



ALONIM

Newsletter of the Bristol & West
Progressive Jewish Congregation

Iyyar/Sivan/Tammuz 5767
May/June 2007

עלונים



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Dear All,

We have at least two challenging articles in this issue and we would welcome your response. Perhaps you can spend part of your summer holiday compiling an article for Alonim. Thank you to those members who supplied the copies of Alonim for the Jewish Community Media competition– keep your fingers crossed. Enjoy the summer.

The Editors

ALONIM & E-LONIM copy date deadlines

Month	Copy date	Festivals covered, notices needed
June E-lonim	Thursday 24th May	
July/August Alonim	Monday 18th June	
August E-lonim	Friday 27th July	
Sept/Oct Alonim	Wednesday 15th August	High Holy Days/ Sukkot

Editorial and Production Team *Judith Lazarus, Malcolm Rawles and Alix Pirani*

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 are preferred, and PC format submission is particularly appreciated by e-mail.

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 or by post to 4 Villiers Rd, Bristol, BS5 0JQ. The 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 Festival of Passover has just ended, and over the last few days I have been thinking about what the festival means to me. As I imagine is true for many of us, I believe that its most important message is one of freedom. I was struck again during the Seder service by the significance of the telling of the story, and thus how the story remains alive and relevant for us individually. This year, of course, also sees the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery and there have been many articles written and television programmes made to mark the event. Of those I saw, two struck me in particular. One was a programme remembering the American series "Roots" – Alex Haley's vivid story tracing his ancestors. What was really striking about the documentary was that it showed the impact this series had on thousands of Afro-Caribbeans living in America and in England. This was their story and for many, the first time they had heard it; it gave them a history and an understanding of their past they just had not had before. Like the telling of the Haggadah to each generation, an awareness of the history of that slave trade is now being passed to new generations, so we all may fully value the meaning of freedom. The second programme was Rageh Omar's powerful and devastating investigation into children sold into slavery today, and in particular the negotiations between a Ghanaian family selling their 13 year old son into bondage to a fisherman for a sum equivalent to two months' salary. It was clear they felt they had no choice as their circumstances were so dire, but they hoped that all would work out well. Five thousand

years after Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, similar transactions are occurring in many parts of the world today. This consciousness and appreciation of the freedom we are fortunate to now possess must not be restricted to the Passover week, but remembered throughout the year, so that we can speak out against the many ongoing forms of modern slavery and people-trafficking in the world today.

Turning to more practical matters, for the last two council meetings, maintenance of the building and plans for new windows have been high on the agenda. Good news is that my husband John has offered to manage routine maintenance of the building in between his travels overseas. We should now be better able to keep on top of all the small jobs that need doing from time to time, and if and when bigger jobs are needed, will hopefully be able to call on willing volunteers. Plans for the new windows are still ongoing and we hope to hear positive news in the next few weeks for a new window in the Kiddush area and a modified window over the bimah. We are still considering the best security and ventilation options with expert advice and will report as soon as we have firmer options.

On another note, David Dwek is about to start his last term as Head of Cheder. He has done a fantastic job and will be handing over in the summer to Iris Segall who has kindly volunteered to take over for a year from September, and happily with David staying involved. Cheder relies completely on willing volunteers to teach our children, help with

Continued at the bottom of page 4



Chair's article continued from page 3

events and organise outings. It is one of the many areas in the community where volunteers are both needed and greatly valued. If you feel you have some time or skills to contribute in any area of community activity, please feel free to contact me or any member of Council.

Finally please see the advert p. 29. Having heard David Newman speak at the university, I am delighted that he is coming to give a talk at our synagogue on Wednesday 30 May and thoroughly recommend that you come along for a fascinating evening. I am also inviting

members of Bristol Hebrew Congregation so this will be an opportunity to meet old and new friends as well.

Keren Durant
Chair of Synagogue Council

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Squeaks of the Scribe's Quill

It is during the summer that we recover from the efforts we have made over the winter to work, learn and grow. Our summer is a 'recovery phase', during which we can plan our next year, with the benefit that we can learn from what had succeeded, as well as what has failed to go well, over the past year. The pause to take stock is essential if we are to take advantage of our mistakes to learn from them. Every mistake can be redeemed to some extent, if we can examine how we made it and work out how to avoid returning to that type of error ever again.

The benefits of an annual review are manifold and the outcomes we really want can be better planned if we utilise feedback.

Of course feedback can be challenging. There is an art to expressing the negative in terms of the positive; people never have problems, only needs! The glass is not half empty, but half full! There is no need to destroy the fitful self-confidence of the timid, only to rein in over-ambition when it exceeds one's ability, always remembering that challenge is stimulating to personal growth and it is boring to carry on doing what we are used to doing.

Recently our Chair, the past Chairman, Kathy and I had an appraisal meeting when we discussed various aspects of our Congregation, reviewed the past year or so and considered our future. We thought about the rabbinic/congregational balance, the recent additions to our membership, developments in Bristol Jewry and the setting of our congregation in its movement. It is probably a good thing for

there to be some debate as to how much change we want to happen and its possible direction in the future.

Complacency is easy but as we are such a diverse community there are bound to be differing views and it is only by listening to each other that we can find out what other people actually think.

Plenty of people talk to me in private, but I don't think anyone should feel afraid to voice their opinions in public - openly and without the need to feel they have to hide their opinion. We ought to be able to respect those with whom we disagree.

I think we have been avoiding a frank discussion for far too long about the association of our Congregation with the movement; Liberal Judaism. Our synagogue Council did say that it would wait until my colleague Rabbi Danny Rich had become established as the Executive Director of the movement. Then we said we would wait until he visited us and we heard his views regarding the direction the movement was going, which we have done.

We have such a range of backgrounds amongst our members, which I consider a strength of our Congregation, that I think we have a natural tendency towards independence. I do not think that there is any need for us to feel

we ought be restricted to any one particular style, for example. We have developed our own particular *minhag*, customs of our Congregation, over time and with guidance from personalities of our past. We have a variety of excellent lay leaders which can give us the confidence to face our future in security. There are many members, perhaps a



Rabbi's article ctd.

majority, who are indifferent to the movement and the involvement of our Congregation in it.

Most people, I sense, feel detached on the issue; quite frankly not bothered one way or the other. Some parent members send their children to Liberal Judaism summer camps and tours; others send theirs to the summer camps and tours organised by the movement for Reform Judaism. Perhaps this choice would still be possible if our Congregation was independent.

The competition between the two movements seems unnecessary to me and I would prefer a loose federation of progressive synagogues, without the doubling of the costs involved in running two organisations which virtually replicate each other. Perhaps such competition is appropriate, for people to have

a choice in the London area, where there is a greater concentration of synagogues, but for us, how relevant is it to have to choose between movements? There are at least two independent synagogues in London; Belsize Square, which used to belong to the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues and left it some years ago, and Westminster Synagogue. Both rabbis of these synagogues are the Conveners of the rabbinic courts of the two progressive movements, perhaps signifying that spiritually at least and even perhaps on an intellectual level, independence is recognised as a quality of sincerity and integrity.

Please tell me what your opinion is.

Rabbi Francis Ronald Berry

The Rabbi's Summer Dates

Some newer members of our Congregation might not know that I have an arrangement whereby I am available full-time for two thirds of the year, i.e. from September to April. Between May and August I am away, generally at the Jewish Study Centre and Multi- Faith Retreat House Kathy and I have developed in Brittany. However we remain in touch and available for consultation as usual **by telephone [0033 296 21 65 51] or email berryuk@freeuk.com** for most of that time and can return if needed in an emergency.

This year we are having most of June as our holiday month and will be out of touch during that month.

Our actual dates back in Bristol are as follows:

22nd - 27th May; 26th June - 1st July; 27th - 30th July.

Rabbi Francis Ronald Berry



Over the years I've looked around the Judaism 'market' in some depth and having seen what else is on offer I feel entirely comfortable in the 'progressive' movement (but, oh how I hate the 'p' word). I think non-Orthodoxy is as legitimate as any other strand of Judaism, all of which have developed with time and travelled a long way from their roots, although the Orthodox seem profoundly incapable of understanding this.

My response to anyone who says that the only 'authentic' Judaism is Orthodoxy is to suggest that the Orthodox leave their comfortable homes, form themselves into tribes and go walk about in the desert. This usually gets a frosty, not to say an uncomprehending, reply.

But one thing bothers me. It is that Liberal or Reform Judaism cannot function without Orthodoxy. Put another way, if Orthodoxy ceased to exist then a generation later so too would non-Orthodox Judaism.

Let me explain. Sharon and I have now belonged to three non-orthodox shuls. I have

always been struck by the fact that the leading lay members who can *leyn*, find their way around a scroll and generally know enough to keep the rabbi on his toes were products not of the Reform or Liberal movements but of Orthodoxy. Progressive shuls do not produce Jews who can *leyn* (other than their *barmitzvah* portion) or who are well versed in the *torah* in the same way as Orthodox shuls.

This uncomfortable fact was undoubtedly true of the two Reform shuls we belonged to in London. I don't know the backgrounds of those I consider the 'leading' lay members of BWPC but I strongly suspect that they too are products of Orthodoxy.

This seems to me to be a fundamental defect of the 'progressive' or non-Orthodox movements. I can understand why the situation is what it is but I have not the slightest idea of what to suggest to remedy it.

Richard Buckley

The editors would welcome comments on the piece above. Do you think we lack skilled people to leyn from the scroll? Are our younger members less skilled in Hebrew than the older generation? Do you believe we are dependent on the influx of people from Orthodox communities to enable us to do all the 'properly' Jewish things? Please, write in with your views.

Bernard Barnett has a copy of the Board of Deputies response to the government

Commission for Integration and Cohesion Consultation.

If you would like to be e-mailed a copy, please contact Bernard on 0117 942 4837 or bernardandberyl@tiscali.co.uk



Neville Lewisohn, a member of our community for 40 years, died at his home in Bristol on Tuesday 13 March 2007, aged 84.

Neville was a dear friend, and an active and talented member of the congregation. My wife and I met the Lewisohns, Neville and Patricia, for the first time in 1968 at a Succoth Party at the Bogods here in Bristol. The Lewisohns had recently come to Bath from Surrey, taking a house in Limpley Stoke. We had also just moved house and so there was common ground for a first conversation.

Everybody did their best to make the Lewisohns comfortable in their new community here. Actually, it was early days for all of us. The community was only about seven years old. We did not have a synagogue of our own and services were held at the Friends Meeting House in Hampton Road, Redland. The ULPS (now LJ) occasionally sent us a Rabbi but had doubts about our future. Yet, we pressed on, and Neville was with us virtually for the whole of those formative years when we started the synagogue in Bannerman Road (1975) and twice extended it (1988 and 2003). Neville was our Chairman in 1981-87 and was one of the builders of the synagogue, one of the builders of our mishkan.

Neville was perhaps not well known among the younger members of the congregation. He had not been able to attend all that often in recent years, no doubt due to his living rather far out of Bristol and his enormous range of interests including a Vice-Chaimanship of

ULPS (LJ) in 1990-96. So, all those who knew him were pleased when he eventually decided to move to Bristol. Patricia had died in in 2002 and in Bristol he was nearer to his daughter Gillian and to long-time Jewish friends.

A profile of Neville's life appeared in the "Getting to Know You" series in Alonim a year ago (May/June 06) and readers will have seen details of his many and varied talents. His qualities as a determined and forthright Chairman were obvious to all of us who had to deal with him in synagogue matters. He no doubt brought these qualities from a distinguished career as a civil servant at the Admiralty, his last position there having been that of an Under Secretary.

But what was less well known, and was brought out so well in that profile, was Neville the actor and producer, although here his talents were exercised not so much in the synagogue as in the drama societies to which he belonged. Equally, the profile told us much of Neville the musician and composer. I would like to add to this by speaking of his warmth and his sense of humour, and of his and Pat's hospitality, especially their Garden Parties in Limpley Stoke as well as in their later home in Trowbridge. Beryl and I knew both of them well and, in common with their many friends, shall miss them.

Neville and Pat had come from an Orthodox background and they wanted their three daughters to be educated in their faith. But their time at an Orthodox (Federation) Synagogue was a disappointment and they



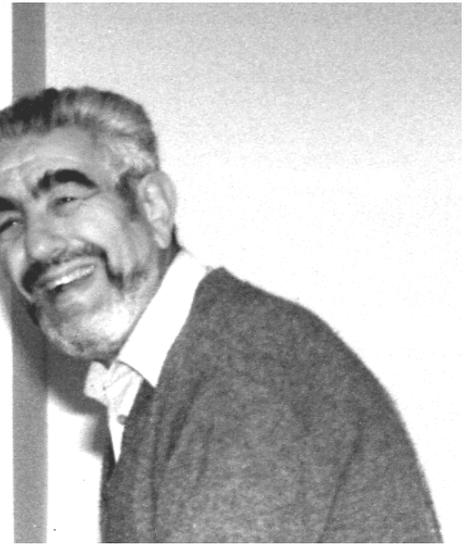
Neville Lewisohn-Obituary

had joined South London Liberal Synagogue where they were much happier. I think the girls were more or less grown up when the family came to Bath. Sadly, the eldest daughter, Lesley, died in 1979 in a motor accident. You will have seen the illuminated panel of a Tree of Life in the synagogue. This was put up by Neville and Pat in Lesley's memory.

Neville and I had some but not many discussions about religion. He was not a philosopher. He was very much a man of action, not only as administrator but also physically. I remember him well for his hard work when in 1974 he was one of a party of members who laid the concrete floor in the potato warehouse in Bannerman Road that was to become our synagogue. Neville's hands-on approach comes out when he said (quoting the above profile)

"Prayers and Psalms don't mean anything to me. The fact that there is a place that is alive and kicking and which Jews, to whom they mean something, can come, that is important."

So his approach was somewhat prosaic. But he was a man of mitzvah nonetheless. He was a builder, a builder of the community, a builder of the *mishkan*. Is this not as great a *mitzvah* as any? He was an example.



Neville, helping to build a staircase in the synagogue.

Over the last year or so Neville had increasing health problems which he met with his usual determination and good humour, always retaining his gratitude for what he called "a wonderful life." He is survived by his daughters Gillian and Judith, two granddaughters, and his brother Bruce.

May he be remembered for good.

Joachim Schapiro



My time on Kibbutz Lotan seems like a distant memory and since then I have begun the final part of the programme. The two parts were separated by a fascinating trip to Poland, which I was dreading after our idyllic experiences on Kibbutz.

The most interesting part of the trip was a visit to the fledgling Progressive community in Warsaw, Beit Warsawa, to which we went for a Friday night service and meal. I felt strangely at home there, as it was in many ways similar to Bannerman road in its practices, membership and members.

As thousands of Jews across Poland are suddenly discovering their Jewish identity they are choosing to be Reform as they find the community more inviting, accommodating and forward looking. There are currently 12 people in the conversion class, a handful of people post Bar/batmitzah age becoming Barmitzvah, and the whole community hold a weekly Friday night meal together.

The community is really held together by their American Rabbi, Burt, who learnt Polish and moved to Warsaw specifically because he felt he had a duty to attempt to revive Jewish life in Poland.

I recommend anybody who is planning a visit to get in touch with Beit Warsawa, as it leaves you with a sense that everything that emanates from the country doesn't have to be negative and harrowing.

The final period of the year comprises options in which people can choose between working for the Israeli Ambulance service, for Ha-aretz or the Jerusalem Post, studying at the Conservative Yeshiva, or embarking on a

900 km walk of the entire country.

In a disillusioned moment, I chose the latter and last week set off with 9 other people from the Taba border crossing with Egypt to begin 'Shvil Yisrael', the Israel Trail. I must admit that being a reasonably unfit group of British teenagers we were entitled to certain luxuries that those who decide to do the trip after the army don't get. When we reach camp at night a big jolly Israeli named Danny is there with our rucksacks, tents, bedding, all the cooking equipment we could desire and practically a small supermarket. The luxury is wonderful and doesn't detract from the 10 hour daily walk. The desert is truly beautiful, and the significance of beginning this journey from Egypt the day after Passover is powerful. The terrain is much more diverse and interesting than I had ever imagined. The southern Arava is one of the driest deserts in the world and I'm looking forward to the stark contrast the green of the Northern part of the country will provide.

The route of the trip takes us up through the Ramon Crater, along the coast around Ashkelon, skirting Jerusalem through the Judean Hills, though Tel Aviv and the more densely populated areas, up through the Galilee and over Mount Hermon. The tour will finish on the Lebanese border on June 7th.

For such a small country, the geographical differences are startling; both in terms of weather and terrain. These two months really give me the opportunity to know the land and explore this phenomenon.

I have thought about home a lot recently, and



- Our Correspondent in Israel

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Our Correspondent in Israel ctd.

of our community. Spending Passover away from home and the *Seder* night with modern Orthodox Jews, despite the fact they were family, was uncomfortable and alien to me. To be sitting around a table where people discuss in intricate details of *Halachah* rather than the modern social and modern implications of the essence of the story on our lives today seems to me somehow to have missed the point of the festival. The fundamental question

seemed to be 'how?' rather than 'why?', and for this reason I felt disconnected from the celebration from which I truly benefit on all other years.

I hope this update finds everybody well. I look forward to seeing you all on my return at the end of June.

Rachel Romain



A brief History of Klezmer Music—part 3

In the late 19th century many Jews grabbed the opportunity to leave Eastern Europe and Russia. The prospect of escaping persecution and poverty in the USA and Britain was attractive.

Also later, the lucky ones escaped from Nazi and Stalinist inhumanities. Once again, many to the United States. Among these immigrants were many Klezmer legends - Harry Kandel (1885-1943), Abe Schwartz (1881-1963), Joseph Frankel (1885-1953), Dave Tarras (1897-1989), Naftule Brandwein (1884-1963), Shloimke Beckerman (1883-1974),) And subsequent descendants of these immigrants (Max Epstein (1912-), Pete Sokolow, Michael Alpert,) this helped the tradition of Klezmer survive and even flourish as dance and entertainment music. The music underwent such deep transformation that many experts believe it is difficult to know how it really sounded in Eastern Europe.

There are surviving recordings first issued as 78-rpm discs. They are full of scratches, pops and even musical mistakes, but to me that is part of their charm. Many of these, if you search around, are available on CD and some have even been electronically corrected.

Sadly, after World War II and the destruction of European Jewish communities the trend was toward cultural assimilation and Zionism. Klezmer seemed bound for oblivion.

Then in the 1970s, came good news. A revival took place starting in the USA. The Klezmer revival owed its origins to classical, jazz, folk or pop musicians such as Giora Feidman, Zev Feldman & Andy Statman, Henry Sapoznik ('Kapelye') and Lev Liberman ('The Klezmerim'). Most of these musicians are Jews, who seem "to mark out a space for 'belonging' or identity or else to connect to their cultural roots, as if their souls were 'screaming for nourishment" (Andy Statman) or searching a valuable alternative to religious orthodoxy and to Zionism... but also Goyim (Gentiles), moved by the depth, the expressiveness and the universality of this music. Like most things starting in the United

States, this 'new wave' soon reached Europe. The main difference between traditional Klezmer bands and the new breed is that the 'traditionals' used to play mainly for dancing at 'simchas' and modern musicians are likely to play at public sit-down concerts.

Today, there is something of a revival with new Klezmer bands who re-interpret old tunes and melodies and even straying into the world of crossover music for instance the UK band 'Oy Va Voy' led by Sophie Solomon. Other well-known bands in the field are 'Burning Bush' and the 'Klezomatics'. Contemporary fans also have access to archive recordings by such artists as Naftule Brandwein.



We now have two strands in Klezmer music: The 'mainstream' musicians e.g. The Epstein Brothers, The Maxwell Street Klezmer Band, Joel Rubin, Andy Statman, Di Naye Kapelye or Budowitz) who recreate the sound and the arrangements of the past.

Then we have the contemporary klezmerim. These artists express themselves by incorporating ideas from other musical genres and bring this to their own compositions, such as jazz. Examples of this are The Klezmerim, The Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band, The New Klezmer Trio, David Krakauer, Kol Simcha, Klezmokum. free-jazz John Zorn, Elliott Sharp, Anthony Coleman, pop music Mickey Katz, rock 'n' roll (The Klezomatics, Avi & Yossi Piamenta) and other kinds of 'ethnic' music such as Indian, bhangra, Pharaoh's Daughter, Arab Bustan Abraham, Celtic, etc. Like in the past centuries, some Klezmer bands Brave Old World, The Klezomatics, The Klezmer Conservatory Band, Kapelye use their (Yiddish!) songs to express their social, political and even sexual concerns and claims.

Bernard Price





Fairy princesses, medieval princes, builders, bears and Brunel? It could only be Purim. The fancy dress outfits came thick, fast and funny and even some of the adults joined in.

The Purim story of Esther, Mordecai, Haman and Ahasuerus was eagerly and emphatically brought to life by some of the younger members, despite the constant pauses for cheers and boos. Along with this was the constant rattling of the noisiest objects known to man along with a variety of shakers and noise-makers made earlier by the children.

There were several brightly coloured banners and ribbons – as if the party wasn't warm and exciting enough already.

For those not in possession of dressing up

clothes, thanks to the outfit room full of ribbons, strings, hats, glasses and fabrics of all shapes and sizes, all was not lost .

Moving onto the tastier regions of the party, there was no let down. The cuisine was both varied and delicious, catering for both the adults and the kids. It was also well labelled to warn against allergies. There was no shortage either.

All round, a great party, I would say. The story was re-enacted brilliantly, the food was unbeaten so far this year and the outfits were great! We shall see if Pesach lives up to the standard set!

Dan Squire

Aged 13 years



Found on the back of a Penguin:
Why do seagulls fly over the sea?

If they flew over bays they would be
bagels.





1. What is the Hebrew date for Shavuot?
2. What does the word Shavuot mean?
3. What other names are given to Shavuot?
4. Why is it traditional to study all night on Shavuot?
5. Which of the books of the *tanakh* is read on Shavuot – and why?
6. What is said to have happened to Mount Sinai when the torah was received?
7. What special foods are eaten at Shavuot – and why?
8. According to tradition, who was at Mount Sinai?
9. Shavuot is one of the three pilgrim festivals – in the time of the temple, festivals when Jews would take offerings to the temple in Jerusalem. Can you name the other two pilgrim festivals?
10. What offering was taken to the temple at Shavuot?
11. What life cycle ceremony happens on Shavuot?

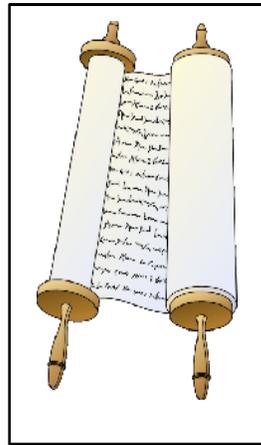
Answers on page 15



Parashat T'tzavveh Exodus Ch.29

Over the last weeks we have been hearing again the intricate instructions for the building and decoration of the Ark and the Tabernacle, and in this week's sidra we are presented with the details of the priestly vestments and ceremonies of investiture and the consecration of the altar. Sylvia Murray took us straight to the reason and meaning behind it all. All the activity has not been merely material, practical; it has been spiritual, preparing the hearts and minds of the people for the declaration by the Eternal One at the end of Chapter 29:-

"There I will meet with you, and there I will speak with you....I will abide among the Israelites and I will be their God...."



The accumulation of detail, of symbol upon symbol, is there to enhance the message. It is there for our benefit. We humans need form and structure. The place where we are to meet the Transcendent Who makes Himself present, immanent, must be beautiful, perfect.

How much discretion is God giving the people? The more detailed the instructions for a building or piece of work, the greater the possibility of things going wrong. Here *those whose hearts so move them* are called upon to give what they are able/prepared to contribute. There is no compulsion; any object, any skill is welcomed. The whole people are engaged in the project. Creation is a spiritual process by which the profane becomes sacred and the person becomes holy.

The Torah is not a philosophical work. Its teaching is manageable; it contains what is necessary for humanity, to build up and bind together. It is a channel of communication between Heaven and Earth, a Jacob's Ladder with us ascending and descending.

Kate Withers



Judaism, my child, is the struggle to bring down God upon the earth, a struggle for the sanctification of the human heart.

David Gilbert introduced the discussion with this quotation cited in the ghetto newspaper Warsaw/Krakov 1940.

Our task is to bring holiness into our human lives, to make sure that whatever our circumstances life itself retains its human quality.

Judaism is not only practical, it has a spiritual element also, expressed by *sincere, heartfelt prayers, and by constant striving for truth and justice.*

In Torah we look for the eternal truths, not for “miracles”. The only “miracle” that can be recognised is that the world exists.

Our God holds the mystery of life, and all

life is sacred. Religious experience is very personal, but our searching for the transcendent must be based in the community, in the performance of the mitzvot, and in acts of loving-kindness.

Many thanks, Sylvia and David, for leading us into such productive discussions.

Kate Withers



Pesach Pieces

As ever, Richard and I thoroughly enjoyed the Communal Seder and it was so good to see old friends and meet new ones.

Everything was wonderful - from Rabbi Ron's symbolic celery stick to Robert's repetitive raucous round, the evening was enhanced by the individual mitzvot and then the excellent efficiency of the waitresses.

The meal was served with its usual alacrity and was totally delicious.

Even the speeches were fun to listen to.

So our thanks, once again, go to all those people behind the scenes who worked hard to ensure the smooth running of this year's Communal Seder so that it could be enjoyed by all present.

What a shame Elijah missed it all again.
Next year in Bristol!

Sharon Buckley

PS - who's still singing "In The Heaven And The Earth"?



On Sunday 25th March we were up bright and early – well, early – to go to the Pre-Pesach Study Day organised by Exeter Hebrew Congregation, Elkan Levy and the UJIA Office of Small Communities. Held at Exeter Arts Centre, the day promised to be full of thought provoking talks by well known speakers, but I have to admit that it was the promise of an Italian Jewish cookery demonstration that really persuaded me that we should make the trip! When we got to Exeter we bumped into Robert Hurst and Ruth Baker, so we knew at least two friendly faces in the group of over 75 Jews from at least 10 different communities in the South West.

There were 11 talks to choose from on the day, ranging from a session on music for Pesach to sessions that explored Anglo-Jewish Pesach traditions, the seder and the role of storytelling in the haggadah. All the sessions offered plenty of opportunities to ask questions, and share ideas. The highlight of the day for me was a talk titled "We remember the fish" by Dr Aryeh Nusbacher. As he is a military historian, and military history really isn't my thing, I have to admit

that his wasn't my first choice of session. As a result of a scheduling problem, his session was under-attended and an appeal was made to make up the numbers. Aware that I was flying the flag for BWPJC – we're friendly and we're very helpful, don't you know – I volunteered. It turned out to be no sacrifice. The session was hugely entertaining, and Robert told me that the other session he ran was also very enjoyable. If you ever get the chance to hear him speak, I recommend him highly.

After a tasty lunch, and a good chance to chat, the afternoon passed far too quickly, with the much anticipated cookery demonstration ending the day. Silvia Nacamulli gave a demonstration of a delicious Pesach feast, complete with recipe booklet, and a chance to taste the mouth-watering food that she had prepared. We left Exeter feeling newly enthused about Pesach, and, more important, having made some new friends on the way.

Shelley Shocolinsky-Dwyer



The combined DAVAR and Radio Salaam/Shalom event held at Redlands Meeting House on Monday 16th April was a resounding success. Approximately fifty people turned up and were informed and entertained by several members of the Internet Radio team, led by Kyle Hannan, the Station Manager. The talks, demonstrations, viewing of the BBC television documentary and the opportunity to generate ideas in small groups were enjoyed by all present.

DAVAR

DAVAR is currently planning an exciting Autumn Programme, so watch this space.

Answers to the Shavuot Quiz

1. 6th *sivan*
2. Weeks – representing the 7 weeks of counting the *omer* that precede it.
3. *hag haKatsir* (Harvest Festival), *hag habikkurim* (Festival of first fruits), *zeman matan torataynu* (time of the giving of Torah)
4. Because the Israelites accidentally overslept on the morning that they were due to receive the Torah. By staying awake we show that we are wide awake and ready to receive and keep on receiving the Torah.
5. Ruth. Two reasons for this are that 1) the story opens during harvest, which is when Shavuot falls and 2) as a convert, Ruth chose to take on the full scope of Jewish law – as did the Israelites at Mount Sinai.
6. It was said to have burst into flower in anticipation of the receiving of the Torah. This is one reason why houses and synagogues can be decorated with flowers and plants on Shavuot.
7. Dairy products are customarily eaten. There are many reasons given for eating dairy food, but one of the most popular is that when the Torah was given, this included all the rules for kosher food. As none of the meat that the Israelites had was kosher under the new laws, they had to eat dairy produce instead. Another explanation is the Torah is also referred to as ‘milk and honey under your tongue’ in Song of Songs 4:11
8. Moses, Miriam, Aaron, lots and lots of Israelites and the souls of all Jews yet to be born. The quick answer - we were all at Sinai.
9. *pesach* and *sukkot*
10. Wheat, in the form of two loaves of bread made from the new harvest. It was also customary to take the *bikkurim*, the first fruits from the seven species for which Israel is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates
11. *Kabbalat Torah* (confirmation) for 15 and 16 year olds who have followed a course of Jewish study



- Poetry Please

LESSON FOR LIFE

"We're learning about Lazarus today.

What can you tell me?"

Silence

"Come now, who knows about Lazarus?

You, Judy, you should know, with your name."

But I didn't.

Soon I did.

Lazarus was a tramp, a lazy man.

Jesus chose him, rose him,

But no, Lazarus was a tramp just like me,

So they said.

"And the Jews killed Jesus, didn't they Miss?"

Hand up in accusation.

"It was the Jews who hung him on a cross."

"Jew girl, Jew girl. You killed Jesus."

"Did they?" I asked at home "Did we?"

And my wise old Dad sighed again.

Tried to explain.

"There can't be a God" he said

"Not with all that's wrong.

There can't be a God."

But I didn't understand.

I hadn't yet heard of holocaust.

Judy Lazarus

A request from Alix Pirani, your friendly neighbourhood proof-reader...

When proof-reading I try to do justice to the articles offered, correcting small mistakes, misprints, typographical errors etc. It is to be expected.

I offer the following advice to contributors:

- 1) Re-read what you've written more than once-or ask someone else to read it.
- 2) Don't use four words where one will do. Your readers will lose interest. Short succinct sentences are more digestible than long-winded ones.

Occasionally, I might return an article with suggested amendments. Alterations will not be made without your consent, as I know, from personal experience how offensive that is.

Alix Pirani