

# ALONIM

Newsletter of the Bristol & West  
Progressive Jewish Congregation

*Adar/Nisan 5766*  
*Mar/Apr 2006*

# עלונים



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## ALONIM copy date deadlines

Month	Copy date	Festivals covered, notices needed
May/June	Wednesday 12th April	yom haAtzma'ut/shavuot
July/Aug	Monday 12th June	tisha b'av/ beginning of elul

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, articles of a personal nature, references to children etc.

Editorial and Production Team

*Judith Lazarus and Malcolm Rawles*

**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. The copy date deadline for submissions is notified above. Submissions after this date cannot be guaranteed to appear in the next issue.



We are blessed with a vibrant, new Council team and we met on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. Here's what I said!

"Thank you all for coming on Council. You join a Community that began back in 1961 as the Bristol Liberal Jewish Group of which Jo Schapiro is a Founder Member. Our current name dates back to 1969 and the first of these three adjoining buildings, that we now occupy, was obtained for us back in 1974 by Hilary Kay, Jo Schapiro and Henry Harris, whose daughter-in-law is now on this Council; nice continuity!

They along with many more, some of whom are thankfully still with us and continue to be of enormous significance here. All have made a big difference to the Jewish lives of many Bristolians over these many years. We are now blessed with a record number of members across the generations; *Le Dor Va Dor*, and I would like at the start of this year to set some goals which with your support and enthusiasm and together with all our vibrant and talented membership, we can forge ahead.

So let this year be subtitled – **"2006 - Making a difference after 350 years"**.

In his moving speech at the recent Holocaust Memorial Day gathering at the Council House, the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Cllr Peter Abraham showed himself to be a genuine friend of the Jewish community. I have written to him to thank him and also to invite him to attend a Civic Service to inaugurate this significant year in the annals of British Jewry. (Jews were readmitted under Cromwell). I have said that we hope to continue to give encouragement to other minority faiths in the City and to be of some

help in the light of our families' long experience as former immigrants to Britain.

I am also in exploratory talks with Rabbis Danny Rich, Aaron Goldstein and Stephen Howard to hold a special L.J. Avodah Weekend here in Bristol towards the end of this year or the beginning of 2007 in which we will devote ourselves to exploring our Progressive attitudes to Prayer in Words and Music. It is also my ambition is that this event should culminate with a Multi-Faith Concert.

I want these meetings to be enjoyable and dynamic. We are all volunteers giving our own time to these matters and therefore I ask you always to keep that in mind. We need a reasonable level of commitment to progress and we need to be kind to one another, especially when we have opposing views. In that way, this year's Council and all our members will make a difference to both our own Jewish Community and to our friends elsewhere in Bristol and the South West.

The Synagogue Contacts List in this edition includes many new names and the promise of several new areas in which together we all can make that difference.

## SEDER

Finally, for your maximum comfort and enjoyment we have decided to restrict the numbers of our Communal Seder in the Synagogue to 70 this year rather than go elsewhere. To avoid being disappointed, please book your places immediately.

Shalom  
Robert Hurst, Chair



## Squeaks of the Scribe's Quill

Sometimes in the morning the straps of my *tefillin* become entangled with the tassel of my *tallit*. However I do not give up and go back to bed! I either patiently sort out the strange knot of broad black leather and fine white fabric threads, or I take care not to pull anything too tight and push the loose threads one way whilst pulling the leather strap in the other direction. Experience has taught me that my need is for patience, care and delicacy whenever this issue arises. Often the rest of the day goes smoothly thereafter, once these principles have been established early. The way the morning Service is prayed is like catching the correct train. This is how I make sure that I am on the right rails to arrive where I need to be.

Yet in the event of two *mitzvot*, commandments, clashing like this, what are we supposed to do? We are helped by the hierarchy of *mitzvot* established by tradition, some taking precedence over others. For example *brit milah*, circumcision for baby boys, is considered important enough to perform even on *shabbat* if the eighth day happens to fall thereon. So some *mitzvot* can be combined though the usual practice is to keep them separate. In my case the separation principle motivates me stopping, to divide and untie, before continuing with my prayers, which confirms for me the general principle of trying to keep issues separate, so that I can deal with them when they crop up one at a time.

Unfortunately, issues don't come like that. They arrive all together in a confusing, complicated awkward knot, imposing an overwhelming existential anxiety, rendering me totally incapable of thinking about anything in any reasonable, rational or useful

way. My mind then wanders in a daze from worry to worry without being able to settle anywhere. I can resolve nothing. There is too much to feel concern over. My emotions seem to flood my brain with hormones, which block the electronic impulses of my cerebral cortex, so any logical constructive thought becomes frozen. What am I to do in such a state? How can I escape from this predicament. From worrying about the Arab/Israel situation I turn to feel concern for the environment; in a flash of panic I wonder what to do about all the congregational work I have neglected only to realise that I also have lots of preparation to do for next week's lecture that I have to deliver at the university. Help! What am I to do first?

I gradually rise out of my stupor to realise that I have to tease things apart. No-one can manage these anxieties all at once, even one at a time they are too difficult! I am being unreasonable with myself. Surely I can only manage to cope with my own area of responsibility, just untie my own little tangle. Unravelling my angst is a bit like surfacing after swimming underwater without goggles, opening your eyes and seeing clearly. The world comes into focus; you can separate issues and then begin to deal with them one by one.

As it says in the Talmud 'the poor of your own city take precedence'. As well as meaning that charitable donations ought initially to be put to local usage, this can also be taken to indicate that one has a duty to consider and establish some order of dealing with need. One must prioritise. There are some issues which one cannot deal with by oneself and we don't have to imagine that we can solve all problems. It may be sufficient to make sure that we do not add to the problems



of others.

Our religious theme at this season is freedom; freedom from fear, from bondage, from oppression. *purim* and *pesah* are all about escape from the fear of persecution unto death and rejoicing in our freedom. Our celebrations include the responsibility to send gifts to the poor and to welcome the needy with hospitality and generosity. As we sort out our ethical and ritual priorities let us try to remember that our Jewishness intertwines them in just such a way that we need to make an effort to separate them to be clear about going forward into a better future, to keep on the right track towards the messianic era.

The difficulties of our modern world just, as much as the demands of our tradition, impose hard labour upon us to separate right and wrong and distinguish between good and

evil. The heart of the stranger is our concern and in the midst of our celebrations at this festive season we must remember that it is only one day in the year, at *purim*, that we are commanded to get so drunk that we cannot tell the difference between Haman and Mordechai. The other 364 days we must be clear and sober enough to use our freedom wisely, modestly and sensitively so as to share its benefits with others. Then they, in their turn, might find our world a little less daunting, its challenges easier to turn into opportunities, its controversies into calm.

**Rabbi Francis Ronald Berry**



## Study with the Rabbi

Basic Judaism/Beginners' Hebrew



twice a month

The Intermediate classes once a month



The following photographs were taken by John Jones, partner to Terry Burke (sister of Stephanie). They are of the Synagogue in Jew Town, Kochi (or Cochin), in Kerala, South India.

Terry, writes:

“The area called Jew Town is where the Jewish Community lived and still lives, although there are fewer people than there used to be, now only 25. I did see one mezuzah on a doorframe near the Synagogue, and the guide book says that many Jewish names are visible on business premises, of which quite a few are spice businesses amongst the busy bookshops, clothes and souvenir shops.

There are lots of Christians in the area and lots of Muslims too. Kerala prides itself on having people of different religions living together, and on its tolerance.

Apparently the Synagogue was originally built in 1568, was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1662 then rebuilt two years later when the Dutch took Kochi. The clock tower was built later, in 1760.



When we arrived to visit the Synagogue, I was surprised that no-one was asked to cover their head, but we were not allowed in unless our shoulders and legs were covered. This falls into line with requirements which we'd already come across in Kerala, rather than what I'd seen in Synagogues at home!

The inside of the Synagogue is paved with hand painted Chinese willow pattern floor tiles. The chandeliers were brought from Belgium. I liked the interior; it felt spacious and light, but I didn't get much sense of it being a sacred place, it felt more like a museum.”

**Terry Burke, Stephanie Burke**

**Photos by John Jones**

In 'A History of the Jews', (1987 pp 561/2), Paul Johnson describes three groups of Indian Jews with very different origins. "Then there were the Cochin Jews, about 2,500 at one time... They had a foundation document of a kind, two copper plates engraved in old Tamil, recording privileges and now dated between 974 and 1020 AD. There were certainly several layers of settlement in this case, the Black Cochin Jews being the earliest, joined by whiter skinned Jews from Spain, Portugal and possibly other parts of Europe (as well as the Middle East) in the early sixteenth century. Both black and white Cochin Jews had sub-divisions and there was a third main group, Meshuararim, who were low-caste descendants of unions between Jews and slave-concubines. None of the three main Cochin groups worshipped together.

All the white skinned Jews and many of the black spoke English, and they flourished under British rule, serving with distinction in the army, becoming civil servants, tradesmen, shopkeepers and craftsmen, attending Bombay university, studying Hebrew, translating the Jewish classics into Marathi and graduating as engineers, lawyers, teachers and scientists.....

But independent India was less congenial to them and with the creation of Israel most chose to migrate, so that by the 1980s there were ....only 250 Jews on the Cochin coast.

That such groups should survive at all testified not to the proselytising power of Judaism but to its tenacious adaptability even in the most adverse circumstances."





A regular feature in which the editors speak to various members of the synagogue who in different ways act in the wider Jewish community or as Jews in other contexts. Some will be formal representatives, but not all. This issue, Effie Romain talks about the Bristol Interfaith Group.

*Firstly can you tell me what the group is correctly called and about your role in it.*

Our proper title is the Bristol Inter Faith Group and our web site is [www.bifg.org.uk](http://www.bifg.org.uk). I have been on the committee for some years now and last year it was agreed I would act as chair. I haven't begun to take over from June Ridd though because she puts in so much time and effort and I could not match her contribution.

*What are the aims of the Interfaith Group?*

We meet every month and have a regular annual cycle of events plus a programme of meetings which we arrange as we see fit. Getting all the communities together is not nearly as easy as you might think!

Every year the Lord Mayor invites the various Faith Communities to a Celebration in The Council House. Food is served after each group has made a short presentation on a selected theme.

In December we have a 'Midwinter Cycle' event. In the summer we have a walk where we do a kind of 'place of worship crawl' around different parts of Bristol.

*Why do you consider it important for us to support this group?*

I think it is important somebody from the Jewish Community is involved in the group and brings back to Council what is

happening. We have been able to give quite a lot to the Inter Faith Group which is important. There is also a lot of networking to be done. Again and again I have seen various paid workers come along to try to get to know people from different Faith Communities and to implement 'plans'. In fact there is nothing like just being around year on year, being friendly and open and willing to make connections.

Although we try to be involved it is not always easy to get to meetings. Other communities no doubt experience the same problem. That is why the fixed points in the year - especially the formal invitation from the Lord Mayor - help to underline our contacting, phoning and badgering really.

I do wish more of us could be at the meetings.

*How do you see the future of this group going?*

I think the future of this group is problematic. June Ridd the Chair is standing down. She has worked terribly hard for this group and wants to retire (and I know if I told you how 'mature' June is you probably would not believe me) But, the group needs secretarial help to try to do even some of the things June has done. An application for a grant has been made - so lets keep our fingers crossed and hope that the BIFG is successful.

**Effie Romain**



## Two Thousand Years

On Saturday 11th February more than 40 people from the synagogue went to Bath to watch Mike Leigh's latest play, 'Two Thousand Years'. The story is about a secular family whose son suddenly 'gets religion'. There were some very thought provoking conversations between the various members of the family and some comical portrayals of a somewhat dysfunctional family.

A big thank you to Michael Romain (sadly not able to be there because of flu) who organised the theatre visit to Bath, ( and because we

were a group, got a big reduction on the ticket price) And to Caroline Roboh for her fantastic tea afterwards which offered all kinds of lovely delicacies. And a great opportunity to socialise.

Michael and I had seen the play in London and thought it was worth seeing. We went with some friends who thought it was 'very pedestrian' but somehow we managed to talk about it for a couple of hours - so that seemed a good reason to see it in itself.

It was a good trip.

**Effie Romain**



## "TAKING A day for meditation and quiet contemplation.



During the day we shall practise some familiar meditations and also explore some new ones.

An opportunity to stop, to breathe more deeply, to reflect.

All meditations will be drawn from the Jewish tradition.

There will be time for silence, and space for sharing.

No previous experience is necessary : all are welcome.

Please wear comfortable, loose clothing and bring lunchtime food ( vegetarian or permitted fish) to share.



On Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> January almost 90 people, aged from 6 weeks upwards, gathered at Bannerman Road for the annual Chanukah party. For the first hour or so children were busy upstairs showing their parents how to decorate biscuits and how to make dreidles under Iris' superb direction. Downstairs a group of grownups road tested the specially prepared game of 'Chanukiyah'. Based on the old favourite, Beetle, this new game involved quick dice throwing, excellent drawing skills, team work and a loud voice. The winners were presented with 2 mugs by Ruth with the proviso that these were donated to the synagogue's kitchen. This was graciously done. Ruth and I are now considering getting a patent for the game.



while the candles burned, Robert and Linda's son, Jonny led us all on the piano in a lively and specially written version of 'Always look on the bright side of life'.

In the kitchen the excellent team of Ruth, Sheila and John were working tirelessly preparing the tea with lots of helpers. Then, after the singing, everyone enjoyed a huge and marvellous spread of latkes, donuts, sandwiches, cakes, nibbles and fruit.

Many thanks to my co-organiser Ruth Baker, to Iris Segall, to the Rabbi, to all who helped and all who came. We look forward to next year, and if you would like to have a turn at organising this rewarding event, then do contact our Chairman.

**Keren Durant**

*And a big thank you also to Keren for her own share of the work in organising this great party.*



## COMMUNAL SEDER

The communal seder (open to members, family and friends)



Seders are much enjoyed and places are allocated on a first come first served basis.

It was very oversubscribed last year so be sure to return booking forms (enclosed) as soon as possible.



# Visit by LJ shlichah

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## Visit by LJ Shlichah, Gili Tzidkiyahu

Gili joined us for the day on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> January. She is both “envoy” and student rabbi from Israel, towards the end of a two year stay, based in London.

We all enjoyed the songs and the opportunity to talk about our likes and dislikes. It was really interesting to find out a little bit about children in Israel.

Gili started off by introducing herself at assembly, and then took two sessions for cheder; one each for the older and younger children. Both sessions involved listening to different Israeli songs about things that we like, and people who are important to us. The children learned how to sing the songs, and looked at Gili’s translations. We then talked about our own “special things”, and thought about how different (or similar) they were to those of Israeli children. The children were also able to learn some Hebrew words for things like chocolate.

Gili then joined us for Kiddush and chavurah lunch where she managed to have a chat with other congregants; particularly with some of our teenagers

I really enjoyed our Shabbat with Gili, who is a long way from home and family. I hope that we can welcome her back to Bristol another time to share worship, learning, and hospitality.

**David Dwek**

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

## Hebrew Poetry Reading

Following the shabbat morning Service on 14<sup>th</sup> January a small group of people stayed for Hebrew Poetry reading led by Gili Tzidkiyahu, the Liberal Judaism Israel Representative. We read three poems and discussed their symbolism and learnt that even secular Israeli poets use Biblical language and symbols with much beauty and sensitivity.

This was a very special and uplifting way to spend a shabbat afternoon.

**Kathy Berry**

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

my voice that distances itself from me

listens to me

my glance sent to the distance

watches me

all that I reach out for

with my hand

touches me and returns

to god of whom

I am made

**Agi Mishol**



New Youth Group  
Starting Soon

Q. What is the collective noun for rabbis?

Ans. Well considering the noise they make, a 'din'

Jane Hart

Do you have a Good Jewish Joke we can use as a filler?

If so, please let the editors know.

## We're having another Teddies Tea Party!

If you are between 0 and 5 years old, do come along to the Synagogue to make friends, play with toys and eat lots of yummy tea. And bring your mummies and daddies too.

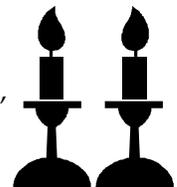


**Don't forget to bring your favourite teddy or cuddly toy!**



### THE NEW SHABBAT KIDDUSH

I hope you have noticed that since December there has been a weekly Shabbat Kiddush. So firstly can I thank the members who brought bits for the visit of Danny Rich, the Crown family, Crew family, Ron and Kathy, Trudy Veremu and Yuval Gabi, the Durant family, David Jewell, the Canzini family, the Webber family (Sally and Gary), Kate Withers and Derek Brown who have all contributed so far.



The plan is to organise a regular Shabbat Kiddush. To give a tasty end to the Shabbat morning service and an excuse to stay around and chat to old friends and new members.

I hope most members and their families will be able to help and make a Kiddush once or twice year. The food can be simple and shop bought or home cooked and I'll provide information about numbers and what to bring. It only needs to be some simple nibbles and is in no way a cooking competition!

So if you have a reason to celebrate a birthday, a wedding anniversary, passing an exam or would just like to contribute –



Prior to the commencement of the film we, a select gathering of 6, were shown a fine example of male multi-tasking by our Rabbi, who acted as doorman, window-blackouter, chair-arranger and video-operator. Had there been any popcorn or ice-cream around he would no doubt have been happy to sell us some. Thank you, Ron!

But, to the film - a charming comedy portraying the life of a bright young Jewish woman (Izzy) working in the New York literary world. She is completely in thrall to the writers and poets for whom she arranges soirées - more particularly she has fallen for the caddish Anton. She works long hours and returns to an empty apartment, her only lover being a married man who uses her when his

wife is giving him a hard time.

Her grandmother calls on her friend, a matchmaker of the old school, and they find Sam, an honest and likeable man who sells pickles. It appears that he has long admired Izzy from afar but she is cool in response to his wooing - how can his life compare to the glamour of the famous literary stars?

His persistence prevails, Anton shows his true colours and Izzy finally succumbs.

This is a film worth seeing - the acting is good and the scenes of New York beautiful. Whether Izzy truly loves Sam and his pickles - well, I have my doubts!

Alan Schiller

## Synagogue Cinema



First we intend to screen '**Primo**', based on the book, 'If this is a Man', by holocaust survivor Primo Levi. This is a harrowing film, but one which every Jew and non-Jew should see.

In April we plan to screen '**Where is My Child?**' a Yiddish film which deals with the issue of the way in which mentally ill people are treated by society. Celia Adler has to give up her newly born baby son for adoption when she goes into a mental hospital. Twenty years later she struggles to meet him upon her release. The film describes the years of the massive immigration of two million Jewish people to the United States and their integration. Although this film is a melodrama, it also provides memorable moments of comedy relief and crafted musical interludes.



## Recent CD release

Allan Schiller and John Humphreys

play the two-piano works of the Italian composer Busoni

(based on compositions by Mozart and Bach). This recording is on the prestigious Naxos label and has received glowing reviews.



### Darkness and illumination – Jews on the stage and screen

It doesn't take an expert to know that Jews can be obsessed with the past. Whether it's the Holocaust, the exodus from Egypt, or the texture of matzo balls in last night's chicken soup. With so many tragic events in our collective history it can be all too easy for them to eclipse achievements and creativity. So that's why *Everything is Illuminated* deserves credit for dealing with the past whilst managing to put a smile on one's face. Based on Jonathan Safran Foer's eponymous novel, *Everything is Illuminated*, charts his own journey from the USA to the Ukraine to track down the village where his grandfather lived until World War Two. The film first hit the screens last year, but only recently reached Bristol via the Cube Cinema in lower Kingsdown (more commonly a host to pro-Palestinian films and 9/11 conspiracy theories).

The film's charm owes much to Liev Schreiber's oddball directing and the broken English spoken by Alex (Eugene Hutz) who clumsily guides Safran Foer (played by Elijah Woods) around rural Ukraine. "*Make sure to secure the door when I am gone. There are many dangerous people who want to take things from Americans, and also kidnap them. Good night!*" Its theme of searching for Jewish roots was nothing new but its style and content were far from conventional. An obsessive collector of family artefacts, Safran Foer travels to the Ukraine to track down the site of Trachimbrod, a village razed to the ground by the Nazis. To further his search, he employs the help of 'Odessa Tours' a ramshackle family business which shunts American Jews around the Ukraine in a dilapidated Soviet motor vehicle.

*"Everything is illuminated in the light of the past."*

If illumination and light were the themes of this film, then confusion and darkness were the guiding forces behind more recent Jewish-interest productions. Stephen Spielberg's *Munich* was more preoccupied with victimhood, guilt and violence. The message that 'violence only begets more violence' may be a worthy one but it was scarcely done justice in this self-indulgent three hour thriller. The charges of fictionalising history, employing an anti-Zionist screenwriter (Tony Kushner) and drawing moral equivalences between terrorists and Israeli counter-terrorism have all been widely reported elsewhere. It is true that with power comes responsibility but this was



undermined by Spielberg's questionable source material – the real events of the secret operation are unknown and, according to the *Jewish Chronicle*, none of the Mossad agents were contacted by the filmmakers. For instance, the assertion by one of the (fictional) Mossad agents that he “only cares about Jewish blood” appears to lend itself to the disingenuous notion that Zionism is synonymous with racism. On the surface, Spielberg's fictional account of Mossad's ‘Operation Wrath of G-d’ is a gripping thriller, following the secret agents who assassinated Palestinian terrorists across Europe following the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. But Spielberg's intention was never to make a ‘surface-value’ film. Instead it was, by his own admission, to ‘ask questions’. Too bad that the questions were incoherent and contradictory.

Similarly, Mike Leigh's new play about Jewish family life, *Two Thousand Years*, was well-executed and had no shortage of tears and laughter. Superb acting and critical acclaim following last September's opening in London's National Theatre assured a sell-out audience at Bath's Theatre Royal in February. Of course, many people will be attracted by the portrayal of people and places they can relate to; middle-class Jewish north London, opinionated grandparents, a dysfunctional aunt and bemusement at the secular Jew turned newly-religious. However, Leigh uses this familiar setting to grind his personal axes about religion and Zionism. Using his actors as a mouthpiece to play-out Leigh's own hang-ups - “*We are all masochists*” - filled the play with a sense of hopelessness and Jewish self-loathing.

Indeed, *Everything is Illuminated* opens with a voice of cynicism, “*I always had the opinion that Jewish people had no brains. That's because they pay very much money to go on holiday from the USA to the Ukraine*”. But Safran Foer's travels brought him closer both in terms of his own Jewish identity and in his relationship with the ‘other’. After spending several weeks of searching through the physical and emotional terrain of the Ukrainian countryside, darkness was ultimately eclipsed by the light of hope.

**Michael Green**

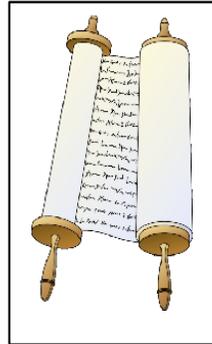
## Parashat Vayigash

Genesis Chapter 44 : Judah said:- Let me remain as a slave instead of the boy.

With David Jewell as our guide, the group examined the story of Judah. Who was this man who offered to take Benjamin's place as a slave in Joseph's court?

Judah was Leah's fourth son, "This time I will praise the Lord". It was Judah who suggested selling Joseph as a slave, rather than be guilty of his murder, when the brothers had thrown him into a pit to die. "What do we gain? After all, he is our brother!".

On that occasion Judah had not taken his father's grief into consideration before the event. Now he begs:- "Let me not be witness to the woe that would overtake my father". If we look at Judah's life since Joseph was sold as a slave, we find that he himself has lost two sons and therefore knows a father's grief. Both sons had been married to Tamar, and Judah, in his fear of losing his third son, did not give him to her in marriage according to custom. Tamar tricked him into lying with her and she later gave birth to twins. When Judah would have her stoned to death as a harlot, Tamar produced the tokens he had left with her, and Judah had to admit:- "She is more righteous than I". Here he showed a certain integrity and depth of character by acknowledging that he had been in the wrong in denying her his third son in marriage. Nevertheless, through her his line was strengthened, and we read about their great-grandson at the fall of Jericho.



There are certain similarities in the scene where the brothers produced Joseph's coat and that where Tamar produced Judah's seal, cord and staff. Joseph's coat had been dipped in the blood of a goat; Judah's tokens had been given as a pledge for a kid. The language, too, is similar. The words "hakerna" – examine (v25) and "vayakar" – recognise (v26) are the same as those used in the deception of Jacob by his sons (Ch 37.vv32,33)

This overview of significant events in Judah's life helps us to understand him as he offers himself in Benjamin's place: "If I do not bring him back I shall stand guilty before my father for ever".

Judah's, and with him his brothers', wrongdoing is turned to good.

Joseph acknowledges:- "God has sent me ahead of you to insure your survival on earth". Judah is the one who receives Jacob's dying blessing.

Thank you, David, for leading us through a very interesting shiur.

The group meets on the first Saturday of every month to discuss a theme chosen by the leader for that week. Peter Walters will lead us on March 4 th; Gary Webber will lead us on April 1 st., in the synagogue starting at 10 00 am. Do join us, everyone is welcome.

**Kate Withers**



## Parashat Bo

Exodus 10:1 - 13:16 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says YHWH, the God of the Hebrews; How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?"

This month Sylvia Murray led us in a close scrutiny of the first paragraph of the sidra. Toward the end of our hour the discussion broadened out to consider the many perceptions of God, and the mystery of anti-semitism.

Sidra Bo covers the last three of the Ten Plagues of Egypt, and Sylvia had us start off dramatically with the third verse. **So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says YHWH, the God of the Hebrews; How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?"**. Note that Moses and Aaron needed each other for mutual support when they went to petition Pharaoh. Their message was that YHWH claimed supremacy over Pharaoh whose name actually means 'Sun God'.

**"Let my people go that they may worship me."** The Hebrew is a commandment, not a request. 'Worship' is the (JPS) translation of a word from the root AVAD which has several senses including physical work / service and (in modern Hebrew) communal work / civil service, as well as spiritual worship / service. Does the translator have an agenda here (conscious or unconscious) and if so do we have to accept it?

Moses and Aaron warn Pharaoh of the forthcoming plague of locusts, then leave him and his advisers. The latter advise Pharaoh **".... Let the men go to worship."** i.e. leaving the women and children behind in accordance with Egyptian custom and practice. But when Pharaoh discusses this with Moses they are soon deadlocked. Moses wants everyone and

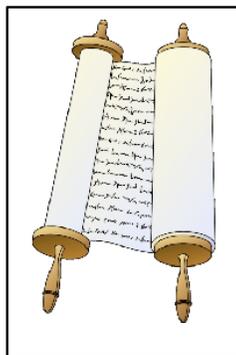
even their sheep and cattle to leave for the Festival, while Pharaoh will allow only the men to go. Moses and Aaron leave again and God commands Moses to call down the plague of locusts.

This short passage shows deep incompatibilities between Egyptian religion and customs and Hebrew religion and customs. In our global village even more religions rub up against each other, with the risk of generating conflict. If there is only one true God but many religions, are all the other religions false? An alternative possibility is that, since they have had different historical developments, each religion has a different perception of God. All religions agree that humankind cannot completely understand God, therefore each of these perceptions of God may be the Truth, but not the Whole Truth.

Turning more specifically to our own situation, could the irrational phenomenon of anti-Semitism be traced to an instinctive reaction against the claim of YHWH the Eternal One to be not only (on the one hand) the God of Israel but also (on the other hand) Creator of the Universe and therefore God of Everything. It is clearly futile to argue against a God of Everything, so perhaps it is instinctive to switch to Plan B. Which is, of course, to shoot the messenger.

Thank you Sylvia for guiding us to so many subtleties in so few verses.

**David Gilbert.**





## BRISTOL JEWISH COMMUNITY CLUB (Previously "Western Jewish Social Club")

It was with shock and great sadness that at the start of our January meeting we heard of the sudden death of our member Ann Handel. Ann had been a member right from the start and it was she who in a friendly and cheerful way made the teas each month and welcomed the members to her garden every summer for the Strawberry Tea. She is sadly missed.

Hilary Kay and Rosina Smith have been in hospital and we wish them both a speedy recovery.

The meeting in January, under our previous name, was a very interesting description of travelling alone through India given by Odi Allan. With maps and photographs Odi let us share her experiences, which at times were very beautiful and sometimes rather frightening but which we all appreciated being able to share with her.

On 8th February we held our inaugural meeting under our new name. It was a very special time of being told the history and development of the "Bagel" and watching our member, Betty Baker shaping, boiling and finally baking plates full of bagels. As they cooled, cream cheese and smoked salmon were piled on, sliced gerkins and cherry tomatoes were added and the whole experience was thoroughly enjoyed by a very select but small group.

This last meeting had been advertised with an open invitation to anyone who wished to come. Rather surprisingly only regular members came so there were very few of us to enjoy this special lunch.

There was a general discussion after lunch and it was agreed by everyone that the time had come to bring the meetings to an end. The Club was started fifteen years ago at a time when we had larger numbers of people not working during the daytime or otherwise not involved in regular activities. We were pleased that the monthly meetings have always been interesting and lively and many people had enjoyed and benefited from the group.

The success of the Club has been due to the many people who gave so generously of their time. Firstly, in the early days, by driving the minibus bringing members to and from the meetings and then throughout the whole period to individual drivers who gave lifts when needed. A special mention must be made of Hilary Kay who, for many years as Chairman, devoted numerous hours arranging interesting speakers and chairing meetings.

The Club has had the special benefit of not only bringing people together from the two synagogues in Bristol but welcoming Jewish members, who were not affiliated to their local communities, by giving them the opportunity to spend time in a Jewish atmosphere.

Members have made new friendships within the Club and as we parted people were already making plans to keep in touch and meet up in each other's homes.

On parting we all gave special thanks to Margaret Hanstead, supported by her husband David, who from the first day of setting up the Club have given so generously of their time.

**Kathy Berry**



# Book Group– The History of Love

## The History of Love, a novel by Nicole Kraus

The story revolves around a book that the young Leo Gursky wrote, whilst still in his home shtetl. The story is split into sections, each section is told from the viewpoint of one of three characters – Leo Gursky himself, as an old man in America; a young girl called Alma, named after the heroine of the book; and Zvi Litvinoff, the erstwhile friend of Leo, who gets the book out safely and then goes on to publish it in his own name believing that Leo is dead. All the characters (particularly Leo and Alma) have great sadness in their lives and the book is really about their struggle to retain a sense of love and purpose.

Views on the book ranged widely from those dismissing it as a book among many that uses Jewish-ness without real legitimacy, to those who found the book riveting and really enjoyed its fresh style. For my part, I was

sometimes irritated by the low standard of English (some thought this a deliberate stylistic point), but on the whole felt that this was a story that could only have been told in a Jewish post-holocaust setting. I was moved by the deep loneliness of Leo and the isolation of Alma and her younger brother, Bird. I found the excerpts from the book (the subject of the novel) irritating, though again others in the book club found them enchanting.

Two of us in the group had heard a brief extract from the novel on Radio 4 and were amazed at how different the book as a whole was from the impression we had gained from one little passage. I think that it is a strength of the book that you cannot predict the whole from any part. It is a complex, sometimes slightly surreal story that none-the-less is easy to read and very engrossing.

**Judith Lazarus**



## Book Group

We will be discussing 'In My Father's Court' by Isaac Bashevis Singer.

The following book will be 'A Tale of Love and Darkness' by Amos Oz.





# rites & practices

**Shabbat Services** are held at the synagogue, 43-47 Bannerman Road **every Friday evening at 8 pm** and **every Saturday morning at 11 am**. Please try to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the service begins.

## Friday evening services

Chavura suppers are held on the first Friday of each month (**3 March, 7 April & 5 May**). Those of us who attend find them a wonderful way to start Shabbat, and recommend anyone who hasn't yet been to one to come along. The service on these days will start at **6.30pm**. Please bring some food (as always vegetarian or fish) to share with others.

All other Friday services (**10, 17, 24, 31 March and 14, 21, 28 April**) will start at **8pm**.

## Forthcoming events

**Purim** falls on **Tuesday 14 March**. We shall be marking the event with a service & reading of the megillah on the **evening of Monday 13 March**, starting at 6pm.

First night of **Passover** is on **Wednesday 12 April**. As always, there will not be a service on the first night, but there will be festival services on **Thursday 13 April** at **11am**, the

evening of **Tuesday 18 April** at **8pm**, and **morning of Wednesday 19 April** at **11am**.

There will be a service for **Yom HaShoah** on **Monday 24 April** at **8pm**, with saying of kaddish and some form of study session.

## Advanced notice

**Shavuot** falls on **Friday 2 June**. There will be an evening service at **8pm** on **Thursday 1 June**, followed by study session. The tradition was to study all night; we have done that in Bristol in the past, but these days we simply see how long we last. It's usually a happy and interesting (if tiring) occasion. There will be a festival morning service at **11am** on **Friday 2 June**.

We shall mark **Tisha B'Av** with an evening service at **8pm** on **Wednesday 2 August**.

**David Jewell**  
Chair R&P committee.

## Lay Leadership Training

Do you think you could help others to pray?

Would you like to express your own spirituality more clearly?



Have you ever wanted to find your way around the torah scroll?

Would you like to understand our *minhag*?

If so, you might like to come to a training session for new Service leaders,



## ULPS Lectionary excerpt for Mar/Apr 2006

DATE	PORTION	TORAH READING	HAFTARAH
4 March	T'rumah	Ex. 25: 1-16 or 25:31-40 or 27: 1-8	I Kings 5:26-6:7 I Chronicles 22:1-13 I Kings 8:22-32 & 41-43
11 March <i>Zachor</i>	T'tzavveh	Ex. 27:20-28:12 or 29:1-9 or 29:44-30:10	Ezekiel 43:10-27 I Samuel 23:1-13
18 March	Ki Tisa	Ex. 31:1-17 or 32:1-14 or 34:1-10	II Chronicles 1:18-2:15 I Kings 18:20-39 Psalm 96
25 March	Vayakhel-P'kudey	Ex. 35:1-10 or 39:32-43 or 40:24-38	I Kings 7:40-51 I Kings 9:1-10 I Kings 8:1-14
1 April	Vayikra	Lev. 2:1-13 or 4:22-31 or 5:14-16	Isaiah 43:21-44:8 Ecclesiastes 5:1-19 Isaiah 33:2-16
8 April	Tzav Shabbat hagadol	Lev. 6:1-11 or 7:22-38 or 8:1-13	Malachi 3:4-24
13 April	Pesach first day	Exodus 12:37-42 & 13:3-10	Isaiah 43:1-2 & 10-21 or Nehemiah 9:6-31
15 April	Chol hamoed Pesach	Leviticus 23:1-8 or Exodus 33:12-23 or Exodus 34:1-8	Song of Songs 2:8-17 & 8:6-7 or Ezekiel 37:1-14
19 April	Pesach seventh day	Exodus 14:30-15:18 or Deuteronomy 4:32-40	Ezekiel 37:1-14 or Isaiah 11:1-12 & 11:16-12:6
22 April	Sh'mini	Lev. 9:1-10 or 10:1-11 or 11:1-12	I Chronicles 17:1-22 II Samuel 6:1-19 Ecclesiastes 6:1-12
29 April <i>Rosh chodesh Iyyar</i> <i>Atzmaut</i>	Tazria-M'tzora	Lev. 12:1-8 or 14:33-45 or 15:19-33	Micah 4:1-7 or Isaiah 60:1-22
6 May	Acharey mot- Kedoshim	Lev. 16:1-10 or 19:1-14 or 19:23-37	Jeremiah 11:1-14 Amos 9:7-15 II Kings 23:1-7 & 10-14
13 May	Emor	Lev. 23:1-14 or 23:23-38 or 24:1-9	Nehemiah 9:1-14 Psalm 81 II Chronicles 4:19-5:10