



ALONIM

Newsletter of the Bristol & West
Progressive Jewish Congregation

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ALONIM & E-LONIM copy date deadlines

Month	Copy date	Festivals covered, notices needed
October E-lonim	Tuesday 26th September	
Nov/ Dec Alonim	Wednesday 18th October	Chanukah
December E-lonim	Friday 24th November	
Jan/ Feb Alonim	Wednesday 13th December	Tu b'shevat/ Purim (notices about)

Editorial and Production Team

Judith Lazarus and Malcolm Rawles

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

For reasons of personal security, all contact details, dates and times have been removed.

Also all photographs, 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

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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.



With the crisis in Israel and Lebanon as yet unresolved, I leave it to others in this edition to comment apart from the following brief account of my feelings as a Jew at such a difficult time.

At times of crisis, we all need our friends and family to support us and help us through the darkest times. Whatever our political views, however much we may question their Government and Military Policies, and we must not desist from doing that if we wish, nevertheless, Israel and the Diaspora are physically and emotionally attached as if they were twins, with the same parents, and as in the best of families, we must be there for each other.

This was certainly evident these past weeks in the Synagogue and we have gained much comfort in being together.

If Israel had not existed the lives of countless

numbers of Jews and their children now in Israel would have been at serious risk throughout the World; arguably close to as many as perished in the Holocaust would have faced continued persecution. Their descendents are the new generation in modern Israel and they are entitled to the same peaceful lives as you and I.

An evening to come together and discuss these matters is being planned after the Summer Holiday period. Meanwhile, I have asked the Editor to kindly reprint the Liberal Judaism leaflet on Israel and Zionism which you may find helpful (see page 6 & 7).

Robert Hurst
Chair



Squeaks of the Scribe's Quill

While living and working in Nigeria as a young scientist I met and was befriended by Moslem people, who invariably behaved towards me with cordiality and respect. One Lebanese man took me home for dinner and introduced me to his beautiful 17 year old daughter, who served us a wonderful meal. I think he wanted us to be more than just good friends! I can never forget the hospitality and kindness shown me then and later on when in Israel. My kibbutz employed some Arab Israelis with whom I shared meals and conversations and I also met socially other Israeli Arabs, Christian and Moslem. From them I learnt the vital truth that Jews and Moslems are essentially alike. We share more than merely a monotheistic perspective on the Divine. We are also related; Abraham is our common Patriarch; we have the same blood line, a common blood-stock. Which means that when we shed that blood we are wounding ourselves.

We all know and understand that, and wonder why the 'other side', the Arabs, continue to attack us and try to kill us. Why do they have such an implacable hatred of Israel? What is it about this little sliver of land that so offends them? If we look at a map of the world and colour in the Moslem countries green we can easily see they have huge territories, so why do they want all of this tiny country called Israel? If we add the populations of the

Moslem countries together to give us a total count of Moslems, even excluding Moslem citizens of non-Moslem countries we end up with a huge number; far greater than the number of Jews in Israel, so why are they so afraid of Israelis? The effect of Israel on the consciousness of Moslems seems out of proportion. Why do they become so worried, excited and offended by the Jewish State?

When I was asked by a Roman Catholic Chaplain at the prison where I work [looking after the few Jewish inmates] to pray for peace in the Middle East I agreed. We were joined by our Moslem colleague. I said a prayer expressing hope for peace for Israelis and Palestinians, acknowledging the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples. The Moslem prayed for justice for the Palestinians and didn't even mention Israel. He couldn't bring himself to say the word! On a later occasion we met at a conference and when we were by ourselves he asked me why Israelis were so warlike and aggressive.

It seems to me that there may be more than one perception of reality. In the Jewish mind there may be various attitudes towards Moslems; some may consider them as friends, others view them as hostile. In the Moslem mind similarly there may be some who are prepared to befriend Jews and Israelis. There was, perhaps still is, an Israeli in Bristol who owns and runs a falafel stall in the centre of town, who employed an Iraqi and a



Palestinian. It is not impossible for me to appreciate that some Arabs are friendly and others are not, even towards other Arabs. We know that some people from the Moslem tradition violently attack other Moslems; as the violence in Iraq shows. Iran, for example, fought a bitter war with Iraq just a few years ago, at fearful cost in terms of casualties; three quarters of a million dead on each side. Yet these are both Moslim countries. The violence in the Darfur region of Sudan is also amongst Moslems.

I think that Moslems themselves generally suffer far more than Jews or Israelis from violence and intimidation from their fellow Moslems. Perhaps this is why the *quran* teaches its message of peace; to civilise those who would behave savagely and stabilise societies ravaged by conflict.

For victims of violent attacks it is immaterial whether the perpetrator is a Christian, a Jew or another Moslem. They need help to recover and rebuild their lives and protection from further atrocity. The continent of Europe, nominally mostly Christian countries, suffered many wars, causing untold misery, death and destruction. Different types of Christians fought amongst themselves for power as well as fighting against Moslems and attacking Jews.

Yet the way in which societies treat minorities like the Jews can be an indication of

their attitude towards those of other faiths as well as their own. When the Nazis started attacking the Jews of Europe some people may have thought it was just a problem for us, but the Nazis soon attacked other people too; Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Belgians, Danes, French, etc. etc.... We can understand, with sadness and regret, that it may be the same amongst the Moslem countries. Those who have benign governments, who do not persecute Jews and who accept Israel, are less likely to attack others. But those having aggressive attitudes towards Jews and Israel may be just as quick to attack other Moslems. I fear for the welfare of my Arab brothers and sisters in the future as the Islamo-fascism taught in the Arab press may rebound in the years ahead and come back to haunt them. Aggressive behaviour, if it becomes the norm, could be committed amongst themselves; Moslem dictators might strive for power like Hitler and Stalin in the past, leading mighty nations and many peoples to war, whilst Israel will persist and remain stable and strong, as long as we trust in the Almighty, our Rock and our Redeemer.

Rabbi Francis Ronald Berry



Gardening with a difference!

The sun shone (well mostly), the people came and music played. Yes, the Summer Garden Party echoed to the sounds of laughter, music and the demolition of the largest pile of sandwiches and scones ever recorded in Chipping Sodbury.

Hosted by Lisa & Steve Marrett, their enormous garden was a perfect venue for members of the Shul and guests from the Bristol Hebrew congregation to enjoy the heat wave and have fun. The party proved a huge success with stalls, Olympic Games (bingo is now being lobbied for London in 2012 after an epic battle) and plenty of fun activities for the kids.

Superb organisation by Miranda Harris and Daren Gordon was supplemented by a host of volunteers who helped the afternoon run smoothly despite tropical conditions.

Rounding things off were BWPJC's very own answer to John Dankworth and Cleo Lane. Trudi Mosiamo (vocals) and Yuval Gabay (drums), were joined by Jon Stein (keyboards) and Yoav Ben Shlomo (sax and flute) to provide a smooth combination of modern ballads and jazz standards.

The musical set was timed to perfection as rain stopped play, but the torrential downpour did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of everyone involved with an encore for 2007 already being scored and the green shoots of new ideas starting to emerge.

Peter Brill



- FORUM - Israel/Palestine

Written on 9 July 2006

I have to admit that I'm not reading much news at this moment. It is far too painful for me to read much of how Israel is behaving in Gaza right now. I have to admit it's more than painful reading the Guardian reports of Palestine and Israel.

When I returned from a 3 week visit to Israel some 4 weeks ago I was filled with a positiveness, filled with, believe it or not, a kind of pride for Israel, the kind we all used to have 40 or 50 years ago, when Israel was a young State, just establishing itself. What has happened since then?

I was thinking this morning that the history of the Jewish people has been so filled with atrocities against ourselves, culminating, though not ending with the holocaust, that there is a collective voice saying never again. It seems burned deep into the Israeli psyche that now we have established our State of Israel, a place where, technically, Jews can be safe, that we are going to defend it with all our might (and the 6 Day War shows what power we do have). Defend it with all our might, come hell or high water. Not only this, but our history and our continued suffering through the ages, gives us the absolute and unequivocal right to defend ourselves up to the hilt. If anyone dares to attack us, or injure us in any way, then we will fight back, for now we are a proud and grown up nation. This is very much the Israeli psyche, although not necessarily that of all its inhabitants, of which more later.

Of course, the flaw in this whole argument, the gaping hole, which the Israeli government seems unable to see, is that defending oneself in this utterly paranoid, and one sided fashion does not listen, does not see, does not take account of those who you call persecutors, who are, in another world view, the Palestinian people. These are people with rights to self determination (as the Jewish people have fought and dreamed of for

centuries), people with human hearts and human feelings, people with families, lives, jobs, hopes and dreams of their own. The current situation I believe is absolutely tragic. I also have to remember that whatever is portrayed in the media, however graphic and sensational is not the whole of Israel. There are many many sensitive and thoughtful individuals in Israel, who must be as horrified as I am at the atrocities in Gaza, but it is a different situation when you live in the country that I have just described, from when you live outside it. My wife lived in Israel for 8 years, and was in the Israeli army, but that was in less extreme times than now. The Israeli army has always been an immense symbol of pride to the Israelis. It has had something in its egalitarian approach and structure which has marked it apart from other armies in the world. But take another look at the activities in Gaza, and what can you say? I can only pray and hope that somewhere down the line there will be a change.

I can write no more at this time, and I recognise that some people may find this piece difficult as do I. I would welcome some encouraging responses that might point a way to how Israel could change its so strong, so powerful, so deep attitude, which fuels its political and military policies.

I should add, that on my return from Israel I was incensed that UK universities were about to impose a boycott on contact with Israeli Universities. I was incensed, since I knew that there were many people in Israeli Universities who were working in many different ways towards peace. Looking now, from the outside at Israel, what can I say to defend my position?

Julian Brown

Malvern



The third of this series took place on Sunday 21st July at the University Chaplaincy, Priory Road, Bristol. I understand that this group grew out of the collaborative work of members from the Muslim organisations, from both Jewish Synagogue Communities, and student bodies. The meetings follow the format of presentations, small and large group discussion, with plenty of time for more informal chat over refreshments. The focus of the discussion for this meeting was The Role Of Women and it was very well attended by members of all congregations - Muslim, Jewish, Christian, men, and women.

Ariella Levy, wife of the Orthodox Jewish Student Chaplain, started the discussion with the question 'Are women, within Judaism, given a bad deal?' She spoke about the morning prayers – men thank God for not being made a woman - but only because they have the opportunity to do Mitzvot that are not required of women, - while women are given perhaps the more satisfying prayer that expresses gratitude for being made according to God's Will – that is, just right! ('ratzon' - will –the sort that creates the earth, the land)

We then examined the text Genesis Chapter 27 to which Ariella gave the title 'The Power of a Woman's Voice'. Here Rivka hears Isaac preparing to bless Esau before his death and persuades Jacob to take Esau's place to capture

the blessing for himself. How did Rivka use her voice? Was she manipulative, deceiving and underhand, as it would seem, and if so why? We learned that perhaps she was using that special intelligence particular to women, 'binah', which implies deep thought, understanding and foresight. She was putting things right according to the way it had to be.

For me, this discussion was very satisfying, finding just enough information to tip the scales in favour of exonerating Rivka's action, while still leaving room to wonder about the details of the stories that are lost in the mists of Biblical times, and to ponder on the mysterious interaction between human will and the Will of God.

From the Islamic viewpoint, Rivka is prohibited from having foresight or special knowledge of God's Will – Mohammed took advice from his wives but only the Prophets are inspired by God and we have learnt from previous discussion that the Islamic God is known to be perfect, 'infallible' whereas Jews, from our Biblical ancestors to Topol, seem to be complaining, and arguing or negotiating with God.

The Muslim speaker (I apologise that I do not have her name) introduced her presentation by asking whether there need be any question about the place of women within Islam – there is so much in the verses of the basic texts (eg



Quran Ch 33 the Confederates V 35) where God's instruction is equally disposed to men and women. 'Rights' are given to women within Islam as fundamental – so there is no necessity for debate or reform. The fact is, for both orthodox Judaism and Islam, that women and men have different but complementary roles. Whether these roles are seen or experienced as **equal** is another question, together with whether equality is desirable. Men are deemed to be 'a degree above women' and the fact that Muslim men are allowed to have four wives was, for this discussion, attributed to the fact that men are created differently, that is to be not monogamous, which brought some lively responses from the group. Multiple marriage also ensures that women have plenty of opportunity to be looked after within the institution of marriage and the Islamic court is there to uphold the rights of the woman within the marriage. The discussion referred to the interaction not just between Man and God, but also between the state and religious law, as well as cultural and traditional norms and expectations. The Muslim woman is given the right **not** to work and it was pointed out that the feminist movement in Islam shifts towards conservative traditionalism rather than away from it, as in the West

I have reported only a small part of the discussion that explored the interface between

Man and God, man and woman, state and religious law, culture and religious tradition, 'western' and non-western culture, and much more. Some of the greater differences in the roles of women lie perhaps in the distinction between the orthodox philosophy and practice of both Islam and Judaism, and the more liberal and secular expression of both.

Such events as these are a wonderful opportunity to meet and learn about Islam, and to discuss our similarities and our differences. I have yet to discover whether there are several 'denominations' of Islamic religious community, but I came away from this particular evening's discussion very aware of, perhaps, the good sense of encouraging different ways of embracing Judaism. It is a privilege to have so many opportunities to continue my personal 'struggle with God'

- 'Israel' – Struggle with God
- 'Islam' – self -Surrender to God

Clare Sandler



I am writing this on **Day 28** of the present conflict in the Middle East. I hope and pray that by the time you read it, a ceasefire will long since have been declared. This is simply an account of some of the things I've done, said and thought in the last 28 days.

Days 1 and 2: In Sheffield, helping out with my granddaughters. Take Naomi, who will be ten on August 12th, a special present. I give it to her early, because on July 31st she will fly out to Israel with the family and will spend her birthday with her grandfather, who lives on a kibbutz close to Hadera. She will also see her uncle, who is in the last year of his National Service in the Israeli army. My son Ben and I discuss the war a bit, but not much.

Day 3: Start to receive many e-mails about the war. Some are from good friends both in the community and outside it. Others from the group *Jews for Justice for Palestinians*. Passions run high. People are fearful, worried, angry, shocked. For as many as oppose the war, there are others who strongly support it. And some who are simply bewildered and confused. The papers are full of shocking images and uncomfortable statistics. I discuss all this with my partner.

Day 9: An account of the situation in Beirut, written by a Jewish eyewitness, makes me weep. But I am conscious of the need for some sort of objectivity. I write a sermon for my forthcoming service. Receive a phone call from a friend, who is training to be a rabbi, and is in Haifa at an Ulpan. She is enjoying a Friday night meal outside a café, when she hears and sees some explosions. She catches the first plane home. "I don't do wars", she says.

Day 10: Not many at my service. I give a sermon about balance. "How can we ever hope to develop a sense of inner peace, when the world is in such turmoil?" I ask. "How can we ever know what is the right response to a situation so emotive and controversial?" Perhaps, I say, we can we use the Kabbalistic paradigm of the Four Worlds, the world of action, the world of emotion, the world of intellect and the world of Spirit, to try to achieve a more balanced outlook on the situation. To ask if there is anything we can *do*, to acknowledge how we *feel*, to gather more information in an attempt to *understand*, to remember and respect our common humanity?

Day 12 :With other members of our community, I attend a meeting of the Jewish/Muslim Dialogue. I am conscious of the importance of *building* bridges, particularly when so many bridges are being physically destroyed.

Day 13: Speak to Ben on the phone about his forthcoming trip. He assures me that everything in Israel is "normal", that there is nothing to worry about. I worry and wish him a happy holiday. A close friend commiserates, but is very challenging.

Day 17: Meet Lisa, an American Jewish woman, who strongly opposes the war. She has recently spent time in Israel with a project called *Compassionate Listening*. We find much common ground.

Day 19: The day my daughter-in-law is due to fly out to Israel with the children, to join Ben. News of Cana breaks. I am horrified by what I



read and hear, and I can see no prospect of a swift or easy end to these hostilities. I telephone her, hoping they have changed their minds, but, in spite of mixed feelings, she has decided they will go as planned.

Day 20: Attend a meeting of South Gloucestershire *Faithnet* and hear a talk by a young Muslim Community leader. I am impressed by his honesty and openness, and we engage in dialogue about what we have in common, rather than what separates us.

Day 22: Attend a meeting in Henleaze, where a Muslim woman from Lebanon, stranded in Bristol and separated from loved ones since the beginning of the war, speaks very movingly about the situation. We are a mixed group, several of us Jewish. She speaks without rancour or bitterness, and when I tell her that my family is in Israel, she hugs me warmly and says: "We are both in the same boat." I feel humbled by her generosity of spirit.

Day 24 : Attend a vigil opposite the Hippodrome, where I quietly add my voice to those who support a cease fire and express my opposition to the war. I renew my acquaintance with the woman from Lebanon, whose first words to me are: "Are your grandchildren safe?"

Day 25: Hear with horror that a rocket has exploded in Hadera, just a few miles from where my family are. Receive a troubled message from my son. Hardly sleep.

Day 26: We speak on the phone, and he tells me that the sirens and rocket have seriously traumatised Naomi. They are clearly deeply shocked and frightened and have decided to come home. I e mail my new friend from Lebanon sharing that news with her. She replies: "I've just read the news to realise there have been casualties again on both sides. I opened my mail box to see something cheerful other than the bloody war. I found your e mail. It made me feel as if my family was the one heading here. Hope they will arrive here soon and put your mind at peace. I am very pleased that I had the opportunity to meet you too. Salam/shalom..."

Today is **Day 28** and I have just heard that my family are safely home in Sheffield. I am of course greatly relieved, but I know it's by no means the end. For any of us.

I have learnt a lot in this last month.

That, whatever my political viewpoint, the well-being and safety of my loved ones is my main concern, and that of most reasonable people. That friends can be supportive, even if they don't share my viewpoint. An often demanding dialogue has been a vital and invaluable part of my process. My encounter with the woman from Lebanon will stay with me for a long while. I appreciated the value of that simple human contact, feeling, as I do, powerless and very sad. In a bleak situation, it seems to offer a small glimmer of hope.

Sheila Yeger

August 2006



Jacob's Gift by Jonathan Freedland

When Jonathan Freedland became a father for the first time, he became curious about his Jewish inheritance, which until then he had taken for granted. He wanted to know more about his family tree and what exactly he was passing on to his newborn son. So, he explored his family history and it is clear that Jonathan comes from a high profile, high-achieving, principled lineage. We are given details of three of his family members of particular interest.

Nat/Menachem Mindel was Jonathan's great great uncle. He was born in Dunilovich, Russia, and emigrated to England with his family in 1903. Nat became a British citizen, served in the British Army and was posted to Palestine. He later became a civil servant, working for the British, in Palestine, during the formative years and birth of the state of Israel. Nat became responsible for immigration and had to find solutions to the conflicting interests of the British and the Zionists. Nat was eventually awarded an OBE.

Mick Mindel (a distant cousin of Nat and Jonathan's great uncle) worked in the sweatshops of the East End. He became a communist as a natural response to the poverty around him. Mick became leader of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers and fought constantly to make the world a better place for everyone who lived in poverty.

The story of Sara, Jonathan's mother, is heartbreaking. She was born in Israel but brought to England as a child. Her life is a catalogue of loneliness and loss, until she met Michael Freedland.

Through these biographies, Jonathan brings us a great deal of social history and an inside view of many significant milestones in the lives of Jewish people. He also uses the stories to raise points of discussion such as what exactly is a Jew?

His writing style is rather variable. The book starts with an absorbing and intriguing analysis of what it means to be Jewish in England today. However, when Jonathan is telling the story of Nat, he writes from historical sources and some anecdotes from people who knew him. Unfortunately, this section of the book, though historically interesting, is written more in the style of a historical novel than a biography, and includes some rather immature and irritating prose. However, when Jonathan writes from his own experience, or presents his own thoughts and arguments, he is brilliant and it is for this reason that I recommend this book.

Wendy Kingdom

Jacob's Gift pub. by Penguin Books
ISBN 0-141-01491-1
Price £8.99

TIKKUN OLAM

Peter Walters chose Tikkun Olam as the topic for this month's Shiur. What – he asked as introduction – did we understand by this concept? Amongst the replies were:- 'repairing the world', 'working towards completion', 'moving towards an ideal world'.

The discussion then centred upon Creation. How could God create something that was separate from Himself? God cannot be contained. Somehow He would need to 'withdraw'; somehow 'reduce the Density of His Divinity'.

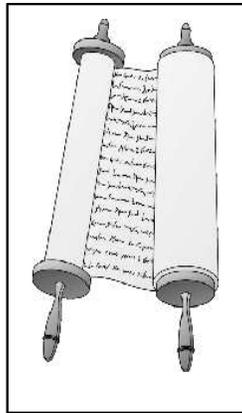
How can God's Creation be imperfect? One tradition suggests that God's first attempts failed when what He created shattered. *'In the beginning the Earth was without form and void'*. We are uncomfortable with the idea that God can make mistakes. In the process of evolution many things just did not work. Mistakes? Or Process? *'Let there be Light'*. In this explosion of Energy God expressed His very nature. The world exploded into being, Creation shattered, and

now the shards must be brought back together again – Tikkun Olam. In Kabbalistic terms there are two principles behind Creation – Form and Force (Energy). Force without Form is explosive, destructive. Form without Force is useless. (A reflection of this can be seen in the splitting of the atom. While in balance the atom has form; split, it becomes energy totally without form.) Our task is to restore the balance between the two.

I found the ideas broached in the discussion very interesting, and I hope I have done them justice in this report. Many thanks, Peter, for taking me deeper into the realms of Tikkun Olam.

The group meets on the first Shabbat of the month, at 10am, before the Morning Service. Everyone is most welcome.

Kate Withers



MIDDLE YIDDISH

Middle Yiddish is considered to cover the period 1500 -1750 - a time when Poland had become the centre of Jewish activity in Europe. Also during this period printing was invented which was to have a profound effect - Yiddish became a written language as well as a spoken one, using Hebrew characters.

With the absorption of Slavic elements into Yiddish from Polish, the difference between the eastern and western dialects increased and in fact from around 1700, the western Yiddish dialect went into slow decline whereas eastern Yiddish strengthened and spread into Lithuania, White Russia,, Ukraine, Romania and the Baltic States. It should be borne in mind that although there were distinct Jewish residential areas there was no real partition from the outside world and thus the vernacular language was spoken in addition to Yiddish which was essential for social interaction and particularly trading purposes.

The dialectal differences occurring during this period are interesting. As an example - to buy meat (mod. German : Fleisch kaufen) - in western Yiddish was kafn flash. In the area where the western and eastern dialects converged it was koyfn flaysh whereas in Lithuanian Yiddish it was keyfn fleys and in Ukranian Yiddish koyfn fleysh.

Now that Yiddish was recorded in written form , its variation from other German dialects can be examined. A very distinctive difference is that Yiddish never shows vowel variations in the present tense which occur in Middle High German and modern German. As a

example:

'know'	sg.	Pl
MHG 1 st . Person	weiz	wizzen
Yiddish	veys	veysen.

With the advent of printing came translations of the Bible into Yiddish - known as the Teitch-Chumesh dating back to 1544 (the Augsburg and Constance versions). Story books (mayses bicher) were popular. These were collections of tales, legends and accounts of religious persons. These books were aimed at the poorly educated and also women - in a style known as vayber-taytsh (lit. womens' German). The Yiddish press also began with the bi-weekly publication of Kurantn (The News) in Amsterdam in 1686. Originals of this publication exist only between Aug 1686 and Dec. 1687 - the others are presumed stolen during the 1970s when being transferred from the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam to the National Library in Jerusalem.

Middle Yiddish reached its literary peak with the work of Elijah Bochur Levita - poet and philosopher - who produced the Bove Bukh (Isny 1541) which was inspired by the Anglo_Norman epic poem Bove d'Antona. Also of note are the supplicatory prayers for women, like those of Sarah Bas Tovim and the Memoirs of Glueckel Hameln.



The birth of modern Yiddish is generally considered to date from 1750 and I will explore this in the next article.

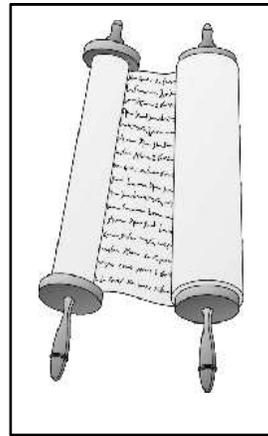
Malcolm Rawles



FORGIVENESS

In this month's discussion Sylvia Murray asked us to contribute our thoughts on *forgiveness*.

There is much in Jewish ritual to do with God's mercy and forgiveness, and with the attitude of the sinner vis-à-vis God. Until the destruction of the Temple sacrifice played a dominant role. Repentance, fasting and prayer, restitution and atonement all have their place; but what about personal relationships – myself and another human being who has wronged me? If a person has done me a grave injury and I still feel angry inside, is true forgiveness possible? The act of accepting an apology, if one is offered, will help restore the balance, lessening the guilt of the sinner, and giving the person sinned against the opportunity to grow above their anger and resentment. Refusal to forgive compounds the sin, and can lead to acts of revenge, even injuring those who had no part in the original offence.



bear any grudge....but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Leviticus 19 v.18).

Sometimes the injury is so great and the hurt so deep that we can feel that forgiveness is impossible, as, for instance, in the case of betrayal, or murder of a loved one, or where the person is the victim of continuous malicious lies. Besides resisting the urge to retaliate, what can that person do to lessen their pain? Forgiveness is a process. It takes time. We cannot help having feelings, but we can control our actions. Positive thinking, praying for the offender over a period of time, a fortnight even, could be enough for something to happen inside, enabling the victim's feelings towards the offender to change and forgiveness to become possible.

Thank you, Sylvia, for leading us into such a practical topic for everyday living.

On the one side, to avoid the cycle of revenge, compensation and restitution are prescribed in Torah; on the other, the person sinned against is admonished: *You shall not avenge nor*

Kate Withers



The Rabbi and the Flood.

Let me tell you the story of a Rabbi who was caught in a flood. It was originally told me by my dear friend Peter Hyams, a man of great good humour. The story is funny as well as serious.

So here was this Rabbi, in his house, absorbed in studying Torah. He was oblivious to the river and a rising flood. A passing lifeboat offered help, but he sent them away, saying he was alright. Eventually though, the rising water forced the Rabbi to go to the upper floor where he continued his studies. When the waters rose also to that level, a second lifeboat came to save him. As before he spurned nay offer of help.

But the waters rose further and the Rabbi was forced to get up on to the roof of the house to continue his studies there. The rescue services sent a helicopter to save him. But to no avail; again he spurned help.

Well, I am afraid I have to tell you, the Rabbi drowned. And when he came to heaven he railed at God saying: I trusted You, and You have let me down. But God said to

him: What are you talking about? I sent you not one lifeboat but two as well as a helicopter and you spurned them all. So what exactly is your complaint?

That was the story, May be it was the way Peter told it but I laughed heartily. Then I became curious. There was something about the story that invited reflection. Perhaps, I thought, it was all about the great Jewish practice of devotional study and how this may have made the Rabbi rather too otherworldly. Could it be that he believed his devotion was sufficient for God to suspend the laws of nature and hold back the waters just for him? Then I came across an old Chassidic saying that seemed to go to the heart of the matter. I submit it for discussion. Here it is :

“He who believes in miracles is a fool.

He who does not believe in miracles lives without faith”

See you in Shul,

Joachim Schapiro



If you like Klezmer or Jewish Music

I would like to tell you all about a great music web site I have discovered on the Internet. Some of you may have already found it. To those that haven't may I introduce Passion Music? Web link = <http://www.passiondiscs.co.uk>.

This is a specialist web site that sells music CDs, books, and DVDs. They specialise in folk, gypsy, traditional, roots and contemporary music from Eastern Europe.

So why am I recommending this site? Well, if you are fond of Jewish Music such as Klezmer you will find it virtually impossible to buy in Bristol. So in my quest to obtain some CDs of this genre of music I discovered and made use of this company.

They have a section on Jewish music and I was delighted with my purchases, so much that I felt others might find this web site useful. Much of the music can be sampled on line, to see if the disc would be right for you.

One disc I bought is '**Yiddish Songs, traditionals (1911 - 1950)**.'

This is a four disc set of traditional Jewish music to Yiddish swing with some well-known names and some not so well known, but all a delight to listen to. Many are archive recordings.

Artists include Abe Schwartz Orchestra, Natufle Brandwein, Molly Picon, Max Leibowitz, Joseph Doldenstein and many others.

Other CDs available are for example music by the **Budapest Klezmer Band** coming from the heart of Europe, from the very geographic location where Klezmer music originates. The Band's performance is an exciting musical experience in traditional Jewish folklore. Then there is **Muzsikás** who have a wonderful CD featuring 'The Lost Jewish Music of Transylvania -Szól a kakas már'. Everybody knows klezmer music, but what we can hear on this exceptional album is the ancestor of klezmer - the forgotten old Jewish music of the Carpathian Basin, hauntingly beautiful and highly recommended.



Then there is **Jewish Songs from Bulgaria'** featuring Various Artists

The music is arranged by Nikolai Kaufman. On this album you will find ancient Jewish songs from Bulgaria, these are sung in three different languages: Ladino (ancient Spanish dialect of the Sephardim Jews), Yiddish and Hebrew.

If you are on a budget then why not try '**The Rough Guide to Klezmer Music'** again featuring Various Artists.

This album includes performances by: The Klezmatiks, Klez Conservatory Band, Naftule Brandwein, Budowitz, Kroke, Brave Old World, Harry Kandel's Orchestra and Alicia Svigals.

So with that I hope I may have whetted your appetites.

Bernard Price