. H. Auden, Ogden Nash, and Lorenz Hart, to name only a few - that his work was not only of the first rank, but that Gershwin had set new standards for the American musical theatre. He was the first lyricist to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize - for '*Of Thee I Sing*' - in 1932. On August 17th, 1983, Ira Gershwin died at the 'Gershwin Plantation' - the Beverly Hills home that he shared with his wife Leonore, to whom he had dedicated his unique collection of lyrics, musings, observations, and anecdotes.

Philippa Bernard

The Bishop and the Sons of Jacob



Richard Trevor (1707 - 1771)

Bishop Richard Trevor served as Bishop of St Davids from 1744 to 1752 and as Bishop of Durham from 1752 until his death. He campaigned to give Jews full civil rights in the UK. In 1749, he persuaded his fellow bishops to back the 'Jew Bill' - the Jewish Naturalisation Bill that would allow Jewish immigrants to be naturalised as British citizens.

Briefly, the story of the Jewish Naturalisation Act is this. During the Jacobite rising of 1745, the Jews had shown particular loyalty to the government. Their chief financier, Sampson Gideon*, had strengthened the stock market, and several of the younger members had volunteered in the corps raised to defend London. Possibly as a reward, Henry Pelham in 1753 brought in the 'Jew Bill' which allowed Jews to become naturalised by application to Parliament. It passed the Lords without much opposition, but on being brought down to the House of Commons, the Tories protested against what they deemed to be an 'abandonment of Christianity.' The Whigs, notwithstanding, persisted in carrying out at least one part of their general policy of religious tolerance, and the Bill was passed and received royal assent. However, the general public reacted with an enormous outburst of anti-Semitism, and the Bill was repealed in the next sitting of Parliament, in 1754.

The seat of the Bishopric of Durham is Auckland Castle. The high ground above the rivers Wear and Gaunless had been the site of an ecclesiastical building since

Saxon times, and the first Bishop of Durham to live there was probably Eadmund, when King Canute gave him some land in 1020. It has never been a 'castle' as such - never a military fortification - in fact the walls around its parkland were built in 1349 to keep the people of Bishop Auckland out because they had the Black Death and the bishop inside did not want them to sneeze on him!

Bishop Trevor did a great deal of work on his palace. He paid Jeremiah Dixon, of Cockfield, to lay out his deer park. He built the distinctive deer house on the Gaunless's opposite bank, and he had the gatehouse - complete with its blue-face clock, designed by Sir Thomas Robinson, of Rokeby.

As Bishop of Durham, Trevor was one of the most influential clergymen in the country. When the Bill which he had so vehemently backed was thrown out, he determined to make another bold statement. In 1756 he purchased twelve of the thirteen paintings by the seventeenth-century Spanish artist Zurbarán, from a series known as *Jacob and his Twelve Sons*. Zurbarán painted them in the 1640s, at the time of the Spanish Inquisition, which was rooting out non-Christian practices. Was he, one wonders, being controversial, appealing for tolerance, or was he being commercial and trying to appeal to three sets of prospective buyers?

The paintings depict the fate of each son, with the thirteenth showing Jacob leaning on his stick, old and weighed down by the passage of time. These twelve paintings cost Trevor £124. The



Jacob

prices ranged from £2 2s for Reuben, the eldest son, to £21 10s 6d for Issachar and Naphtali. But he wasn't able to find Benjamin, which had been bought by a dealer called Jones Raymond and now hangs in Grimsthorpe Castle, in Lincolnshire. Raymond happened to be a friend of the artist Arthur Pond, whom the bishop paid £21 to copy Benjamin. One wonders if perhaps he was a victim of some collusion between dealer and artist! At some stage the paintings had been owned by Sir William Chapman. When he fell on hard times they were sold to James Mendez, a Portuguese Jewish merchant in Surrey. In 1756, he auctioned them. The buyer was the Bishop of Durham.

Trevor lengthened the Long Dining Room, adding windows, doors, fireplace and ceiling, and designing it so that it was perfectly proportioned for these thirteen super-sized paintings. In his castle, he





Reuben



Simeon



Levi



Judah



Dan



Naphtali



Gad



Asher



Issachar



Zebulun



Joseph



Benjamin

regularly entertained religious, political and military leaders from across the Continent, so he bought the paintings and hung them in his redesigned dining room in order that his guests - especially the most reactionary - had to eat in the presence of, and dwarfed by, the seven-foot portraits of the Tribes of Israel!

** Sampson Gideon featured in the issue of April 2016*

Claire Connick

Note: A paperback book, ZURBARANS at Auckland Castle, by Robert McManners, was published in 2010.

The Jews of Ukraine



Interior of the Kharkiv Synagogue

The Jewish community of Ukraine can date its history back for more than a thousand years. Jews may have lived there even earlier, as there are traces of their ancestry going back to the Khazars, the trading community who converted to Judaism in the eighth century. The Cairo *Genizah*, the huge treasury of Jewish archive material, much of which is now in Cambridge University, indicates the presence of Jews in Ukraine as early as 930 CE.

Certainly by the twelfth century the Jews were well enough established for there to be a 'Jewish Gate' in the city of Kyiv, which also boasted a scholarly Talmudist, Moses of Kiev. Polish and Lithuanian Jewish settlements were increasing, active in trade and cooperating with Jews in other East European countries. With increasing prosperity came the inevitable anti-Semitic outbreaks.

Jewish life in the lands now known as Ukraine became even more entrenched after 1569, when much of present-day Ukraine came under a new political alliance, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The country was composed of many different ethnic and religious groups, not always well-integrated. Much of the farmland and industry in Ukraine was the property of Polish nobles who were Catholic. The peasants in Ukraine were a mix of Eastern Orthodox Ukrainians and groups known as Cossacks, who lived primarily in the southern part of Ukraine. In the far south, the Crimean Peninsula was owned by the Ottoman Empire and populated largely by Tatar

Muslims, who engaged in constant, low level warfare with Cossacks along their border. Both groups would stage skirmishes into each other's territories, seizing property and slaves.

With many farms and businesses owned by absentee Polish landlords and nobles, an exploitative system called *arenda* developed, which allowed agents to manage farms and other enterprises on behalf of absent landlords. It was often Jews who were employed to manage the *arenda* economy, acting as caretakers for absentee nobles and landowners. Jews managed salt mines, farms, mills, and inns. They also became local tax collectors for Polish noblemen. Many *arendas* were in the alcohol trade: brewing, selling alcohol and managing inns and taverns were often seen as Jewish professions.

In 1648 the Cossack leader Bogdan Khmelnitski led an uprising against the Jews of Ukraine during which tens of thousands of Jews were massacred in acts of unspeakable cruelty. The trouble stemmed from the oppression of the Cossacks under their Polish masters, who, they believed, were in league with the Jews who served them. It may have been because of this tragedy that Chasidism found a ready home in the Ukraine. The country was ripe for innovation, both political, spiritual and cultural.



The Baal Shem Tov

Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov, its founder, known as *Besht* – the acronym of his name – established an orthodox form of Judaism. This mystical Jewish movement was a reaction to the rigid academicism of rabbinical Judaism.

It taught love, joy and humility - both in the service of God and in the treatment of fellow human beings. The movement believed that even less-educated Jews could encounter God through various ritual practices, particularly ecstatic prayer. *Besht* established his centre in Western Ukraine where he is buried, and where many leading Chasidic Rabbis were born.

In contrast to this adherence to traditional Judaism, Ukraine was also an important centre of the Jewish Enlightenment (the *Haskalah*) which preferred a more modern approach, integrating with modern society and cultural renewal, as well as encouraging a return of the Jews to Israel.

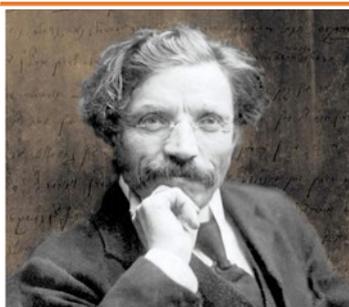
Ukrainian Jews were largely responsible for the emergence of modern Hebrew, both language and literature, as well as the use of Yiddish as a national language.



Jewish men in the Ukrainian stettl of Krasinov, c. 1916-17

Perhaps the most famous poet to be responsible for modern poetry in the Yiddish language was Sholem Aleichem. His original name was Solomon Naumovich Rabinovich. He was born in 1859, south of Kyiv and one of his creations has become a world-wide theatrical character, translated into many languages, Tevye the Milkman, of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Several other Jewish writers and thinkers from Ukraine are much honoured still today, such as the poet Chaim Bialik, the Zionist *Ahad Ha'am* and a later Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir.

At the beginning of the twentieth century anti-Semitism increased. A ritual murder charge was placed against a Ukrainian Jew. He was acquitted and left the country for America, but the case was likened to the Dreyfus affair and many Jews left Ukraine for Israel or



Sholem Alaichem

Western Europe. Violent pogroms broke out and many Jews were killed or injured in the years after the Russian Revolution of 1917. In spite of the appalling slaughter of perhaps 100,000 Jews, Ukraine remained one of the biggest Jewish communities, Jews comprising about five per cent of the population.

However in 1917, after the February Revolution, the Ukrainian People's Republic was inaugurated, and the National Congress in Kyiv elected a Central Council which declared its independence from the Russian Republic. The UPR lasted for only three years, but during that short time Yiddish was declared a state language, along with Ukrainian and Russian, the Jewish National Union was created and the community was granted an autonomous status. Yiddish was used on Ukrainian currency in this same period, between 1917 and 1920.

In 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland, initiating World War II, a large part of Ukraine was under Polish control. The country itself was taken over in 1941 and experienced one of the worst atrocities of modern times, when 33,000 Jews were massacred at Babyn Yar, outside Kyiv. The Jews of most countries overrun by the Nazis were imprisoned during the Holocaust to meet their deaths in the camps, but the Jews of Ukraine were usually slaughtered in or near their homes, sometimes with the cooperation of the local people. More than a million Ukrainian Jews were killed at this time, some sixty per cent of the pre-war population.

Under Communism, when the war ended, life for Ukrainian Jews was not much better. Their lives were difficult in the extreme, anti-Semitism was virtually

sanctioned by the State, food and fuel was very limited and some eighty per cent of the population left for Israel or the United States, with perhaps 100,000 remaining. Now it is estimated that only about 43,000 declare themselves Jewish, though as is well known, both the President, Volodymyr Zelensky and the Mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, are Jewish.

Today we probably know more about Ukrainian Jewry than ever before. At one time only one synagogue functioned in Kyiv but there are now many fully flourishing houses of worship for Jewish people, though since the Russian invasion most are temporarily closed. Before February 2022 Ukraine boasted many Jewish schools, communities in most large towns and the largest Jewish community Centre in Europe.



Volodymyr Zelensky

Jewish people across the world are determined to help their fellow Jews from Ukraine, not only to give them aid against yet another oppressive dictator, but when the fighting ends, to rebuild their Jewish lives in a country which can boast such a long history of Jewish communal existence.

Philippa Bernard



Sayings of the Rabbis

The World is new to us every morning – and every man should believe he is reborn each day.

Baal Shem Tov



Doubt is part of all religion. All the religious thinkers were doubters.

Isaac Bashevis Singer



Oral deception is more heinous than monetary fraud because restoration is possible in the latter while no restoration is possible in the former, and the latter concerns one's money while the former affects his person.

Moses Maimonides



Judge a man only by his own deeds and words: the opinions of others can be false.

The Talmud

The Mountain Jews



The sophisticated Jews of the West probably know very little about a group of their fellow-religionists living in some of the wilder areas of Central Europe. Sometimes known as the Jews of the Caucasus, or the Mountain Jews, they have inhabited the areas of Azerbaijan, Dajestan and other Russian republics since the fifth century.

They are descendants of the Persian Jews of Iran and have an oral tradition which says that they are descended from the Ten Lost Tribes, exiled by the King of Assyria who ruled from Nineveh - modern day Mosul. They settled in some of the remote mountainous regions, were known for their skills in horsemanship and were brave and skilful warriors.

The mountain valleys of Dagestan were home to many of these Mountain Jews - their Muslim neighbours called the area the Jewish Valley - and it grew to be a semi-independent Jewish state with the largest settlement being Aba-Sava. Another important region occupied by Jews is Krasnaya Sloboda, a Jewish settlement in the city of Quba, located on the eastern slopes of the Greater Caucasus. The people who live there honour and preserve their centuries-old traditions. Krasnaya Sloboda is believed to be the world's only all-Jewish town outside Israel, with a population of around three and half thousand people.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Mountain Jews lived peaceful lives, but in 1758 Fatali Khan began to lead the Quba Khanate, and invaded much of the area. His armies killed off thousands of the local inhabitants, among them much of the Jewish population, swearing loyalty to their Russian overlords. Fatali himself

tried to protect those Jews who managed to escape to Derbent in Dagestan.

Mountain Jews also settled in Azerbaijan, mostly in Qirmizi Qesebe which became known as Jerusalem of the Caucasus. Here the Jews continued to obey the laws of their ancestors, wearing their native dress and keeping the dietary laws, especially during *Pesach*. A recent article in the *Jerusalem Post* explained that these remote communities abstain from sugar, pickles and cheese at this time and quotes a visiting Israeli Rabbi, 'I remember one lady in particular who looked at me appalled after she saw I keep sugar on Passover. I assured her it was up to the strictest standards of kashrut. She looked at me, asked, "And you call yourself a rabbi?" and walked away. I cherish the memory of this woman, so secure in her knowledge of Judaism that some guy with a beard from Israel wasn't going to confuse her.' The two principal cities of Azerbaijan, Baku and Quba, boast several synagogues, though some were destroyed under Russian control and again during World War II.



Mountain Jews in 1883

At the end of 1942 the Nazis invaded the Northern Caucasus and killed several hundred Jews. However they departed from the area in 1943, though by that time some 1500 Jews were lost. The numbers would certainly have been higher, had not the majority of the Mountain Jews retreated into the inaccessible fastnesses of the wildest stretches of their homeland. It also seems that their leaders managed to convince their oppressors that they were religious not racial Jews! Some insisted that they were not Jews at all, but Tats, the native Caucasian people, and the local Rabbi buried their *Sifre Torah* in a fake interment ceremony.

Russia resumed control of the Caucasus and at Nalchik, capital city of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, the majority of the Jewish community found safety. It is today the largest Jewish settlement in the area. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union many of the Mountain Jews left their homes for Moscow and other Russian cities, or emigrated to Israel. However there are still some 3,000 Jews remaining in Qirmizi Qesebe.



Mountain Jews' Synagogue - Baku

Younger generations of Mountain Jews no longer know their native language. It is now spoken primarily by the older generation. In 1974 a daily fifteen-minute radio broadcast was begun in the Tat language of the Mountain Jews, transmitting music, folklore, readings from Tat authors, performances from Tat theatre, and the latest news. Since 1960 a yearly literary almanac, *Vatan Sovetimu* (Our Soviet Homeland), has been published. Even limited quantities of books, however, cannot be published because of the absence of a sufficiently large readership in the Tat language. The introduction of primary-school education and current measures to develop national languages hold the promise of a new stage in the history of the culture of the Mountain Jews.

The lives of the Mountain Jews in the bleak areas of the Caucasus was hard indeed. The majority were farmers or gardeners and although their Russian overlords forbade them to own land and they had to work on collective farms, they managed to grow grain and, with neighbouring Ukraine, provide much of the world's wheat today. They also grew rice, raised silk worms and cultivated tobacco. The terraced mountainsides of the area proved useful for the planting of

vines and as their Muslim neighbours were forbidden from drinking wine. they found a welcome source of income from sending it abroad and selling it locally. Although many herds of cattle, yaks and mules as well as cows, roamed the Caucasian countryside, few Jewish farmers raised farm animals. However they were famous for their tanneries which formed a large part of their income. In the towns, Jewish men and women produced fine handicrafts in leather, wool and silk.

Perhaps surprisingly in view of their agricultural lives, many Mountain Jews attained high professional standing as doctors, pharmacists and engineers. Some put their native love of the arts into the entertainment industry, travelling from town to town, with audiences coming to see their performances from the distant villages. They claim neither Ashkenazi nor Sephardi heritage, dating their ancestry from Persia, and still follow some Mizrahi customs, often relating to the Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism. Most communities have both a Rabbi and a Dayan, with the Rabbi and a *Chazan* in the synagogue, with a *cheder* for the children. The Dayan supervised the communities in the towns, presiding over the *Beth Din* and was democratically elected by the leaders.

The appearance of the Jewish elders owes much to their Muslim neighbours. The men wear the traditional long black coat - the *chokha* - and the sheep's wool hat - the *papakhas*. The women wear dresses made of silk or velvet, decorated with beads, gold pins and buttons, with silver- or gold-plated belts.



The food of the Mountain Jews usually follows the traditional fare of Caucasian households, the cuisine of Azerbaijan,

Persia or even Turkey, often conforming to the laws of *Kashrut*. The poorer families rely on beans, cabbage and other home-grown vegetables, but meat plays an important part in most households' diet, with dishes such as *tara* (a herb stew with meat), *shashlik* and *dolma*, with rice and curry and special dishes for Passover and Purim, using honey, sunflower seeds and walnuts. A favourite dish of the children is *nukhorush*, made of meat, dried fruits, chestnuts and quince, and served with rice.



Nukhorush

These Caucasian Jews are very musical, using stringed and percussion instruments, often home-made. Much of the music relates to the liturgy of the synagogue, with special songs for the festivals and weddings. There is also a considerable history of folk music, with family songs handed down from generation to generation, often based on agricultural life and the scenery of the mountains and lakes where they live.

There is now a large Museum devoted to the Mountain Jews. This historical and ethnographic collection is in the Red Village - a suburb of the Azerbaijani city Guba (a unique settlement, the only one in the former USSR, where the majority of the population are representatives of the Jewish ethnos). The museum presents artefacts collected from all over the Caucasus, including cult utensils, printed and manuscript documents, and other things demonstrating the Jewish life of this region: a nineteenth-century silver *Kiddush* cup, faded Soviet propaganda magazines from the 1920s, clandestine letters mailed from the front by Jewish soldiers battling Nazis and medallions from Azerbaijan's bruising 1992 war against Armenia.

A unique exhibit is the so-called 'Chopped book' - a copy of the *Torah*, which took the blow of the blade of a Persian military



The Museum of the Mountain Jews

leader. Thus, the book saved the life of the rabbi of the Red Village a few centuries ago. Books in the local language, Juuri, were also collected for the museum; a special place was assigned for dictionaries. The museum intends to create the world's largest library in this language, which should develop linguistic research into the unique dialect, which is spoken by no more than 100,000 people around the world. The founders of the museum hope that it will become not just a repository of artefacts, but also an important cultural and educational centre.

Due to the wide emigration of Jews from the Red Village and generally from all the Caucasus, many experts believe that the museum will become a kind of memorial to the disappearing community.



19th Century Children of the Mountain Jews

Much work has been done, especially in Israel, on the lives of the Mountain Jews, especially on their religious traditions, their music and their family heritage. It is to be hoped that Russia will allow them to continue living their lives as they have always done, without restrictions or oppression.

Philippa Bernard

The Gilroes Cemetery Leicester



The first obligation of a new Jewish community has always been the reverent interment of the dead, and very often one of the first indications of the appearance of a community is the purchase of land for a cemetery. The earliest mention of a cemetery in Leicester is to be found in the *Leicester Chronicle* of 20 December 1856, before there was any formed community:

The members of the Hebrew faith, about sixteen families of whom are now settled in this town, have applied to the authorities for permission to purchase a piece of ground for a burial place. An offer to set apart a portion of the cemetery has been rejected, the Rabbi stating that it was absolutely necessary that the ground should not join a Gentile burial ground; and that, in addition to being separate it must be completely walled round. A few days since, the son of an Israelite, in High-street, died and the body had to be taken to Birmingham for interment, that being the nearest place where there is a Jewish burial ground. The application of the Jews for a piece of ground has been referred by the Town Council to the Estate Committee.

This application failed, and the next recorded mention comes in 1888, after the congregation had been fully established. The 'Society of Jews' applied for land, sufficient for fifty graves, with a gated entrance and a two-door mortuary house, one door as an entrance and the other opening to the graveyard. After six months of negotiations the congregation offered to enclose the land and build the mortuary house but pay for the graves as and when they were used. The proposal was to reserve the individual plots but to defer payment until the interment. The

Cemetery Committee of the Leicester Corporation rejected the request.

A further attempt was made five years later, although there is no information as to where any members of the congregation who had died were buried. This attempt foundered on a legal technicality, but in 1899, with the beginning of planning for the new Gilroes cemetery, the congregation applied for land sufficient for between 250 and 300 graves. Two years of conversation followed but in December 1901 the Corporation rejected an offer of £400. In further negotiations the congregation increased its offer to £500. This must have been accepted, because the first burial took place in July 1902. In this section the land had been bought by the Jewish Burial Board and sub-divided into individual plots, which were reserved by members of the congregation but were not paid for until the burial took place. In 1929 and again in 1949 additional land was purchased from the Corporation. However, in subsequent years, additional land has been made available on condition that the individual plots have been authorised by the congregation and the grave spaces purchased from the Leicester City Council.



Photographing the Stones

Over the years, records of burials had been intermittent and so, in 2014, a team of six members of Leicester's Jewish Community, together with thirteen volunteers, set out to catalogue all the graves. They have created a comprehensive website with full search facilities, researched stories about past members of the community and implemented work to improve access to the cemetery. All this was enabled by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

As with many old graveyards, the early section had fallen into disrepair, but they

did not want the stones, or, indeed, the lives behind those stones, to be lost. As it was not possible to repair each stone, they recorded all the inscriptions from the headstones. Unfortunately, quite a few plots had no stone but after considerable research, using the limited information available from the written records as a starting point, the group had enough information for small plaques to be made and attached to these plots. Row markers and broken kerbstones were replaced, and three large information boards were installed. One is a map of all the sections and the other two contain the plot locations of every grave in the cemetery which have been marked so far. The hardest part of this task was checking that the names were correct.

At the entrance to each section are two large granite tablets inscribed with a prayer to be said by anyone who has not visited the cemetery for thirty days. In the far corner of the old section, a number of the unmarked plots were for stillborn babies. Individual plaques were not made for these plots. Instead, there is one plaque to mark the main area of babies' and young children's graves. The older section has large wrought iron gates and a thick hedge to separate it from the City's cemetery and crematorium. There is a *bet tahara* where bodies are normally prepared for burial. However, in Leicester, the body is usually prepared for burial elsewhere, and so the little building serves as a chapel. The House was built in 1928 and later on, electricity and running water were installed.

Whilst working on this project the group uncovered fascinating stories about people arriving in Leicester after long and dangerous journeys escaping persecution, about inventors with copies of original patent applications, about doctors, tailors, market traders, and a complete cross-section of society covering more than a hundred years of life and death in Leicester's Jewish Community.

Of course, the Gilroes Cemetery is under the auspices of the Orthodox Community. The Progressive congregation has a Jewish Section in Loughborough Municipal Cemetery.

Claire Connick

The Samaritans



The Samaritan Synagogue in Holon

According to the Hebrew Bible, the Israelites captured the region known as Samaria from the Canaanites and assigned it to the tribe of Joseph. The southern part of Samaria was then known as Mount Ephraim. After the death of King Solomon, the northern tribes, including Ephraim and Menasseh, separated from the southern tribes and established the separate Kingdom of Israel. Initially its capital was Tirzah until the time of King Omri who built the city of Samaria and made it his capital. Samaria was the capital of Israel until its fall to the Assyrians.

It was a wealthy kingdom – the king's palace was referred to as an 'ivory house'; pieces of ivory were found when the ruins were later excavated. In 721 BCE the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians and many of the inhabitants went into exile as captives, but those that remained intermarried with their Gentile conquerors, becoming known as Samaritans.

They believe that Samaritanism is the true religion of the ancient Israelites, preserved by those who remained in the Land of Israel during the Babylonian captivity; this belief is held in opposition to Judaism, the ethnic religion of the Jewish people, which Samaritans see as a closely related but altered and amended religion, brought back by Judeans returning from captivity in Babylon. Samaritans consider Mount Gerizim near Nablus (biblical Shechem) and not the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, to be the holiest place on Earth.

This constituted much dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans, and in the second century BCE the temple on Mount Gerizim was destroyed by the Maccabees.

The low esteem that Jews had for the Samaritans was the background of the famous parable of the Good Samaritan.

During the Hellenistic period, Samaria was largely divided between a Hellenizing faction based around the town of Samaria and a pious faction in Shechem and surrounding rural areas, led by the High Priest. In 6 CE Samaria became part of the Roman province of Iudaea, and flourished again as Sebaste. Herod rebuilt it in 27 BCE on a much larger scale with magnificent buildings, including the new Temple of Augustus. In the same year he married the beautiful Samaritan princess Malthace. Under Herod the city became the capital of the Roman administrative district of Samaria.

A building dated to the second century BCE, the Delos Synagogue, is usually identified as a Samaritan synagogue, which would make it the oldest known Jewish or Samaritan synagogue. On the other hand, although there is evidence of Samaritans on Delos, there is no evidence the building was a synagogue. Much of Samaritan liturgy was set by the high priest Baba Rabba in the fourth century.



Samaritan Temple Mount Gerizim

In 529, under a charismatic leader named Julianus, the Samaritans launched a war to create their own independent state. Emperor Justinian I crushed the revolt and tens of thousands of Samaritans died or were enslaved. The Samaritan faith was then virtually outlawed by the Christian Byzantine Empire; from a population once at least in the hundreds of thousands, the Samaritan community dwindled to tens of thousands.

By the time of the Arab conquests, apart from Palestine, small dispersed

communities of Samaritans were living also in Arab Egypt, Syria, and Iran. Like other non-Muslims in the empire, such as Jews, Samaritans were often considered to be People of the Book. Their minority status was protected by the Muslim rulers, and they had the right to practice their religion. The tradition of men wearing a red tarboosh may go back to an order by the Caliph that required non-Muslims to be distinguished from Muslims.

During the Crusades, Samaritans, like the non-Latin Christian inhabitants of

...tolerated and perhaps favoured because they were docile...

the Kingdom of Jerusalem, were second-class citizens, but they were tolerated and perhaps favoured because they were docile and had been mentioned positively in the Christian New Testament.

The population of Samaria was shrinking rapidly and by the twentieth century it had dwindled to fewer than 200 individuals, but it grew steadily to about 800 in the 2010s. Only in recent years have men been allowed to marry women from outside the community, although women who marry outside remain ostracized.

The Samaritans are somewhat evenly distributed between a village on Mount Gerizim, which is also the residence of the high priest, and the city of Holon, where a synagogue is maintained. They pray in an ancient dialect of Hebrew but speak Arabic as their mother tongue. Samaritans in Holon also speak modern Hebrew.

Philippa Bernard

Paintings of Synagogues

Although many photographs of synagogues are within reach of those seeking images of ancient and modern Jewish places of worship, there is no doubt that paintings of both interior and exterior views bring a warmth and reality to the depiction of these honoured buildings.

It is also interesting to know a little about the artists, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who have brought their genius to giving life to synagogues, many of which no longer exist. To see such paintings of these buildings as they were, often centuries ago, gives us a new experience of how our ancestors worshipped then, and enables us to appreciate the colour and religious fervour of those times.



Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue,
L.S.Lowry (1887-1976)

This rarely seen 1960 painting of the former Merthyr Tydfil synagogue in Wales by L. S. Lowry has just been auctioned by Christie's. The striking features of the Victorian Synagogue have attracted various artists over the years. Lowry encountered the Synagogue on a visit to South Wales.

The painting is entitled 'Old Church' and has not been seen in public for sixty years. Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue is a stone structure designed in Gothic Revival style, and is the oldest purpose-built synagogue still standing in Wales. Today it is considered architecturally one of the most important synagogues in the UK and has been awarded Grade II listed status.



Jews praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur.
Maurycy Gottlieb (1856-1879)

Gottlieb was a Polish realist painter of the Romantic period, from an orthodox, Yiddish- and Polish-speaking family.

In 1879 Gottlieb settled in Kraków and won a gold medal at the Munich art competition for his painting, *Shylock and Jessica* (1876), portraying a scene from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. The painting was exhibited in Lviv in 1877, and in 1878 at *Zachęta* in Warsaw and was widely acclaimed.

Despite his premature death at the age of twenty-three, more than three hundred of his works survive (mostly sketches, but also oil paintings), though not all are finished.



Jewish Shtetl Wedding at The Old Wood Synagogue
Ari Roussimoff (1954-)

Roussimoff is a modern artist working in America. He is also a film director and actor with an interest in Freemasonry. He has painted a series called *Old Russia* of which the *Shtetl Wedding* is one. Many small synagogues in Eastern Europe were built of wood. This one was probably in Lithuania.



Hurva Synagogue, Jerusalem at Night
Alex Levin (1975 -)

Alex Levin was born in Ukraine. He entered the Art Academy at the age of twelve and graduated with multiple honours. Feeling the need to get closer to his heritage, Alex Levin emigrated to Israel. Today, his main painting styles are Judaica, Surrealism and Realism.

He is perhaps best known for his technique involving the multi-layered use of tempera and oil, with no brush strokes. His paintings have been reproduced on the covers of books and other printed materials.



A Jewish Wedding Outside the Synagogue
Moritz Oppenheim (1800-1882)

Oppenheim was born to Jewish parents at Hanau, Germany. He entered the Munich Academy of Arts at the age of seventeen, and visited first Paris and then Rome. There he studied the life of the Jewish ghetto and made sketches of the various phases of its domestic and religious life. In 1825 he settled in Frankfurt, and shortly afterwards exhibited his painting *David Playing Before Saul*; to see this, a great number of admirers from all parts of Europe visited his studio.

In 1832, at the instigation of Goethe, Charles Frederick, Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach conferred upon him the honorary title of Professor. Oppenheim was commissioned to paint several portraits of prominent members of the Rothschild banking dynasty.



Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam
Emanuel de Witte, (1617-1692)

A non-Jew, De Witte initially painted portraits as well as mythological and religious scenes. After he moved from Delft to Amsterdam in 1651, de Witte specialized more and more in representing church interiors, and also painted the old church in Amsterdam from almost every corner. He sometimes combined aspects of different churches to depict interiors of ideal churches, populating them with churchgoers, sometimes accompanied by a dog. De Witte's sense of composition combined with his use of light created a powerful sense of space. The careful arrangement of light serves to 'intensify the sensation of being within a great but at the same time sheltered space.'



Jews in a Synagogue
Rembrandt van Rijn, (1606-1669) - drypoint etching

Also a non-Jew, Rembrandt painted and etched many pictures of Jews in Amsterdam, living as he did in a Jewish quarter. Some paintings show characters from the New Testament, but many of his black and white etchings have a moving reality not always seen in the larger, coloured pictures.

Here he catches the movement of the old Jewish figures at the synagogue in an almost photographic portrait.

Leo Baeck College



It may seem extraordinary, but it is nevertheless true, that until very recently, if you were a middle-of-the-road Orthodox Jew in Britain and wished to become a rabbi, you would have needed to receive *Semicha* (certification) in another country, or to attend the Gateshead Yeshiva as an ultra-Orthodox Jewish student.

Jews College, the rabbinical seminary in London, was founded in 1855 by the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, Nathan Marcus Adler (but with support from the Sephardi community). It had two objectives: to train English-speaking ministers and laymen in Jewish and secular subjects; and to educate boys in a Jewish secondary school. The secondary school was closed in 1879, but the college continued to train ministers, readers, and teachers for the English-speaking world. However the number of those wishing to take up a rabbinical career was gradually dropping; during the years 1971 to 1995 only twenty-two received the Diploma.

The organisation was re-focused and given its present name - the London School of Jewish Studies - in 1999, with an emphasis on offering a broader range of adult educational courses and training to the wider Jewish community, to both men and women. The rabbinical training programme was suspended, and many of the historical holdings of the library were sold off. The LSJS has had growing success in its new role, and since 2012 once again was able to offer rabbinical training, in partnership with the programme set up by the London Sephardi community.

For several years after Jews' College ceased to train for *Semicha*, a reputable rabbinical diploma was not readily obtainable by UK residents except by attending full-time study at the *Yeshiva* in

Gateshead or moving to Israel or other places. Potential rabbinical leaders of quality were lost to the community as many young men felt unable to put their careers and families on hold for several years of study. It was to remedy that situation that the trustees of the Montefiore Endowment took the lead in an attempt to create a new generation of home-grown Ashkenazi and Sephardi rabbis for future leadership roles, either as community rabbis, teachers or educated lay leaders; English-trained rabbis for English-speaking communities.

The Montefiore College was founded in 1869 in Ramsgate by Sir Moses Montefiore in memory of his wife Judith and re-founded in 2006 to offer programmes of advanced Torah education and leadership training. Its *Semicha* Course was established to produce a new generation of rabbis for the Anglo-Jewish community.

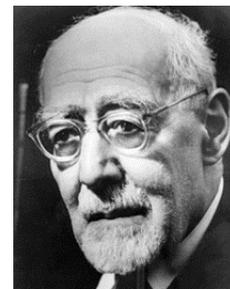


Rabbi Dr. Harold Reinhart

In spite of - or perhaps because of - these difficulties the Reform Movement decided to set up a college of its own where would-be rabbis could obtain *Semicha* within the Progressive Movement and provide leadership in a rapidly-growing community in accordance with its own beliefs and traditions. Until that point candidates for non-Orthodox rabbinical diplomas had to study at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. In 1949 the Association of Synagogues in Britain, as the Reform movement was then called, decided to set up its own training academy, and under the Chairmanship of Rabbi Harold Reinhart, Senior Minister of the West London Synagogue, the Ministers' Training Committee set out to find new rabbis for the rapidly growing number of synagogues which had joined the Association.

However the situation was a difficult and delicate one. Few possible students were put forward and the Committee discussed the possibility of setting up a theological college at Oxford or Cambridge, possibly in conjunction with the Liberals. This was turned down out of hand by the Association, never willing to pursue links with the Liberal movement until much later in their history.

Rabbi Reinhart had striven tirelessly to provide sanctuary and work for Reform Rabbis from Germany, many of whom were instrumental in keeping reform synagogues in being in this country. One of these refugees had been studying for the rabbinate while still in Germany. Charles Berg came to London and pursued his studies with private tuition. Anxious to receive *Semicha* in this country, he was examined by Dr. Leo Baeck, head of the Reform movement, Dr. Arthur Loewenstamm, of the Society for the Advancement of Jewish Knowledge (later the Society for Jewish Study) and Rabbi Max Katten, a distinguished scholar and teacher at West London. Rabbi Berg was awarded *semicha*, the first rabbinic ordination in this country outside the Orthodox community.



Dr. Leo Baeck

The Association was still anxious to establish its own college and was approached in 1952 by two young Jews wishing to become rabbinical students. West London was very active in pursuing the possibility of a new school, and Rabbi Reinhart, together with Rabbi van der Zyl, minister of Alyth Gardens Synagogue, embarked on the arrangements, originally funded by their congregations. The Leo Baeck Fund was set up to encourage financial help from the wider community. Rabbi van der Zyl was appointed Director of Studies of what was at first the Jewish Theological College, with the initial students being Lionel Blue, Michael

Leigh, Henry Brandt, Michael Goulston and Dov Marmur, all of whom became distinguished leaders of the British Reform movement.

The inauguration of the College took place on 30th September 1956 at Upper Berkeley Street. It was to have been under the direction of Dr. Baeck.

Unfortunately, he was not well enough to attend. Rabbi Reinhart stood in for him and more than 200 people attended the ceremony. Leon Roth gave the opening lecture. 'He who wants to learn,' he said, 'will be welcome; the use of his learning will depend upon his conscience.' Sadly Dr. Baeck died two months later, and the College was renamed the Leo Baeck College in his honour.

The future of the College was something of a continual concern for its Reform sponsors. The number of students was never very high and although it was funded largely by West London Synagogue, with other communities helping out, financial backing was always a problem. The suggestion that cooperation with the Liberals might be a way out did not meet with the approval of all members of the Association. The idea was that in return for financial support, half the classes would take place at Upper Berkeley Street, and the rest at the Liberal Synagogue in St. John's Wood. A note in the *Synagogue Review* - the journal of West London - said: *If an institution conceived on these lines ever acquired a soul of its own, it would find a neutral resting place (midway between the two headquarters) in the waiting room of Baker Street station!*

Arrangements for joint sharing of the College were eventually put in place, with students from both groups learning together. However, space for the College at Upper Berkeley Street was at a premium. The College occupied the old Council Room, but needed a Library and better facilities for the students and staff. When West London decided it needed more room for its own activities, it decided to build an annex on to the Synagogue premises, part of which was devoted to the College.

In 1975 the College confirmed the ordination of its first woman Rabbi. It had for some time offered study facilities

to women, but Jackie Tabick was the first to receive *Semicha* and was followed by many more women Rabbis, including Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger who went on to become Senior Rabbi at the West London Synagogue and head of the Reform Movement.



Rabbi Jackie Tabick

By the 1980s the College was a recognised leader in the field of religious education, growing fast in the community and offering a wide programme of seminars, lectures and study programmes with all the extra facilities needed to maintain them. Classrooms, a library, tutorial facilities and staff rooms were crowding themselves out. The College needed a house of its own.

After considerable searching it was announced that it had found premises in Finchley which it proposed to purchase, with the help of generous donors, as a site to train rabbis and to provide a Progressive Jewish Day School as well as facilities for the elderly. The site was big enough, if funds were forthcoming, to house offices for the Association - now the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain - as well as full facilities for the College. The seven-acre site of Manor House in East End Road was formerly a convent and a school, a listed building built in 1723 and the College put in an offer of £750,000.

In spite of considerable opposition from the United Synagogue, the site was finally



Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger

secured. The lease was duly signed and Rabbi Albert Friedlander was appointed Director of Studies.

Once established at Manor House, known as the Sternberg Centre in honour of the generosity of Sir Sigmund Sternberg, the College continued to flourish. It had an energetic programme of studies, a high reputation in the academic field and plenty of students. What it did not have was enough money to keep going. The West London Synagogue itself was having financial difficulties. One former student with a congregation of his own, remarked, 'Jews College has plenty of money but no students; the Leo Beck College has plenty of students but no money.'



Rabbi Dr. Albert Friedlander

As usual the generosity of the community, together with a remarkable effort at fundraising by the students themselves, managed to save the College from extinction and it has continued to provide a source of Jewish learning and rabbinical training ever since. The College announced the introduction of a new part-time BA in Jewish education from autumn 2013, the only one of its kind in the country.

The Sternberg Centre remains the complex home of a thriving educational system for the Reform movement in the UK, providing the means for training future rabbis for the Reform synagogues of this country as well as lectures, seminars and a comprehensive library.

Philippa Bernard

A Gem in Cavaillon



In a tiny back street in the middle of Cavaillon, a small town not far from Avignon, France, nestles a little gem - an old Synagogue. It is the oldest Synagogue in France and has its own museum. The last members of the congregation left in 1913 and the Synagogue is now administered by the Cavaillon Museums Authority.

The Synagogue sits above an arched passageway which links the rue Hébraïque and the rue Chabran. Over the doorway there is an old stone cartouche on which is inscribed in Hebrew: *This is the gate of the Lord into which the righteous shall enter*, and the year of construction: 5534 (1774). The Jewish presence in Cavaillon goes back to at least the thirteenth century.



The present Synagogue was built between 1772 and 1774 on the site of the original fifteenth century building. This building was in the *carrière*, the Jewish quarter, which occupied the centre of the medieval

town and was composed of a single street which was completely sealed off by a locked gate at night. The inhabitants had their own rules and elected their own leaders. The congregation's entire existence revolved around the Synagogue which was not only a place of worship but also a meeting hall and a school. The arrangement of the building is unusual in having preserved its original plan, which consists of two distinct elements: the Synagogue, which forms a covered passage above rue Hébraïque, and the *mikvah*, located in the basement of the courtyard and reached by a stairway with seventeen steps.

In 1394, the Jewish communities, expelled from the French kingdom, took refuge in the Comtat Venaissin, an independent state which belonged to the Papacy from the thirteenth until the eighteenth century. These communities were protected by the Popes of Avignon who welcomed the Jewish communities which had been expelled from the Languedoc and Provence areas. The Pontifical States offered the Jews freedom of worship and residence and they believed that *He who touches a Jew is as guilty as if he had set to the eye of Jesus himself, for the Jews are his flesh and bones*.

They were called 'the Pope's Jews' by the local population because they were dependent upon the Pope as their host. However, in the fifteenth century, the Papacy ruled that the Jews of Cavaillon be forced to live in a ghetto (or *carrière*). Jewish men were obliged to wear a yellow hat when they went out. They had to pay special taxes. They also had to listen to Christian sermons calling on them to convert. Only professions authorised by the Pope were open to them. These were mainly moneylending and the production of clothes.

Permission to build a synagogue was granted in 1494, and it was on the vestiges of this older building that the new place of worship was built in 1772.

Because of the density of the population of the *carrière*, buildings consisted of six or seven storeys. The Synagogue's main place of worship is on the first floor and is reserved exclusively for men. The interior of the high-ceilinged room is richly

decorated. The *Bimah* rises between two sets of stairs, with a sumptuous wrought-iron balustrade.

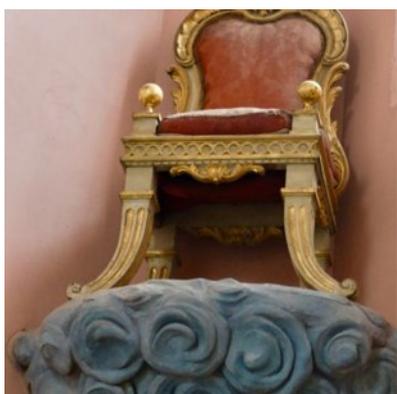
The women of the congregation did not sit behind a *mechitsa*. They were banished to the basement! The room allocated to them is more sober and has no direct access to the upper part of the structure. This room also served as a bakery, where the oven was used exclusively at *Pesach*, to produce *matzot*.



Since 1960, the bakery has been a museum testifying, through its many exhibits, to life in the *carrière*. There is a domed stone over a kneading table, and the museum also has one of the oldest archaeological relics of the Jewish presence in France: an oil lamp found in an *oppidum* near Orgon. The lamp dates from the first century C.E.



Also in the museum are showcases containing various liturgical objects,



manuscripts, *ketubot*, *siddurim*, *machsurim*, *megillot*, and a map of the Comtat Venaissin showing the four holy communities of the locality, the *arba kehilot*.



My husband and I visited in 2006. Although little remained of its former glory the building still retained a special 'feel'. The woodwork had been carefully restored to its lovely pale green shade and the beautiful wrought ironwork and gilded pillars were impressive in a gentle way - such a contrast to the many awe-inspiring Cathedrals and Churches which we visited.

High on the wall in a little recess is a gilded chair, the seat of the Prophet Eli, and on the floor below, the circumcision chair - with a shallow cupboard set in the chair-back to contain the *Mohel's* instruments.

The Ark has niches for seven *Torah* Scrolls. Opposite the Ark, on a raised gallery is the *Bimah*.

When we visited, a Gardienne, provided by the Museums Authority, was on the premises during opening hours. She was obviously not Jewish but very knowledgeable about the building and its history.

We were shown where the women of the congregation would have been allowed to sit. Since there would have been bare floorboards on the floor above, the women would have been able to hear but not see, or take part in, the Services. Now, of course, the ceiling of the basement has been plastered over so we were not able to tell how much would have been audible.



Also in the basement are two old tombstones. These were brought to the Synagogue when the Jewish cemetery ceased to be used. However, the sacred plot itself - not far from the Synagogue - has now been grassed over and railed off. On the rock-face above is affixed a plaque, stating that here was the burial place of the Holy Jewish Community of Cavaillon.

On the day following our visit an 'open evening' was going to be held with all the Museums of Cavaillon and the theme was to be Light. To mark this, the ancient *Hanukkia* belonging to the Synagogue was to be brought out of its place of safety and filled with lighted candles - and the Synagogue itself was also to be illuminated by candlelight. We were sad that we were not going to be able to witness this special event - it must have been very moving.



We visited several Synagogues and Jewish sites during our four-week tour of France but none touched our hearts or our imagination as strongly as did this little gem in Cavaillon.

Claire Connick



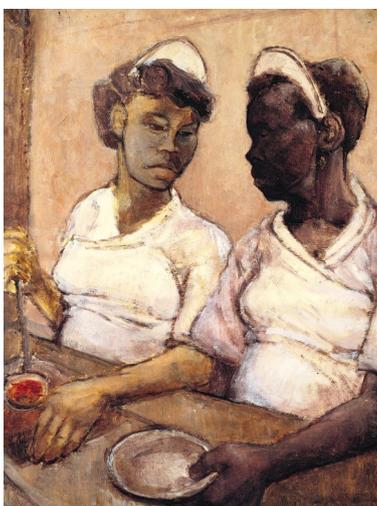
Eva Frankfurter (1930-1959)



A recent exhibition at the Barbican – *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain 1945-1965* – featured among several other artists, Eva Frankfurter. Some of the artists, including Eva, fleeing from the Nazis, had arrived and settled in England.

Overlooked for several years by the art establishment, Eva's work, which captured the slums of the East End of London in the fifties, was finally recognised sixty years after her death.

At the Barbican exhibition, just one item from Eva's vast body of work is represented. It is a haunting painting of two exhausted West Indian waitresses. Arguably the most poignant portrait by this talented artist, the painting reminded me of a series of pictures of other kitchen workers produced by Chaim Soutine. One immediately feels sympathy and compassion for these poor exploited employees.



West Indian Waitresses

Eva Frankfurter was born in Berlin, the third and youngest child of Paul, a businessman, and Henriette, an economics graduate. The family had strong cultural leanings towards music, literature and the visual arts. Henriette, already diagnosed as suffering from cancer during her pregnancy, died just eighteen months after Eva's birth. In 1934, Eva's father remarried and his new wife, Nina, became a caring stepmother to the children. Following the rise of National Socialism in Germany, in 1939 the family escaped to London.

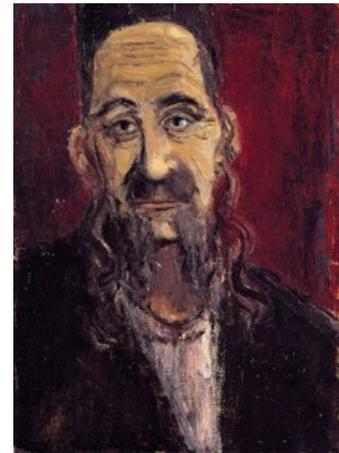
After being evacuated to Hertfordshire during the Blitz, Eva returned to London and in 1946, aged only sixteen, she enrolled at St. Martin's School of Art, where she studied until 1951, and where her fellow students included Leon Kossoff and Frank Auerbach. Auerbach described her work as 'full of feeling for people'.

After leaving St Martin's, Frankfurter embarked on her first visit to Italy in the summer of 1951. There she painted pilgrims, beggars and children; on her way home, stopping off in Paris, she sought local colour in the working-class districts, and thus began the strengthening of her interest in depicting ethnic minorities, putting the lives of others at the centre of her art.

Returning home, she moved to Whitechapel where, in the evenings for six years, she first worked as a counter-hand at a Lyons Corner House and then in a sugar refinery, earning enough to enable her to paint during the day. Whitechapel and indeed all the East End, had been heavily bombed and in the 1950s was still

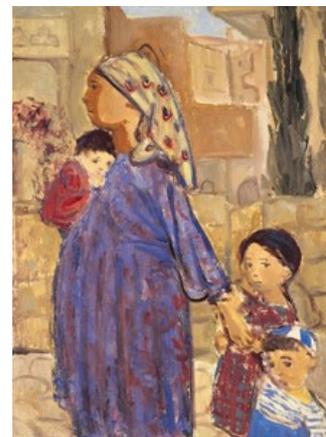


Soutine's Waitress



Middle Eastern Jew with Red Background

recovering, as were its residents. Old men, mothers and children, West Indian waitresses, brides, flower sellers, street children: all were grist to her mill. Few of the subjects look directly at the viewer: they're engaged in their own lives, making do in a recovering Britain.



Woman with Three Children

Characters from Jewish life are well represented in her enormous output – cloth merchants, Rabbis, Jewish bakers, kosher butchers – but by then, the East End was changing and was no longer a predominantly Jewish area, becoming home to a truly mixed population including West Indian, Pakistani and Irish communities. She loved to portray members of the immigrant population where she lived and her studies of West Indians, Cypriots and Pakistanis, both at work and at rest, executed with enormous empathy and dignity, are her greatest achievement. She said of her work, 'my colleagues and teachers were painters

concerned with form and colour, while to me these were only means to an end – the understanding of, and commenting on, people.’

Eva also spent eight months living and working in Israel. In October 1958 she returned to London and three months later, suffering from depression, at the age of only twenty-nine she committed suicide, leaving behind an important body of work based above all, on compassion for the dignity of ordinary working people of all races and communities.

During her lifetime, Frankfurter exhibited regularly in local group shows at the Whitechapel Art Gallery and the Bethnal Green Museum. Her work has also been shown posthumously in Leicester, Cambridge and Berlin and is in several collections including the Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, Clare College, Cambridge, and a number of private collections, both in the UK and abroad.



Old Man in Brown Cap

Other Jewish artists prominently featured in the Barbican exhibition were Magda Cordell who fled Hungary as a war orphan, and Franciszka Themerson, whose family perished in the Holocaust.

Claire Connick

Emeritus Rabbi Thomas gives us answers

If a death occurs on a Friday morning in the summer, can a funeral take place the same day?

Traditionally, funerals should happen as soon as possible and so it can take place on the same day (Friday) provided it is held before sunset – *i.e.* before *Shabbat*. However, the *shiva* service needs to be postponed till the Sunday morning.

Why do we cut the tzitzit on the tallit which wraps a body?

The *tzitzit* - the tassels - on the *tallit* represent the 613 commandments. The tassels remind us of the necessity to fulfil these commandments, so we cut off one of the *tzitzit* to ensure that we do not mock the deceased who cannot fulfil the *mitzvot*/commandments.

Why do we not have flowers at a funeral?

There is no social or religious reason for this although it is said that, as the flower fades so does life, and placing a stone instead of flowers reminds us of the everlasting memory of the deceased. The practical reason is that in ancient times, in order to ensure that no animal could reach the dead body, the grave was secured by heavy stones; hence the symbolism of placing stones on the graves instead of flowers. In Israel there is a custom of putting a rose into the grave - as opposed to on top of the grave.

Why do we bury prayer books with a body?

There is a general custom that we do not burn or destroy any Hebrew text with the name of God on it and that applies to books with Hebrew writings, as almost certainly the name of God is mentioned. Burying a prayer book is the way to preserve the name of God in Hebrew. So a Hebrew prayer book is buried with the body, or separately, in a Jewish cemetery.

Why do mourners sit on low chairs?

Sitting on the floor or on low chairs is a sign of grief, as in ancient times that was the custom when feeling low and grief-stricken.

Why do some mourners not wear leather shoes?

Skin or leather is a sign of life and of apparent luxury. This is also the reason why traditional Jews do not wear leather shoes on *Yom Kippur*.

Why do some mourners cut or tear their clothes?

Cutting or tearing clothes is a sign of pain and mourning – as if cutting into our painful hearts.

Are there any other customs to do with funerals?

In the orthodox community there are seven days of mourning. During that time, people visit the house of mourning bringing food to comfort the mourner. Traditionally, men do not shave for the duration of the *Shloshim*, the thirty days of mourning. The thirty days are the days that the Children of Israel mourned for Moses following his death. *Kaddish*, the traditional mourners’ prayer, is said. The prayer itself does not mention death or mourning but speaks about the glory of God. *Kaddish* would be said for a totally wicked person for twelve months, but as no one is totally wicked, the prayer is recited only over eleven months. No wedding should take place during the year of mourning. However, if a wedding was already planned then it should take place, but without music and dancing.

We commemorate our loved ones once a year on the anniversary of their death, by saying *Kaddish* and lighting a candle. The anniversary is called *Yahrzeit* and is calculated in accordance with the Hebrew date on which the person died, rather than on the secular date.

EDITORIAL

With Rabbi Benji's message for this *Quarterly* in mind, and with the war in Ukraine still the headline news in the world, it is good to record that one of Westminster Synagogue's members is making his own contribution to the rescue and rehabilitation of civilians from that stricken area. Brooks Newmark has helped to move women and children to safety from Lviv and Kyiv. He assisted in organising transportation hubs in Vinnytsia, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro and Kharkiv. Brooks has also been instrumental in setting up an orphanage for Ukrainian children in Poland.

This community has said a sad 'farewell' to Erika Burghardt who for so long has provided delicious spreads for our *Shabbat Kiddushim* and many special meals. We are very sorry to see her go and we wish her every success in her new venture.

And a short plug:- Claire's son and daughter-in-law, Jeremy and Lisa Connick are trekking from southern Italy back to London to raise money for BEYOND. At the time of writing, they have walked 1,500 km of the 3,200 km trek. Originally named Beyond Shame Beyond Stigma, the charity is a grant-giving organisation committed to making a difference to the mental health of young people throughout the UK.

Donations can be made via <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jeremyandlisaconnick>



Clifford and Soozee Gundle write:-

Thank you for the April edition of the fabulous Westminster Quarterly. You produce such a marvellous magazine with such interesting information. However, you do not pay the publisher, or the person who put it together, any acknowledgement or even say who the person or persons are that produce this most useful document.

On the very back page you list lots and lots of people with their email addresses, but nobody is mentioned as to who published this magazine, the name of the person that we could write and say thank you to them.

Perhaps this is an omission, but if it is intentional then it is a pity. If it is an omission we think one should pay courtesy to the publisher or the people that worked on this magazine so that the congregation knows who put in the hard work and did the heavy lifting to produce such a fine document.

We reply:- *Thank you for your very kind words. Philippa and I took the view when we started on this task that we preferred to remain anonymous - hence the request to send e-mails to 'the editor'. Until now we had supposed that most of the congregation knew the identities of the culprits! However, at your insistence, we have now acceded to your request and our names appear below!*

Editors: **Philippa Bernard and Claire Connick**

Please submit letters and articles for the Westminster Synagogue Quarterly to the Synagogue office or e-mail to editor@westminstersynagogue.org

MY PAST

My past sings in the Wind of Time
In the wind which carries songs away...
It sings the song of infancy, of youth in the land of the Pharaohs
A song as beautiful as those of birds in Springtime
It sings the songs of maturity under cloudier skies
The song of life which changes and remains constant
The song of life itself emotionally charged
Moments of hope, those of joy
Moments of despair, those of grief
Life's moments, its very fabric
The Song of a Time removed from Time and Space
A captured time the song revives and liberates
A time the wind takes beyond Time

Where does the past go to?
Which unknown yet familiar dimension welcomes it?
A space from where memories come back to us
A space packed with images
Unchanging images, some hurtful, others pleasing
An intangible reality trailing life
But the wind comes for the North now
A cold wind the sun never warmed
The bright sun which shone in the land of the Pharaohs
And the frozen song ends in the freezing wind

Colette Littman





Planning Your Diary

Erev Rosh Hashana

Sunday 25th September

Rosh Hashana

Monday 26th September

Kol Nidre

Tuesday 4th October

Yom Kippur

Wednesday 5th October

Erev Sukkot

Sunday 9th October

Sukkot

Monday 10th October

Erev Simchat Torah

Sunday 16th October

Simchat Torah

Monday 17th October

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