

# **W**ESTMINSTER **Q**ARTERLY

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*Walter Rothschild and his zebra-drawn carriage outside the Albert Hall*

**The Eccentric Walter Rothschild**

**The Disputation of Paris**

**Synagogues of Siena and Florence**

**Humour in the Bible**

Inside this issue

From the Rabbi	3
Flora Solomon	4
Notre Dame Treasures	5
Elias Canetti	6
Hebrew Corner	7
Disputation of Paris	8
Walter Rothschild	10
Evelyn Friedlander z"l	12
Ilana Alexander z"l	13
Two Italian Synagogues	14
Amusement Arcade	15
The Jews of Norwich	16
Book Review	18
Poetry Page	19
Humour in the Bible	20
Korah	21
Editorial	22
Letters	22
Education Report	23

## Westminster Welcomes its New Members

Thomas Karshan & Sarah Savitt	Sarah Moshel
David Romain & Camila Klich	Don Valledor
Karen & David Gorfil	Mayer Rothschild
Joanna Kaye	Imola Nemes
Rabbis Benji & Leah Jordan	Polina Gruzer
Ines Chung Halpern	Sunny Iyer
Jasmine Modiano	Joe Crossley
Gillian Solnick & Rory Farrell	Sergey Sukhikh
Michelle Jaffe-Pierce	Jeremy Miles
Sharon Hutson-Wyler & George Hutson	Charlotte Nahum
Amy Anzel	Amelia Walker
	Lisa Snutch

### Births

- Eli Levy - a son for Carey & Yoav on 14<sup>th</sup> August
- Zena Karshan-Savitt - a daughter for Sarah & Thomas on 16<sup>th</sup> August
- Leo & Maxim Lobel - twin sons for Claudia & Mark on 8<sup>th</sup> October

### Infant Blessings

- David, Daniel, Samuel and Raphael Raba on 31<sup>st</sup> August

### B'nei Mitzvah

- Jacob & Sasha Sandelson on 14<sup>th</sup> September
- Luke Meyohas on 21<sup>st</sup> September
- Raphael Halabi on 26<sup>th</sup> October

### Marriages & Blessings

- Eve & Eli Rosenberg on 22<sup>nd</sup> August
- Ashley Tabor & George King on 23<sup>rd</sup> August
- Greg Lassman & Romina Richardson on 26<sup>th</sup> August
- Danny Strauss & Sunny Iyer on 6<sup>th</sup> September
- Vitalia Merkulova & Simon Gold on 15<sup>th</sup> September
- Miranda Lerner & Ben Dean on 11<sup>th</sup> October

### Deaths

- Rachel Laddie on 25<sup>th</sup> September
- Evelyn Friedlander on 2<sup>nd</sup> October
- Ilana Alexander on 5<sup>th</sup> October

### Condolences

*We offer sincere condolences to*

- Miles Laddie on the death of his mother
- Rabbi Ariel, Michal and Noam Friedlander on the death of their mother
- Sharon Good and Daniel Alexander on the death of their mother



Let us bring the light. The world at times can feel darker. Right now, the shorter, dimmer days may bring us down. At the time of writing, our country is mired in some murkiness. Furthermore, we have seen in recent years a rise in hateful ethno-nationalism and a resurgence of discriminatory discourse and violent action against minorities, including anti-Semitism. What's more, we are as aware as ever of our concern for our loved ones, their waning health and their loneliness - and our own. At times the world can feel darker and we may call out for some sort of miracle.

With the festival of *Hanukkah* just behind us, we find a related Rabbinic teaching not to look for light to suddenly shine from God but rather to bring it ourselves. In Chapter 24 of Leviticus we hear this about the *Menorah*, the candelabrum that we associate with *Hanukkah* 'Command the people of Israel to bring to you pure, beaten, olive oil to light an eternal light on the Menorah' and the next verse says, 'Aaron should arrange this light just by the Veil of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting from evening until morning in front of the Eternal continually'.

In the *Talmud* our Rabbis essentially ask, 'well if there is a long-lasting light that is needed right in front of the Eternal in the centre of the Tent of Meeting, why doesn't the Eternal take care of that detail themselves? After all isn't God the source of both light and eternity?'. In the words of the *Talmud*, 'for the people to light this light why is it needed? Didn't the people of Israel, all the forty years that they walked in the wilderness, walk exclusively in divine light- a cloud by day, and a pillar of light by night?'

Why do the people need to bring the light? Why doesn't the Divine? The

question is resolved in the *Talmud* as follows:-

The human lighting and arranging of the *Ner Tamid*, the perennial light, is needed primarily, not for its practical light but to give testimony - *Edut* -to humans that the Divine presence dwells among us. The *Talmud* goes on to say that it provides this testimony because the light that is being described in the *Torah* is the one light that is used to light all the others in the *Menorah* and yet it is the light that lasts the longest.

This Rabbinic answer as to why we need to bring the light ourselves is itself puzzling. We are told that the act of lighting this single candle is not needed so much for practical light but actually to provide testimony that the Divine dwells with us. Yet, then, we might ask: if what is needed is testimony that the Divine dwells with us, wouldn't that divine column of light coming from the sky be much better testimony? Wouldn't a better world be much better testimony for belief in the good?

**Focus on bringing light to others. Put this at the heart of your life. Sustain yourself on those memories of such goodness - for they will last.**

This is what we can learn from the *Talmud*. We need to readjust our focus. In this world we do not rely on a divine column of light. Our Rabbis elsewhere teach us that the *shechina*, the Divine Presence, comes to dwell when ten people come together in community, or when two people come together to learn; we need to bring the light, it's not the other way round, if we wait for the Divine Presence to be completely manifest before stepping forward, we might be waiting rather a long time. We look at that *menorah* and we learn the need to give light to others. We not only learn the need, we see the everyday possibility. We see that this kindness is where the Divine

dwells. We see that our job, for each of us, is to give light to others.

The miracle is only that just one candle can give, can devote itself to others, and it will not go out first, but it will illuminate longest. In giving, we gain from others; we contribute to an exponential economy rather than a sparse one. In giving, we establish in the world a currency of kindness that will last forever, for all generations, like that light. We will pass it on to those who are with us and come after us. The light that we bring provides testimony of community and resilience, and this is where we find not only testimony to the Eternal, but the inspiration to bring greater divinity to our world - one cannot replicate a top-down miracle.

Focus on bringing light to others. Put this at the heart of your life. Sustain yourself on those memories of such goodness - for they will last. They can outlast all. Build your life and our world from this kindness.

Re-adjust your focus. The good is there. The good will last. It may not be clearly visible right now in the looking out into the world; it is there in the staying close. It is there in a persistent commitment to dwelling with others, to doing one's best to bring light, and to receive it.

I have seen this light in our community. Ilana Alexander used to describe the members who looked after her as 'angels', and, in the face of such darkness, this community also cared for the Linseys. Help us to bring more light; to develop the strategy and resources to train a cohort of volunteers to visit the lonely; and do let us know if you would like to be calling and visiting. When the world can feel darker, our Judaism teaches us to bring the light.

**Rabbi Benji Stanley**

## Flora Solomon (1895-1984)



With so many different aspects to Flora Solomon's fascinating life, it was difficult to decide which of them should be treated as the salient feature. It proved to be a daunting task. Her story reads like a novel.

Flora was born in Pinsk, which was originally in Russia but is now part of Belarus. Her father, Grigori Benenson, was a Russian Jewish multimillionaire banker and oil tycoon who made his fortune in the oil fields of Baku and who wielded considerable economic influence in Tsarist Russia. He was banker to the Tsar and had dealings with Rasputin, who approached him for money. After the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917, the family fled Russia for Britain where they had influential connections.

In London, Flora met and married Harold Solomon, a member of a London stockbroking family and a career soldier who was a Brigadier-General in the First World War. In 1920 Harold was attached to the staff of Sir Herbert Samuel, High Commissioner in Palestine, and they went to live in Jerusalem, an entrancing development for the passionately Zionist and untiringly party-mad Flora. Their only child, Peter, was born in 1921. Widowed in 1931, she raised Peter on her own. Despite the family riches, his was not a happy childhood. However, Flora's own social conscience had influenced Peter - as

well as others both close to and far away from her - as he later became the founder of Amnesty International. In 1939 he took the surname of Benenson, acceding to his dying Grandfather's wishes.

At Christmas 1923 Harold Solomon, whom Peter adored, suffered a serious riding accident outside Jerusalem and was confined to a wheelchair. The family returned to London, where the marriage collapsed. In 1927 Flora became the mistress of the former Russian leader Alexander Kerensky. In her autobiography, *Baku to Baker Street* (written with Barnet Litvinoff, 1984), littered with the names of the prominent from Eleanor Roosevelt to Chaim Weizmann, she confessed to being an unsatisfactory mother; indeed she was to cause Peter much anguish throughout her life. Harold died in Switzerland, the day before Peter's ninth birthday. The boy was inconsolable: Flora wrote of her son's relationship with his father, 'He had been the limbs the man on the first floor never possessed, and I believe he prayed daily for the miracle to make his father whole'.



*Brig-Gen. Harold Solomon*

In the 1930s, before the Second World War, Flora helped to find homes in Britain for Jewish refugee children who had to flee from Europe. During the War, she was instrumental in setting up the British Restaurants, which worked to feed people on the Home Front and she was awarded the OBE for her work. No doubt through her father, who died in 1939, she had many well-known friends including Simon Marks, Chairman of M&S and son of the founder, Michael Marks. In 1939, at a

dinner party, she complained to him about the company's salary policies. She had learned that staff often did not eat lunch there because they could not afford it. She said to Marks, 'It's firms like Marks & Spencer that give Jews a bad name'. He responded by giving her the job of looking after staff welfare!

In her new position, she pioneered the development of the staff welfare system - including subsidised medical services. These practices directly influenced the Labour concept of the Welfare State and the creation of the British National Health Service in 1948. As a result, Marks & Spencer acquired the reputation of being the working man's paradise. Not content with her welfare work, the next episode in her life saw her founding the Blackmore Press, a British printing house.

But now Flora Solomon's life became much more complicated. She was a long-time friend of British intelligence officer Kim Philby and she was the matchmaker between him and his second wife Aileen. Nearly twenty-five years later, however, she was to play the key role in exposing his treachery, leading to the master spy's flight to Moscow. Whilst working in Spain as *The Times* correspondent on Franco's side of the Civil War, Philby proposed that she become a Soviet agent. His friend from Cambridge, Guy Burgess, was simultaneously trying to recruit her into MI6. Had both moves succeeded she would have become a double agent!



In 1962 when Philby was the correspondent of the London *Observer* in Beirut, she objected to the anti-Israeli tone of his articles. In August of that year, during a reception at the Weizmann

Institute in Israel, she fell into conversation with an old friend, Victor Rothschild. Now a member of the House of Lords, Rothschild was a former MI5 officer. Solomon told Rothschild that she thought that Tomás Harris and Kim Philby were Soviet spies. She then went on to tell Rothschild that she suspected that Philby and his friend, Tomás Harris, had been Soviet agents since the 1930s. 'Those two were so close as to give me an intuitive feeling that Harris was more than a friend.' 'How is it the *Observer* uses a man like Kim?' she asked. 'Don't they know he's a communist? You must do something.' Back in London, Rothschild lost little time in doing so. An interview between MI5 officers and Solomon was arranged at which Flora recounted Philby's attempt to recruit her in 1937, as well as a further conversation a year later in which he claimed to be 'in great danger'. Solomon's exposure of Kim Philby as a Soviet spy changed the course of British history. Had she not done so this country's most notorious traitor would probably have got away with it.

In the book about her time at Marks & Spencer - *Baku to Baker Street* - 'Russian soul, Jewish heart, British passport', was how she described herself at the end of an extraordinary life that took her from the Russian revolution to the British high street - from Marx to Marks & Spencer.

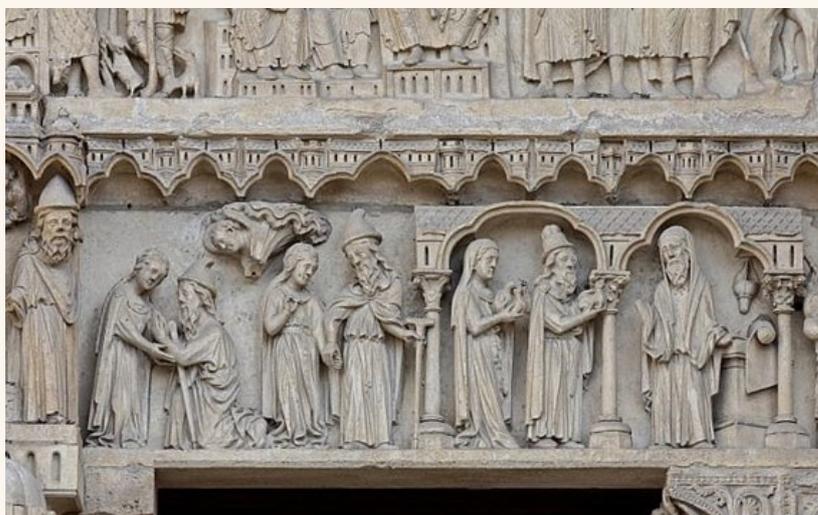
In another one, *A Woman's Way*, she recounts her life of wealth and comfort in pre-revolutionary Russia and her later life as an emigrée, describing her involvement with Zionism, her affair with Alexander Kerensky and other relationships. She also wrote a novel - *A Pledge of Silence*.

Flora died in 1984 and is buried next to her husband in Switzerland.

**Claire Connick**



## Jewish Treasures of Notre Dame



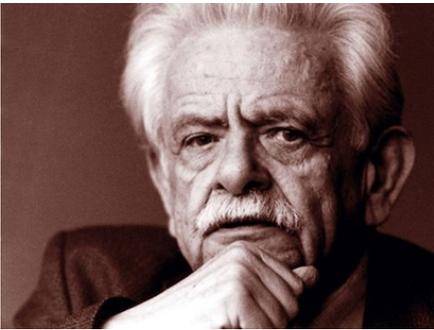
The terrible fire that broke out in Notre Dame Cathedral last April gave the opportunity for a re-examination of some part of the structure. An interesting discovery was the subject used in the frieze above the main doorway. It depicts two saints, Saint Anne and Saint Joachim, who were believed to be the grandparents of Jesus. They were of course Jewish, and the artist apparently used Jews from the locality as his models.

The construction of the Cathedral was started in 1163, and the Jews of France were expelled by King Philip II some twenty years later, but within a few years they began to trickle back into the country, settling in several cities and towns, including Paris. The frieze on the Cathedral represents the wedding of Anne and Joachim. The bride and bridegroom and their guests wear the medieval clothes, with the pointed hats used by the Jews of the time. The rabbi conducting the wedding ceremony wears a *tallit*, and in the background can clearly be seen an Ark with the Torah, some books and the *Ner Tamid*. The participants are bringing offerings, and there is even a Torah Scroll on the *bima*. There are Jewish guests chatting to each other.

The Catholic Church wanted those entering Notre Dame to believe that Judaism was finished, downcast and humiliated. So at the same time the frieze depicts the Christian attitude to Judaism. One woman stands ragged and defeated, her eyes are covered by a snake and her head is bowed. She holds a broken sceptre, and tablets of Jewish law are slipping from her grasp. Under her feet lies a crown trodden into the dust: she is 'Synagoga', representing the synagogue or Judaism in general. On her left is a finely dressed woman standing upright, carrying a chalice and a staff with a cross at its peak, seemingly triumphant. She is 'Ecclesia', representing the victorious Catholic Church. Above them is yet another depiction of Jews: the Gallery of Kings, featuring twenty-eight kings of ancient Israel.

As French officials survey the wreckage of Notre Dame, it is becoming clear that the front façade of the Cathedral is largely intact. These irreplaceable artistic treasures depicting the history of Jews in France seem to have been saved.

## Elias Canetti (1905-1994)



Elias Canetti won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1981 for his only novel, *Auto-da-Fé*, an extraordinary story about a man whose love of books turns him mad. It has been described as one of the greatest books of the twentieth century.

Canetti was born in Bulgaria to Jewish parents in 1905. His father, Jacques, was a merchant, living in the small town of Ruse on the Danube. Centuries before, the family, Sephardi Jews, had been expelled from Spain during the Inquisition, and Elias's mother, Mathilde Arditti, came from one of the oldest Jewish families in Bulgaria, though they had settled first in Livorno, in Italy. Their native tongue was Ladino. In 1911 the family moved to Manchester, where Mathilde's brothers had a prosperous business.

The following year Jacques Canetti died suddenly and Mathilde took her children first to Lausanne and then Vienna. Young Elias, already speaking Bulgarian, as well as Ladino, soon picked up English and French, though his mother insisted he learn German, a language which he loved and in which he always wrote. Although living for a time in Zurich and then Frankfurt, Elias returned to Vienna, to qualify as a chemist, though he never practised, preferring to study philosophy and literature.

He began his novel in 1934, obsessed by books and by writing, visiting Prague and enjoying the sounds of a language he could not understand. He loved the spoken word and languages of all kinds, a love which often appears in his books. While engaged on the book he married Venetia Taubner-Calderón, known always as Veza. He was frequently unfaithful to her, having a brief affair with Mahler's wife Alma, and later

with Iris Murdoch. Elias was becoming aware of the German attitude to Jews, and when Hitler moved into Austria, he and Veza decided to leave. They went to London, where his name was also linked to the painter Marie-Louise von Motesiczky.

When the Blitz began, Elias and Veza moved to the Home Counties taking a house in Chesham Bois, between Chesham and Amersham in the Chiltern Hills. During the war several Jewish families settled in the area, forming a small community, with a home-built synagogue. They formed an intellectual artistic group; among the members were the Edelmans, the father Maurice becoming an MP; Walter Goehr, the conductor with his wife Laelia, the pianist and photographer, their son Alexander who later became a distinguished composer and the Conquys, whose daughter Gina, married Murray Pollinger the literary agent. Murray's father Laurence handled many authors including Laurie Lee, and Gina herself was later established as one of the greatest agents for children's writers.

### the prize was 'for writings marked by a broad outlook, a wealth of ideas and artistic power'.

After the war, the Canettis moved back to London. Although they were never the centre of a wide social circle, they were friendly with many contemporary writers and artists. Kathleen Raine the poet was one, though she was frequently badly treated by Elias. He was friendly with Gavin Maxwell, the naturalist and explorer, with whom Kathleen was in love (the title of Maxwell's book about his otter, *Ring of Bright Water*, was a line from one of her poems). When her friendship with Maxwell ran into trouble, Canetti acted as go-between, but he was an inveterate snob and an unreliable friend. He wrote about her later, 'How much gravity, concern and endeavour I expended over many years trying to help her with the difficulties of her life.' Kathleen admired his Jewish background, though he was never a practising Jew. She wrote, 'The proudest aristocracy is that of the Jews whose

privilege it is to give out everything it possesses to mankind ... the only really mature men I know are Jews ... Jews are the only good fathers and Jewesses are the most wonderful mothers.'

Elias and Veza took a house in Hampstead and became part of a small literary and artistic circle, which included William Empson and his wife, T.S. Eliot (whom Canetti loathed, both for his personality and for his poetry). Also in the group were Veronica Wedgwood the historian, who translated *Auto-da-Fé*, and Arthur Waley, the translator of Chinese literature, whom he described as 'a man of the most universal culture I had thus far encountered anywhere'.

There were many more household names, politicians, writers, academics, from Enoch Powell to Henry Moore, Vaughan Williams to Oscar Kokoschka. Canetti loved belonging to this illustrious circle of famous men and women, though he must have seemed to some of them at least a pretentious name-dropper, and a German speaker at that!

In 1952 Canetti was granted British citizenship. It was not until 1980 that he was awarded the Nobel Prize for his only novel *Auto-da-Fé*, written in German under the title *Die Blendung (The Blinding)*. The citation said that the prize was 'for writings marked by a broad outlook, a wealth of ideas and artistic power'. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, reviewing the work, said the book was part of an originally planned series of novels which was to take the shape of a *comédie humaine* of the madmen. 'It has such fantastic and demoniacal elements that associations with Russian nineteenth century writers like Gogol and Dostoevsky



## Hebrew Corner

As I write this, we are approaching the portion of Noah - which reminds me of Noah's ark, and God's commandment to Noah to make a window in the ark. *Genesis* 6:16 reads:

*Tzohar ta'aseh la'tevah* - 'Make an opening for daylight in the ark'.

On the surface, this is a pretty simple command - make a window in the ark so that you can see out! However, the Chasidic commentators enjoy playing with Hebrew. One such commentator, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk, the great eighteenth century Chasidic master, shares a wordplay about *Genesis* 6:16 that is found in Chasidic teachings.

The Noam Elimelech teaches that Rashi, the medieval commentator, tells us that there are two possibilities for what this *tzohar*, this window or opening, might have been. Maybe it was a window, or possibly it was a great stone, shining light into the ark. And *'tevah'*, which means ark, can also mean 'word'. Any word that we speak, he teaches, needs to shine a great light, just like a precious gem.

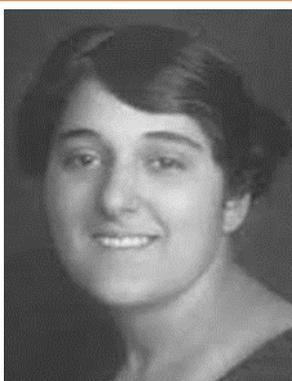
Other Chasidic commentators teach that in addition to this light or opening in the ark, or in our words, we also need to bring *'chayot'* (animals) into our *'tevah'* (ark). *Chayot* can be re-read as *'chiyut'* life force, and the importance of bringing life and energy into our everyday speech.

May our Hebrew words of prayer and the words we speak every day be filled with openings for light and livelihood - and may we find space for wordplay, puns, and humour!

**Yael Roberts**

to whom Canetti himself has declared he owes a debt of gratitude - are apparent.' *Die Blendung* is regarded by several critics as a single fundamental metaphor for the threat exercised by the 'mass man within ourselves'.

Canetti is perhaps better known for his book *Masse und Macht (Crowds and Power)*, a study of crowd behaviour which examines many forms of human activity in mass movements, from religion to education, covering such dominant figures as emperors, orchestral conductors, religious extremists and others whose control of crowds led to domination and control. The book is a remarkable overview of the psychological elements in the power of men over their fellow human beings. In it Canetti wrote, 'The crowd wants to grow indefinitely; distinctions are thrown off and all become equal. It is for the sake of this blessed moment, when no one is greater or better than any other, that people become a crowd'.



*Veza Canetti*

The three volumes of his autobiography, published between 1977 and 1985, are, according to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 'among the most fascinating and readable of his works, giving an insight into both his tormented personality and a long-forgotten world of cosmopolitan culture.'

In 1963 Veza died. It had been a happy marriage, in spite of Canetti's frequent infidelities. She was also a Sephardi Jew, an intelligent woman, having written novels, short stories and plays, and was a tremendous help to him in his work. She is described in the Introduction to *Party in the Blitz* as having a sharp wit, a sharp tongue, and a fiery nature, but was known for her compassion for the suffering of others. She tolerated Elias's character - usually difficult - and shielded him from those he did not wish to know. Her work has recently been rediscovered and republished. After her death Canetti then married Hera Buschor, with whom he had a daughter, Johanna.

Canetti finally decided to leave England for good. For a while he had frequently visited Switzerland and decided to make his home in Zurich. He died there in 1994, and is buried in the *Fluntern Cemetery*. His works are still little known in England, but in Europe he is accepted as one of the great writers of the twentieth century. His difficult, sometimes tormented, character may be part of the reason. He alienated many of his close friends and wrote of them unkindly in his recollections, but there is no doubt that his was a mind of immense thought and feeling. His books may remain after he is forgotten.

**Philippa Bernard**



*Canetti by Marie-Louise von Motesiczky*

Although he only wrote one novel, his work covers plays - mostly unperformable - many contributions to journals and the press, a travel book, *The Voices of Marrakesh*, and literary portraits, notably a study of Kafka. He also published a memorable series of memoirs, recalling his childhood, his experiences of power and control while living in Vienna, and a book about his life in England, *Party in the Blitz*.

## The Disputation of Paris



In the year 1240, there took place what has become known as the Disputation of Paris, sometimes referred to as The Trial of the Talmud. As part of its evangelistic efforts, the Catholic Church sought to win the beliefs of the Jews through debate, hoping that they would see what it considered to be the superiority of Christianity. Western Christianity in the thirteenth century was developing an intellectual vigour of its own and had assimilated the challenges of Aristotle through the works of Thomas Aquinas. According to Augustine of Hippo, the Jews bear the responsibility of upholding the Old Testament so as to provide living proof of the truth of the New Testament offered by Jesus.

Nicholas Donin, a Jew originally from La Rochelle, lived in Paris in the first half of the thirteenth century. Having expressed his doubts as to the value of the Talmud, the Oral Tradition, he was in 1225 excommunicated by Rabbi Jehiel of Paris in the presence of the whole congregation and with the usual ceremonies. Excommunication, or *cherem*, is the strongest form of official banishment by a rabbinical court pronounced against a wrong doer.

It involves the culprit being excluded from the synagogue and from the company of his fellow Jews. Having for ten years lived in the state of excommunication, though still clinging to Judaism, Donin became dissatisfied at last with his position, and embraced Christianity, probably under the influence of Christian propagandists, who saw the benefit they could derive from such a recruit, embittered as he was against his coreligionists. Donin joined the Franciscan order. His first act of retaliation was to stir up the Crusaders, resulting in bloody persecutions in Brittany, Poitou, and Anjou, in which 3,000 Jews were killed, 500 accepting the alternative of baptism. In 1238 Donin went to Rome, presented himself before Pope Gregory IX, and denounced the Talmud.

If the Jews were to give precedence to the Talmud, the Oral Law, and allow themselves to reinterpret the Bible, they were no longer fulfilling their historic role, and were no longer candidates for conversion – and hence no longer warranted the protection of the Church. This Oral Law, as distinct from the Written Law – the Pentateuch or the first

five books of the Old Testament – consists of the Mishna, the rabbinical interpretation of Jewish law of the third century CE, and the Gemara, the later (sixth century) commentary on the Mishna. It is considered by orthodox Jews to be no less divinely inspired, or binding, than the Torah. Donin believed that the Talmud was beginning to supersede the original Biblical Five Books of Moses on which Jewish belief was based.

The debate took place at the court of King Louis IX of France. It started on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1240. Donin represented the Christian side, and four distinguished French rabbis put the Jewish case. The main argument against the Talmud was that it had no right to exist, as it set up a counter argument to the holiness of the Scriptures which was the unique authority on Jewish law. The principal speaker among the four rabbis was Rabbi Jehiel, he who had excommunicated Donin originally. He was an eminent Hebraist and teacher, son of the leader of the Paris yeshiva. The other three were Rabbi Judah ben David of Melun, Samuel ben Solomon of Chateau Thierry and Moses of Coucy who was a well-known preacher.



*Pope Gregory IX*

It was the Pope himself, Gregory IX, who set the debate going. He had written to ‘all the kings in Christendom’ and it was King Louis who acted upon it. The letter said that the Jews of France ‘are not content with the Old Law ... and affirm that God gave another Law which is

called ‘Talmud’, that is, Teaching, handed down to Moses orally. Falsely they allege that it was implanted within their minds and, unwritten, was there preserved until certain men came, whom they call Sages and Scribes who, fearing that this Law may be lost from the minds of men through forgetfulness, reduced it to writing. In this is contained matter so abusive and so unspeakable that it arouses shame in those who mention it and horror in those who hear it.’

The King, who was later canonised, was no friend of the Jews, but it was his mother, Queen Blanche of Castile, who actually presided over the disputation. She was a woman of culture and learning, granddaughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, and favourable towards the Jews. She promised Rabbi Yehiel, that he and his goods were under her protection. It was considered by some commentators that the debate proceeded under the aegis of the Inquisition and that the antagonists never met face to face; this is not the view of some of the Jewish recorders, though all agree that the individual rabbis were not allowed to confer among themselves but had to answer separately. The Inquisition itself was in its early stages, though it claimed certain rules of interpretation regarding its interference with Jewish belief or behaviour. It could step in if Jews blasphemed Christianity or attempted to convert others to Judaism. Where Christian belief was contravened by Jewish tradition, such as belief in the Old Testament as Holy Writ, this might be considered heresy and fit for Inquisitorial intervention.

The principal point of attack by the Christian side was the reverence given to the Talmud by Jews, that the Talmud attacked Christianity and was therefore blasphemous, and that the only legitimate continuation of the Old Testament was Christianity itself. Rabbi Yehiel protested strongly. He explained that the Talmud was truly Judaism, not something new, introduced by later Jewish thinkers, simply an interpretation of the original Bible, and at least a thousand years old. Indeed the Christian speakers were not out to interfere with Jewish thought itself, only to insist that the original Biblical law should not be altered by any later interpretation or ‘improvement’.

Hyam Maccoby, in his book *Judaism on Trial*, puts it succinctly, ‘They insisted that it was heresy on the part of the Jews to have a Talmud at all’.



Louis IX

However, it was decided in the event, not that the Talmud should be suppressed completely, but that it should be altered to conform with the Christian acceptance of what was non-blasphemous and might be accepted, by taking out some of the offending passages. This meant that Jews would be allowed to study the Talmud, but only in its adulterated form.

There were other charges brought against the Talmud, besides the theological ones. It was noted that these included vilification against Christians themselves, particularly the permission to kill Christians and then the Jewish curse against Christianity which appeared in the *Eighteen Benedictions*. The argument raged long and hard; the final verdict and the condemnation was not announced for some two years, but when the trial was over, twenty-four carriage loads of Talmuds and other Jewish religious manuscripts were set on fire by French law officers in the streets of Paris, at the urging of Pope Gregory. Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, the Maharam, is said to have witnessed the Paris burning, which took place at the Place de Grève. In a lamentation, he described how ‘My tears formed a river that reached to the Sinai desert and to the graves of Moshe and Aharon. Is there another Torah to replace the Torah which you have taken from us?’

A report of the proceedings was taken in Hebrew and in Latin, which show the affair to be more of a trial than a debate, the prisoner at the bar being the Talmud itself.

An interesting footnote to the Paris Disputation was the debate in England at the time of the founding of the Reform movement. The Rev. David Woolf Marks, the first Minister of the West London Synagogue, was of the opinion, as were many of his congregants, that the Oral Law, the Talmud, was a man-made Law and of less importance than the Written Law, the Torah. The disapproval of the orthodox community, later to take the form of a *cherem* or excommunication, caused the Chief Rabbi of the time, Solomon Hirschell, to declare that ‘certain persons calling themselves British Jews, publicly and in their book of prayers, reject the Oral Law; I deem it my duty to declare that, according to the laws and statutes held sacred by the whole House of Israel, that any person or persons declaring that he or they reject and do not believe in the authority of the Oral Law, cannot be permitted to have any communion with us Israelites in a religious rite’. It seems, indeed, that little changes.

### Philippa Bernard



## Walter Rothschild (1868-1937)



If you had wandered through the small Hertfordshire town of Tring in the 1880s, you might have come across a well-built, bearded, moustachioed gentleman driving about in a carriage drawn by four zebras. This was Lionel Walter Rothschild, the elder son of Nathaniel Mayer de Rothschild, the first Baron. His mother, Emma, was also a Rothschild, her husband's first cousin, and Nathaniel was the first Jewish peer in England. Born in 1868, the boy was always known as Walter, rather than Lionel, and as a child was considered delicate and unfit for the rough and tumble of school. He was educated at home, showing an interest at a very early age in animals and birds, natural history and zoology, collecting insects and spending his time bird-watching and reading about animals. The collection included an ostrich which he harnessed to a gig, salamanders, a kangaroo, cranes and butterflies. He was also very interested in botany, an occupation inherited by his niece, Miriam, who lived nearby and with whom he cooperated on several projects.

Walter spent a year at Bonn University before entering Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he arrived with a flock of kiwis. Here he met and was befriended by the distinguished ornithologist, Alfred Newton. In 1900

Newton was awarded the Royal Medal of the Royal Society and the Gold Medal of the Linnaean Society. He founded the British Ornithologists Union. Walter was anxious to achieve a career in zoology, but in the tradition of the Rothschilds, he had to go into the family bank.

At his father's estate at Tring, Walter built a small house to store his collection of insects and his extensive library. As the collections grew he commandeered other sheds on the family estate and extended the house until he had enough specimens – insects, birds and stuffed animals – to create a museum, which he later opened to the public. This was an achievement he had dreamed of from the age of seven. He was still working in the City so he appointed a curator to look after the birds and another to be in charge of the insects. He was by now a considerable expert in zoology, and banking seemed a tedious way to pass his time. He resigned from Rothschilds and confined himself to his first love, birds, insects and animals. Throughout his lifetime Walter kept a total of 144 live giant tortoises from Galápagos and Aldabra (in the Indian Ocean). His aim was in part to protect them from hunting and potential extinction in their native habitat.



*Walter on his giant tortoise*

The museum opened in 1913, paid for by his parents. They also sponsored his visits all over the world, seeking out rare specimens. He was granted the Honorary Degree of D.Phil by the University of Giessen.

The high quality of his work and of his collections had caught the attention of national bodies and in 1899 he was

made a Trustee of the British Museum. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and several other distinguished scientific bodies made him an Honorary member; the British Association for the Advancement of Science made him President of its Zoology section.

The Rothschild wealth made it possible for Walter to appoint leading experts to help him in his work: librarians, taxidermists and the best professional scientists. It also left him enough leisure to pursue other interests. In 1899 he was elected Conservative Member of Parliament for Aylesbury, a post he held for more than ten years. He was also an officer in the Territorial Army, the Royal Buckinghamshire Yeomanry, where he was first a Captain and then a Major.

## Throughout his lifetime Walter kept a total of 144 live giant tortoises

Walter came from one of the richest and most important Jewish families in the country. In 1915 Nathaniel Rothschild died and Walter inherited the title. He was not a religious man, but was proud of his Jewish ancestry, a confirmed Zionist (he was elected President of the Zionist Federation) and a close friend of Chaim Weizmann. In 1917 he received a letter from Arthur Balfour, the British Home Secretary, addressed to his London home, 148 Piccadilly. It declared the government's support for 'a home for the Jewish people'. He was pleased to sign, on behalf of British Jews, the document known as the Balfour Declaration. He served as President of the Board of Deputies for a short time.

Perhaps the most attractive feature of the second Baron Rothschild was his eccentricity. He never married, though he is believed to have had two mistresses, one of whom presented him with a daughter.

Apart from the zebra carriage - in which he once drove to Buckingham Palace to prove the animals were not dangerous - he also owned a giant tortoise, which frequently carried him around.



Walter was fascinated by the cassowary, a large, flightless bird found in Australia and New Guinea. He kept sixty-four live cassowaries in nearby Tring Park, had portraits done of each, then had each one prepared as taxidermy when they died. He wrote a monograph based on observation of live specimens. Although he thought the birds' individual variation - especially their coloured wattles - indicated many species, there are only three species now recognised by Science.

Two of the most bizarre specimens on display in the Museum at Tring are the dressed fleas. They come from Mexico, where they were made as souvenirs for



*Dressed fleas from the collections of the Natural History Museum at Tring*

tourists. An interest in fleas ran in Walter's family. His brother Charles and niece Miriam both studied them. Miriam was also the first person to work out how fleas jump.

In spite of his family's great wealth, the baron was sometimes short of money. He sold most of his beetles to raise funds for his museum, and in 1931 a personal crisis forced him to sell his bird collection to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. But his museum wasn't to blame for all his financial troubles. In 1931 Walter was confronted with a demand to pay for a debt 'not incurred on account of the museum'.



*The Natural History Museum, Tring*

After his death it was revealed that he had been blackmailed for nearly forty years by a peeress (who had once been his mistress) and her husband.

According to Chaim Bermant in *The Cousinhood*, after his delicate childhood, 'he grew up to be a burly giant, six foot three inches in height, with massive shoulders and weighing, in later life, over three hundred pounds. He had an impediment of speech which made it difficult to modulate his voice and he spoke either in a whisper or a roar. The total effect could be forbidding, even startling, but he was mild, gentle and modest. His lonely childhood had made him socially awkward and pathologically shy.'

Walter Rothschild died in 1937 and was buried in Willesden Jewish Cemetery. He was succeeded as 3rd Baron by his nephew Nathaniel Mayer Victor

Rothschild. He left the Tring Museum to the British Museum. It was taken over by the Natural History Museum, which has continued to care for the collection and to keep it open to the public. His collection is the biggest private natural history collection ever assembled by one person, and the largest bequest of specimens ever received by the Museum. Today it retains its unique Victorian character, including its original floor-to-ceiling, glass-fronted hardwood and iron cases. The 4,000 specimens on public display are still arranged in taxonomic order, classified into related groups, just as they were in Walter's lifetime. The Museum looks after one of the largest ornithological collections in the world, composed of 1,150,000 skins, skeletons, nests, sets of eggs and specimens preserved in spirit, as well as the ornithological library with 75,000 works. There is plenty to interest children and Museum scientists are researching the solar system, Earth's geology and life in novel ways, using the unique combination of their expertise, collections and cutting-edge techniques.

### Philippa Bernard



*Cartoon by SPY from Vanity Fair Magazine*

## Evelyn Friedlander



In the *European Judaism* interview Albert Friedlander is asked, ‘who has had the greatest influence on your life?’ and he answers simply... ‘Evelyn’.

Evelyn was born in Kensington to German refugees and started life as a very talented pianist. Aged eleven she performed at the Festival of Britain concert and subsequently at many other top London venues, and on the BBC World Service. But her German background never left her. How could it with all that happened there? Unlike others and possibly lesser mortals she devoted a huge part of her life to reconciliation and understanding.

She started the Hidden Legacy Foundation, under Elie Wiesel’s patronage, and catalogued German Jewish rural communities, writing books on what she found.

This was so successful and respected that the German government awarded her the Order of Merit as she was responsible for the rescue, inventory, and restoration of ritual objects found in German synagogues. She also ensured that they remained in Germany which otherwise might never have happened. The Order of Merit is the highest tribute the Federal Republic of Germany can pay to individuals for services to the nation.

All this made her the perfect candidate to be the Chairman of the Memorial Scrolls Trust - a position she held for over ten years. Evelyn understood that at the same time as we look back and remember the horrors of the past, we must look forward to the generations that are yet to be, and she started seeking ways for the Scrolls to be part of the present, and future, of Jewish communities. And so, from this collection of Scrolls, a museum was created, recording the history of the Scrolls, and then the next step, developing outreach programmes to raise awareness in the Scroll-holding communities themselves. That story is not over and there are high hopes that the Scrolls could play an important part in this country’s remembrance of the Holocaust. We will owe a lot to Evelyn for ensuring that in her own words ‘Yes, the Scrolls had come out of the Holocaust but something positive and practical had emerged from that terrible history. In their quiet way the Scrolls are a living proof of survival and continuity’.

She did things in a determined way and always with a good heart. Who can forget her Nearly New Sale? For those who aren’t aware, Evelyn ran a shop in the *shul* originally for five days where people gave clothes to Evelyn to sell - and where their husbands sneaked back to try and buy their adored garments. It was always surreal in the weeks following the sale to come to *shul* to see people I didn’t really know wearing what I thought were my favourite ties.

She was no ordinary *Rebbetzen*, if such a thing exists. She was a successful person in her own right with her own views. I know how much she cared for our community. Only a few weeks ago we were chatting, and I reminded her how odd it was that I joined the Synagogue and became chairman pretty quickly thereafter, long before I had any idea that we were broke and the building was about to fall down. ‘Really’ she said, ‘I wasn’t surprised. The day he met you Albert came home and said I have found my new chairman’. Why did she tell me that? Because she knew how good it would make me feel. I had no idea he was thinking that my central reason for becoming and staying Chairman was that I recognised that our community owed a huge debt of gratitude to the Friedlander family and that if I became Chairman I could ensure that the promise we made to Albert - to look after Evelyn, for life - would be honoured. And it was, because Evelyn was respected and loved by so many in our community.

As a community we look after each other and you, Ariel, Lucia, Michal, Noam and Orli are, and I fervently hope will always be, part of our community. We will do our best to ensure that this is the case, as we share your grief because we knew Evelyn well for the person she was, we knew how much you loved her and looked after her, right up to her last days.

She, and your late Father, will always be remembered by us with affection, gratitude and enormous respect.

**Lord (Howard) Leigh of Hurley**  
**President of Westminster Synagogue**

## Ilana Alexander



### Scholar Teacher Mentor Mother Grandmother Friend.

Ilana died of metastatic breast cancer on *Shabbat Shuva*, 2019. A learned, generous and enthusiastic source of Biblical history, a patient and kind teacher and above all, a passionate Israeli and a proud Jew.

She was born Ilana Setton in Tel Aviv at the end of WWII. Her mother, Miriam Bassan was from Aleppo in Syria and her father, a 'Sabra', was born in what was Palestine under the British Mandate. Ilana's maternal family were Sephardic Jews who, forced out of Spain, settled initially in Italy where a forebear became a rabbi in Padua in the 1800s. Clearly Ilana had academic genes. She grew up in a household speaking Hebrew, French, Ladino and English. Ilana lived through the Six-day War in 1967 which strengthened her belief in Israeli autonomy and during her army service in Kibbutz Neve Eitan she reluctantly learned to drive a tank.

In 1969, aged twenty-three, whilst working in a library, she met an English Jew, Anthony Alexander, and moved to London. They were married by Rabbi Albert Friedlander at Westminster Synagogue. Ilana and Anthony had two children: Sharon and Daniel who were her pride and joy and whose virtues she never stopped extolling! She drove her children up from Chislehurst in Kent every weekend for the WS *cheder* and whilst they were small, she completed an Open University degree in the Humanities, achieving top marks in the Classics. After her divorce in 1992, Ilana moved to Baron's Court in West London and for the next twenty-five years, threw herself into life at the Synagogue, particularly in Education.

I first met Ilana when we joined WS about sixteen years ago. My daughter Dorabella started at Or Shabbat and at the same time, a rag-tag group of parents used to meet in the basement before the Service to discuss politics, life, parenthood, swap stories and network. Ilana somehow found us all and suggested a 'Beginner's Hebrew' class. Thus started a delightful few years of us attempting to master spoken Hebrew whilst Ilana valiantly provided textbooks, set us homework and tested our reading and speaking skills. We rarely, if ever completed the homework, and made very slow progress indeed. However, the atmosphere was very congenial, and we all loved our weekly Hebrew 'experience'. Ilana was friendly and welcoming and never admonished us for our laziness. She peppered our reading with explanations of origins of words, emphasising the eloquence and conciseness of the language and the beauty of its grammar. Although much of this was lost on us, we absorbed her enthusiasm for her native tongue and felt privileged to be given a little insight into our Jewish heritage.

Ilana loved to teach and share her joy in Hebrew, Biblical history and culture - especially with children, with whom she had a special bond. She rapidly became embedded in the education facility at Westminster Synagogue. Her achievements speak for themselves. At the time of her death, she had reached the unbelievable figure of almost eighty *Bar & Bat Mitzvahs* over two decades. She delighted in her students' success and was thrilled when they chanted their portions immaculately and with a true Hebrew accent (she regarded the Ashkenazi intonation as very inferior). She loved all the children she taught, my daughter included, and, always encouraged, they in turn regarded her as a benevolent instructor who never criticised and always saw the best in them.

During our early days at WS, Ilana confided to me that she had developed breast cancer. Over the next fifteen years she dealt with her disease uncomplainingly and with great fortitude. When her cancer had spread, she was referred to the Royal Marsden Hospital where I work. She used to come to my office in the X-ray department after every appointment and scan, usually bringing me chocolates or other treats, calling me 'Eli-nor' (*God is my light* in Hebrew).

She accepted her condition and submitted herself to increasingly invasive treatments with stoicism. There was no anger or self-pity. Her only desire was to continue being able to teach her BM students, attend WS services, and watch her grandchildren grow up. In the end, when it became clear that the battle was being lost, she was still the kind, gentle and friendly Ilana we had always known, accepting of her fate and thankful for any help people offered. Once admitted to the ward, I would visit her and find her as always welcoming and lovely, her Bible and her *siddur* by her side.

Terminally ill, she was transferred to Nightingale House in Clapham where she had a nice bright room with a view of the gardens. Again, she was always pleased to have visitors and delighted to welcome family and friends. The last time I saw her, just days before she died, she could no longer see but was able to hear. I started talking to her. 'Eli-nor!' she said, and her face lit up the room with her amazing smile.

**Eleanor Moskovic**

## Two Italian Synagogues



When I posted photographs on Facebook during five days spent in Florence this summer, my daughter commented, 'You and Edward go to one of the centres of the Catholic world and you spend all your time in shuls!!' She's not wrong - and what delightful experiences they were.

Jews have had a very long and sometimes difficult existence in Italy. Rome is probably home to one of the oldest continuous Jewish communities in the world and this is largely a result of the absence of anti-Semitism in Roman culture. Sadly, the combination of a gradual influx of Christians and the reign of Emperor Constantine, who embraced Christianity himself and recognised it as the state religion in 313CE, meant that the tolerance towards Judaism diminished and Jews began to be subjected to special taxes and were restricted in many areas of everyday life.

Well documented struggles with the Papacy, which included issuing bills and edicts further to infringe the rights of Jews, or simply blaming them for natural disasters and disease - for example the plague of 1348 - meant that it was not until the fall of Rome in 1870 that Jews were again allowed to become full citizens with equal rights and to move from the ghettos that they had been forced into. Freedom for Jews after centuries of inequality and

discrimination changed the fabric of Italian life and many Jews who had lived isolated lives in rural and inaccessible parts of Italy, moved to the cities and became active and fully integrated into Italian society.

By the time Mussolini came to power, the combination of ancient Roman Jews, Sephardic Jews, following their expulsion from Iberia in 1492, and the smaller Ashkenazi population, that arrived in the Middle Ages, had created a very distinct and fully accepted Jewish Community which was widely respected and valued. But in 1938, Mussolini's alignment with Hitler's Nazi ideology was formally stated in the publication of *Manifesto on Race* and persecution and discrimination were again a part of Jewish life in Italy.

By the end of the Second World War, the pre-war total of Jews living in Italy of 45,000 had been reduced by over one third, and out of a total population of fifty-seven million, the Jewish population in Italy today is around 30,000 with over half of those living in Milan or Rome.

Our visit to the Synagogue in Siena was a little like discovering the Jewish Tardis. The building itself dates back to 1786 and, in keeping with all synagogues built during the period from 1571 to 1870, was in the heart of the ghetto. It had a completely anonymous façade, and when we knocked at the enormous oak front door for the 14.45 tour it was with some trepidation.



The approach to the Sanctuary was functional, including the obligatory gift shop selling Judaica that we are all familiar with, but the serene beauty of the Sanctuary was impossible not to experience. It was relatively small, with plain wooden benches seating no more than 100. It was built in Neoclassical style and heavily influenced by the non-Jew, Luigi (Domenico) Vanvitelli, an architect who worked on many buildings in Siena. He clearly had grasped the brief of providing a setting to do justice to the spiritual tasks undertaken in such a place, but the inscription on the ceiling of the Ten Commandments was a giveaway of his non-Jewish roots!



Sitting there, in that beautiful place, it was possible to imagine nineteenth century Sienese Jews, hurrying through the tiny ghetto backstreets, to arrive at a place where there was no room for the persecution and discrimination that occurred outside its walls.

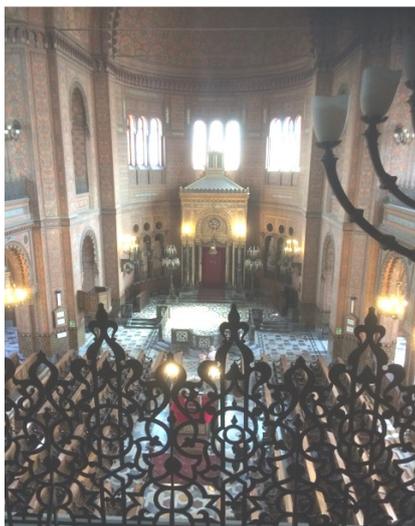
Not even the steep climb up small stone steps to the ladies' gallery could have dampened our enthusiasm for this place; looking down from there could have been compared to premium Royal Circle seats in a West End theatre. To look down on the beautiful walnut *Bimah*, the candelabra and Baroque-style friezes and festoons really was the best view in the house.

The visit to the Synagogue in Florence was a completely different experience altogether. The obvious location, elaborate high security entrance and the prohibition on taking bags into the building was a significant contrast to the understated and discreet approach to the Synagogue in Siena.

The golden age of Florentine Jewry, between the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, marked the razing of the ghetto and the construction of the Moorish style Synagogue in 1882. Considerable restoration has taken place since the German occupation during the Second World War when it was used as a garage for military vehicles. In 1966 devastating floods flowed through the city and the waters of the Arno reached two metres high inside the building, which again resulted in important restoration.

It took eight years to build the Temple which is surrounded by a once-exotic garden, now mainly laid to lawn; part of the garden has become a memorial for the Florentine Jews who fought in the First World War and those who perished in the Holocaust.

The Sanctuary has many similarities with the Spanish Synagogue in Prague, but it is domed. The Ten Commandments sit firmly above the gilded wooden Ark surrounded by six very dark marble columns which support the highly detailed and ornate Moorish Arch above the Ark. The cornices of the columns are elaborately



crafted and gilded in gold leaf. The marble flooring with the repeated Magen David motif is perhaps to remind us of the omnipresence of Judaism in our lives.

The Ladies' Gallery, accessed by lift and stairs, is attractive but the view down over the sanctuary is restricted by some very substantial iron railings. Any fully emancipated Jews may well be offended by the inference of the lower status of women at prayer, but the inscription of the *Hallelujah* from the *Hallel* around the gallery is a thoughtful addition.

Although it's a building of great beauty and splendour the vastness of the architecture obviously doesn't create the intimate atmosphere one would associate with a smaller synagogue. I would go back to the Synagogue in Siena tomorrow, Florence maybe not, but they are both very much worth a visit to any travellers looking for a reminder of important times gone by.

**Janet Mernane**

## Amusement Arcade

The Pope decided that he would like to improve relationships between the Catholics and the Jews. He pondered for a while on the best way to achieve this. Finally, he decided on a Golf Match.

He asked one of his aides to tell him who would be their best player. The aide suggested that the Pope could make Rory McIlroy a Cardinal and get him to play for the Pope's side.

The match took place and Rory McIlroy telephoned the Pope to tell him the result.

He said 'Your Holiness, I have good news and bad news'.

The Pope told him to give the good news first.

'Well,' he said, 'I played the best game of my life. I hit the longest drives I have ever hit, all my putts went in – I have never played better!'

'So, what's the bad news?' enquired the Pope.

McIlroy replied 'I was beaten by Rabbi Tiger Woods!'



## The Jews of Norwich: Presence, Absence and Reconciliation



On a windy day in February in 2015, the Mayor of Norwich unveiled a plaque outside Chapelfield Shopping centre, in the presence of Jewish and Christian ministers. The plaque commemorated the burial in 2013 in the Jewish cemetery in Norwich of seventeen people, whose bodies had been found in a medieval well during the construction of the shopping centre in 2004.

Archaeological investigation and DNA testing revealed that their deaths were unnatural, and that their bodies had been thrown down the well. It also revealed that they were very probably Jews who perished sometime in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, possibly during one of the many riots and acts of aggression against the Jewish population of Norwich.

The unveiling of the plaque was the final stage of a long struggle by the local community to give the bodies a proper burial and provide an act of reconciliation between Jewish and Christian communities for the persecution and oppression committed against the Jewish community of medieval Norwich.

Jews came to England shortly after the Norman Conquest in 1066. They played an important part in the financing of William's wars and the new King was keenly aware of how useful Jewish financial acumen and capital could be in increasing prosperity in his new conquest and in indirectly extracting

money from the nobility and the general population. It was far easier to squeeze money out of a few wealthy Jews by fines and threats than to try and obtain it from a hostile nobility by taxation. As Robert Mundill says in his book *The King's Jews*: 'Jews were not permitted to own land, nor to participate in trades, but they became expert in money lending, pawn-broking and the sale of mortgages and bonds. The Jews were the "King's men", accountable directly to the Monarch, and for almost two centuries their dealings were closely scrutinised by a government department dedicated exclusively to Jewish affairs – the Exchequer of the Jews.' They were expelled from England by order of Edward I in 1290.

Norwich was a wealthy city, at the time the second largest in England. It had a number of industries and a healthy agricultural base. The first evidence of the presence of a Jewish community in Norwich is in 1144 but there may have been a presence as early as 1135. The Jewish quarter, if it can be called that, was situated between the churches of St Peter Mancroft and St Stephens, below the castle near the sheep market, the wheat market and the horse market and importantly, close to the centres of Royal and civic authority.

If you stand in the middle of the Market Place in the centre of Norwich, next to the old church of St Peter Mancroft and direct your gaze south east behind Caffè Nero, you will be looking at the site of the medieval Jewish synagogue. It lies beneath Primark and the Lamb Inn. There is a plaque at the entrance to the Lamb Inn which records this. The synagogue was destroyed around 1290 shortly after the expulsion of Jews from England. Almost nothing remains of it except a few glazed tiles and parts of a pillar which can be found in the Castle museum. A more substantial remnant of the Jews' 150-year sojourn in Norwich is the Jurnet house (now an adult education centre known as Wensum Lodge) in King Street. This was built sometime in 1140 and acquired by the wealthy Jurnet family around 1190. It is still a substantial and impressive stone house with a large cellar held up by massive pillars. The cellar now houses a

bar where you can have a drink and try and imagine it as it was in the heyday of the Jurnet family, stocked with merchandise: barrels of wine from Bordeaux and bales of wool for export to France. Or perhaps you might imagine a group of anxious Jewish residents in hiding from an angry mob, wondering whether their houses and goods will be safe, and whether family and friends had made it to safety.



*The Jurnet House in King Street*

According to Vivian Lipman, in his magisterial book *The Jews of Medieval Norwich* (a copy is in the synagogue library), 'The relationships between the Jews and Christians in Norwich were never very good, and became worse during the century-and-a-half of the community's existence; this deterioration can be traced in the increasing gravity of the attacks to which the Jews were subjected by the local population... The first of these is the ritual murder accusation of 1144. Norwich thus has the unenviable distinction of being probably the scene of the first anti-Jewish ritual murder accusation in medieval Europe'.

The bizarre circumstances in which the Jewish Community of Norwich were blamed for the murder of a young boy, and the way this developed into the calumny of the 'blood libel' which has caused so much harm to Jews everywhere are too complex for this article. However, the suffering of the

community is eloquently recorded in another altogether surprising manner. 'I am Meir son of Rabbi Eliahu from the city of Norwich which is in the land of the isles called Angletterre' declares a compelling voice from the past, booming out of an old Hebrew manuscript found in the Vatican in the late nineteenth century.

Nearly a hundred years before Chaucer wrote the Canterbury Tales, another English poet, Meir ben Eliahu, was composing verses in Hebrew. The poems speak eloquently of the poet's faith in *Hashem*; 'Majestic are You and luminous ... dividing darkness from light', but they also testify to the sorrow and despair that the Jews of England felt at that time; 'They make heavy our yoke, ... they are finishing us off'.

Almost nothing is known of Meir apart from the poems he wrote. He identifies himself in two acrostics; the first, which is quoted above, comes from his poem 'Who is like you?'; and in the second, which is in the last of a series of sixteen *piyyutim*, he calls himself 'Meir son of Elijah the Hozeh'. Lipman, who included all of Meir's poems in his book, discussed the possible identity of Meir at length. Regrettably he could not find any other evidence suggesting the existence of the poet in Norwich. However, based on stylistic evidence and certain references to contemporary events within the poem, Lipman concluded that Meir must have lived in the latter part of the thirteenth century, and may well have written on the expulsion after he left England. Other scholars have suggested that certain unattributed verses may well be the work of Meir but apart from these he seems to have disappeared into the sands of time.

## The historian Cecil Roth believes that a community began to re-establish itself in Norwich around 1750.

I came across another possible link with Meir at the Norfolk Record Office. Searching through old records of legal transactions, I found a translation from Latin of a summary of a deed of

conveyance of a house made on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1293. It reads as follows:

*Peter De Bumstead, merchant, and his wife have granted to Nigel de Foxlee, merchant a moiety of the house with ground and solar, which they had built upon land acquired by Peter of the Lord King, which once belonged to Elyas the Jew, and was entry to the Jew School in St Peter Mancroft...*

So Elyas (Elijah) the Jew, was a man noteworthy enough to be remembered in a deed made three years after the expulsion of the Jews from England. This Elyas owned property at the entrance to the Synagogue of Norwich. Was this Elyas perhaps Rabbi Elijah father of Meir the poet? Was he 'Elijah the Hozeh' referred to in Meir's poem? I like to think so.

Towards the end of 2012, a chance conversation led to an introduction to the Norwich Writers' Centre. To my astonishment they were about to publish a parallel translation of Meir's poems which they had commissioned from two scholars at the University of East Anglia. This was a part of the City's induction as England's first UNESCO City of Literature. As the writer Keiron Pim explained in his introduction to *Into the Light: The Medieval Poetry of Meir of Norwich* (a copy is in the synagogue library):

*Norwich is now a member of the International Cities of Refuge Network for threatened writers owing to its tradition of welcoming the persecuted; yet after 150 years in the city, the Jews alone were expelled rather than assimilated. The uncompromising voice of Meir ben Eliahu is a discomfiting reminder of a less tolerant era.*

The launch of *Into the Light* took place at the Dragon's Hall in Norwich, another medieval merchant's house which the poet may well have known. The Writer's Centre was determined that this should be more than just a launch; it should be a commemoration of the Jewish contribution to the city's culture. It had commissioned The London Cantorial Singers to set some of Meir's poems to music and to sing them. For the first time in 700 years Meir's voice was heard by a

packed audience of his fellow countrymen.

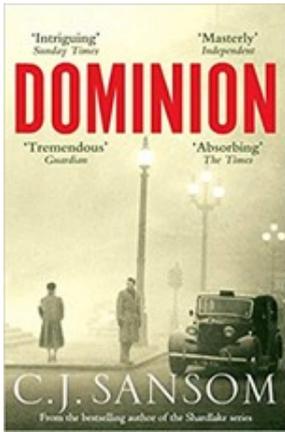
Jews returned to Britain in 1656, thanks to Oliver Cromwell, and the historian Cecil Roth believes that a community began to re-establish itself in Norwich around 1750. In 1828 a small Synagogue was built in the Tombland area of Norwich near the Cathedral. On the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1849 a fine new Synagogue was consecrated, and the congregation once again began to play an active role in the city. Unfortunately, the Synagogue was destroyed by enemy action in 1942. However, that did not prevent the community from welcoming many Jewish American servicemen, or from taking an active part in bringing out refugees from Europe and helping them to start new lives in England. The community moved to new premises in Earlham Road where the present Synagogue buildings were completed in 1969.



Earlham Road Synagogue

The community remains a small one. However, it is active and committed to remaining a viable centre for Jewish faith in the city, and to making a significant contribution to harmonious inter-faith relationships.

**Jeremy Solnick**



*Dominion*  
by  
C J Sansom

Published  
by Mantle

2012

The loyal readers of C.J. Sansom's novels of Tudor England, and his remarkable detective, the hunchback lawyer Matthew Shardlake, may be a little wary of his latest novel *Dominion*. It is set in the very different England of the 1950s. The Second World War has ended in 1940, in an armistice in which Germany and the Allies agree to share control of Europe and of the English nation. Churchill is defeated by Lord Halifax in an election. After several changes of government, Lord Beaverbrook becomes Prime Minister, but Germany takes control of the Army and the Police, working with the English Special Branch, together with many of the government organisations, while the country slowly descends into chaos and misery. Oswald Moseley is Home Secretary.

The only hope for a well-run, happy and caring Britain lies in the Resistance, a secret group of Englishmen and women who try to look after the poor, the sick, the mentally ill and inevitably the Jews, in the hope of returning England to normality.

In accordance with the beliefs of the Nazi Party - Hitler is a very sick man who has not appeared in public for some time - Jews are the lowest of the low. They are rounded up and await deportation to the East, publicly to a 'better life abroad' but in reality to an unknown fate, which readers, with hindsight, know will be a horrific end. Their only chance of survival is through the Resistance.

The hero of the book is David Fitzgerald, a Civil Servant who works in the Dominions Office. He is happily married with a good job, but is very concerned for the state of the country and agrees to join the Resistance, using his position as a government official to obtain information which might aid the fight. What he does not reveal to anyone, including his wife, is that he is a Jew. He knows what that might mean for his family and for his very existence. The plot of the novel revolves around his old university friend Frank, a mentally frail but highly intelligent scientist, now confined to an asylum. Frank knows an important secret which must be kept from everyone, friends and enemies alike, but when the Germans suspect that the secret is vital to their future, the story takes on a new thrust, as they begin the hunt for Frank and his friends.

**The story grips the reader from the beginning; the reality of the fiction is overwhelming**

The excitement of the book lies not only in the plot - how will the Resistance save Frank's sanity as well as his secret - but also in the terror which accompanies an England under the Nazi heel. Could it happen here, we have asked ourselves often enough. According to Sansom it certainly could. His alternative history paints a picture of an England subservient to cruelty and bitterness. The majority of the British people seem to hate the Jews, obey the Germans, and have little backbone for a fight. Food is short, everyone is frightened and no leaders dare to face up to the situation. This, it is clear, is what might have been the case in the genuine 1940 if the 'Dunkirk spirit' and Churchill's speeches had not roused the nation to fight back.

The story grips the reader from the beginning; the reality of the fiction is overwhelming and the details - clothes, food, political chicanery - all form a terrifying conspiracy. In the last half of

the book, London is stifling in the Great Smog of 1952, which can only add to the horror, as anyone who remembers it can testify. The romantic interest, when David falls in love with a member of the Resistance, is perhaps a little contrived, but the characters - the 'loony' Frank, his protector, the Scottish communist Ben, and the German SS investigators - are frightening in their reality. Sansom uses real characters to emphasise his story: Churchill himself, Enoch Powell, Marie Stopes, Goebbels and Himmler. But what becomes very clear as the story progresses is that what we, having witnessed some of the worst atrocities ever to befall the human race, have always believed was the work of a European nation far away, could ourselves have let it happen here.

In a long epilogue the author justifies his alternative history, explaining his reasons for telling such a grim, even terrifying tale. Having finished the story at a point where his readers are ignorant of the future, Sansom leaves the outcome to some extent to their imagination. But this book is so well told and so frightening in its intensity that Jewish readers at any rate will shiver at the possibilities it offers, even as they enjoy reading it.

**Philippa Bernard**

**JOEY'S GARDEN**

**Autumn is unmistakably back in Joey's garden  
Fresher air mitigates the heat of the sun  
Nature perfect and natural balance  
A harmony destined to end  
Ending but yet never ending  
A cycle I know and know not  
An ancient phase locked in a lost memory  
While regardless of my feelings the Earth continues in its orbit  
Welcoming newcomers, souls from somewhere beyond...  
Reclaiming those tired of circling  
Those who exchange Time for Eternity  
Yes, I do love Autumn's slanting rays  
Still warm even though from further away**

**Colette Littman**



## Humour in the Bible



*Jonah & the Whale  
by Pieter Lastman*

Reading the Book of Jonah on *Yom Kippur* we become aware of a thread of gentle humour running through the story. Jonah, wanting to get to Tarshish to avoid God's wrath, finds a boat and pays his fare. This homely touch - Jonah expects to pay for what he wants - immediately puts the reader in a friendly mood. This is not just a contract between man and God, it is the action of an ordinary passenger on a boat, who plays fair and forks out his money as any honest man would.

Once on the boat, Jonah, tired and anxious, goes down below, lies down and falls asleep. The reader knows exactly how he feels. The good fellow, who has not attempted to hide his problems from the crew, having told them why he needs to get away, knows perfectly well that he is to blame for the tempest, confesses his guilt and takes responsibility. He explains that he is a Jew and it is his God who invoked the storm.

Apart from his rescue by the whale - a splendid way to save our hero - the story of Nineveh, 'that great city', is embroidered with a gourd, a worm, sackcloth and ashes, and finally a description of the population of the city, who don't know their right hand from their left. No modern comedy writer could have put together such a set of circumstances without leaving his audience in fits of laughter. They would perfectly understand that of course one is angry with God when things go amiss, and it seems that God understood too!

We are all familiar with the account of Sarah, when told that she will have a child when she is already an old woman, 'and Sarah laughed'. She laughs, less with joy at the thought, though she was obviously delighted, but because she finds it

genuinely funny that at her age she is to fulfil the role of continuing her race. One can imagine the scene: the long-married couple, already settled into old age, are about to change their whole lives; they can't believe it. Do they tease each other? Does Abraham sweep his wife up in his arms and give her a kiss? Do they giggle together at what is to come?

In 1984 a conference was held in Israel on the subject of Jewish humour, where no attention at all was given to humour in the Bible. But there is much fun to be found there, not perhaps uproarious farce, but gentle, teasing accounts of the ways of men and animals, of God's perception of his creatures, and what happens when they disobey his instructions. One such is the tale of Balaam and his ass. God forbade Balaam to go to visit Balak, King of Moab, but he went anyway, riding on his donkey. There then follows a hilarious account of the donkey, who could see the Angel of the Lord when Balaam couldn't, trying to prevent her master from continuing his journey. First of all the poor animal turned away from the path into the nearby field and Balaam forced her back. Then she wandered into a vineyard with a wall on each side, so that the rider's foot was crushed against it. By this time Balaam was getting very irritated and used his whip to keep the animal going. Finally the way became totally impassable so the poor donkey just collapsed under her master who beat her unmercifully. Some sort of intervention was clearly necessary, so the donkey found her voice and spoke to her master.



*Balaam and his Ass by Rembrandt*

Like any servant who is maltreated and wants his own back, the beast berates Balaam: 'What did I ever do to you to be treated like this?' He of course puts the blame on the loquacious animal, 'You made fun of me. If I had a sword, I'd kill you on the spot.' But the donkey has the last word - almost. 'I've served you well - did I ever let you down?' The shame-faced Balaam has to admit, 'No, you never did'. At this point he is enabled to see the Angel, sword in hand, and falls flat on his face, as any comic actor would. What a gloriously humorous way to make a point.

Some of the incidents in the Old Testament are cruel, as humour can often be. Poor Elisha, bald as a coot, is mocked by a group of children. 'Go up, thou bald head, go up thou bald head', they shout at him. But he calls over two bears which attack the lads and kill forty-two of them! Ugliness, frailty, and human weakness too can invoke such unkind but humorous reaction.

Eglon, king of Moab, was 'a very fat man'. The Bible never hesitates to tell the story in all its horror. Eglon is killed by Ehud who came from the tribe of Benjamin, most of whom were left-handed. So Ehud approaches the king with a double-edged sword hidden on his right side. Expecting a blow from the opposite side, Eglon is pierced through his belly 'and the haft also went in after the blade and the fat closed upon the blade so that he could not draw the dagger out'. The fun doesn't end there, for when the servants find the doors of the palace locked they say to themselves, 'He must be covering his feet' - a euphemism, the commentators explain, for answering the call of nature!

Some of the humorous references in the Bible are easily missed, as much humour can be if you are not listening carefully. King Jehoshaphat died, 'smote in his bowels with an incurable disease'. The Bible says he wasn't much regretted. The Book of Proverbs is an unending source of gentle fun. 'As a jewel in a pig's snout is a fair woman without discretion'. For wisdom too can make you smile. 'Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife'. Advice offered with a smile is usually the more effective. Who was it, we wonder, who suggested, according to Proverbs, 'There

be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go forth they by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands and is in king's palaces'. Many of the Bible's comic stories hide a vein of truth.



*Nebuchadnezzar by Wm. Blake*

But others, which must have drawn a smile in former times, are now less politically correct. For we have learned not to smile at the misfortunes of our fellows. The story of Nebuchadnezzar, who was 'driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws', was in fact no figure of fun, but suffering with a recognised disease, known now as *boanthropy*, a psychological disorder in which a man believes himself to be bovine. It is not so long since families visited lunatic asylums to stare, laughing at the inmates.

For humour can be double-edged. Comedy, it is well known, is not so far from tragedy. When we come to laugh at some of the stories of the Bible, we must remember that they are often written to remind us of a deeper meaning.

**Philippa Bernard**

## Shadows in the Bible

### 1. Korah

*Every now and again a shadowy figure appears in the Bible; someone who seems to make his or her mark on the history of the Israelites and then vanishes, never to appear again. This is the story of one.*

Jacob had twelve sons, of whom the third born was Levi. According to *Numbers* 16:21, Levi had three sons - Gershon, Merari, and Kohath. Kohath's son, Izhar, was the father of Korah, making him the first cousin of Moses and Aaron. (This is not Korah, the son of Esau.)

Korah was a wealthy man, apparently by discovering some of the treasure hidden in Egypt by Joseph. He is compared to Haman, the two being the 'richest men in the world' and both were destined to die because of their greed, for their wealth and ambition were not given to either of them by God. Korah was also known as a wise man, and as the living representative of the house of Levi was granted the honour of carrying the Ark of the Covenant on his shoulders. Between the cousins ran a thread of jealousy; Korah felt that in view of his standing and his financial status he should have been granted the role of High Priest which went instead to Aaron. Another cousin, Elitazafan, son of one of Korah's uncles, was appointed head of the Levi tribe, much to Korah's annoyance. So envy and jealousy was growing within the community ready to boil over into rebellion at any moment.

Korah rallied community leaders to his cause, joined by two trouble-makers from the tribe of Reuben, Abiram and Dathan. They were believed to be the ones who forced Moses to flee from Egypt (by informing on him to Pharaoh that he killed an Egyptian overseer). They had sworn at Moses and Aaron in Egypt, had tried to turn the Israelites back from the Red Sea, and went out to gather the manna on Shabbat. When Korah incited

the rebellion they were only too happy to join in.

The rebels faced Moses to insist that the appointment of the High Priest was illegal as it had not been sanctioned by God, and that they should all be allowed to serve in that office. Moses explained that this was not possible as only one man could be appointed. He suggested that the following day they should all take incense before God who would accept the sacrifice by only the one he considered worthy.

Korah immediately began to enrol men into his ranks, until he had some 250 men all holding pans of incense. Moses realised what was coming and warned the Israelites to beware of Korah and his army, foretelling the fate of those who joined the rebellion, that the earth would open and swallow them up. Immediately the earth quaked and a great chasm appeared. Korah, his leaders, their families and all their possessions disappeared into the cavern and were never seen again. The incense bearers were consumed by fire, and the rebellion came to a tragic end.

This was not the end of the story, for the Israelites were horrified at the fate that befell Korah and his followers. They protested to Moses at the punishment and he tried to placate the challengers. Many were swallowed up and buried in the earth. Others were consumed by fire. But the complaints continued, Moses and Aaron being accused of bringing death to God's people. God's anger manifested itself by a devastating plague that consumed over 14,000 men, women and children before Aaron was able to mitigate the disaster.

The story of Korah's rebellion is more than just a tale of greed, ambition and God's retaliation. It symbolises the difficulties faced by the Israelites on the eve of the Exodus from Egypt. A strong leader who can rely on the support of his followers is essential for any major undertaking - perhaps a lesson for today - and retribution awaits the man who contravenes not only God's law but the fellowship and community of the people around him.

**This issue of the Westminster Quarterly is a more sombre publication than usual. Unprecedentedly, this time we mourn the loss of two prominent and influential members of our community. Never before have we published eulogies and we are unlikely to do so again but we felt that such a body-blow as we have recently sustained needed to be recorded.**



**On a lighter note, we apologise wholeheartedly to our readers - especially to those who are Members of the House of Lords - for illustrating an article about anti-Semitism in the July issue with a picture of the House of Commons, when the debate took place in the Upper House! This is what we should have printed.**

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*From Michael Benson, Be'er Sheva, Israel*

**I've just finished reading your *shul* magazine for October - as usual, very interesting! You mention that you saw Sir Robert Mayer at his Children's Concerts and I wanted to tell you about a memory of mine.**

**I imagine that I must have been about twelve years old when my Dad took me to a Promenade Concert (he took me to several). Anyway, there was a first performance of a composition by Ralph Vaughan Williams (his picture on page 16 of your magazine) and at the end of the performance he himself came out to receive the applause of the audience.**

**I still remember seeing this very old man, so it must have made quite an impression on me!**

## Education Report



I have done a lot of journeying in my life. I was born in St. Louis, Missouri. I moved to Washington, DC when I was ten. I attended University in New York City, studied Jewish Studies for a year at the Pardes Institute in Jerusalem - and ended up in London four years ago. My journeys have been geographical but also spiritual - I grew up Modern Orthodox, yet I've worked in progressive Jewish spaces since moving to the UK. Judaism in my childhood, although joyous, didn't feel meaningful, and I now work to continue to make Judaism meaningful to myself and to those that I am in community with. In various places that I've taught, whether at Sutton Place Synagogue on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, North Western Reform Synagogue London, the Nesiya Institute, or BIMA at Brandeis, I have loved seeing people of all ages on educational journeys.

It's been a busy start to my journey at Westminster Synagogue. From teaching weekly Or Shabbat and Or Chadash classes, leading Friday night services and family High Holyday services, and meeting with BM students and parents, I feel as if I've begun an energising and exciting journey along with you.

There have been so many incredible community members who have come forward to shape the journey, to warden at family High Holiday services, to read Torah interactively with children, to volunteer their time to rethink the BM process, to join me to discuss the future of Or Shabbat over coffee. There were

people who showed up to decorate our *Sukkah* this year, or who agreed to carry a Scroll during the *Simchat Torah hakafot*. Teachers led craft activities for families on *Simchat Torah*. Each of these contributions has been a huge part of beginning my journey here and has added to what we are building together.

Journeying is a large part of what it means to be Jewish. In Parshat *Lech Lecha*, God commands Abraham: *Lech Lecha* - Go for yourself from your land and from your birthplace, from the house of your father, to the land that I will show you.

*Lech Lecha* - go for yourself. The medieval commentator Rashi tells us that Abraham must go for his own enjoyment and his own goodness - the current place he is at is not a fertile ground for him to have a legacy. But there, in the place where he is headed, there is a chance to make his mark on the world.

The journeying we do requires leaving behind that which is familiar and going into the unknown, all while being in touch with what we personally care about creating.

As the wonderful musician Debbie Friedman echoed (even changing the language of *lech lecha* to the feminine *l'chi lach*, so that it could be personalised for each individual) this journey is blessed:

*L'chi lach*, to a land that I will show you  
*Leich l'cha*, to a place you do not know  
*L'chi lach*, on your journey I will bless you  
 And (you shall be a blessing) *l'chi lach*

The BM students learned about the fruits and blessings of the journey of *Lech Lecha* on the residential weekend here at Westminster Synagogue in November, exploring the theme of Jewish immigration past and present and the journeys we go on to self-realise and actualise. Or Shabbat, meanwhile, has learned about the journey of the calendar year and the High Holidays towards *Hanukkah*, and the journey we each make of *teshuvah* and saying sorry.

This journey began long ago. On a recent Friday night during the service we learnt the Midrash (*Bereshit Rabah* 1:1) that God looks into the *Torah* and creates the world. The *Torah* and Jewish text is the blueprint for all creative work that we do. What is especially exciting about working here as Director of Community and Education is that the educational vision can be closely tied to community building - that through the work we do with Jewish text, we can create a sense of community and purpose rooted in our Jewish tradition and values.

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat echoes this calling towards purpose in her poem

### First Step:

It's not going to be easy.  
 All of your roadmaps are wrong.  
 That was another country:  
 those lakes have dried up  
 and new groundwater is welling  
 in places you won't expect.  
 You'll begin the journey in fog  
 destination unknown, impossible.  
 Don't be surprised by tears.  
 This right here is holy ground.  
 Take a deep breath and turn away  
 from cynicism and despair  
 listen to the voice from on high  
 and deep within, the one that says  
 I'm calling you to a place  
 which I will show you  
 and take the first small step  
 into the surprising sun.

May we each hear the call, find our part in the journey, and make our mark - discovering a place in community in which we are deeply engaged according to our own self-interest and excitement, a place where we can take that first step from the fog into the surprising sun.

**Yael Roberts**



# Westminster Quarterly

## Planning Your Diary

### Erev Purim

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March

### Purim

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March

### Seder Night

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April

### Pesach first day

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April

### Pesach last day

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April

### Erev Shavuot

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May

### Shavuot

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May

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

