



# ALONIM

Newsletter of the Bristol & West  
Progressive Jewish Congregation

*Adar/Nisan/Iyyar 5767*  
*Mar/Apr 2007*

# עלונים



## INSIDE ALONIM THIS ISSUE



Editorial p. 2

From the Chair p.3

From the Rabbi p.4& 5

Yad Vashem p.5

Report on Talk by Danny  
Rich p6 & 7

FORUM- Jerusalem  
Peacemakers p.8

Poetry Please p.9

Purim Quiz p.10

History of Klezmer p.11

January Shiur p.12 & 13

Book Review-A Little Piece  
of Ground P.13

From Our Correspondent in  
Israel p.14 & 15

February Shiur p. 15

Pesach Quiz p.16

Synagogue Security p.17

FORUM—Jacob's Well  
p.18 & 19

# Purim & Pesach Issue



Dear All,

This issue features two suggestions for ways of contributing to Alonim and we have many events coming up, so please volunteer to be a reporter. In particular, we would love to receive a report on the Teddies' Tea written by a younger person (with help from an adult, perhaps) and a drawing to match. Likewise, if you are a junior member attending the Purim Party or the Seder we would be very pleased to receive your copy. We hope you enjoy your newsletter,

The Editors

### ALONIM & E-LONIM copy date deadlines

Month	Copy date	Festivals covered, notices needed
April E-lonim	Tuesday 27th March	Yom Ha'Atzama'ut
May/June Alonim	Wednesday 18th April	Counting the Omer/Shavuot
June E-lonim	Thursday 24th May	
July/August Alonim	Wednesday 20th June	

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](mailto: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.



I must admit it feels rather strange to be writing this column for Alonim! As a past editor I still expect to receive articles to put together, rather than write and send in a contribution, particularly the first of a regular column.

In the position of newly elected Chair, I have been giving some thought to the role and have pondered the idea of 'chair' itself. In our lives we all sit on many types of chairs at different times, and they can have quite varied outlooks. For example, at work I'm sitting in front of a computer on a rather well designed office chair and my focus is either towards the keyboard or towards the door and incoming visitors. When driving, I'm sitting and concentrating on where I'm going and what's immediately in front or behind me. In the evenings, I might again be sitting on my slightly less comfortable office chair, sending e-mails or doing some studying, or sitting at the table eating and talking to my family, and later relaxing on the sofa watching some television. Perhaps you are wondering where all is this leading? Well, as chair of this community, I would hope to be able to find the perfect chair that allows me to be aware of all the variety and diversity of viewpoints of the whole community. I would like our community to continue to be as inclusive as possible and so I envision something in the line of a (hopefully rather comfortable!) chair on wheels, that will allow me to turn to listen and talk to any and all synagogue members wherever they may be coming from or going to – Indeed such a chair would encompass the qualities of all those chairs listed above: welcoming, looking to the immediate and longer-term future, learning and

communicating.

I'm writing this after chairing my first Council meeting (and the library chairs are surprisingly comfortable!); it is good to be back on Council after a three year gap and to find such an enthusiastic and energetic team. My plan is to use this column to occasionally air some of the discussions and decisions taken by Council, as it seems that it could be a useful forum for such dissemination. Discussions this week focused on important forthcoming events such as final planning for the Purim Party and the Communal Seder (full details of both these events on page 13) as well as starting to plan the Annual Garden Party (details to follow when are dates finalised). I look forward to seeing many of you at some or all of these celebrations.

Finally, on behalf of all of us, I would like to thank Robert for being such an excellent and wonderful Chair for the last three years. I feel very lucky, and indeed we all are, that he has agreed to be Vice-Chair so we will all continue to benefit from his great warmth, wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

**Keren Durant**  
Chair of Synagogue Council



### Squeaks of the Scribe's Quill

A generous gift of money to our Congregation, on the occasion of a significant birthday of an elderly member, led to a discussion in our Rites and Practices Committee about what to spend it on. Various suggestions were made and during the course of our conversation we shared many views. Eventually we decided to have new curtains made to hang before the new *aron hakodesh*, our Holy Ark for the High Holy Days, as it is usual to have white curtains during the *yamim nora'im*, the Days of Awe. Other suggestions were that we have a jeweller or craft person make either a *keter*, a *torah* crown, or some *rimmonim*, [literally 'pomegranates'] which are *torah* finials, which fit over the ends of the *'atzei hayyim*, the wooden rollers of the *sefer torah*.

There is a rule that we should perform the *mitzvot*, the commandments, in the most beautiful way. This is called *hiddur mitzvah*, and is perhaps one reason why there are often works of art and beautiful objects in Jewish homes and synagogues. A sense of style and an appreciation of the finer things in life and of the skill of the crafts people who are able to design and execute admirable objects in attractive materials, are all aspects of the love of God. This love is a reciprocal relationship, which means that we can show our love by performing our religious duties in the best way possible, to thank God for our skills, those of others, as well as the wonderful materials and objects which are the gifts heaven has bestowed on human beings to use.

Perceptive members will have noticed by the time this is published that our small scroll has new *'atzei hayyim*. I have just completed attaching the scroll to these new rollers. The old rollers were worn out in that the lower discs were slipping down onto the handles, which made *hagbahah*, raising of the scroll, difficult. Yet as the upper parts of the old rollers were made of attractive fruit wood, possibly apple, inlaid with ivory and little round mirrors [yes, really, take a close look sometime when you are able] we decided to preserve as much as possible of the old and incorporate it into the new. The craftswoman who has skilfully blended the old tops into the new rollers used beech poles and mahogany discs and was also able to incorporate a new feature which we requested; interlocking discs top and bottom, which should ensure that there is relatively little vertical shift between left and right rollers. They will always fit together relative to each other in the same position.

To create ritual objects which are meaningful, yet original, is not easy. Nor is it easy to incorporate the old into the new; yet that is what our contemporary Jewish life is all about. To be creative in such a way as to cherish what is beautiful, though aged, utilise what remains useful by strengthening it with a stronger modern embellishment, is symbolic of our role as Jews in today's world. Though we live in an era of mass production, what is authentic and traditional remains part of how we worship, with our sense for the stylish and our artistic self-expression equally ways of approach to the sublime.



## Guardian of the Memory

**W**ith the last issue of Alonim you will have received a card asking you to support the Yad Vashem project to remember the past and shape the future ( if your card was missing please let me know). Each card has the name of one Holocaust victim of the three million whose names are recorded. These have been distributed to Synagogues in this country by Yad Vashem UK Foundation, and Communities throughout the world by Holocaust Foundations in the respective countries.

For the most part the response has been overwhelming, enabling the Foundation to advance the cause of Holocaust education and awareness into the future. From Bristol the

response is short of what might have been expected, with only 17 cards returned so far, and that includes two from non Jewish partners of members.

It is easy to put something aside with the intention of doing it later. As I'm sure many more will want to respond, I just want to remind members to get out the card and send it off. Show that BWPJC cares

If you cannot find yours I do have a few more.

**Bernard Barnett**



*From the Rabbi continued*

Exodus 15, 2 tells us; **This is my God and I will enshrine him.** The Hebrew root used is *nun, vav, heh*, meaning 'beautify'. A beautiful ritual object is a way to glorify God. A beautiful hand-made work of art as a sacred object or part of a synagogue is very fitting as an example of *hiddur mitzvah*. We have two stained glass pieces as memorial plaques in our synagogue, which are always effective and lovely to see. All our visitors comment on

them with admiration and appreciation, showing that added joy, which is the feeling evoked by the work, which blesses the beholder as well as the maker and is a solid tribute to God, who has created all things. If you would like to sponsor or contribute to any such work, please contact me.

**Rabbi Francis Ronald Berry**



On January 21<sup>st</sup>, following the AGM, Danny Rich spoke to us, as Chief Executive, about his goals for Liberal Judaism

We now have 33 communities with over 10,000 members.

Danny's first task, of increasing morale within the movement, has been partly achieved through improved coverage in the Jewish Chronicle and other sources. Increasing the number of Liberal Jews also, in time, spreads the financial load.

He spoke about the situation in Manchester where a Liberal congregation has started despite the presence of 3 Reform congregations already, and explained that of the 50 members it already has, none were previously members of the Reform shuls. There is therefore no reason to avoid setting up in the same area. Likewise he is pleased that a Reform congregation is setting up in Salisbury because it will increase the Jewish opportunities.

His second major goal was to have transparency within the organisation and he is really committed to getting it right.

Danny is committed to serving communities outside London. We now have a worker on permanent placement in the Midlands. It is also hoped to improve the use of technology. Yoav Ben Shlomo (our secretary) is helping with this. Also members of Birmingham and Bristol (Michael Romain) congregations are now among the officers of LJ.

36% of all subscriptions go straight out to the

Leo Baeck College to train rabbis. This is a high cost for the low number of rabbinic students each year, but is essential if we are to continue to have a rabbinic pool to draw on as we expand.

Danny is intent on involving Liberal Judaism in the central Jewish organisations so that the Liberal Jewish voice is heard alongside others as an equal. We are now represented on the Jewish Leadership Council.

He is also giving attention to Muslim/Jewish relations.

The cost of maintaining the Chief Executive reflects the increased workload. Enquiries into the office have increased to five times their number.

Bristol directly benefits from LJ activities, for example, with a new project to help local congregations to develop their own curricula. This will involve working closely with the Centre in Haifa. The project is going to cost £20,000, but Danny has already raised £15,000 of it. This is part of his pledge that additional projects will be funded by patrons and not out of the standard subscription which has only been rising in line with inflation. Last month LJ received its first business sponsorship

Danny pointed out that national schemes for raising Jewish identity among young people need to be run centrally. Last year Bristol saw three young people taking part in Israel and Europe schemes.

Danny professes to be delighted that Bristol is



so demanding, adding that without the central movement local communities would find it hard to thrive, but equally the central movement would not exist without its constituent congregations.

Questions were raised from the floor:

David Dwek asked why we couldn't have a central printed curriculum for the *cheder* to follow. Danny replied that other congregations are keen to retain their autonomy; however, he told us that Judy Thwaites (at Leo Baeck College) now has a bank of curricula and is able to support synagogues in devising theirs. There is apparently a new guide book on what LJ would expect a child to know at each age. Danny pledged that we would definitely see progress on this within a year.

Ruth Baker asked Danny's opinion on a merger with the Reform Movement. He replied that it was not the right time because currently we would lose the right of the Reform and the left of the Liberal. However, we are doing more and more work together, particularly in the field of youth work. The recent chanukkah party was an example of a joint initiative. Student workers from both movements now liaise so that their visits to universities are spread out.

Michael Romain expressed the belief that there needed to be a federation of progressive movements. He recently spoke about this at Limmud and wants to address the next Rabbinic Conference on the subject. Danny said that he did not think this would save us money as many people believed, but Michael

feels that we cannot continue as we are.

Peter Brill asked for a greater accountability. He wanted to know how Danny Rich intends to measure his outcomes and demonstrate his accountability.

Danny replied that he now gets the budget out sooner and comes to talk to many congregations. He is also encouraging greater involvement.

He believed that initially it was more important to get on with doing things rather than with planning. However, most of his tasks on appointment have been met already. They were; improving morale (already happening), balancing the budget (okay so far), establishing a patrons' fund of £100,000 in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and £200,000 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, increasing the profile on campus, (for which he has created and funded a new position). And finding the money to recruit for an interfaith post (underway, awaiting funding)

Danny agreed that there was an issue about how he communicated these goals as they are not laid out in a formal manner. He reports to council and hopes that information will filter back to communities, but it doesn't always happen. Sylvia Murray suggested that LJ Today was a good forum.

Danny finished to warm applause after his articulate and enthusiastic talk.

**Judy Lazarus**



## Jerusalem Peacemakers in Worcester 16 November

Eliyahu Maclean is a religious Jew from Jerusalem (whose father is of Scottish descent). He belongs to a group called Jerusalem peacemakers who have been involved in bridge building between the Jewish and Muslim communities in Palestine/Israel since the start of the second Intifada in September 2000.

He was to have spoken with Shaikh Bukhari, a resident of the Old City, at the Old Palace, a former Bishop's residence by Worcester Cathedral, but in the event, the Sheikh was not able to be there. There was however a wonderful mood in the meeting as he spoke of so many events in which Jews and Muslims, and also Christians and Druze had come together in the name of peace in the Middle East. His story was gripping as he spoke of his 3 day fast and vigil overlooking the Wailing wall and Al Aqsa Mosque, when an Israeli woman Police sergeant had to clear the area due to civil unrest, The Day of Rage, but allowed Eliyahu and his colleagues, Jews and Palestinians alike, to remain, in the hope that they might help the situation.

He talked about a series of initiatives and unlikely links between Jews and Muslims, Palestinians and Israelis, which have taken place throughout the Middle East in recent years. He spoke of Rabbi Menahem Froman, an ultra orthodox settler Rabbi, a founder of Gush Emunim, but yet a man who had had a long lasting and significant relationship with Sheikh Yassin the leader of Hamas, until the Sheikh's assassination in 2004. The basis of their link was that the central beliefs in spirituality that they both shared, were

stronger than their political differences.

He spoke of another group of Rabbis and religious leaders of different denominations, who believe that faith connections are a better route to moving forward in the middle East peace process than any political initiative is likely to have.

He spoke of the old Arab custom of sulha – a process of forgiveness and reconciliation which has been practised for centuries between warring tribes in the Middle East – a tradition that is being re-enacted by Jews and Arabs who wish to heal the divisions between their peoples.

At the end of the day, there is a growing recognition that Jews and Muslims have much in common – Sarah and Hagar had children, Isaac and Ishmael, and Abraham was father to both. There are many interpretations of the story of Sarah and Hagar, but increasingly people are realising that the split between the 2 faiths and the opposition that is often portrayed is not necessarily the only viewpoint to take.

**Julian Brown**

For more information on all of this you can visit the sulha project:

<http://www.sulha.com/>

Jerusalem Peacemakers at:

<http://www.jerusalempeacemakers.org/>

and Rabbi Froman at:

<http://www.jerusalempeacemakers.org/froman/art-settler.html>

and also a book, *The Tent of Abraham – Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians and Muslims* (available from Amazon.com)



# Poetry Please

*The sun and the moon play important roles in Jewish life. We light the Shabbat candles just before sunset and the Jewish calendar begins when the first sliver of moon becomes visible after dark.*

**Yoav Ben-Shlomo**

## The Sun and the Moon

By **Elie Ben-Shlomo** (10.5 years)

The sun and the moon compete for the sky,  
They win and they lose, they fall and they rise.  
They fight and they fight for darkness and light,  
the light of the day and the dark of the night.  
Shadows shall rise, shadows shall fade,  
the heat of the sun, and the cool of the shade.  
As time goes by, dark turns to light  
as the sun and the moon compete for the sky.

**D**o you have a poem that you have written ? Or is there one that you've been meaning to write?

We'd like to invite more contributions of poetry to the newsletter. Anything with a Jewish theme will be welcome. The next issue will be for Shavuot and the Counting of the Omer, so you could use that as a theme, or perhaps you have a better idea.

Contributions from all ages are very welcome.

**The editors**



## - Purim Quiz

1. In which month is Purim celebrated? For a bonus point, on which day?
2. Whose empire was in control at the time of the story of Esther?
3. Purim is also known as the feast of...?
4. Name the four Mitzvot associated with Purim.
5. Would a 'make your own cake' kit be a good Purim food gift for a friend?
6. During the reading of the Megillah Esther, whose name do we try to drown out –and how many times is this name mentioned?
7. How many times is God mentioned in the Megillah Esther?
8. How many breaths is the reader allowed to take when reading the names of the sons of Haman.
9. True or false – dressing up and masquerades are a popular part of Purim celebrations?
10. Which commandment are you expected to break on Purim?
11. What food is traditionally eaten at Purim?

Shelley Shocolinsky-Dwyer



- Answers to Purim Quiz
1. Adar - the 14th
  2. Persian
  3. Lots
  4. a) Listening to the public reading of the Megillah Esther b) sending food gifts to friends  
c) giving charity to at least 2 people d) eating a festive meal.
  5. No – you are meant to give 2 food gifts that are ready to eat, no self-assembly required.
  6. Haman – 54 times
  7. None – God stays in the background.
  8. Just one!
  9. True – it's a day for lots of merriment.
  10. Wearing the clothes of the opposite gender, which is normally prohibited.
  11. Hamantaschen

# A History of Klezmer

## A brief History of Klezmer Music—part 2



**D**uring the eighteenth century, Jews came under three different religious influences:

Western, the Maskilim (members of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment movement) of Moshe

Mendelssohn (1729-1786, the

composer Felix Mendelssohn's grandfather) who encouraged cultural assimilation.

Northern, the Misnagdim (opponents or rationalists), led by Eliah ben Solomon Zalman, the Vilna's Gaon (1720-1797), valued the study of the holy texts. Eastern, the Hasidim (pious), followers of the charismatic Israel ben Eliezer, aka Ba'al Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name, 1700-1760), who placed high value on joy, songs and dances as ways to express their love for humans and God in a form of mystical collective ecstasy.

For the Maskilim in Germany, Austria, Bohemia and Moravia, Yiddish and Klezmer had to be supplanted by the Germanic culture. But in Eastern Europe, the Klezmer flourished and borrowed from the Hasidic stream 'nigunim' (wordless melodies), as joy and fervour. They mixed it into an artful mixture with popular songs, profane dance music and 'hazanut', the cantorial way of singing Jewish prayers.

All through the European Diaspora despite the innumerable pogroms of Eastern Europe, Yiddish culture, including the music flourished late into the nineteenth century. Klezmer musicians exchanged many popular tunes with the various cultures that surrounded them e.g. Romanian, Russian,

Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Greek, Ottoman (Turkish) or 'Arabic' and - especially in Hungary- Gypsy music. They even used to play with Gypsies or 'Goyim' (Gentiles) and vice-versa.

However, the main function of the *klezmerim* was to perform at the traditional Jewish events, mentioned earlier. Each performance had an appropriate theme.

Examples being 'Tish Nigunim' for meals, meditation and concerts, 'Gasn Nigunim' for the processions and -last but not least - for the weddings: 'Tsu der khupe,' 'Fun der khupe' and 'Kale badekn' for the bride, 'Mazltov' for the greetings, 'Firn di Mekhutanim aheym' or 'Dobranoc' for the end of the ceremony.

The musicians - wages were evaluated by their virtuosity, their repertoire, but mostly by their ability to adapt the music to the listeners and dancers.

In the early nineteenth century, more than 5 millions East European Jews were confined in what was known as the 'pale of settlement', this covered the regions around Kiev plus (Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Galicia and Moldavia). Jews were restricted access to the important cities and towns. Most of the musicians learned to play strictly by ear often as they played. The profession was passed from father to son (as the women's public performances were banned.). They spoke a Yiddish slang (*klezmerloshn*) full of anagrams and double meanings. They also formed themselves into guilds.

To be continued....

**Bernard Price**



## THE IMPLIED AURA OF BENJAMIN

The standard portion for January 6<sup>th</sup> was the very end of the Joseph saga, but Kate Withers took the opportunity to discuss the very summit of Joseph's career when he became controller of all the food in Egypt, through the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine, saving the lives of his father, his brothers and all their families.

Throughout this narrative the spirit of Benjamin is felt in the background, although no speech of his is recorded: his only direct action is when both he and Joseph weep and embrace at their reunion.

Yet Benjamin was the cherished youngest son whom Jacob kept at home when his brothers went to buy food in Egypt. Benjamin was also the beloved younger brother whose presence Joseph demanded (as if by a whim) but whose arrival was itself delayed by the guilt which Joseph created by having the brothers' food payments returned to them secretly, in their grain-sacks. Only when they were all (including Benjamin) in danger of starvation for the second time could the brothers persuade Jacob to let Benjamin travel with them, while Judah offered to bear blood-liability if Benjamin should not return.

Yet we know hardly anything about Benjamin, not even how old he was at this time. There are indeed clues to this detail but, frustratingly, they are contradictory.

By one reading Benjamin could have been as young as 12 years old (making Joseph 20, a precocious genius with an undergraduate sense of practical-jokery), supported by the description *yeled z'kunim katan* (child of his old age, a little one) in Gen. 44.20; also that the brothers "took Benjamin with them" in Gen.

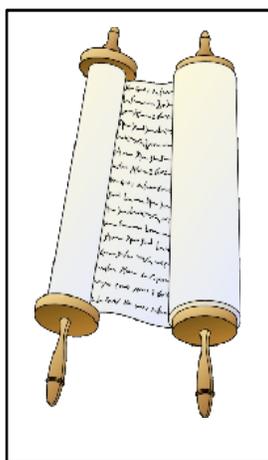
43.15. On the other hand, it is difficult to reconcile this with the ten sons of Benjamin who are listed among the 'seventy souls' who migrated from Canaan to Egypt when Joseph finally reunited the family under his protection (Gen. 46.5-26).

By another reading, Benjamin could have been in his thirties (making Joseph 40, an elder statesman with a malign wish to make his brothers sweat and

squirm big-time). This time-scale would give Benjamin plenty of time to beget ten sons, but would his brothers still be describing him as *katan*?

Documentary Theory attributes most of the Joseph saga to a combination of the (earlier) 'J' and 'E' sources, but the detailed roll-call of the 'seventy souls' is attributed to the later 'P' (Priestly) source. Perhaps we should not be too surprised if discrepancies can be discovered here and there.

Finally Joseph reassures his brothers that his eventful life had been "the Hand of God" and they should not blame themselves for their





# Book Review- A Little Piece of Ground

# 13

Although this book is written for young teenagers, it can well be read by, and is a good read for, adults wanting to have more insight into the current Palestinian- Israeli situation.

It is the story of a 12 year old Palestinian lad who lives in Ramallah (which is under intermittent curfew/occupation by the Israelis). The book is very everyday and natural in its style, and for this reason is quite compelling in making you feel as if you're experiencing life in Ramallah. You hear the rumble of the Israeli tanks, as they move into the city squares at dusk. You discover that attending school is a chancy business, which may be interrupted at any time, by sirens, or by actual physical destruction.

In its simplicity, and yet charm (in the character of Karim, the boy telling the story) it gives you a sharp flavour of life on the other side. If this book were read, as a matter of

course by all Israeli teenagers in schools, it might help them see a little more of the situation they (and we) are all part of.

Elizabeth Laird is a widely acclaimed and widely travelled writer, who has lived in Ramallah, as well as Ethiopia, Khazakstan, Iran and Russia.

My daughter Maya, aged 11, picked this book out of the library, and all of us in our family have enjoyed reading it.

**Julian Brown**  
Malvern

A Little Piece of Ground,  
Elizabeth Laird  
(Macmillan 2003)



*January Shiur continued*

part in it and certainly not enter into recriminations among themselves. This Jewish idea of the Hand of God acting for good through the agency of humans following Divine guidance is in contrast to the ancient Gnostic fatalism that only a pre-ordained 'elect' can ever prosper. God works through

people, so on the one hand we should be thoughtful as to how we behave, but on the other hand we should be gentle towards each other. Thank you Kate for leading us into the depths of this profound passage.

**David Gilbert.**



I am now in the next stage of the programme and have been at Kibbutz Lotan for about a month; the most rewarding, positive and enjoyable month I've spent here in Israel.

Kibbutz Lotan is one of the two Progressive Kibbutzim in the country and it was founded by members of the American Reform Youth Movement (NFTY) and young Israeli soliders and Progressive Jews in the 70's. It is situated in the Arava Valley nestled between the stunning Edom mountains in Jordan and the equally breathtaking mountains on the Israeli side. As the sun sets it frames the hills in a pink light, turning to red.

The Syrian - African Rift boundary runs through the Kibbutz which, as well as causing a few earthquakes now and then, also means that over a billion birds every year fly overhead on their migratory path between Africa and Europe. Lotan has its own Bird Reserve just south of its borders.

As if the geographical position, religious persuasion and Reform Zionist ideological stance isn't enough to make me fall in love with Lotan, the whole community has adopted an environmentally friendly approach to every aspect of Kibbutz life. Lotan has created a method of building using sand, hay and mud that lasts longer than normal building materials and can withstand earthquakes; art forms, recycling centres, children's play areas and even whole houses are made using this technique. Everything is recycled and then used within the kibbutz and Lotan's huge '*gan bayit*', sort of kitchen garden, is fertilised using waste from the dining room which has been processed.

A JNF project is underway that will allow Lotan to process its own sewage and turn it into clean water. A collective of people living like this is unbelievable, when we in England struggle as individuals knowing that however much effort we make our next door neighbour is driving half a mile to work everyday.

I also think that this ethos is reflected in the way people treat each other here. The mission statement of the Kibbutz preaches an 'I & Thou' approach to life and community and I truly think this is achieved.

The recent suicide bomb in Eilat shocked the Kibbutz, as it was close to home and the first of its kind here. Conversations I have had following the event have led me to find out how many people here are involved in furthering Arab-Israeli and Israel-Jordan relations.

Palestinian, Jordanian and Israeli groups also come here regularly to learn about the environment and about building sturdy, cheap and attractive structures in their communities. The aim is that in doing so they learn also about each other.

My days are spent in the Gardens of the Kibbutz; we had to prepare areas for Tu B'shvat, the swimming pool for summer, prune trees, plant flowers, roof buildings... there's an endless list of things needing to be done. I love the work and being outside, though irrigation is driving me round the bend, not something we have to worry about in rainy Bristol!

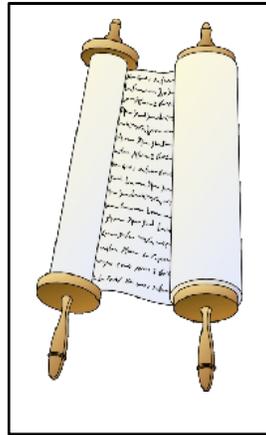


B'SHALLACH, Exodus Chapter 13 v.17 to Chapter 17 v.16

This portion deals with the children of Israel leaving Egypt.

My theme was the ambiguity in the text in that it is not clear whether the Israelites were forced to leave or went of their own accord.

According to some interpretations of Torah, an ambiguity suggests some sort of challenge. One interpretation of this challenge is that there were perhaps two forms of the Exodus, a physical and a spiritual one. Even though they were not forced to go physically, they might have had enormous pressure on them to change their lifestyles, to start again and to



take on the risks of the unknown, even though in Egypt perhaps they may not have been any more oppressed than other people.

I tried to relate what is happening in our lives today to the Exodus story. We too may have to make decisions about leaving what has gone before. We discussed times in our experience when we realise that life will not be the same again.

**Michael Romain**



*Our Correspondent in Israel continued*

I look forward to Shabbat and my one day off work, a lovely Progressive service and a meal where the whole Kibbutz come together to sing and relax.

The community is so welcoming; what saddens me is how little is known about it across the Jewish world. We should be so proud that our counterparts in Israel have established such a wonderful community which is fulfilling environmental, political and religious goals in modern day Israel.

The fact that the Muslim-Jewish radio on the Internet is up and running is fantastic; it made

me think that we also are attempting to make a difference in the society that is around us. A community helps provide the means to achieve these dreams.

I hope this update finds everyone well. More information about where I am can be found on [www.Kibbutzlotan.com](http://www.Kibbutzlotan.com). I also advise anyone coming to Israel to visit Lotan, as no description of mine can truly do it justice.

Best wishes,

**Rachel Romain**

1. On which Hebrew date does the first day of Pesach fall?
2. What other names are there for Pesach?
3. What 3 items do you traditionally use to search for *chametz*?
4. How long is *matzah* for Pesach allowed to sit before being cooked?
5. Can you name the 5 species that matzah can be made from?
6. Why is Pesach harder for Ashkenazi than Sephardi Jews?
7. What does the word '*seder*' mean?
8. How many mitzvot need to be observed during the *Seder*?
9. Name all the items that appear on a traditional Seder plate.
10. What are the four questions?
11. What were the 10 plagues?
12. Traditionally, who never gets a mention throughout the whole Seder?
13. What do we start counting on the second day of Pesach, and keep counting until Shavuot?

**Shelley Shocolinsky-Dwyer**

## Answers to Pesach Quiz

1. 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan
2. Chag HaMatzot – the holiday of the unleavened bread, Z'man Cheiruteinu – the time of Jewish Liberation, Chag Ha-Aviv, the holiday of spring.
3. A feather, a spoon and a candle.
4. 18 minutes.
5. Wheat, Barley, Spelt, Oats, Rye.
6. Ashkenazi are also not allowed to eat rice or legumes, but Sephardi may.
7. Order or arrangement.
8. 7 – i) telling the exodus story ii) eating matzah iii) eating maror iv) eating the afikomen v) saying hallel vi) drinking the four cups of wine vii) demonstrating acts of freedom and democracy.
9. Z'Roa - Shankbone, Beitza - roasted egg, maror – bitter herbs, charoset, karpas – spring greens
10. Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights we eat either bread or matzah, but on this night we eat only matzah. On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night we eat only bitter herbs. On all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once, but on this night we dip them twice. On all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we eat in a reclining position.
11. Rivers turned to blood, frogs, lice, flies, disease of livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, death of the firstborn.
12. Moses
13. The Omer



# - Synagogue Security

If you have ever wondered about the work of the Community Security Trust (CST) or indeed why security has been given such a high profile at shul recently, then read on for a summary of 594 anti-Semitic incidents recorded by CST for 2006. Also note that 6 incidents were actually recorded in the south-west region. I will be placing a full copy of the report in the library for those who wish to study it further. It pays to be vigilant and never complacent. Security should always be taken seriously.

Bernard Price



## Executive summary

- 594 antisemitic incidents were recorded by the Community Security Trust (CST) in 2006. This is the highest annual total since the CST began recording antisemitic incidents in 1984.
- The total of 594 incidents is a 31 per cent rise on the 2005 total of 455 incidents. It is 12 per cent higher than the previous record high of 532 incidents, recorded in 2004.
- 59 per cent of the 594 incidents occurred during the second half of the year. 134 antisemitic incidents took place during the 34 days of fighting in Lebanon between Israel and Hizbollah in July and August. 54 incidents during the year included specific reference to the fighting in Lebanon.
- There were 112 violent antisemitic assaults recorded in 2006, the highest ever recorded by the CST and a 37 per cent rise on the 82 violent antisemitic assaults in 2005. The 112 violent attacks included four that were classified as Extreme Violence, meaning that the attack potentially caused loss of life or Grievous Bodily Harm.
- There were a record number of incidents of Abusive Behaviour - 365, an increase of 34 per cent from the 273 incidents of Abusive Behaviour recorded in 2005. This category is an indicator of the amount of background, low-level antisemitism in society.
- Incidents of Damage & Desecration to Jewish property rose by 46 per cent, from 48 incidents in 2005 to 70 incidents in 2006.
- The months of July, August and September had the third, fourth and fifth highest monthly totals on record respectively.
- Thirteen people were convicted of offences relating to antisemitic incidents from 2005 and 2006. Other cases from 2006 are awaiting trial.
- In 227 incidents the victims were individual Jewish people going about their lives in public. In 121 of these, the victims were visibly identifiable as Jewish.
- 82 incidents targeted synagogues, including 27 involving damage to synagogue buildings. A further 50 incidents targeted congregants on their way to or from prayer.
- 59 incidents targeted Jewish schools or schoolchildren, of which 25 were against Jewish schoolchildren on their journeys to or from school.
- There were nine desecrations of Jewish cemeteries in 2006.
- 79 incidents targeted Jewish communal organisations and their events, including representative bodies, youth movements, welfare and cultural organisations.
- Physical descriptions of incident perpetrators (using the 'IC1-6' system) were provided in 205 of the 594 incidents reported to the CST. Of these, 96 were White (47 per cent), 4 East European (two per cent), 28 Black (14 per cent), 60 Asian (29 per cent), 1 Far Eastern (one per cent) and 16 Arab (8 per cent).

**M**any of you will have heard of 'Jacob's Well'. It is the so called medieval mikveh after which Jacob's Well Road, Bristol is named. The site is definitely earlier than 1142, when the site was purchased by St Augustine's Abbey. This makes it the earliest mikveh in Europe.

For many years the well has been owned by someone who has used the adjoining rooms as a storage space, but now he is putting it up for auction on 26th February. Sadly the notice was too short for us to start a fund to try to purchase it, however, the auction does mean that it has been opened twice a week for half an hour for prospective buyers to view. I went to view the site with Rosanne and Shelley Shocolinsky-Dwyer, and we photographed as much as possible.

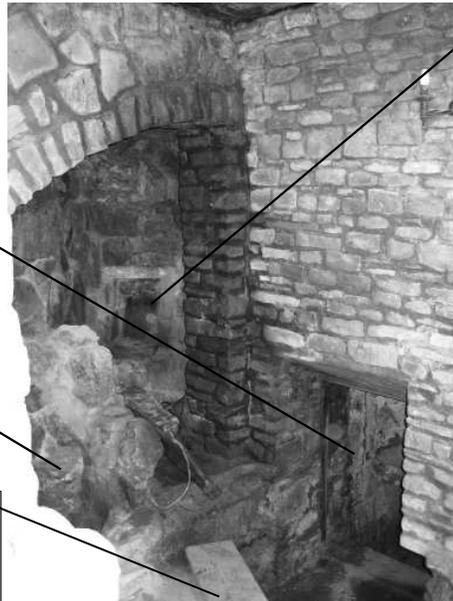
The building has clearly been used as a tourist attraction in the past, as this sign shows. The actual area that constitutes the ancient monument has a seriously broken floor in front of it and therefore very little space to position for photographs.



It is a scheduled ancient monument, including the well itself, the Hebrew inscription, and the 'mikveh' entrance. This means that it cannot be demolished, or damaged and every attempt must be made to retain it in its current condition, which is very poor.

This is the corner which contains the well and the 'mikveh'. You can just see the corner of the 'mikveh' entrance in the bottom right of the frame and the well is to the bottom left.

You can also see the edge of the board one has to walk across, because the floor is dug up.



There is good reason to believe that it may not have been a *mikveh*, but rather a *bet tehorah*, that is a place for washing the dead. The main evidence is its presence outside the medieval city walls. It is very unlikely that our ancestors would've risked travelling unprotected to use the mikveh.

The first two photographs were taken by **Shelley Shocolinsky-Dwyer**

For more of the history, read *Jews in Bristol*, Judith Samuels p. 18.



A close up looking into the well. Apparently it goes down a long way, but you can only see about a foot as the view is blocked.

Most of the people who are interested in buying the site are attracted by the bottling rights. There is a fresh spring feeding the well which is now hooked up to a large tank in the outer room. There is an abstraction licence to take 50 million litres of water per annum.

This is the entrance to the area, believed to lead to the 'mikveh'. We were originally told that the Hebrew inscription was on this lintel. In fact it is further inside.

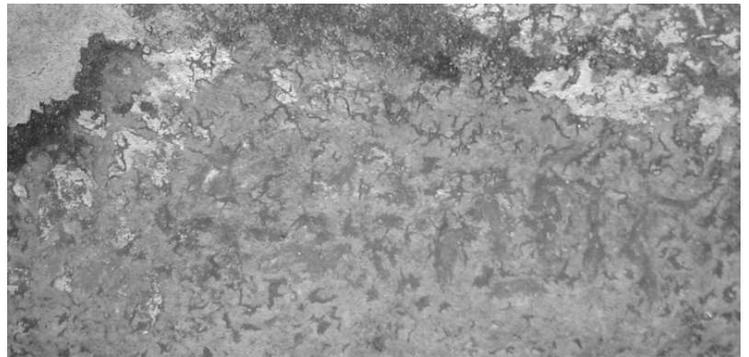


The Hebrew inscription. We couldn't read the first letter, but the next two appear to be *chet* and *lamed*. It has previously been translated as '*zochalim*, (flowing) Followed by the word 'mayim' it would read 'flowing waters', a traditional indicator of a mitzvah.



There is no obvious reason for this piece of slate, set in a niche in the wall.

DAVAR has featured an article about the well in it's current on-line newsletter at <http://webnik.org/davar/nl/nljan04.htm#MIKVAH>



Both of these are looking down into the 'mikveh' area. Without a torch it looks as though there are steps leading down into an inner room. In fact it has clearly been filled with stone at some point, perhaps as an attempt to stop the spring from leaking into the rest of the building



The exterior of the site is definitely not medieval (my guess is Victorian, but it maybe even more recent). Nor is any of this protected. In fact the sewage pipe for the flat upstairs, runs through the rooms. The whole building was in an appalling condition. Perhaps next time it comes up for sale the Jewish Community could try to buy it and restore it properly.

Judy Lazarus