

ALONIM

Newsletter of the Bristol & West
Progressive Jewish Congregation

Tevet/Sh'vat 5766
Jan/Feb 2006

עלונים



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A Warm 'Hello' to all readers from the new editorial team.

First, a big thank you to Keren Durant for three years of great newsletters that were attractive, readable and interesting. What more could one ask?

And also to Ruth Baker for tireless distribution over the same period.

Judy Lazarus and Malcolm Rawles are taking over as joint editors from this issue. To clarify our respective roles, all content decisions will be jointly made. Judy will be assembling each issue and Malcolm organising printing and distribution. Malcolm will also be doing the essential business of proof reading. Copy should be sent to the Alonim e-mail address .

We look forward to receiving lots of wonderful articles from you all.

ALONIM copy date deadlines

Months	Copy date	Festivals covered, notices needed
March/April	Wednesday 12th February	purim/pesach
May/June	Friday 14th April	yom haAtzma'ut/shavuot

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. Contributions and communications can be sent directly to the **Editor** at alonim@bwpjc.org The copy date deadline for submissions is notified above. Submissions after this date cannot be guaranteed to appear in the next issue.

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.



We've recently joined a Leisure Club - a strange word for a place where everyone is seriously intent on improving his or her physical fitness. It appeals to all ages from babes to oldies like us. Feeling reinvigorated and while sitting in the intensity of the Steam Room, it suddenly occurred to me - I feel a bit like this after Shabbat Morning in our Synagogue! So where's the similarity? We hope to become spiritually fit by exercising our minds with Torah, massaging our hearts with devotional prayer and giving our children early lessons on the ethical moralities and customs of our people. Like learning to swim early, Hebrew is more easily acquired if children attend Cheder in the first class. Rushing to swim both a length and a parasha in a hurry is hard work. The similarities even extend to the rewards afterwards! For Cappuccinos read Kiddush in the area where people assemble to socialise and catch up with each other's busy lives. Out of this often come requests for help or support during a difficult patch.

No one should underestimate the importance of the weekly Kiddush for these reasons and I am especially grateful to Sally Webber for taking their organisation under her wing.

In the past year our community has been growing steadily and we approach another AGM with much to look back on with pride, and

I shall be writing fully in this year's Annual Report but I cannot let this edition of Alonim appear without thanking the previous production team for their extraordinary

devotion to these pages. Their unobtrusive dedication and gentle encouragement over the last few years has resulted in an ever-increasing improvement in the content and quality of this magazine. We owe them a great deal and congratulate Keren (Durant) and Ruth (Baker) on their considerable contribution to the life of our Congregation.

We welcome the new team of Judy (Lazarus) and Malcolm (Rawles) who take over with this edition. They are full of new ideas and enthusiasm, which I am sure, will become infectious. I can see you putting pen to paper or even fingers to keyboard in the months ahead!

With the coincidence of Chanukah and Christmas this year and Rosh Hashanah and Ramadan earlier, there have been good opportunities to share our lives with other faiths in the area. I am excited by new initiatives on which we hope to be reporting more fully soon.

We hold our own Festival of Light on the first afternoon of the secular new year, in the Synagogue. It promises to be another great family event in our calendar. Please come along and shine with us!

Peace and Blessings to us all

Robert Hurst (Chairman)



The death of my mother last summer plunged me into Jewish mourning customs more intimately than usual. Normally I have to deal with death from the perspective of the professional; now I have to do so with feelings more personal, emotional and spiritual. There are, also, the same procedural and practical aspects, now encountered highlighted with an emphasis of personal responsibility. This has coincided with a request from our synagogue council that I publish guidance for members of our Congregation to help with advice and to shape your expectations as to what happens in the event of death.

Kathy and I had already purchased plots in our local cemetery several years ago, including one for my mother. Our Congregation has burial ground in two Bristol cemeteries, Canford, at Westbury on Trym, and Bedminster Down, on the way to Bristol Airport. The differences between these places are; that Canford is now very full and there are few spaces left, and it is an older burial ground with mature trees and upright memorial stones, whilst at Bedminster Down there are plenty of spaces and the grounds are neat as the stones lie flat sunken just below ground level so the grass is mown easily over them.

Apart from those two places, any grave opened in any burial ground is consecrated as Jewish by the funeral Service held for the person whose body is buried there. I have conducted funeral Services for Jewish people all over our area.

The graves need to be purchased by the estate of the person who has died, by the relatives or executors, from the Municipality. Currently they are about £650. Grave plots can be purchased in advance. They are not

owned outright, but burial rights remain for 50 years and can then be renewed. There is also a fee for opening the grave at the time it is to be used. These arrangements are normally all detailed and managed by a Funeral Director, together with any other charges, e.g. an organist should one be requested, though this is unusual for a Jewish funeral. I charge no fee for full members of our Congregation. Cremation is allowed and though I do not recommend it I respect the wishes of the deceased if that is their choice and will officiate; in which case there may be charges associated with the use of the crematorium and perhaps for the burial of ashes or their subsequent scattering. The funeral director can be found from Yellow Pages; we used the Cooperative Funeral Services, which cost £1,660.00, for just the one limousine, used within Bristol.

After a burial the ground is left to settle for about ten months before the setting of a memorial stone. There is a Service of Consecration at this stage. The stone generally has engraved the letters peh nun at the top, being the Hebrew abbreviation for 'here lies buried' and tav, nun, tzaddi, bet, heh along the bottom, being the Hebrew abbreviation for 'may her/his soul be bound up in the bond of life', adapted from 1 Samuel 25, 29. The Hebrew name of the deceased and the date of death according to the Jewish calendar are usually accompanied by the English too and there may be a short epitaph. As an example the granite stone for my mother after this pattern is costing about £1,200 and there is also a cemetery fee of £140 for allowing it to be put up. The total costs involved with a death can be considerable, adding up in my recent experience to well over £3000. If the deceased has left a house or property such costs are easily covered so



cause no worry. Otherwise it may be advisable to take out insurance or pay into a savings account a small sum regularly, leaving instructions in your will, so that those who have to sort out your affairs when you die are clear what this money is for.

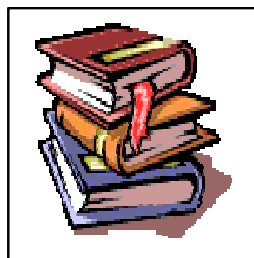
If my mother had belonged to a large London synagogue, it is likely that the costs would have been far higher, which is why people who live in the metropolis often pay for burial scheme insurance. This is supposed to cover the costs after their death. However the situation there also includes the consideration that the synagogue organisations share ownership of their own burial grounds, which may therefore not be owned and maintained by a municipality. There is scope for this to be done locally, at the Woodland Burial site just North of Bristol, but this would involve raising quite a lot of

money to buy rights to a large plot of land. Members of our Congregation who want to be buried there can of course buy their own plot; though costs are somewhat higher it is possible to specify what tree is to be planted nearby, and the funeral can be more relaxed than is possible with the municipal facilities.

Apart from the disposal of the body in a respectful way as an act of love, there is also the sorting out of a lifetime of connection, of mixed emotional feelings and personal attitudes, which takes far longer, if it ever really ends. One just lives with the fact of death just as one lives with the ongoing event of living, the costs of which are far higher, but which we normally, inevitably, prefer....

Rabbi Francis Ronald Berry

Study with the Rabbi



The Basic Judaism/Beginners' Hebrew classes are twice a month

The Intermediate classes are once a month

Speak to the Rabbi for more information.



I was extremely privileged to be invited by a friend to a lecture in London by Aaron Barak, President of the Supreme Court of Israel, on Human Rights in Israel. I was very impressed by the man and his values and felt I would like to share some of the experience with the community.

A quiet, softly spoken man with a slight German/ Israeli accent, Judge Barak, described the development of the concept of human rights in Israel and the enactment of two statutes in 1992 which recognized concepts of human rights in areas of work, health, education and freedom of movement in the Israeli constitutional and judicial framework. He described how these statutes were exerting an influence on life within Israel, governed by Israeli law and in the occupied territories, governed by international law.

He talked about the difference in opinion between the Supreme Court of Israel and the International Court of Human Rights in the Hague saying the Israeli Court accepted the opinion of the court on the route of the wall but that the Israeli Court took issue with the opinion of the Court of Human Rights that the wall was not valid on security grounds. There have been 80 cases brought to the Israeli Supreme Court concerning the route of the wall and in many cases the route has been altered to meet the needs of local landowners and residents.

The most impressive and genuinely uplifting part of his address was the clear and

unemotional summation of his view that the role of the court was to protect democracy and the principles upon which democracy is built. Hence the torture of suspects is not allowed under Israeli law. There has been no change of legislation since the intifada and the current wave of international terrorism in Israel. Judge Barak made the simple but very effective point that when a country changes laws that are fundamental to the protection of the value and dignity of the human being in a democracy, the changes will live for a very long time, affecting the character of the nation. This seemed to me a subtle but true point and a clear rebuff to the some of the legislation now being proposed in Britain.

Lord Woolfe introduced the event and many important and well know legal figures were in attendance. Shirley Williams asked pertinent questions about the wall and detention. She spoke clearly on how impressed she was by the moral stature and integrity of the judge.

How I wished more members of the press had been present to report on this event which went some way to showing an important aspect of modern Israel, the complexity of the issues facing a society dealing with terrorism and the respect that must be accorded to basic democratic values and the role of the different institutions in the protection of those values.

The judge finished with the comment that he saw himself as being on trial in every case he judged.

Lynn Johnston



Parashat Toledot

Genesis Ch.25:22-23 And the children struggled within her....

Ben Walters introduced the discussion by quoting the Midrashic interpretation of the opening words of verse 22: "When she (Rebecca) passed by the entrances of the Torah of Shem and Eber, Jacob would struggle to come out; when she passed the entrance of (a temple) of idolatry, Esau would struggle to come out". Another interpretation: They were struggling with each other and quarrelling about the inheritance of the two worlds."

In order to gain enlightenment as to the reason for the struggle going on in her womb, Rebecca "went to inquire of the Lord"; she did not "pray", she "went". Rashi's explanation is that she "went to the beit Midrash of Shem". There she would have consulted an appropriate authority of Jewish wisdom, and "Shem was told through divine inspiration, and he told her: "Two nations are in your womb.....one kingdom will become mightier than the other,...and the elder will serve the younger".

A few of the comments raised questioned about whether this was truly a prophecy, or whether it was a looking back over the events of the twins' lives in an attempt to make sense of what happened. Or perhaps it was a self-fulfilling prophecy where the young men acted out what had been predicted for them. This touched on the question of destiny and free will.

Much of the discussion centred round the character and personality of the two brothers. How much can be laid at the door of sibling rivalry? It would seem that we can see Jacob as "good" only at Esau's expense. There is no

real evidence that Esau was inclined to idolatry. One member of the group suggested that Esau was not evil but rather concerned with the conquest of evil, whereas Jacob's role was the pursuance of good. Both are essential.

It was suggested that much of what happened was determined by personality rather than destiny. Esau was a hunter-gatherer who saw life in the short-term. What use was a birthright to him if he was about to die of hunger and exhaustion? Jacob on the other hand was the cultivator and herdsman, a planner and organiser, who took time to study

and think ahead. At this period in history the two ways of life were in conflict. Hunting was giving way to agriculture. Society goes forward through the latter. The Jacobs of this world save for the future, the Esaus spend: both are needed. Moral quality is not in question.

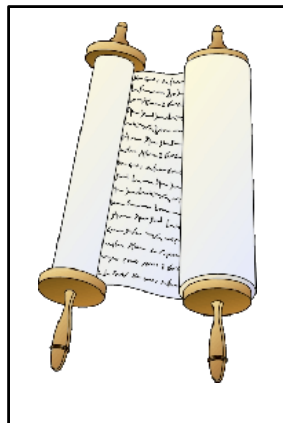
To return to the implications for our own history, Esau, as the elder, should have been the one who

inherited the promise made to Abraham. The story of his exchanging his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew is intended to justify the continuance of the promise through Jacob.

There is no doubt that the discussion could have continued profitably for some time, but we had to break off at this point. Thank you, Ben, for leading us so ably in this week's shiur.

Our next meeting will be on the first Saturday in January 2006, at 10am as usual. All are most welcome.

Kate Withers





This was the first such event I had attended, so I paid close attention to advice given me by the community's more experienced Limmudniks. 'Get there early and study the programme. You will need plenty of time to choose what you want to explore!' Good advice, as the programme was very full.

My interests tend to be both cultural and religious, and I chose to divide my time between these themes. I started the day with a session on Yiddish song, led by Hilda Bronstien. The sum total of my Yiddish is a one-week crash course at Klezfest, the annual Klezmer festival in London so I was rusty to say the least. Still, Hilda proved an excellent leader of the group, probably due to her background as an academic and teacher. She was certainly very well prepared with music and with song sheets in both Yiddish and transliteration form. I was especially pleased that she took time to put each song into perspective. For example *Dona Dona*, ostensibly a song about a calf being taken to market is also a protest song about injustice. Perhaps its most famous rendition was as an American Civil Rights era song, by Joan Baez. This is an important point when singing Yiddish songs, as it was a Yiddish trait to say (sing) one thing in order to introduce a deeper idea, much more so than is the case in English.

Another aspect I enjoyed about this session was the use Hilda made of songs in a variety of Yiddish dialects. Her Polish Yiddish song 'Ayn balade fîn tserisne shikh', 'A ballad about broken shoes' (remember the 'layers of meaning' quote above, the meaning relates also to broken hopes!) brought home the variety of Yiddish culture. No group can be considered purely monolithic, but everyone is an individual too. I hasten to add that there

were plenty of happier songs too. *Yidl Mit'n Fidl* indeed!

On, then, to two sessions on religious themes. Sybil Sheridan spoke on Jewish views of Jesus, and Jonathan Romain on the Afterlife. My reason for choosing the first of these was that I work alongside, and also play music with practising Christians who often ask 'What do you think of Jesus!' I thought I might surprise them with an answer one day! Not so, though, as Sybil Sheridan made the point that Christianity was not strong when Jesus was alive (it gained ground under the Roman Emperor Constantine some time later) so much contemporary Jewish writing hardly addresses Jesus. Some later sources consider the Jesus question, but they are more concerned with issues arising amongst their neighbouring Christians than with Jesus. Jesus himself tends to get lost in the crossfire. Jonathan Romain raised some interesting points in his session on Jewish views of the afterlife. Too often we concentrate on our tasks in this world without too much thought for the next, but subjects such as grief and loss of loved ones cross the bridge between our lives here and thoughts of the next world. We shouldn't lose sight of the need that bereaved people have to know that their mourning is being taken seriously by their friends. The related Torah sources (Psalms, some of the Prophets, Job etc.) could be more prominent in our study than they are.

But, back to my musical moments! In this case a superbly produced multimedia show by the BBC's Rodney Greenberg on 'From Babylon to Broadway'. Many historical references to Persian, Spanish and German culture showed clearly that Jewish music has both contributed to and borrowed from the surrounding



population. Many of the Klezmer scales we are re-familiarising ourselves with are clearly Arabic in origin, and of course have now become adopted by the Eastern Europeans due to the influence of the Jewish Diaspora. All that and the familiar Hollywood stories too!

Finally I let my hair down with Clive Lawton and his session on 'Crazy Jews, a Study of Jewish Extremists'. Certainly some Crazy Jews qualify as figures we wouldn't wish to emulate. We discussed Baruch Goldstein, Yigal Amir etc. What might have motivated them? Also, can someone be crazy and right? My thoughts went back to the 1960's and Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Daniel

Cohn-Bendit. Crazyies all of them, but they shaped their world, and many would say for the better. Was there anything specifically Jewish in what they did? I think they were responding to their Jewish heritage though as secular people they didn't see it that way. Were they trying to repair their world by Tikkun Olam? Do we develop their likes now? Is it crazy to do that? Or is it quite the opposite, and an imperative for us?

All in all, I found Thames Valley Limmud stimulating, enlightening and rejuvenating, and I recommend it thoroughly and hope to attend many more. See you there next time!

Derek Brown

A chance to Explore Hebrew Poetry

A visit from Gili Tzidkiyahu, the Shlichah of Liberal Judaism, (a shlichah is an emissary)



Gili is an Israeli student rabbi, who will be joining us for Shabbat Services. On Saturday afternoon, (after a shared lunch) she will lead us in looking at contemporary Hebrew poetry on themes of prayer.

She says, "there are many different ways to be in a dialogue with God, and poetry expresses some of them - bitter and sweet, distant and connected."



This will be a regular feature in which the editors will be speaking 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.

In perfect harmony with our visit from Danny Rich (see next page) we are beginning with **Michael Romain** discussing his work for **Liberal Judaism**.

What is Liberal Judaism?

It is the name of the Union of the constituent member synagogues. It was formerly known as the ULPS. The name change was in order to give it a sharper focus and in the modern environment names are important. It is effectively run by a small staff headed by a chief executive who is Danny Rich. He is responsible to the honorary officers of which I am one. There is a council that meets quarterly and the Chair and Treasurer of our synagogue are entitled to attend these council meetings. One of these quarterly meetings is the AGM of the movement. Rabbis who serve constituent synagogues are members of the Rabbinic Conference which meets monthly and our Rabbi attends these monthly meetings. The chair of the Rabbinic Conference attends the officers' meetings and there seems to be a good relationship between the two bodies. May I recommend for further information the Liberal Judaism website and also look at some of its publications. It also supports the Leo Beck College which trains rabbis. In fact the college is now called L B C J E (Leo Baeck College of Jewish Education) and is responsible for overall education.

What is your role within Liberal Judaism?

I had been our representative and was invited to stand for election as an honorary officer. As such I do not represent Bristol but obviously I come with a Bristol perspective! Robert Hurst and Jon Webber are the representatives of the synagogue on the council.

I had been chair of our synagogue for five years and wanted have a wider involvement. One of our previous chairmen, Neville Lewisohn had become involved in the movement and was positive about it. Although I had been quite concerned about LJ in the past I respect and admire Danny Rich and support what he is trying to do.

What does this involve?

I have to attend many meetings in London. The officers meet monthly and the council quarterly. I am officer for the "regions". I have to visit all the non-London synagogues and this I have been doing. Many regional communities do not send representatives to London. Many communities have less involvement with the central movement than we do. I am one of those who has to find out what their needs are and whether LJ can help them. I also consider how the resources of LJ should be spent. One of my particular interests in the monthly meetings is the relationship between LJ and the Reform movement. I would very much like to see greater co-operation.

How do we compare with other synagogues that you visit?

We are similar in so many ways to congregations of a similar size in the regions. I attended one council meeting when very similar issues were being discussed. I think we are really special in that we are able to have services every Friday evening and Saturday morning. We are very fortunate in our lay



Into the Wider Community

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involvement particularly with services. We are very unusual for a community of our size to have the support of a rabbi living in our midst. There are many synagogues larger than ours to do not have full-time rabbis and even if they have an employed rabbi he or she does not live in the area. I have been to services at other synagogues. I think we are unusual in parading the scroll twice in the service. I very much prefer it when the Scroll is not paraded but that is my personal preference.

Are there differences between the views of our synagogue and those of LJ?

I think some members of LJ would like to see a movement with greater independence from the constituent synagogues. I would be very much against this.

I think LJ it is too often driven by seeking to find an identity different from the Reform movement. It is looking for a liberal agenda. This is because it is very much a London based. In London Jews have the choice as to what type of synagogue to join. In Bristol although there is another synagogue it is an

orthodox one and doesn't offer the facilities that we do and therefore the choice is much more limited. A number of our members are quite understandably are not too concerned that we are members of a movement and may not be entirely happy with identifying with LJ.

I can see the many benefits, especially to a regional community, of being members of a movement but I do think that LJ sometimes stresses what distinguishes it from the Reform movement when it does not need to do so. Having said that, I fully endorse the recent stand taken by the rabbis and Danny Rich offering support in the synagogue for those who are taking advantage of the Civil Partnerships Act. I have little doubt that where LJ leads the RSGB will follow and I think our decision has been brave and correct. I also think that the LJ stance on patrilineal descent is entirely right and the RSGB approach will eventually be changed.

Michael Romain



Make sure that you don't miss the
SYNAGOGUE AGM

Nomination papers and
agenda will be enclosed with
this issue.

COMMUNAL SEDER

The communal seder (open to members, family and friends) will be held in Bristol

Seders are much enjoyed and places are allocated on a first come first serve basis:

It was very oversubscribed last year so look out for future details and be sure to return booking forms as soon as you have received them



Danny Rich, the chief executive of Liberal Judaism visited Bristol over the first weekend in December. He joined us of the Friday night chavura supper & service, then led the service with Rabbi Berry on Saturday morning, and gave the sermon. After service & lunch he talked at a formal 'question and answer' session, and then joined us for supper at the Romains' house on Saturday evening.

Danny told us that the last time he came to Bristol, the synagogue was a third of the size that it is now, so that was something for us to feel good about.

In his sermon he used the characters of Jacob & Esau to talk about valuing both sides of religious expression – both the intellectual and the emotional. I wasn't quite sure about that, but then (as many in the community know) I distrust emotional approaches towards Judaism.

In the question and answer session he talked about relationships with other Jewish movements in Britain - both other progressive movements, and his experience of working with the orthodox community when he was a rabbi in Kingston. We talked about the change of name from ULPS to LJ. He was happy to take neither credit nor blame for this (it happened before he was chief executive) but was able to name one advantage that it enabled Jews to be members of the movement even where there was no community nearby. He also told us that there are plans to mark in 2006 the 350th anniversary of Cromwell's agreeing to the return of Jews to Britain, and that events would be held everywhere Jews live now, and in places – most obviously

York – where there used to be Jews. The events will be joint between all the movements of British Judaism, and we were happy to report, as we always do, that we enjoy very cordial relationships with the orthodox community in Bristol.

There was, of course, quite a lot of discussion about money. Over the years some of us in Bristol have felt that we pay substantial amounts to support LJ, and get little in return. Danny pointed out, as do some of the members who have memories that far back, that we got substantial financial support when the community was first being formed; one of the problems now is that most of the events LJ supports, that could benefit us, are held in London and it is not always easy for one of us to attend. (David Dwek did recently go to a teachers' day). The 'London centric' focus of LJ is probably something that will always be there, and we simply have to put up with it. Of LJ's subscription income, 25% goes to support Leo Baeck college, whose costs are shared with the Reform & Masorti movements. At present there are few students, but it would be difficult to imagine any kind of progressive Jewish movement without it, and we have had (and continue to have) the benefit of rabbis who trained there.

Then we also get the books (siddur & machzor) whose development costs have been substantial; and we are part of a movement with a national voice.

Ruth Baker wanted to know about the costs of setting up a Liberal synagogue in Manchester, where there are already a number of Reform communities, but this was answered by Danny saying that he had raised funds separately for this venture; that it was being done to answer

an expressed local need; and that there were lots of non-affiliated Jews in Manchester who might welcome a Liberal community. In answer to the charge that we don't get enough help from LJ in running our religion school, he said that he had appointed an education officer to support religion schools. It's up to us to demand what we want from LJ, and report back to Danny if we don't get it.

Hanging over all the details there were one or two big messages: we must be clear what we stand for as part of LJ, and be clear about the

principles that we would not want to compromise. We wouldn't be the same as any other of the constituent synagogues; the movement itself is genuinely inclusive and liberal, but it too has some fundamental principles. We should not be apologetic for our version of Judaism, and not assume that orthodox practices should take precedence. His own prediction, almost as an afterthought, was that there will be a single progressive movement in 10-15 years' time. We shall see.

David Jewell

A day for meditation and quiet contemplation.



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

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

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

All meditations will be drawn from the Jewish tradition.

No previous experience is necessary : all are welcome.



A small but happy audience attended BWJPS afternoon cinema on Sunday 13th November to enjoy a viewing of Green Fields, a Film in Yiddish made in 1938 (I do not have the name of the director).

I came in from the startlingly bright Bristol streets to the darkened shul and was drawn into the grainy black and white green pastures and rolling farmlands of a lost world, somewhere in central Europe - as Kathy Berry said, to a world that has been now, completely wiped out.

A Yeshiva student abandons his institute of study to wander the land, disconcerted by reading the concept that 'a man is nothing without his own land'. An eager young boy takes him home, where, encouraged (in the most difficult-to-refuse manner of an overbearingly hospitable Jewish family) to stay despite his attempts to leave. He struggles to stay focused on his strict religious academic study while becoming increasingly enchanted by the romance of the countryside and its villagers.

I found this film enchanting: the characters so recognizable in their humanity - jealous, competitive, cooperative, and loving, parents yearning for the best for their children and for closeness to God – while the children yearned to learn and be close to each other. The young rabbi stumbled and stuttered his conflicted way through the tale - the centre of everyone's attention. All the characters experienced transformation in themselves and their relationships as the story progressed and the film rewarded us with moments of moving intimacy and a happy ending.

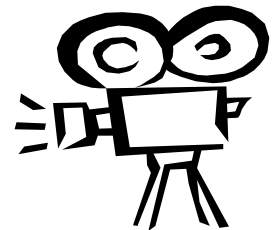
The distinction between city and country was strongly drawn, the villages grieving that they are too busy and ill-educated to be 'really' religious, while the troubled teacher came to recognise the glory of God in an ear of corn and the abundance of the harvest. A rather simple romantic tale, it was a joy to watch and left me with a real sense of a radically changing world that nevertheless, is forever the same.

There are bound to be plenty of seats available at the synagogue cinema, convivial company, unusual movies, and no advertisements.

Clare Sandler

Synagogue Cinema

The first film we hope to show, in the new year, is 'Hester Street' and the second, 'Crossing Delancy', both about New York Jewish life.





The book club met at the end of November to discuss the 'Radetsky March'. We took along the CD to set the mood - but Angela Hutter whose house we were in had already prepared the music and off we went. da da da da da da dadadada da - think of circus music.

Written by **Joseph Roth** the Radetsky March was only translated from its original German in the 1990s. It tells the story of the Hero of Solferino, one Sergeant Trotta who throws himself in the way of a sniper's bullet to save the life of Franz Joseph, Emperor of the Austria-Hungarian Empire.

The Trotta's are honoured - seemingly in perpetuity - by the Emperor and so we meet the hero, his son and his grandson. Each has this honour to uphold which seems to become increasingly burdensome as time passes.

The son goes into the civil service and seems to fossilise in a quiet and dignified way oblivious to the bureaucracy and the humbug around him. The grandson, brought up to be a gentleman seems poorly cut out for the army yet joins the cavalry. Endless manoeuvres, drunkenness and loneliness absorb him whilst he is stationed near the Russian frontier.

When the father's old retainer dies he travels to spend time with the son and he begins to see how corroded the rule of the empire has become.

Along the way there are incidents - both gripping and revealing that help to mould the characters. There is also the tune which repeatedly affects one's response to the story.

As the old grandfather died a hero saving one man, the grandson dies trying to save many.

There is no 'Jewish' theme - Jews are there and incidental to the plot. Certainly the book describes ethnic divides which will play their part in undermining the empire but it is far richer than that. It is a great panorama of pomp and humility, stupidity and fate all weaving a spell into a novel which is a joy to read. It is beautifully written.

Thank you to Angela Hutter for her hospitality.

Effie Romain

Book Group

At the January meeting we will be discussing 'History of Love' by Nicole Kraus.

For the following meeting the chosen book will be 'In My Father's Court' by Isaac Bashevis Singer.



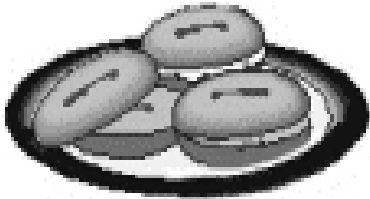


BRISTOL JEWISH COMMUNITY CLUB

(Previously "Western Jewish Social Club")

Programme for January and February 2006

January "Travels in India" Odi Allan will share her experiences of back-packing in India.
(This talk was originally programmed for the November meeting)



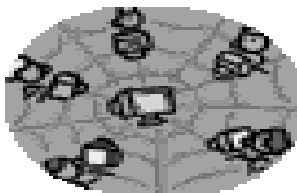
"Re-launch lunch" – All about bagels. Betty Baker will be telling us the history of the bagel whilst demonstrating making and baking them at

11.30 am followed by a lunch of bagels and smoked salmon.

Meetings take place at the Progressive Synagogue,

Kathy Berry

WIZO NATIONWIDE MULTI-VENUE QUIZ - 11 February 2006



Enjoy a brilliantly entertaining quiz
and a convivial evening of food and laughter with friends
whilst supporting the therapeutic services at WIZO's 11
schools and youth villages



Friday evening services

Chavura suppers are held on the first Friday of each month (**6 January, 3 February & 3 March**). 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**. It's usually a bit shorter than the usual Friday service, but more than made up for by wonderful singing of birkat hamazon, provided there are people there to lead it. Please bring some food (as always vegetarian or fish) to share with others.

All other Friday services (**13, 20 & 27 January, and 10, 17 & 24 February**) will start at **8pm**.

Forthcoming events

The **Channukah** party is on **1 January** coinciding with the last night of the festival, and just worth announcing it here. As always this should be a joyous event for all the family.

Tu b'shevat falls on **Monday 13 February** for those who are interested – no observance in the synagogue.

Advanced notice.

Purim falls on **Tuesday 14 March**. We shall probably be marking the event with a service & reading on the **evening of Monday 13 March**. I say probably because we didn't get around to discussing it at the last R&P meeting, so you need to keep an eye on this space in the next issue of Alonim.

First night of **Passover** is on **Wednesday 12 April**. As always, no service on the first night, but festival services on **Thursday 13 April at 11am**, evening of **Tuesday 18 April at 8pm**, and **morning of Wednesday 19 April**.

David Jewell (Chair R&P committee)

Would you
like to
express your
own
spirituality

Lay Leadership Training

Do you think you could help others to pray?

Would you like to understand our *minhag*?

Could you do with more fluency in reading Hebrew?

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

If so, you might like to come to a half day training session for new Service leaders, The first hour and a quarter session will be mostly theoretical, the second more practical.





ULPS Lectionary excerpt for Jan/Feb 2006

DATE	PORTION	TORAH READING	HAFTARAH
7 January	Va-yiggash	Gen. 45: 1-15 or 45:25-46:7 or 47: 1-12	Ezekiel 37:15-28 Psalm 105: 1-23 Amos 8:4-11
14 January	Va-y'chi	Gen. 47:28-48:9 or 49: 1-12 or 49:28-50:6	I Kings 2:1-12 I Chronicles 28:1-10 Job 5:17-27
21 January	Sh'mot	Ex. 1:1-20 or 3:1-15 or 4:1-17	Isaiah 27:6-13 Jeremiah 1:1-10 Job 40:1-14
28 January	Va-era	Ex. 6:2-13 or 7:14-26 or 9:22-35	Ezekiel 28.25-29.21 Isaiah 42:5-17 Psalm 78:38-55
4 February	Bo	Ex. 10:1-11 or 12:1-11 or 13:3-16	Jeremiah 46:13-24 & 27-28 Ezra 6:13-32 II Chronicles 35:1-19
11 February	B'shallach	Ex. 13:17-14:4 or 15: 1-18 or 16: 1-18	Judges 4:4-15 Judges 5:1-21 Psalm 78:1-29
18 February	Yitro	Ex. 18: 1-12 or 19:16-24 or 20: 1-14	Isaiah 6:1-13 Isaiah 43:1-12 Nehemiah 8:1-12
25 February <i>Shekalim</i>	Mishpatim	Ex. 21: 1-11 or 22:20-23:9 or 24: 1-18	Jeremiah 34:8-17 Amos 5:6-24 Ezekiel 1:1-14
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