



# ALONIM

Newsletter of the Bristol & West  
Progressive Jewish Congregation

*Elul/Tishrei/Cheshvan 5767*  
*September/October 2007*

# עלונים



## INSIDE ALONIM THIS ISSUE

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Editorial p. 2                              | FORUM- Is it Good for the Jews? p. 12 & 13 |
| From the Chair p.3                          |  |
| From the Rabbi p. 4 & 5                     | The Arab & the Jew p. 14                   |
| FORUM- Spare Us, Please!<br>p. 6 & 7        | Sons of Father Abraham<br>p. 15            |
| FORUM- Third Millennium<br>Judaism p. 8 & 9 | Slimbridge p. 16 & 17                      |
| FORUM-If it isn't Broken<br>p.10            | FORUM- Leaving to Zion<br>p. 18 & 19       |
| FORUM- Our Commitment<br>to LJ p. 11        | Writing for Alonim p. 20                   |

# High Holy Days Issue

  
liberal judaism



Well, summer is over and the High Holy Days are upon us again. A new year begins. Alonim seems to be going from strength to strength as more people contribute.

If you have something that you would like to write, but have not yet put pen to paper perhaps you will feel encouraged to read Judy's piece on 'Writing for Alonim' (page 21).

We wish you well over the fast and a very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

The Editors

### ALONIM & E-LONIM copy date deadlines

Month	Copy date	Festivals covered, notices needed
October E-Lonim	Monday 24th September	
Nov/Dec Alonim	Tuesday 19th October	Chanukah
December E-Lonim	Sunday 25th November	
Jan/Feb Alonim	Monday 17th December	Tu b'sh'vat

Editorial and Production

*Judith Lazarus, Malcolm Rawles and Jill Pomerance*

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

For reasons of 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 am writing this on one of this summer's rare sunny days, and hope by the time Alonim is out, everyone will feel revived and refreshed for the New Year ahead. This time of year, when we celebrate Rosh Hashana, always feels to me like a new start. Children and young people start new terms at schools and universities – and I do hope they all got the exam results they wanted and needed and wish everyone great success in new classes, new schools, new universities and new jobs. For the rest of us, life may not be linked so closely to new academic terms, but there is still the opportunity to get involved in new things. I would like to ask anyone who thinks they may wish to volunteer for any aspect of our synagogue or community life, or simply to find out what possibilities there might be now or in the future, to give me a ring or send me an email and we can talk.

The last issue of Alonim had a fascinating and rich number of articles, some of which were centred on the question of whether our community should stay under the umbrella of LJ or branch out independently. I imagine there may be a few more contributions in this issue. Council discussed this briefly in July, and I want to reassure anyone who may feel a

decision is somehow already being made, that this is not the case. As a community we may feel we need an informed debate on the issue in due course, whether this happens or not, no decision will be taken without full participation from the community.

On the synagogue maintenance front, I am pleased to let you know that we have now received planning permission for a new window in the Kiddush area above the piano, so we can look forward to more light one day soon.

Please do take the time to read the enclosed letter detailing this year's Yom Kippur Appeal.

Shana Tova  
**Keren Durant**  
Chair of Council



### Squeaks of the Scribe's Quill

When my wife and I bought our property in Brittany we didn't know how it would develop, but we knew that we were going to have to do a lot of work to develop it. There were two derelict houses and over five acres of wild scrubland. Now, nine years later, the second house is coming to the end of its renovation. I have enjoyed the project and been able to learn a lot about processes and materials, but the main effect has been to develop my own patience and the care that I put into things. If I had known at the beginning how much time and attention it was all going to take and how much money would need to be invested we might have felt extremely doubtful and been daunted. We might have decided to play it safe and kept our money 'safely' invested in shares and bonds, therefore would have lost it all in the last stock market crash! Instead, being impulsive and reckless, we charged ahead and despite mistakes have, by and large, stuck to our overall plan, notwithstanding some setbacks. Nevertheless, when we look around now at our newly renovated 'old house' we cannot help feeling some pride and a certain feeling of amazement when we remember how derelict it used to be. It would have been difficult to imagine how it would turn out.

Yet, looking ahead into the future can be quite inspiring. It is a way of taking control of time and instilling some predetermined intent into it. Of course events may not turn out exactly the way you plan, so it is best to be pragmatic enough to accept things may have to change and be flexible and adaptable. Nevertheless, planning is a way of looking

ahead and determining how one is going to spend one's time and where one is going to put one's effort. As such it is a lever on life, exerting control perhaps to the only extent humanly possible. Each year at this time I engage in this sort of attempt to predetermine the future as I look into the year ahead and plan my days, building into my calendar a complex network of Services and lessons, meetings and conferences. In this way my time becomes organised as my 'free' time becomes more and more limited. Yet I feel quite exhilarated by this activity as it gets me looking forward to engaging with my various types of work for the coming year. I find myself looking forward to the start of my teaching, to the interactions and the dynamics, which define my professional existence. It makes me feel my time is worthwhile.

There is a famous quote by the medieval Jewish religious philosopher Bachya ibn Pekuda [c.1050 – 1120] who wrote the book 'Duties of the Heart': "Days are scrolls; write on them what you want to be remembered". This is really an exhortation to lead an ethical life, not to sully the days of one's lifetime by besmirching them with wrongdoing and sinfulness.

Hopefully, consideration in advance and planning how one wants to spend each day is a technique for avoiding sin and preventing wrongdoing. To look at this from another angle, my mother used to say; 'The devil makes work for idle hands'. In other words, if one has no plan and is wasting time, it seems much easier to get into trouble. Very few people actually plan to get into trouble or intend to do wrong or commit sin



intentionally, though of course there are some that do. So at this time of the year, as I plan ahead to sort out my professional intentions over the coming year I combine that with a glance back at the past so that I can incorporate some of the lessons I have learnt and avoid repeating some mistakes. Mistakes become merely learning experiences when after taking them, we take them into account when completing the rest of our life. After all, we do not need to keep on making the same old mistakes, do we?

Maybe this sounds too easy! Actually we are human beings and people do keep on repeating the same old mistakes because we have bad habits, repetitive patterns of wrong behaviour which are so familiar it sometimes

seems we can't escape no matter how hard we try! However human fallibility is recognised by Jewish tradition, which is perhaps why we have liturgical devices to enable us to transcend it. Our tendency to become trapped by bad habits is dealt with by the series of High Holy Days approaching, in which we can congregate as a community to bring peer group pressure and prayer together in a common endeavour to improve our behaviour and plan for a better future. This is our joint project – I look forward to your assistance!

**Rabbi Francis Ronald Berry**



In his article “A Very Liberal Synagogue” in the previous Alonim, Peter Walters told us of his vision of a “liberal” (but not “Liberal”) synagogue.

We, in Bannerman Road, are a “Liberal” (but not “liberal”) Synagogue. I would like to discuss our Liberalism in comparison with Peter’s vision. There is some common ground but we developed on lines he would not have approved.

He does not like affiliation to a body. We have always been affiliated, right from our beginning, to the body now known as “Liberal Judaism”. Affiliation gives us a wide rabbinic support and common ground with similar synagogues elsewhere. I merely state this as a general good. I am not concerned here with current discussions on affiliation.

Next, the Liberal Synagogue has a feature not found, indeed maligned, in Peter’s vision. We have a “viewpoint”. It is called Liberalism or, more generally, Progressive Judaism. In a few words (of my own), it is the viewpoint which respects Torah but takes a critical look at the authority of Torah. I need not go into details here. There is plenty of literature and a website on the subject.

Also, I have discussed some of my views in the article ‘Torah – Miracle or History’ on p.28 of the previous Alonim. All I wish to say here is that our viewpoint reflects a positive approach to the religion. This distinguishes it from the anarchist (his word) approach in Peter’s vision.

However, Peter does place emphasis on the right use of resources to promote an understanding of Jewishness. I had thought that this is what we Liberals were doing anyway. Perhaps Peter thinks we do not pay

enough attention to the classical resources. The classical Torah studies are important, but so is modern Jewish religious literature, say, since 1800.”

We part company with Peter when it comes to his insistence on the use of a traditional Siddur. This inevitably means an Orthodox Siddur. He says that such a Siddur has resources not otherwise available. I wonder. All prayer books have the same basic structure but differ by elaborations, translations and commentaries depending on the attitude of the issuing authorities. Which one does Peter have in mind? New editions are coming out all the time and even the most traditional ones start taking notice of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For example, the 1992 Siddur of the United Synagogue was superseded in 2006, i.e. only 14 years later, by a new edition. In the 1992 edition the Chief Rabbi wrote a 5-page essay on ‘Animal Sacrifices in Judaism’ to explain to the modern mind the part of the Siddur dealing with the sacrificial procedures in the ancient Temple. In the 2006 edition this was replaced by a 20-page essay of his on ‘Understanding Jewish Prayer’. Both essays are learned resources but differ regarding animal sacrifices. Which essay would be Peter’s choice?

Incidentally, if Peter uses an Orthodox Siddur formally in his synagogue, there is an unintended consequence. His synagogue will be regarded as an “Orthodox” one. However, because of his intention to avoid affiliation to any body, his synagogue will merely be regarded as “orthodox”.

Further, Peter insists on the use of Torah. Who would disagree? But he is totally silent on what he means here. This is ominous because it is in the very study of Torah that Liberal-Orthodox



differences come up. I suppose in his synagogue, people might use whatever Chumash they prefer, Plaut or Artscroll for example. The biblical text is the same in both, but users reading the introductions of those books will find the respective, entirely different, approaches of Progressive and Orthodox Judaism. I hope a love of Torah will provide a bridge.

It will not be so easy for him in his vision regarding services. Here he mentions specific differences that have to be accommodated in his synagogue, differences concerning for example “women leading the service” and “who is Jewish”. These define the usual Liberal-Orthodox divide on the authority of Torah. He hopes that a service can be devised (the “put up with it” service) which ignores these differences.

But if the “put up with it” service doesn’t work (not enough people putting up with it), he provides the option of the “don’t come that week” service. Effectively that means, say, Liberal services one week and Orthodox services the next. This is monstrous. It would set up fortnightly services for each of the two sides and, in any case, it would divide the community.

Of course, as the last of his options, Liberals can always take their Lev Chadash into another room and “do their own thing” during an Orthodox service, and the other way round for the Orthodox. The mind boggles.

Thus, regarding services, while I appreciate that Peter wants each individual to be free to find his/her own position on “the continuum of belief, knowledge and practice”, he openly cannot balance individual autonomy with the need for coherent service arrangements.

All in all, his vision is for a group of people

without affiliation and without a particular viewpoint other than to promote Jewishness by a good use of resources. This is fine until that amorphous group tries to become a actual synagogue and starts running services. Then Peter’s chaotic arrangements will divide the group. If they remain united, their only common feature is the Orthodox Siddur and this makes their synagogue not a “liberal” but an “orthodox” one.

We in the Liberal Synagogue go a long way to meet a diversity of religious orientations but do so on the basis of a reasonably well-defined viewpoint, the Liberal viewpoint, developed quite naturally against a background of 200 years of Progressive Judaism. It happened because there was a need for it.

While most of our services and shiurim are led by our Rabbi, each year’s programme has 10-12 services, and a similar number of shiurim, which are led by lay members. This gives plenty of opportunity for airing personal views. Interestingly while our services use the Plaut Chumash, our cheder uses the more user-friendly Artscroll Chumash. Our library has a great range of resources, both classical and modern.

As Liberals we are formally at the left of the Progressive spectrum. Yet we are close to Reform in custom and practice, and we respect the common ground we have with Orthodoxy and our Orthodox friends.

I am sorry the Liberal ethos doesn’t quite work for Peter. I respect his vision. But could we please be spared?

**Joachim Schapiro**



## TORAH, TALMUD AND THIRD MILLENIUM JUDAISM

*with special reference to Chanukah.*

We have been having an interesting debate about the future of our Congregation, and I would like to put in a plea for a positive and confident approach to the future.

I feel that Judaism is now still near the beginning of a new phase of development and we should be looking forward to our future rather than back to our past.

First we had the Patriarchs with their individual spirituality and communion with God. This gave way after Moses to the written Torah and priestly rituals of the Temple era. Finally came the Halachah and structured personal involvement of Talmudic Judaism, eventually codified in the Shulchan Aruch several centuries ago.

Now we are perhaps a century or so into a phase of Post-Talmudic Judaism, where we respect Talmud but do not accord it final authority, because we now have access to entire modes of knowledge which were not available in Talmudic times. One of these modes is material knowledge through the application of scientific method; another mode is historical knowledge through the discoveries of physical and cultural archaeology. We are now able to understand Torah and Talmud better than earlier generations, not through any innate superiority on our part but simply because such additional resources have become

accessible to us.

**So what do we now believe? By what symbols and rituals can we express these beliefs? How can we evolve a new synthesis; a Judaism which will combine the best of all the sources available to us?**

Consider Chanukah for example. We celebrate the victory of the Maccabees by recalling the Miracle of the Oil. But the Miracle of the Oil is first mentioned only in the (centuries later and far distant) Babylonian Talmud. It is not mentioned in the (nearer) Jerusalem Talmud nor in the (earlier) writings of Josephus nor in the (earlier still) books of Maccabees I and Maccabees II. Scholars have suggested that the Miracle of the Oil was conceived as an act of appeasement to the civil powers of the time, saying in effect "Our God is not primarily interested in leading us to civil power, but only in by-passing the laws of nature where they might interfere with our Divine Worship". *Is that the image of God which we wish to promote and perpetuate in this day and age?* Of course we all, children and adults alike, enjoy the cheerful Chanukah candles warming up the ambience of our midwinter homes and even serving as a symbolic 'light unto the nations'. Can we keep this fun and still-relevant symbolism without tying it to the political necessities of life in Babylon nearly two thousand years ago? I think we can and furthermore, I think we should.

When I light my Chanukah candles I do so not in memory of the Miracle of the Oil but in memory of the Miracle of the Minyan (see below). The latter does not even replace the former but, having in effect assumed it, asks a





supplementary question - "Why did it take eight days to purify the new oil?" The answer reveals a form of miracle which does not involve suspension of the Laws of Physics, a form of miracle which is still with us and therefore directly relevant to our lives as Third Millennium Jews.

## THE MIRACLE OF THE MINYAN

*Why did it take eight days to purify the new oil at the first Chanukah?*

*The reason it took eight days was because they needed a minyan to say the blessing over the oil, to make it Holy. Unfortunately, the need arose in a small community and on a Public Holiday: only the Rabbi and the Warden were present. So the Rabbi and the Warden went out to find more Jews.*

*The first day they only found one Jew. So they went on looking.*

*The second day they found one more Jew. So they still went on looking.*

*Altogether it took them eight days to find eight Jews, to join with the Rabbi and the Warden, to make a Minyan, to say the*

*Blessing, to kosher the Oil, to light the Lamp, to re-dedicate the Great Temple of Jerusalem.*

*That is why, even to this day, we celebrate Chanukah every year, for eight days. Because every Minyan is a Miracle.*

So there we have it - not only that minyan but every minyan is a miracle, Jews coming together by the Grace of God, for the Glory of God and for Tikkun Olam (redemption of the world). By extension our Congregation is a miracle; Liberal Judaism is a miracle; Anglo-Jewry and World Jewry are Miracles. For this concept and this symbolism I proudly light my candles every Chanukah, creating a warm glow in my home and shining out to the world beyond in ways which are relevant here and now.

Third Millennium Judaism must seek to stand on the shoulders of Talmudic Judaism, gaining support from those elements which have proved to be solid but rising above those aspects which can now be seen to have limitations.

**David Gilbert.**



I have read and listened to the many arguments for changing the status of our Synagogue, the mere fact that there are so many opinions leads me to the conclusion that this is neither the time nor place to make changes or cause divisions.

The time is not right with the rise of anti-Semitism and the problems in the Middle East. The place is not right because here in Bristol we have a robust Jewish community comprising our own Liberal synagogue with its ever-increasing membership. Bristol Hebrew Congregation, which has a declining membership, does not need to merge with us, it needs our support and respect. Davar caters for the cultural needs of all Bristol Jewry, whilst inter-faith groups help us to understand other faiths and they to understand us.

In my time I have belonged to all three main synagogue groupings in this country, As a child and youth it was the United, as a young man it was Reform and for the last 40 years Liberal. As a former Chair of two Liberal Synagogues, Northwood and Bristol,

combined with many years on the then ULPS Council I well understand the meaning of Jewish unity.

The idea of having one universal shul could never be guaranteed because anyone could then start an alternative congregation.

Some people are concerned at the amount we contribute to LJ; they forget that for many, that, and the Board of Deputies levy is the only contribution we make to the support of Judaism and the Jewish people outside of Bristol. Judaism does not stop at the M32.

Yes, by all means let us examine ways to improve, but do it for all. Thriving communities are in a position to help others. That can best be done by being one people, by sticking together, by being a part of world wide Jewry, that can link arms and stretch up to heaven and so touch the Almighty. Yes, if it isn't broken, it doesn't need mending, just a bit of fine-tuning.

**Bernard Barnett**



Having read and re-read the articles in Alonim on the subject of Bristol and West becoming 'independent' I remain quite unconvinced by the arguments.

As Founder members 46 years ago and Council Members over a long period we remember the immense amount of help, advice and support we received from ULPS. Not only was there an interest-free loan, but for ordinary members there was a fountain of knowledge to draw on. We were an assortment of Jews from a wide variety of backgrounds and we were guided along the way to become active members of ULPS.

I would like to hope that the help we had is something we can repay by playing our part with newly forming communities.

This congregation has expressed concern over the years that most of the activities of our parent body take place in London. and while I understand the reason for this, I regret absence of more regional meetings for the lay members of provincial communities.. Maybe they still take place, but only for Council members. Some of the isolation and lack of knowledge about LJ may be of our own making. It does take effort to be involve and serve on committees, but personally I found it was useful to meet with other ULPS congregations and share ideas 3-4 times a year.

As a committed liberal Jew before this Congregation was founded I have only minor problems with the liturgy, especially as it has progressed over the years... and there lies the strength of our movement – progressive Judaism has indeed progressed, to a gender inclusive, people inclusive movement, nowhere more obvious than in our own congregation.

Lastly, we do not need to leave our parent body and become independent in order to be part of a wider Jewish Bristol community. The opportunities exist for us all to meet socially, and share ideas. We regularly invite the Orthodox community when we have visiting speakers, and share membership of WIZO and the Book Group to name a but a few occasions.

Those of you who have known me over the years will know I am not an old dinosaur reacting against change but I see great value belonging to a wider progressive movement, stretching our horizons beyond the narrow confines of Bristol as something too valuable to discard.

**Mavis Hyams**



Those against a state of Israel are anti-Jewish.” This is what Yoav Ben Shlomo wrote in the August edition of *Alonim*. I’m surprised by this statement. I’m against a Jewish state and I’m a full member of the synagogue. Rabbi Ron didn’t insist that I swear allegiance to the state of Israel when he encouraged me to join the synagogue. As far as I’m concerned, it’s okay to disagree. It’s got to be. We can accept each others’ points of view without liking what the other says and without resorting to insults. That’s always been the challenge of being Jewish. There’s never been a time in our history when we all agreed on everything.

We Jews are a diverse bunch even if you only consider our physical features, let alone our beliefs and views. Get three Jews together and before you know it, you’ll hear at least five different opinions. Belief in one G-d, the rules of kashrut, the importance of the Talmud and the Torah, the coming of the Messiah – even the religious amongst us have major differences in interpretation and practice. And not all Jewish-identified people practise Judaism. Some are Buddhists, for instance, and I’ve come across a Catholic priest claiming a Jewish identity. You might argue that we share a common history. But you’d be on dodgy ground. I bet each of us has taken different lessons from the adventures of Sabbatai Zevi, the Nazi Holocaust and the destruction of the second Temple.

I do have a problem with people who claim that they speak on my behalf. Zionists say they’re acting for all Jews. They’ve created a state with a Jewish character which discriminates in favour of Jews in law and practice. They say that any Jew, anywhere in the world is entitled to become a citizen of the state of Israel. The Jewish National Fund owns more than 90% of the land in Israel and holds it in perpetuity for the Jewish people. When was the vote taken? I

never gave them the authority to represent me. Like Sabbatai Zevi, they decided they wouldn’t wait for the Messiah and would create a Jewish state by their own efforts. And like Sabbatai Zevi’s movement, it has gone disastrously wrong.

I also have a problem with people who believe the ends justify the means. To create and maintain a Jewish state, Israel has used violence in word and deed. Anyone who doesn’t acknowledge this fact is in a dangerous and delusional state of denial. Go on a tour of the West Bank with the Compassionate Listening Project or the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions like I did and you will see first hand what it means to be driven out of your land, to be living under military occupation, to be demonised as terrorists when you defend your people against injustice, to have your home demolished, to be deprived of access to water, to have your village wiped off the map, to be imprisoned and tortured, to be attacked, to have your democratically elected government boycotted, to be denied any chance of self determination, to be unable to travel freely, to have your olive trees destroyed, to be caged behind a wall and on and on. I have no animus towards the Palestinians. My vision is of a country where all people get their needs met, where there is no discrimination and oppression, where each precious human being is free to express themselves in all spheres of life.

I still naïvely believe that the fundamental values of Judaism are justice, peace and truth and yes, compassion too. I know these values are part of the Jewish teachings – they’re in the Talmud: “On three things the world stands: on justice, on truth, and on peace.” Rabban Shim’on ben Gamli’el said while Rav Muna carried on arguing, “These three are one thing:



Where justice is done, truth is done and peace is made.” Rabbi Hillel says, “What is hateful to you, don’t do to your neighbour. If I am not for myself, who then? And being only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” And in the Torah, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” OK, we all pick and choose and interpret these words in our own unique ways. Still they matter to me and they matter that they’re from my Jewish tradition. I am ashamed to be associated with a Jewish state which ignores these teachings.

I am not the only Jewish person to disagree with the concept of a Jewish state. According to some orthodox Jews, “the Zionists have illegitimately seized the name Israel.” These Torah-Jews believe that a sovereign Jewish state is contrary to centuries of Judaic law. “The Talmud in Tractate Kesubos (p. 111a), teaches that Jews shall not use human force to bring about the establishment of a Jewish state before the coming of the universally accepted Moshiach (Messiah from the House of David). Furthermore it states that we are forbidden to rebel against the nations and that we should remain loyal citizens and we shall not attempt to leave the exile which G-d sent us into, ahead of time.” (From the Neturei Karta website, Jews United Against Zionism, [www.nkuk.org](http://www.nkuk.org)).

Israel is a secular Jewish state and its establishment is NOT mandated by the Torah. In Genesis 17:8, God says to Abraham, “I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession and I will be their God.” But that’s the least important part of the story. In the next sentence, God says, “As for thee, thou shalt keep My covenant, thou and thy seed after thee throughout their generations.” God was driving a hard bargain – we agree to live by the ethical guidelines he laid down and

we get our own state. But if we transgress his commandments, we lose the Jewish state. And as all know from our history, we messed up big time. And on and on. Israel was conquered by the Babylonians and later by the Romans. The Jewish people were sent into exile and scattered around the globe.

An even more convincing argument could be made that those who support the state of Israel are anti-Jewish. There are hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Christian evangelists in the States and some in Britain who support Israel. They send millions of dollars to facilitate and encourage the restoration of Jews to Israel. They fund illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank. They lobby for international recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. They promote the Temple Mount movement. They actively oppose any moves towards a lasting peace with the Palestinians and they argue for the complete removal of Palestinians from Israel. These people are truly anti-Jewish. They’re doing all this because they believe in an imminent Armageddon, an apocalyptic war between good and evil, during which non-believers including all of the Jews in Israel, will be exterminated. They say they love us. With love like that, who needs enemies!

Amongst us Jews, we are not enemies when we have different views about Israel. Let’s accept that people have different interpretations of what it means to be Jewish. But let’s not stop there. I invite any interested person to meet for dialogue. Are you up for it?

**Lisa Saffron**



**D**ramatic, moving and at times distressing are my immediate memories of "The Arab and the Jew". This amazing modern mime is performed by Gecko Theatre Company in the Tobacco Factory on its way to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

I went to see it with a few friends, on Saturday 4th August. Despite the discomfort of the seating I was gripped throughout.

The show was mainly performed by two men, Amit Lahav and Al Nedjari, though ably supported by others in the company off set.

At the beginning of the show we see a man gently lowered into the centre of the stage, which is empty. Shortly afterward, he is joined by another man crashing down beside him. Then we get to see the first man in communication with his Jewish family and the second sitting in a Turkish style café. This is how we learnt the Arab and which the Jew.

They go through many stages of

communication, including demonstrating a shared love of the land, a shared horror at a world they do not understand, and a growing need for violence. All of course without words.

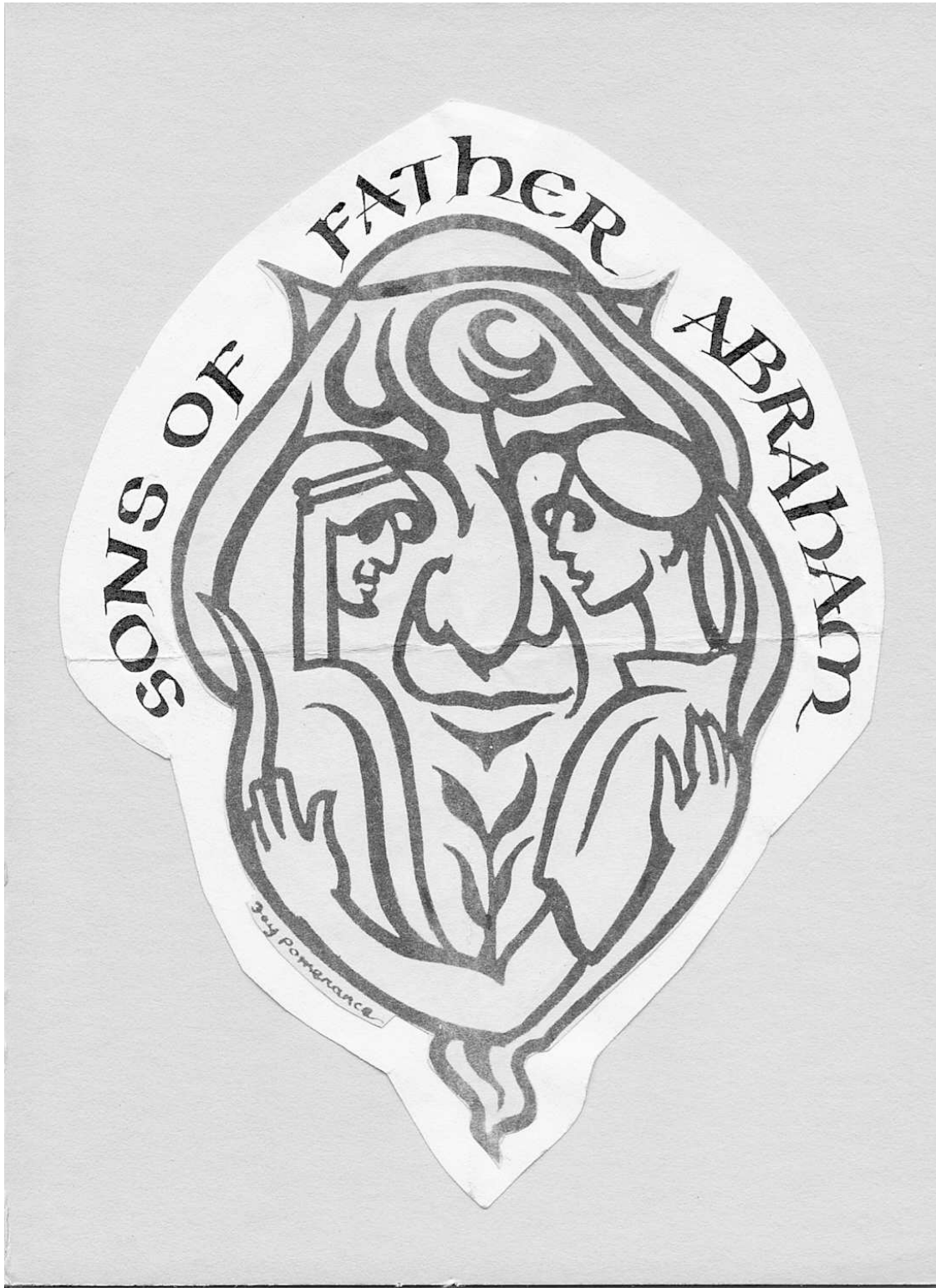
The mime is cleverly accompanied by appropriate music, which often emphasised the points being made. I was particularly moved by the scene involving loving the soil, but very disturbed by a scene depicting the Jew catching the Arab in a net in order to 'tame' him and bring him to a peace table. There is also a dead child in the story, demonstrating both men's humanity.

If you have the chance to see this powerful performance, I would strongly recommend it.

**Judy Lazarus**

Touring Sept 2007 to Feb 2008

See [www.geckotheatre.com](http://www.geckotheatre.com) for full details.



By Fay Pomerance (1912-2001), mother of Jill Pomerance. Jill has many of her mother's paintings including a series on biblical themes incorporating Hebrew lettering. She would be pleased to show interested people.

Well the weather held out, just about, for our Cheder community weekend at Slimbridge YHA during the weekend of 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> June. This meant that we still managed to have a barbecue in the garden on a balmy Saturday evening, and were reminded that, “Yes, this is the Summer”.

Ruth Squires had led us for our *erev Shabbat* service, followed by a sumptuous *chavura* supper. It was very nice that we were joined by Keren, Jon, Robert and Linda, amongst others from the wider community. The youngsters were very excited, but we managed to get them to bed early enough for some “adult social time”.

Following breakfast on Saturday, we had a “service in a circle” with everybody contributing. Following *Kiddush*, we got down to the serious business of some DRAMA. Irit and Miranda set up the older children and a number of adults for reading and rehearsing two separate plays based on the portion of the day: *korach*. There was lots of “striking down” and “swallowing up”. The younger children were creating sounds, pictures and actions to accompany a traditional story ; commandingly led (and read) by Tania.

Memorable performances followed. You can look at them on the BWPJC website. Three of the children completed the morning with short musical pieces. Can I thank Jenny, Bridget and Eitan for being so brave.

After lunch we had some free time for walks, visits to the wetlands and wildfowl centre at

Slimbridge, or just some “down-time”. It was a feature of the whole weekend that we had a core of families who were there all the time, and then we were joined at various points by others members and prospective members. This worked really well, I believe, for everyone who was there, with lots of “mixing and matching” as the weekend progressed.

Gary, Sally and Naomi joined us on Saturday afternoon, with an awful lot of kosher meat. The barbeques were set-up and by early evening, the ‘grape juice’ started to flow, and we were tucking-into some really top-quality nosh. Gary and Ismet really do make a great team. If the Quartet of US, EU, UN and Russia ever need somebody to replace Tony Blair as their special envoy, then there was a group of guys who managed to sort out MOST of the problems of the world around 8.30 that evening. (Bless!)

Inside, Iris had put some Israelli folk music on the stereo. Little Misha started to dance, and within a few minutes, more of us had joined in; forming circles, clapping, turning, holding hands. Within 20 minutes, we even had some of the boys!!

Back outside, as the darkness fell, we lit our *havdala* candles and sang “goodnight” to our wonderful Sabbath. And then it was time for bed. There were some very tired children (and adults).

Following breakfast on the Sunday, we had our art activities. Lisa and Steve led an activity where the children could make some





“special Shabbat shawls”. Our friend, Louise Block, who has worked with us on a number of previous occasions, led a tile- painting activity which was very inspiring. These tiles are going to be assembled to form a wall decoration for a room upstairs in *shul*.

We finished off with lunch and ‘thanks’ and final photos before packing up early afternoon to wend our weary ways home.

I would like to thank everybody for a thoroughly enjoyable and memorable weekend away. It was a real tonic to this busy



## My trip to Slimbridge

**I** went on the Cheder trip to Slimbridge, It helped me make lots of friends.

The best bits were making a play with the girls, and making hideouts in the bedrooms.

The funniest bit was when the boys made a poster saying ‘girls stink’. The bit that made me most glad is that I knew the kind of tricks the boys would play because they are all just

time of year. I would particularly like to thank Lisa and Irit for their hard work and organisation with all the catering arrangements for the weekend. I am extremely grateful to Iris for organising bookings, accommodation and many other things. Without Iris, the weekend simply would not have happened.

I hope that we can have a weekend away next year and that you will join us.

**David Dwek**

like my cousin Alex Squire.

All the mums and dads made yummy food and drank a lot of tea and coffee. At Kiddush, I liked the wine, but I had to have grape juice with my brother Jake.

It was brilliant. I want to go again!

**Mia Harris**

Age 6, Aleph Class



“If tomorrow I was leaving to Zion, then I wouldn’t stay a minute more.”

Black Uhuru, *Leaving to Zion*. 1981.

This week I made aliya. It’s been 13 months since I made the decision, not to mention my 28 years a British citizen. Like Black Uhuru’s yearning for Africa, I’ve been longing for leaving for a place where I’ll no longer be in the minority. The modern Jewish Zionist movement and the Rastafarian call for black repatriation share the common desire to be redeemed from exile and rebuild anew. The geography may be different but the concept of Zion, whether Israel or Africa, is rooted in the same source: the Hebrew bible. But I’m on no divine mission to the Promised Land. My set texts are Theodor Herzl’s *Jewish State* and Shai Agnon’s *Only Yesterday*, not *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*.

### Why on earth?

Of course, the reality of Israel in 2007 is very different from Herzl’s utopian vision for a Jewish ‘national home’ a century earlier. But forty years of occupation, celebrity endorsements for anti-Zionist campaigns and the blurring of lines by the left mean that Israel isn’t on the top of the list for many people to visit, let alone emigrate to. Since the Six-Day War, the Israel Defence Forces have gone from being global pin-ups to figures of hate. I was astonished to hear a liberal-minded colleague tell me that Golda Meir was his hero during her tenure as Israeli Prime Minister. “Israel really had it’s back against

the wall in 1967”, he said. “Things were much more clear cut than they are today.” So, on the 40th anniversary of this turning point in history, and with little end in sight to the conflict, why on earth am I going there?

### ‘Here it is. I’m a Zionist.’

One consequence of living in a city – Bristol – with a tiny Jewish community, is that a common response to learning that I’m moving to Israel is to ask, ‘Why?’ To pack up and leave behind family, friends and a rewarding job to start from scratch, requires motivation, not to mention an ideological or religious commitment (and, some might say, recklessness). The most simple explanation for this upheaval is: ‘Zionism’. But this simple word, and the ignorance and misconceptions surrounding it, raises more questions than it answers. Ha’aretz’s Bradley Burston faced a similar quandary when he ‘came out’ as a Zionist recently. “Were I to come out with it, I thought to myself, I’d be asking to be lumped in with people who are routinely shunned, reviled, quarantined by polite society, spat at by the over-righteous, openly blamed for global ills,” said Burston. “So here it is. I’m a Zionist. Go ahead. Take your best shot.” I’ve never hidden my own identity and many non-Jewish people have been supportive of my decision. But I’ve also received emails from colleagues in the past extolling terrorism against ‘invaders’ or accusing me of ‘personal, vested interests’, as well as the accusations of being a ‘Nazi’ and ‘racist’ spat at me by the local Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Last year, an old school friend told me that he was not anti-Israel, but was opposed to Zionism. I



explained that Israel was the outcome of the modern Zionist movement and that a Jew moving to Israel is the ultimate act of Zionism. He hadn't thought of this and, by coming out unequivocally as a Zionist, I hope it makes people think more deeply about 'the Z-word'.

### **One less settler**

For me, making aliya means creating a small but vital, shift in Israel's balance. By becoming an *oleh chadash*, Israel will have one more Progressive Zionist pursuing a two-state resolution and one less West Bank settler. In this sense, making aliya is more 'pro-Palestine' than the posturing of Jews for Justice for Palestinians or Independent Jewish Voices, with their *de facto* boycott of the Israeli Peace Movement, will ever be. My experience in the British environmental movement has taught me that it is far more effective to work for change from the inside than to scream from the margins.

### **Glorious ideals**

The case for Israel is sometimes made by recourse to anti-Semitism, but for most Jews

in Britain it is not a daily issue. Even the Jewish Agency admit surprise over immigration from Western countries, "It is easy to assume that when the threat of war is looming over Israel and terrorism is unceasing, Jews who have a choice would remain in their native countries." One hundred and three years after Herzl's death, Jews are still intoxicated by his infusion of hope for the future and reflection on the past. In 1897 at the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Herzl declared that "Zionism is not only a sad necessity, it is also a glorious ideal". In 2007, "aliya by choice" represents a positive action, not a negative knee-jerk. As an environmentalist, I will work to protect and enhance Israel's natural resources. In a nation where people are so obsessed with the 'Land', there's a grim irony in the damage regularly done to Israel's soil, water and air. Fulfilling this ideal may take even longer than leaving for Zion.

**Michael Green**



I am writing to lay some misconceptions to rest. To begin with many people seem to be concerned that their writing will not be academic enough for publication. Let me state very clearly that we are not a literary journal. The purpose of the newsletter is to be a tool for communication between members of the congregation. We do not all speak in the same way, so why should we write in the same way? All contributions are welcome.

I have a few rules that I apply to the positioning of articles and they have nothing to do with any reflection on my part about their quality or interest value. . Firstly, I try to spread the actual articles throughout the newsletter, interspersed with events notices and the like, in order to create visual variety and to retain interest in the whole magazine. Secondly, if someone replies to a previous article I try to place it in or near the same position. Thirdly, I group articles on the same subject together and finally, when all else is considered, articles are positioned in the order in which they reach me. Send your copy late and it will be more likely to end up at the back.

I do hold back pieces from outside agencies in order to check that we have enough room to include them. Certain items, such as the comment from the Chair and the services page, have a fixed position. However, for the rest, I hope that the

readers do not attribute any specific value to the position in which an article appears.

While I am writing I will add that articles should be no more than two Alonim pages which is approximately 1,000 words. If you have an idea for a bigger piece, speak to me and we will consider the idea of serialising it.

We do not accept open letters because there is a danger of them sounding like a personal attack on individuals.

It would be very helpful to me if you could label any submissions with the title of your piece rather than 'Alonim Article' of which I get several every issue.

And lastly, let me say, that we welcome FORUM pieces on any subject with a Jewish theme or related to the synagogue or a member of it.

I hope this has cleared a few concerns and will encourage you to contribute.

**Judy Lazarus**

Editor