

ALONIM

Newsletter of the Bristol & West
Progressive Jewish Congregation

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March/April 2009

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Purim & Pesach Issue



It has been a turbulent time since our last issue, and this is reflected in some of our articles. It is sometimes difficult for a community to stay united in the face of such strongly varying views and outlooks regarding the heated topic of Israel. I always feel that one way we can hear each other and stay connected is through the newsletter.

However, we also have a variety of other items, on subjects as diverse as Passover in Greece, Chanukah and the latest films. This issue is a strong reflection of the vibrancy of the Jewish community in Bristol, in our own synagogue and among the other Jewish groups we are lucky to have here. A big thank you to our excellent contributors this month.

Judy Goldsmith

Editor

ALONIM & E-LONIM copy date deadlines

Month	Copy date	Festivals covered, notices needed
April E-lonim	Sunday 22nd March	
May/June Alonim	Monday 20th April	Shavuot


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Production Team

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This version of the newsletter has been prepared for use on the synagogue website.

For reasons of personal security, all contact details, dates and times have been removed. Also all photographs of people, articles of a personal nature, references to children etc.

ALONIM Contributions & Editorial Policy.

The editorial policy is to encourage contributions from all Synagogue members and  ALONIM readers, concerning any aspects of communal and Jewish life, including advertisements of forthcoming events, cultural and communal reviews, information concerning synagogue activities, letters and feedback, and articles of Jewish cultural and religious interest.

Typically, contributions that fit on one side of A4 being approximately 500 words are preferred, and PC format submission by e-mail is particularly appreciated.

The editor will NOT print anonymous or unattributed articles. Contributors are asked to be aware of the need to protect the copyright of others. Opinions expressed in  ALONIM do not necessarily reflect those of the synagogue Council or the Editor.

Contributions and communications can be sent directly to the Editor at alonim@bwpjc.org. Copy date deadline for submissions is notified above. Submissions after this date cannot be guaranteed to appear in the next issue. If you are intending to send in unsolicited material please let the editor know ahead of the deadline.



The snow and ice in early February meant that Council had to postpone its first meeting since the AGM twice, and so at the time of writing we have not yet met. However I am delighted that we have two new members joining Council this year, Rebecca Lissak and Sheila Brill, and I am looking forward to us all working together. Council will continue to meet on the first Monday of the month, except for August when we have a break, so please contact Miranda or me at least a week before the monthly meeting if there is anything you would like added to the agenda.

There are a number of activities and social events coming up in the next couple of months such as the Purim party on Monday 9 March, and the popular Communal Seder on Thursday 9 April. Full details of these events are in this issue, including a booking form for the Seder, so do be sure to note the dates. If you would like to be involved in helping with any future events, please let me or anyone on Council know.

It was good to see so many people at our AGM in January and we were very pleased to have Paul Edlin from the Board of Deputies as our guest speaker. It would have been nice if more members of the other congregations we invited to the talk had been able to join us,

but as far as I am concerned, the important thing is that we continue to make such invitations and build links with all faith communities in the South West. I recently read the disturbing news that anti-Semitic incidents had risen significantly in the UK in January alone and like most people, believe this is a direct result of the Gaza conflict. I know that the conflict has been and continues to be difficult for a lot of us to come to terms with. With the recent elections in Israel showing just how divided the country is, my own fear is that peace in the region seems a very long way down the agenda.

My belief is that as a community here in Bristol and South West, we need to be vigilant about our security as always, and that the best way to do this is to continue to build on the excellent interfaith work that so many of our members are involved with. By meeting and working with other faith groups, whether through Salaam Shalom or at events such as the Civic Interfaith Celebration taking place at the Council House in Bristol on Wednesday 18 March, we are doing what we can to dispel prejudice and stereotyping.

Keren Durant
Chairperson



Squeaks of the Scribe's Quill

To avoid being squeezed between incoherence and chaos Jewish life involves the conscious input of order. Our techniques for managing this are twofold, prayer and ritual. The dimensions are mobilized so as to arrange our life style spiritually according to these two techniques. For example, the day is arranged with three set prayer times, *shaharit*, *minhah* and *ma'ariv*; morning, afternoon and evening prayers, historically corresponding to the times of sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem, destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 CE. Each Service of prayers is recited in a set order; *p'sukey d'zimra*, *bar'khu*, *shema'*, *'amidah*, *alenu*; songs of praise, formal call to prayer, declaration of the unity of God, standing prayer, final prayer. In this way an attempt is made to impose upon the inconsistencies and random events of human life a structure or framework for each and every day. Jewish life, then, takes time as its essential dimension for building the sacred into the fabric of our existence by standardising it within a set framework of prayers.

The words of the prayers are the other dimension; human language providing meaning and mediating between every individual's understanding of our common culture and the values codified in the texts from which the prayers are taken. Thus a flexible system is in place, permitting a

gradual evolution within this system so as to allow it to be fitting for every age and appropriate to each generation. The essential moral, ethical and spiritual teachings are expressed by the recital of the prayers so as to bring into our lives today the accumulated wisdom of centuries, whilst obsolete traditions are not lost and forgotten but can be transformed into socially meaningful and relevant symbols. Thus our year goes by with an order imposed by Festivals celebrated at their due season each with its relevant teachings with their meanings appropriate for bringing clarity and conscience into our modern life.

Modern life can sometimes seem overwhelming with its complexity and speed. The special times for contemplation once a week, every *shabbat*, bring healing to those disconcerted by the pace and fierceness of our existence, dismayed by the callousness and brutality of our entertainment, doubtful about the values portrayed by the media and upset by events and trends in our world or our society. With our religion we can reclaim control over our selves, our own values and our own standards of behaviour. We can stiffen our personal moral fibre and show by our own example how to choose a personal direction so as to infuse purpose and hope into human life.

Blind fate then no longer rules over us. We



have taken control! This is not necessarily easy, but it might be easier than allowing life to push us around. It may involve 'swimming against the tide' but that might prevent us being either swept out to sea or swept up upon an unwelcoming rocky shore. Putting order into our Universe through the deeds we do and the words we speak is typically human in its endeavour. To try and put reverence into our souls by governing what we consume we use ritual as well as prayer.

In April we celebrate our *seder*. This word itself means 'order', though when we use the word we mean 'meal'. Eating itself has become ritualized in Jewish life so that

everything we eat has a symbolic significance. During our *seder* we have many rituals, as we know, for example with a series of symbolic foods recalling slavery and actions, like leaning, demonstrating our access to freedom. The dramatic re-enactment of our *seder* from year to year keeps us free with its annual reaffirmation of our capacity to rest and celebrate. 'Our final declaration; 'Next year in Jerusalem' promotes our eternal hope for redemption, the Jewish quality of that heady mixture of inspiration, aspiration and anticipation which characterizes our approach to the messianic era.

Rabbi Francis Ronald Berry

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- LETTER-A Jew By Any Other Name

Dear Richard,

Well, you can call me a radical universalist anti-labellist non-denominationalist if you wish, but I do think we can get far too hung up on hair-splitting definitions of ourselves. I suspect that there are as many types of Judaism and ways to be Jewish as there are Jewish people. Why not just stick to being plain 'Jewish' - perhaps then we'd have more of a chance of remembering what we have in common rather than what divides us?

I realise that issues of difference and degree can be hugely important, but I do feel these can create barriers between us. If we are a people, and a collection of diverse congregations that make up that people, should we not be focussing on what unites us, and how we can begin to allow our boundaries to be less rigid? For example, what would happen if for one mad moment we were to imagine that our often self-imposed labels just weren't there?

I've no doubt that this will be deemed rather too simplistic and naive by some, but I don't mind that. They're right in a way. I'm just adding my bit of seasoning to the pot! I'm certain we will continue to argue the toss about this and many other matters. Long live the art of friendly debate!

As for parading the scroll in shul, well, I for one would feel very deprived not to be able to sing that wonderful kabbalistic song 'L'cha Adonai' preceding the reading of the Torah, or the rousing Psalm 29 just before the scroll is replaced in the ark. When the scroll passes among the congregation, we are reminded that it belongs to all the people, that it's a tangible presence in our lives, that although it's sacred it's also solid and accessible to all. So, sand or no sand, long may we continue to parade the scroll in our shul.

Miriam Patrick



On the evening of 22nd January, Lisa Saffron and I, together with Maria Kennedy, Lisa's partner, who is a Quaker, held a meeting at the Friends' Meeting House in Horfield.

The purpose of this meeting was not to "talk politics", but to bring a diverse group of people together in a quiet and peaceful space, in which, instead of focussing on conflict, we could create a positive vision of harmony and co-operation in the Middle East.

We are very conscious of the suffering endured by ALL the victims, whether Israeli or Palestinian, in recent tragic events, as well as in the longer term. We are also aware of the grave responsibilities and many moral dilemmas faced by ALL the military leaders and politicians in this troubled region.

We empathise with the pain and frustrations of the very many ordinary citizens, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere, who feel powerless, confused and frightened.

We feel that the way forward is not make judgements, or to apportion blame, or to give up hope, but rather to open our hearts in compassion, and our minds to understanding.

Though I draw inspiration from an eclectic range of teachers and philosophies, these always include notable Jewish sources such as Rabbi Lawrence Kushner and Rabbi Nachman.

I am very proud of my Jewish heritage, and feel that Torah points the way clearly and powerfully towards kindness, justice, hope and love. I believe that ALL peoples are created equal in God's image. I do not believe that war can ever lead to peace.

Our meeting was attended by 31 people (including us), the maximum number the room could hold. They included the young and not so young, Catholic, Quaker, Muslim,

Jew, English, French, Italian, American, Irish, Algerian.

In the centre of the space we placed a small table, and on it lit candles in the configuration of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, together with a picture of the Tree with explanations of the *Sefirot* (Spheres). On the table we also placed photographs of Israeli and Palestinian leaders, inviting them into our hearts.

Many people were interested in the Tree of Life, and asked about its origins and significance. I was proud to share what I knew.

After a helpful and passionate introduction from Lisa to set the scene, we began with a meditation. Drawing on the Jewish mystical tradition, I led a meditation on *Chesed* (Loving Kindness) Later, we chanted together in Hebrew and English: "*Bay Orcha nirey Or: In your light do we see light.*"

Then, drawing on the Quaker practice, we held a Meeting for Worship, led by Maria. In this "gathered silence", anyone who feels so moved, may speak. I found this quite an extraordinary and unique experience. The silence was amazingly powerful and eloquent, and each contribution came spontaneously and from a deep place within, to touch the hearts of all present.

After tea and cake we came back together to share our visions of the real possibility of peace, harmony and co-operation in the Middle East. This session was led by Lisa, and, at her suggestion, we spoke in the present tense, as if the things we envisioned were actually happening NOW.

Indeed, some, it transpired, are already a reality. For example the Jerusalem Peacemakers, Hope Springs, Creativity for Peace, all beacons of light and strong examples of what is possible, when men and women are prepared to open their hearts with trust.

Then, one by one, people called out what



Peace Action continued

they saw in their mind's eye: Israelis and Palestinians travelling freely around the country, Tourism flourishing in a country at peace, people making music together, eating together, sharing each others' festivals, children playing together, carefree and unafraid.

When we visualised Israeli and Palestinian leaders shaking hands and smiling, we were inspired by a woman from Northern Ireland, who referred to that country's troubled history, and the previously unimagined reconciliation that had come to fruition. As the meeting drew to its close with singing, several participants commented on the fact that they felt more hopeful and positive.

We are committed to continuing this work, and hope that some of you might like to join us.

On Tuesday 31st March from 6.30-9.30 at Horfield, we shall be holding a Peace Fair, with stalls displaying examples of peaceful initiatives in the Middle East.

Then on Sunday April 19th, also at Horfield, from 12-6pm, we shall be facilitating a workshop entitled: "Peaceful Solutions: Being Peace." This is a day of meditation and contemplation, Compassionate Listening and discussion, reflecting on the ways in which peace begins with inner peace.

Sheila Yeger



Sidra VAYYIGASH (Genesis 44:18 - 47:27)

Derek Brown led our discussion of this portion, which relates the final working-out of the Joseph saga.

The famine is tightening and Jacob's sons have already made two journeys to buy food from Egypt when Joseph (unrecognised by his brothers) has his personal gold cup hidden in Benjamin's sack of grain and then has Benjamin arrested for the "theft".

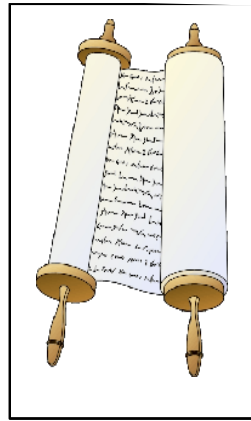
In a passage of heart-rending eloquence, Judah (who had previously taken over the leadership from his elder brother Reuben) pleads for Benjamin's release. Talmudic sages interpret the wording of this passage to show that Judah came to the task "ready for battle, conciliation or prayer", in other words, for whatever situation he might find. Surely the loss of Rachel's second son would prove fatal to their father, he pleads. Of course Judah does not realise that the Grand Viceroy who holds their fate in his hand is actually their own brother: so by keeping Benjamin captive the Viceroy (Joseph) would be killing his own father! At this point Joseph cannot keep up the pretence any longer, reveals himself, and in due course the family is re-united in Egypt.

Sidra VAYYIGASH contains a number of details of historical interest. Was Joseph the first example - the model even - for the 'Court Jew' enjoying protection of the Monarch in exchange for expertise such as finance, medicine, architecture or music? Does the Biblical reference to Joseph appropriating farm-land (for Pharaoh) in exchange for food, correspond to the historical record of the

Hyksos dynasty when freehold farmers became tenants of the state, during their rule from 1720 to 1580 BCE? Should the number 'five' be taken literally or was it a colloquialism of the time, rather like our 'half-a-dozen'?

There were also some touchingly human details. When Joseph suggests to his brothers that they "promote" themselves from shepherds to cattle-herders when speaking to

Pharaoh, they disdain his advice and are bluntly honest - "We are shepherds". It does them no harm and Pharaoh even offers them employment (subject to qualifications, of course). Similarly, Jacob is courteously humble before Pharaoh, saying that his life had nothing to boast of (but he was proud of his ancestors).



Derek sent us away provided with several pages of quotations ranging from Mishnah to the Diary of Anne Frank, throwing further light on details of the text and providing food for thought. When all the farm land became state-owned, Joseph collected (for Pharaoh) one fifth of the crop as rent. I later read the commentary of Rabbi Daniel Levy in the Jewish Chronicle where he points out that while one-tenth of income should be the 'standard' level of charity, the (reasonably) wealthy should give a fifth or more, quoting Maimonides (Gifts to the Poor 7:5) and also the learned Chafetz Chaim (1838 - 1933).

Thank you Derek for a wide-ranging discussion.

David Gilbert



There's doubtless a range of reasonable views about Israel's recently military action in Gaza, both for and against. But with few exceptions, the British media's anti-Israel hate-fest over the last two months has been an incitive mix of half truths, factual omissions, exaggerations, and falsehoods. As a result, there's an ugly mood around when it comes to Israel and the Jews.

So, here's some alternative reporting of the Gaza war:

Danny Finkelstein ('Israel Acts Because the World Won't Defend It'):

www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/daniel_finkelstein/article5461544.ece

Bradley Burston ('If Mexico Shelled Texas like Hamas Shells Israel...'):

www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=1052866

Martin Sherman ('Proportionality & Hypocrisy'):

www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3656420,00.html

Shiraz Maher ('Britain's Muslims Should Condemn Hamas, not Israel'):

www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/4207857/Britains-Muslims-should-condemn-Hamas-not-Israel.html

Here are some interesting video clips:

Prof Alan Dershowitz on why Jews should stop being embarrassed by Israel:

www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1054831.html

Col Richard Kemp on Israel's great efforts to avoid civilian casualties:

www.liveleak.com/view?i=926_1232340064

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' speech to the anti-Hamas/pro-peace rally on 11 January:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWwygvGzMp8&NR=1

And here are some reflections on the situation post-Gaza conflict:

David Horowitz ('Until the Next Time'):

www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1232643732053&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull

Norm of Normblog ('One-eyed in Gaza'):

<http://normblog.typepad.com/normblog/2009/02/oneeyed-in-gaza.html>

Prof Ephraim Karsh ('What's Behind Western Condemnation of Israel's War Against Hamas?'):

www.jcpa.org/ICPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=1&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=283&PID=1845&IID=2824&TTL=What%27s_Behind_Western_Condemnation_of_Israel%27s_War_Against_Hamas?

Prof Gerald Steinberg ('The NGO Front in the Gaza War'):

www.ngo-monitor.org/article/the_ngo_front_in_the_gaza_war



-Chanukah Report

It was Sunday, 21st of December. The shortest day of the year, the darkest day of the year! Or was it?

We had plenty of light! The light that shines when people gather. The light of delight when people celebrate. The light of seeing a child smile. The light of the first candle of Hanukkah. Only this time, it wasn't a single, small candle of Hanukkah lighting the Synagogue. It was a strong, bright light emanating from the many Hanukkiyot, set on a table in the centre of our Synagogue, with us all gathered around to watch as the flames flickered and danced.

Let me digress a little... The event, our annual Hanukkah party, started with the adults sitting in a big circle in the sanctuary, playing a Hanukkah Picture Bingo devised specially by Hanan Moller, followed by the learning of a nice Ladino song called "Ocho Candelikas" (8 little candles), taught by Valerie Emmott. The children meanwhile, were busy upstairs: colouring wooden dreidles and playing with them as well as icing cookies in the shapes of Hanukkah symbols such as Sevivon (dreidle), Hanukkiyah (Hanukkah Menorah) and plenty of Magen David's (Stars of David), while supervised by the very attentive post bnei-mitzvot; Deniz Gursul and Daniel Squire. It was nice to see the parents of the little ones enjoying the opportunity to chat with other parents, some of them old friends and others new acquaintances.

We then all gathered downstairs in the sanctuary for the lighting of the first candle of Hanukkah. Rabbi Ron Berry led the blessings while the children waited impatiently around the table to light their own Hanukkiyot, their parents and other members of the community encircling them with the warmth of the Community event.

After the lighting of the Hanukkiyot we all sat down, children taking first row on the carpet, each "older" child with a "little" one on their knees or by their side. All eyes on Robert Hurst who very successfully led us in singing some Hanukkah songs in English, Hebrew and Yiddish! Naomi Webber sang us a Solo and Daniel Laruelle played the beautiful tune of "Für Elise" on the keyboard.

The Hanukkah party culminated with the "noshing" of some good food including latkes and Sufganiyot (Jelly filled doughnuts), the staple food of Hanukkah – reminder of the miracle of the oil.

All in all – a heart warming party on a cold December day. An evening to remember. Thanks to Hanan Moller for organizing the event. Well done!

Iris Segall



Anne Frank was born five months before me. I was born three weeks after the Wall Street Crash. I've always felt these facts to be very significant. I'm challenged by the meaning of her death, and by the power of a depression which ultimately involved other kinds of death. Indeed it led to rise of Nazism—and I fear now that the current depression will lead to ruthless extremism—including anti-Semitism.

Anne Frank has become an 'icon'. Inevitably there have been romanticised and heroic versions of her life. But her own version is more honest. She was, as her diary shows, a girl of exceptional sensitivity and intelligence, unafraid to express herself, often in thoughtless and hurtful ways, as she reacted to the constrictions imposed on her. Like any adolescent she could be a pain in the neck. As a writer, however, she was devoted to her craft, to her beloved 'Kitty', and to the rituals of her religion. When I watched the BBC series—itsself an example of honest reporting—I was amazed to be reminded that endured their ordeal for two whole years. At that time, living here in England, very troubled by the war, I still had sunshine, and space to develop and begin to think about these matters.

I now feel a commitment, responsibility indeed, to pursue the values that were important to her. I'm a writer too: I have my own 'inner diary'. When I consider her legacy, I know she would be, as I am, horrified by what is happening in Gaza, and she would not be afraid to speak out in protest. And to those who try to use the holocaust to justify Israel's behaviour, she, who never knew the word 'holocaust', but experienced persecution as an individual in

acute pain, would consider it an act of obscene cynicism.

It's women, girls growing up to become mature mothers, who will not be silenced. Mature politicians too. I see too many powerful, bullying fathers over there: the most bullying preserved comatose in aspic. Meanwhile the whole democratic process of government too has ground to a halt. Why? Because a lively young woman, Zipi Livni, appeared on the scene, and Lieberman appeared to ensure the men retained power. Stalemate. Meanwhile the suffering in Gaza goes on, with little prospect of relief.

Where are the 'good fathers'? What is our view of God the father? Well, I was immensely impressed by Otto Frank, as he appeared in the film: a thoughtful, warmly discriminating man, giving attention to his needy daughters but also mindful of the needs of the whole group—of his unhappy wife, of the importance of avoiding friction and maintaining mutual respect, including the avoidance of trivialising sex. His was a steadying influence, though some problems remained for him later when it came to editing the diary which he valued so highly. It seems right that he, of all of them, survived Auschwitz, and became the guardian of the written word, to bear witness to Jewish determination not to disappear off the face of the earth. He died in 1980. Looking now in 2009 at what is happening in Israel, wouldn't he be wondering "Were my family and I sacrificed so this could happen?" The ultimate betrayal...

Alix Pirani



- Passover & Easter in Greece



Outside the synagogue

Some years ago, Judy and I went with another married couple to Symi, a Dodecanese island near Rhodes in the Aegean Sea, just a few miles off Rhodes. We went at the end of April so as to coincide with Greek Easter. It was such a wonderful experience

that we decided that

we should repeat it. Easter in the Greek Orthodox calendar is somewhat later than the rest of the world and more closely follows the Jewish calendar. Last year 1st night Passover was on 19th April and Greek Easter Day was on 27th April so a two week holiday could combine the two.

Judy made enquiries before Christmas and ascertained that there was a synagogue in Rhodes. Carmen Cohen, the director, was helpful and said that we would indeed be most welcome but, as there were fewer than 40 members on the whole of the island, it was not certain as to where 1st night would be celebrated - if at all. In February we received a follow-up email to say that there was sufficient take up for the Seder to be held in the synagogue. So our trip was on! It fell upon me to devise an itinerary and to include a third island, Leros, seemed appropriate. Almost immediately, the Saga brochure arrived and, quite by chance, the Islands of the Aegean tour, not only featured the three islands but it was scheduled for this time. It seemed like fate had taken a hand and we booked. However, because of a fall, Judy's mother was unable to come with us.

Normally, it is impossible to obtain direct flights to Rhodes before 1st May but, as the Rhodes



Hilton was the choice of a very large Seder with visitors from all over Europe and beyond expected to attend, GB Airways (Easyjet) started them two weeks earlier. Not that I am a great authority but there seem to be as many ways of conducting a Seder service as opinions of environmental health officers. However, I was rather unprepared for Rhodes' version. It started off strangely: the ticket said 6.30pm so, when we arrived at 6.15, to see about 20 people already was rather surprising - not the punctuality associated for a Jewish function! Two long tables set for 42 occupied the length of the room. Some people had driven two hours across the island. Our numbers were bolstered by a family from USA and four generations of one family made it an impressive evening.

The Haggada not only included the two expected languages, Hebrew and Greek but also, surprisingly, Spanish - making it less difficult to follow - but it became apparent that some bits were being omitted. No matter, the salient points were there. Although we were not aware of it at the time, there was so much food to come that extra time was needed

to get through it all. Of course, hard-boiled eggs were expected but, instead of being painted red as in the Greek Orthodox way, they had been boiled with red onion skins to give them that colour. The meal itself was wonderful! So Greek! Plenty of meat and fish with a vegetarian option available. A welcome change from chicken! The wine, too, was a very good local village red. The grace after meals was considerably reduced and poor Elijah never got his cup! We





- Passover & Easter in Greece



The museum is open every day.

had a most delightful evening. The Kahal Shalom synagogue,

located in the La Juderia part of the old town, is Sephardic and was built about 430 years ago and is the last remaining although there were six at one time in Rhodes. There were about 1700 Jews on the island at the beginning of the second world war but all but 100 or so were deported by the Italians. Numbers have dwindled considerably since but seem to have stabilised and could well increase now. The synagogue is exceedingly beautiful and holds services during the summer months.

After having spent three days on Leros, we arrived on Symi on the Wednesday before Easter. Having made numerous friends (restaurateurs of course!) on our previous visit, they had to be looked up. On Good Friday, being the start of the Easter celebrations, we encamped ourselves at the Trata restaurant at the bottom of the Kali Strata, a route up 365 steps to the Chorio, the upper town. This was so that we had a good position to view the procession of the ceremonial bier as it wended its way to the main church where it stopped by the church door for those to pass under it before entering. It really seemed as if the whole town watched the parades (there was another one taking a different route from the other side of town). The army was also in attendance. Their at-ease stance was most strange with heads cocked to one side.

Saturday was very good day: after a fantastic dinner at Mythos on the quay, we made our way to the church for the



midnight (11.00pm) service. A cantor sings much of it as a drone but, nevertheless, it is impressive. It is almost obligatory to



purchase an Easter candle. At about 11.45 this is lit by passing the flame from candle to candle and then go outside and await the main bell to toll midnight. This is greeted by joyous bells, shouts of 'Christ is Risen' and the letting off of hundreds of fireworks. It may seem dangerous but I have not known of any injuries - unlike our experience on November 5th. The last challenge was to get our candle home without the flame being blown out!

Easter Day itself is the time when the mayor invites everyone - visitors included - to accept his free lunch. It really is a barbecue. About a dozen lambs are slowly roasted on spits from 8.00am. The only disappointment was the weather as there was drizzle. This may have put a damper on things but the local restaurants were pleased as it meant extra business for them. In the evening we returned to the main square to enjoy a free concert, the ceremonial burning of Judas (rather like a Guy) and an impressive firework display with dynamite explosions.

We rejoined our Saga group the following day by taking the morning catamaran to Rhodes.

Robin Belcher

As an addendum to what I have already written, please note the relative Dates this year:

Passover 8th April (as I am sure you know)

Easter Day 12th April

Greek Easter Day 19th April



- Poem for Passover

COMING OUT

In the narrow place
We hide our souls
From the beast-headed
Gods of prey
Who scan the rat run
Where we scurry
Blindly
To our toil.

We pig down
The leaden leaven
Grey as stone
In the gut
Like blood
Like ashes
On our tongues
The darkness
Like soot in our eyes
Like a burden on our backs
Like boils on our skin
Poison and pestilence
In hearts set
Hard as a pharaoh's
Cry --
Oh God
Let me go!

We hear your voice
From the mountain
Like whispers

Like warnings --
Raise your eyes
From the dust
To the sky
And live!

But it seems so far
To feel
So high
Like the lights
Singing in the heavens
Calling--
Come to me!

One foot
Then the other
Stumbles
Staggers from our chains
As we shudder
Newborn
Blinking into daylight
Dazed
By the dazzling desert
The open plains
The gaping heart.

And your arms are
Spread wide to greet us
Always
Just ahead.

Miriam Patrick



Carol and I have recently invested in Cineworld monthly passes. We only have to see two films in a month to be in profit. We have become cinema junkies, especially as it is only ten minutes drive away. Oddly, our first three films related to the Holocaust in various, completely differing ways. They were; 'The Reader', 'Defiance' and 'Valkyrie'.

The Reader

This is a film version of the book by Bernard Schlink. The book was my best read for the year it appeared in English. It had left a lasting impression on me, so I had mixed feelings about seeing the film. Would it manage to capture the depth and ambiguities of the book? I was not disappointed. It captured the atmosphere of the book despite some necessary changes in order to adapt it for the screen.

The basic story line is of a romance between a young boy of 15 years and a woman of 36. The other way round this would be thought completely inappropriate and yet it is relevant to the story line that he was so young when he met her. The film dwells rather longer and in more detail on the sex between them than the book. Kate Winslet's acting was superb. In all but the sex scenes one could completely forget that she was both too young and too attractive to be Hanna. One begins to suspect that the relationship will break up as the boy matures and starts to notice other girls, however before this can happen the woman disappears.

The next time he sees her he is a young law student and she is in court. From this point on the story ceases to be a coming of age story and instead transforms into an exploration of

the complexities of relationships and an examination of one woman's motives in behaving as she did. Our heroine is given a small excuse, a let out clause for the things she did, but we finish the story wondering whether she has accepted this for herself.

Defiance

This is based on a true story of a group of Polish Jews who survived the war and escaped Nazi extermination by hiding in the forest. The film centres on a particular family of brothers, one of whom goes off to join the Russian partisans and another of whom becomes the leader of this random group of survivors – mostly ill equipped for forest living in the extremes of Polish winter.

I was powerfully uplifted by this story and amazed that I could be so affirmed as a Jew by this positive image of Jews surviving the holocaust with guts, courage and, yes, defiance.

Valkyrie

Again based on a true story, this time of an attempt from within Nazi ranks to overthrow Hitler by some German patriots. They saw his actions as anti-German in nature and against the interests of the German people. I found myself sitting on the edge of my seat, eager to know how close to success they got.

Judy Goldsmith



Holocaust Memorial Day

HMD – 27th January – is the international day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust and of other genocides. I was privileged to attend both Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations in Bristol this year.

The short act of remembrance at the Victoria Rooms hosted annually by the University of Bristol Multifaith Chaplaincy was moving and attended by students, staff and community members. In the evening, the City Council sponsored a most meaningful evening of remembrance of 'Hitler's other victims' -- deaf people, black people, gay and lesbian people, disabled people, and children of survivors (second generation). It was an evening of such depth and insight; I only wish many more members of our Jewish communities in Bristol could have been present.

Meditation and Reflection on Peace in the Middle East

I attended this joint Jewish-Quaker event held at the Horfield Meeting House for an evening of meditation, singing, prayer and reflections on participants' various visions of what peace and justice in Israel and Palestine could be.

I came with an open mind, not sure what to expect, and invited a Muslim colleague along from Radio Salaam Shalom. We experienced a respectful, uplifting evening in which we were led

in a Jewish meditation and chant by Sheila Yeger, a Quaker silence, and a vision exercise by Lisa Saffon, all of which came as a constructive tonic to the then-constant barrage of images of destruction and loss of innocent lives.

Radio Salaam Shalom's 2nd Anniversary

In February this year, Radio Salaam Shalom (RSS) celebrated its second birthday. It was humbling to hear from our Chairman, Peter Brill, at the social evening marking this anniversary, just how far this little 'media project' has come in that time.

What perhaps few people not involved in RSS realise is the impact on listeners and non-listeners alike simply that this 'project' exists and is taking forward the principles of Jews and Muslims talking together, in all sorts of ways on all sorts of topics. Listeners around the world send in both content for broadcast and enthusiastic feedback.

The website has recently been re-launched -- do take a look and a listen to recent podcast programmes on www.salaamshalom.org.uk

Valerie Emmott

Interfaith Co-ordinator

If you have any questions, wish to get involved, or to discuss anything to do with interfaith matters, please contact me; Valerie Emmott, vremmott@aol.com or tel: 0117 909 5116.



– Report on New Members' Reception

The New Members' Reception was held on Sunday 21 December from 3-4 pm, before the Chanukah party. It provided an opportunity for Members and Friends of the Synagogue who have joined in the last couple of years to meet the Synagogue Council and get to know other members of the congregation. We each introduced ourselves – an excellent idea, as we were able to find out more about everyone. It was then the turn of the Council members, who gave us a brief outline of their individual responsibilities. This was followed by a tour of the synagogue and a visit to the wonderful Jo Shapiro library. We were also treated to tea and cakes and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Linda Hurst, Sheila Wilson and Ruth Squire for their hard work in organising the event.

It was wonderful to see how many families were there with their young children and even babies – they represent the future of Judaism and will hopefully ensure that it continues to survive and thrive. I was also delighted to note that, no matter how people had found out about the B&WJPC, the reason why they came back was always the same – the warm welcome and friendliness they had encountered. It is great for people who are new to the area and feel isolated to find a place where they feel they 'belong'. For my part, my roots and culture were something that I had taken for granted when growing up, then brushed aside and eventually forgotten. Thanks to Rabbi Berry and everyone for helping me to rediscover them.

Viviane Bowell