



ALONIM

Newsletter of the Bristol & West
Progressive Jewish Congregation

*Cheshvan /Kislev/Tevet 5767
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עלונים



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Chanukah Issue



This has been a very sad issue to compile. I don't think we have ever before had three obituaries in one issue. The synagogue has been hit very hard by the loss of four members in one year. Each of these wonderful people will leave a hole that can never be filled. None-the-less the practical duties they performed will need to be picked up by other people. It is with great sorrow that I ask if there is anyone willing to take on the role of Alonim distributor in place of Malcolm Rawles. If you feel you might be able to do this and would like to know more, please contact me directly (details in the contacts list on the rear cover).

Judy Lazarus

The Editor

ALONIM & E-LONIM copy date deadlines

Month	Copy date	Festivals covered, notices needed
December E-Lonim	Sunday 25th November	
Jan/Feb Alonim	Monday 17th December	Tu b'sh'vat
February E-lonim	Monday 28th January	
Mar/Apr Alonim	Monday 18th February	Purim & Pesach

Editorial and Production Team

Judith Lazarus, 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 being approximately 500 words 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 or by post to Flat A, 124 New Fosseway Road, BS14 9LJ. 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.



The High Holydays services take a lot of organising, planning and preparing, and there are a few people that I know we would all like to thank. That we were unaware of the organisation because the services ran so smoothly and had such a good community feel, was really wonderful. This extended into the shared meals and let's hope that this communal feeling continues through the rest of the year. So I would like to thank our Rabbi; Gary and the R&P team; Max and everyone who helped with security; Linda for meeting and greeting all our members and visitors, and all the people involved in the children's services.

Many of you will now have seen the new windows which were installed in October. I am delighted with them, and hope everyone else is too. It's really great to have natural light in the Kiddush area, and to know the windows are double-glazed and secure with CST approved glass. Many thanks to Effie and John for all their work in making this finally happen. The memorial stained glass window is being reframed and will be back in place in the very near future

Further to writing about Woodlands cemetery in the summer Alonim issue, we have now fixed a date for a group visit of anyone who is interested in seeing the place and finding out more. One of the directors will show us round for an information gathering visit. Once we know if enough people have expressed an interest, Council will be able to discuss this further. Do let me know if you want to come along. The plan is to meet there, but there will be lifts if needed.



Website for information and directions: www.memorialwoodlands.com

Council has now set a date for the AGM. There are plans to invite a speaker, and details will follow in due course. There will be elections for new Council members, and full details and forms will be circulated with the January issue of Alonim. Meanwhile if you think you might like to join Council, or would just like to find out what it involves, please get in touch with me.

Finally, we have received copies of the first LJ Annual Report. If you would like one, please collect from the synagogue next time you are there.

Keren Durant
Chair of Council



Squeaks of the Scribe's Quill

What a healthy community we are! How lively the debates we have! The vigour of expression and breadth of views expressed both by members and non-members of our Congregation in *Alonim* are remarkable for their variety and colour. Right across the range, opinions of tints and shades on all topics may be found in our small Congregation. The debates on whether or not we should continue our membership of the Liberal Judaism movement and what our perspective ought to be on Israel continue to generate fresh and interesting insights. The guiding principle is that people feel able to express themselves despite disagreement; that everyone has the right to speak out and say what they think.

Whatever you have to say, if you think that it is worth saying you should be able to say it without fear. That you may say it aloud knowing that others hold different perspectives is, perhaps, more important than what it is you actually want to express. How we listen to those with whom we may disagree is perhaps a rather more important skill than our own articulation of our case in an argument.

It would, of course, be rather peculiar if we all had the same views, but it is good we all have the ability to listen with respect and try to understand and even to empathise to some extent with those who hold different views to our own. How much do we ever make the attempt to see matters from the same point of view as someone else? It is significant that when we do this we are never the same as before but are moved on, transformed by

being able to shed our prejudices.

This does not mean that we are necessarily going to have to give up our cherished old positions. However, the comforts of the past may be illusory. It is not so much that we must believe in them as that we feel that we must have beliefs and it is only the realisation that a belief is merely a strongly held opinion, not a necessity for our existence, which can enable us to evolve. Evolution is a necessity, which God had built into the Universe. Everything changes, so if we persist in trying to stay the same our environment alters imperceptibly around us until our entrenched beliefs become inappropriate. If we can transcend our prejudices, surmount our mistrust of our enemies, we may be surprised to discover that theirs are like ours and they are similar to us.

The light of the *hanukkiyah* may be taken as our inspiration for this process because of the change in our tradition regarding the meaning of our festival. Light symbolises the presence of the Divine within the congregation of Israel, like the candles lit on our tables at home every Friday evening for the reception of *shabbat* or the *ner tamid* (eternal light) which hangs before the ark. Originally the story of the celebration of the festival of Hanukkah was based upon the account of military success told in the Book of Maccabees when the Hasmoneans defeated the Assyrians who had despoiled our Temple in Jerusalem. Later the reason for the kindling of the *hanukkiyah* was given in *megillat ta'anit* that a small cruse of oil, enough to burn for only one day, lasted for eight days. So the literary standpoint providing the reason for our festival changed. There is now more than one point of view, but



both are incorporated into our historical understanding. Later, other rabbinical perspectives on the mode of observance are incorporated, denoting our spiritual openness, sensitivity and awareness. So, we still light the candles but our reasons for doing so may have become lost in the mists of antiquity. Do we now know why we do what we do; why we think the way we think, believe what we think we believe? There is a prescribed way to kindle the *hanukkiyah*, but for me the most important aspect of our festival is to see the light reflected in the shining faces of the children of our community and their parents when we congregate at our *hanukkah* party.

real, enhanced powers of survival, as the environment undergoes changes, which may not be apparent. It is clear to me that we do need to make changes, so whilst I acknowledge the past and respect our traditions I do also feel a need to move on. We are most definitely not the same kind of Congregation we were when I joined. The mutuality of our exchange of views proves that. We have a confidence and a range of competencies quite distinctive for a small community and sufficient for us to move ahead into the future together. I look forward to seeing you at our party.

Rabbi Francis Ronald Berry

Evolution happens because of the effect of the environment upon the organism. This effect confers upon the organism hidden, but



Dear Editor,

I would like to express my thanks to Jo Shapiro for taking the time to review and comment upon my earlier article.

As usual, Jo brings his great knowledge, experience and intelligence to bear upon the subject. There has never been a occasion when I have been with Jo that I have failed to learn

something new and deeper about Judaism, and this was no exception.

I found his comments perceptive and helpful, although of course I disagreed with almost all of them!

Thanks again to Jo,

Peter Walters



An interesting debate has taken place, in the pages of Alonim, about the position of our community within the movement of Liberal Judaism (LJ). The current discussion began I think, after I returned from my failure to encourage the officers of LJ to consider a form of federation of progressive synagogues. I also felt that we, as a strong regional community, had to attract progressive Jews from all shades of belief and practice and perhaps there was more chance of doing so if we were an independent synagogue. I wanted to foster a debate on the subject.

I have perceived in the correspondence and also in discussions with members two general strands well exemplified by Bernard Barnet and Mavis Hyams in the last issue. Effectively Bernard was saying if it is not broke do not fix it and Mavis was using the very powerful argument that over the years that the ULPS and LJ has had a strong relationship with us. These are very powerful arguments indeed. One other debate that has taken place recently, although not directly on the same issue, was the article by Peter Walters in the penultimate Alonim "A Very Liberal Synagogue" in which he set out a vision which was very well and thoughtfully criticized by the "anonymous" Jo Schapiro last month. Jo, in that piece stated "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."

But in fact Jo IS in my opinion, concerned with affiliation in general. If we were not members of the movement then there would be a danger that I admit I have not noticed before of an individual member or members taking the community in the way that the majority does not wish to go. Of course there is a risk that if this is an influential powerful member of the

community we may lose them. This is a risk we have to be prepared to take. By being members of a movement we in a way protect ourselves against our community being taken in a direction without the consent of its members through a form of lethargy.

In short, having heard the arguments, I, for my part, accept that the status quo should be maintained subject to two important caveats. One is a plea to our members to involve themselves in what LJ is doing and try to be involved in the direction that it is taking. I know that will not be easy. My second caveat is I would urge us to continue to be a "broad church": by that I mean I think we should for example encourage Jews to be members of our synagogue even if they profess they "have no beliefs". There are I think many in this position. Let us say to them we do not have all the answers but we do have similar questions. Let us share these questions with you. Let us also continue to welcome as members those from other movements.

And on the issue of being a broad church, in my view, Lisa Saffron is right. Our synagogue must welcome and give support to those Jews who do not support the current state of Israel. Our Mitzvah is to support Jews in their lives who wish to practice progressive Judaism in the southwest. We have to support them.

For my part I am happy that we have had this debate and I am sure that it will continue but meanwhile I look forward to the future and particularly to the year 2011 when we will proudly celebrate 50 years as a liberal community.

Michael Romain



Firstly some apologies:

The editorial team apologises sincerely for omitting the name of Joachim Schapiro from the bottom of his article, "Spare Us, Please" in the last issue.

Also, two names were omitted from the list of kiddushim contributors, namely Miriam Patrick and Rosanne Shocolinsky-Dwyer.

I (Judy Lazarus) am also very sorry for the late arrival of this issue, which is a result of a range of events all coinciding. I hope this will not inconvenience anyone too much.

Secondly, A Request:

Alonim is now looking for someone to act as distributor. The task involves delivering Alonim to the printers, who will then deliver published copies to your house. Receiving any insertions (there will always be LJ Today, but sometimes other items too.). Labelling and stuffing the envelopes and then posting them off, having first purchased and applied the stamps. The whole is only a few hours work spread over a few days once every other month. However, there is always a tight timescale to be met at the tail end of the month in question. There are about 200 copies at present.

E-lonim is much less daunting. It is printed on the distributor's home computer, enveloped and posted, but there are only about 35 copies and it is only two sheets of paper per copy. Obviously it comes out at the end of the in-between months.

All expenses are reimbursed or a float can be set up, whichever the distributor prefers.

If you think this is a task you could undertake or you might be interested in sharing the task

with someone else, please contact Judy Lazarus (details on back cover)

Thirdly, Thanks

A big thank you to Ruth Baker for stepping into the breach with this issue's distribution. What a trooper!

Finally, Your Opinion, Please.

Alonim seeks to print a range of views on any subject. In particular, the editorial policy is to publish any articles written by a member of the congregation, provided they are not a direct attack on another individual or could be interpreted as being in breach of UK law in any way including incitement to hatred.

However, we have had some very heated debates recently on a range of quite emotive subjects. From time to time someone will complain to me that they feel a particular article should not have been published.

I personally feel that the way to deal with an article one dislikes or with which one disagrees is to write a response, but right now I would like your opinion.

Have there been articles that you felt should not have been published? Do you feel there are 'no go' areas or topics? Do you believe that the editorial guidelines should be tightened?

Do you feel there should be different guidelines for the content of our web version of Alonim? Should we be stricter for matter that might be read by non-members?

This is your opportunity to be very critical. I look forward to hearing from you,

Judy Lazarus
editor



None of us can actually believe Isobel has gone. Isobel, so active, so involved with everything, who flew off from Bristol airport looking forward immensely to her four day trip to Scotland, where she had never before been. In less than 24 hours, she was lying in a hospital in Inverness, dying from something she didn't know she had wrong with her.

Isobel had a zest for life, whether it was downloading music on to her ipod or trying to beat me at canasta.

For those of you who don't know me, I am Isobel's younger sister. I use that adjective deliberately because one of her greatest delights when together we met new people, was that they usually asked "Which one of you is the older?" I took that not as an insult to me, but as a compliment to her, because no way did she either look or act her age of 78.

Just consider her involvements and interests up to that last awful Friday: Book keeper for her son Simon; until quite recently Managing the Bristol dress shop for her daughter Mandy; Keen bridge player; Amateur watercolour artist; Organiser of a "girls" (I use the term advisedly) birthday lunch group; Amateur dramatics and play readings; Running the synagogue Judaica shop; Working in the St Peter's hospice charity shop; Enthusiastic photographer; Keen tennis watcher (in her younger days, she had been a keen tennis player); An enthusiastic computer games player of specialised mystery games – she often played to the early hours of the morning (just one last game...); Add to that proud mother and grandmother; and just a few weeks ago, because she said she was "bored" she had arranged to start shortly on a one day a week job in a local gift and card

shop. I am sure there are many other involvements that I have missed out.

And she recently bought a book entitled "1000 places to see before you die" and was busy ticking off the places she had already been to. Sadly, there was not time for her to add any more.

Isobel and I were both born in Stoke Newington, in North London and later brought up in Putney, South West London where we moved for our father's job – I gather that our maternal grandmother, who lived slightly more upmarket in Stamford Hill, was horrified that we were moving so far away – strange since she had managed to come to the East End of London and then Stamford Hill all the way from Poland. But on September 1st 1939, the very date that 68 years later Isobel was to die, we were evacuated to a little village in Berkshire. We both had very clear recollections of our time with a childless couple who had never seen a Jew before and certainly did not know what to do with the platters of cold fried fish our parents brought down on their visits. Eventually, our parents, recognising we were unhappy, took us back and we all moved to Windsor, where Isobel and I enjoyed happy school days. It was in Windsor, where a sizable Jewish community evolved, that Isobel met Mike, whose family had taken themselves from Richmond to Datchet. They were married in 1951, living originally in Slough, then in Bristol. Sadly, Mike died seven years ago.

Originally trained by ICI in Slough as an electron microscopist, after moving to Bristol and the birth of Mandy and Simon, Isobel had various jobs, including running a children's wear shop in Olveston village, with a friend. Her most outstanding success was



In memory of Isobel Wagen

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joining Weightwatchers , getting off all her excess weight, then becoming a lecturer, then an area manager. If I showed you pictures of us as children, you would not recognise the podgy teenager as the smart, slim Isobel you knew.

I should have added to that list above – “holiday organiser”. She was adept at finding the bargains. The phone would ring and her voice would say , “I’ve just seen this fabulous bargain”. So, over the years, we have found ourselves flying over the Angel Falls in Venezuela; sipping free cocktails while we played the slot machines in Las Vegas; almost missing the cruise ship sailing from Singapore because she was too busy looking at the shops; going through the Panama Canal; taking a boat ride through the jungle in Costa Rica; eating food from stalls in Vietnam; exploring Rio de Janeiro’s Copocabana Beach; and so on.

In our Progressive Jewish liturgy, there is a



Isobel and her husband Michael were founder members of this Synagogue, and Isobel served on Synagogue council for many years always remaining committed to Liberal Judaism and ULPS. She also formed part of a very active core group who not only worked hard but also played hard in our, then, very active social life in the Shul by serving on the Social committee taking a major role in organising splendid fund raising events such a concert with Alan Schiller and on another occasion a dinner dance as well as helping run quiz nights and taking part in play readings organised by Neville Lewisohn.

Latterly she ran our Shul Shop, taking pride in

piece, written by the late Rabbi John Rayner which reads as follows: “Let us strive to fulfil the promise that is in each of us, and so to conduct ourselves that, generations hence, it will be true to say of us: the world is a little better because, for a brief space, they lived in it”

We do not have to wait for generations hence. All of us here know that the world is a little better because Isobel lived in it. None of us will forget the 78 year old, going on 40 year old, who gathered new friends about her wherever she went, who always looked great and was always ready for the next adventure.

Rosita

keeping it well stocked on her forays to London suppliers. As she often helped her daughter Mandy in her shop on Saturdays and spent time away taking interesting holidays, in recent years she was not often seen in shul on Shabbat mornings, but loved coming to Chavurah suppers and thoroughly enjoyed the social contacts she made in the Synagogue. In fact - thoroughly enjoying things sums Isobel up, always elegant, her enthusiasm was infectious and her organising skills masterful. She was a good and loyal friend and will be very much missed.

Mavis Hyams



It was depressing to read 'Is it Good for the Jews?' by Lisa Saffron in the September/October issue of Alonim. That's because the article goes beyond intelligent criticism of Israeli policies and actions - criticisms with which individuals might agree or disagree as part of an informed debate - to subtle demonization of the Jewish state. Such demonization is achieved by a combination of factors:

- factual inaccuracy: the JNF, for example, doesn't own 90% of land in Israel.

- the presentation of partisan NGOs as though they were straightforwardly objective: the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, for instance, often uses the language of human rights to camouflage a campaign of boycott and delegitimization against Israel.

- a gross caricature of Israel itself: the polemical but generalized list of supposed Israeli crimes excludes even the merest possibility that Israel might have legitimate rights (e.g. stopping suicide bombers from the West Bank and rocket fire from Gaza) or that a hysterical hatred of Israel and the Jews among extremists on the Palestinian/Arab/Muslim side may be at least part of the problem.

Furthermore, being against the existence of Israel sixty years after its creation can only mean being in favour of one thing: the end of the Jewish state. But since it's obvious that Israelis will never voluntarily agree to the

replacement of their country with a Greater Palestine (in which Jews would necessarily be a minority at the mercy of the likes of Fatah and Hamas), logic dictates that it must also mean being in favour of Israel's destruction through boycotts, terrorism, or war. There are, of course, plenty of fanatical individuals, groups, and governments trying to bring about Israel's demise by precisely these means - whether the boycotters in British unions, the Palestinian Solidarity Movement in various countries, Hamas, or Ahmadinejad and his supporters.

And, indeed, it's the tacit support for Hamas and Neturei Karta that is the most disturbing feature of this piece in Alonim. Why? Because Hamas and Neturei Karta's ideological soul-mate Ahmadinejad are, in reality, extremists who oppress their own people while simultaneously preparing for a second holocaust against the Jews.

More precisely, Hamas is quite overt in its antisemitism (e.g. its charter could almost come straight out 1930s Germany) and its desire to create a repressive Islamist state on the whole of Israel and the Palestinian territories. So it's perverse to condemn Israel for having nothing to do with the 'democratically elected' Hamas until it accepts Israel's right to exist and renounces terrorism.

As for Neturei Karta, it was prominent in Ahmadinejad's holocaust-denying conference in Iran earlier this year. Thus, by quoting approvingly from its website about the alleged evils of Zionism (on the basis of a spurious interpretation of a Talmud passage),



this article effectively shares a platform with those who dabble in denial of the holocaust while aiding and abetting preparations for the next one. Ahmadinejad is quite open in his desire to destroy Israel, after all, and he finances and arms Hamas and Hizbollah to that end.

So, all in all, I fail to see how this Alonim article has anything whatsoever to do with 'justice, peace and truth and...compassion', as it claims, for either Palestinians or Israelis. On the contrary, it engages in the demonization of Israel, effectively supports the oppression of Palestinians by legitimizing Hamas, indirectly justifies attacks on Israeli civilians as mere self-defence, and describes Ahmadinejad's allies in Neturei Karta as good 'Torah Jews'. To my mind, in the current climate of widespread irrational hatred of Israel, that adds up to incitement to hatred in effect if not in intent.

Indeed, the article gives general expression to a growing belief across the globe that Israel is a senseless, imperialist, murderous, racist aggressor going against the core values of Judaism and/or the common values of humanity. That conviction in turn leads to expressions of sympathy for the likes of Hamas and the friends of Ahmadinejad, as exemplified in this article, inasmuch as the 'resistance' of such people is wrongly interpreted as an inevitable desperate response to the prior vileness of the common Zionist enemy.

In recent years, this sort of ill-informed and obsessive antipathy towards Israel has moved from the political and religious margins into

the mainstream, with support coming from some prominent but deluded individual Jews. There are, mercifully, some counter-currents too: Honest reporting has had some success in getting fairer media coverage of Israel in America and Europe, for instance, while the UK's Labour government resists grassroots loathing of Israel within the Labour party.

Nevertheless, there are now hundreds of millions of people - including not a few Jews - who believe a pack of lies about the Jewish collective known as the State of Israel in a manner that is chillingly reminiscent, at least in broad terms, of the way tens of millions of folk in the 1930s and 40s believed deadly myths about the Jewish collective in Europe and elsewhere.

In such circumstances, shouldn't we as a community think twice before publishing that kind of demonization of Israel - all the more dangerous in the article concerned for not quite spelling out the implications of what's being said - in our synagogue magazine that is available for all to read on the web?

I would urge the editor and Council to consider that question as a matter of urgency.

Jonathan Campbell

Editorial Comment:

Please read the final section of my article on page 21.



Malcolm was, a man of rare charm and quality. Not a particularly religious man in any formal sense, yet towards the end of his life comforted by his connection with the synagogue. Malcolm was a convivial friend, always ready for a joke, but underneath that he had a sincerity, the quality of which was earnest and very real. He nourished those in the circle of his friends with the power of his being. I know that there are valued friends and congregants who have gained from knowing Malcolm and being with him, for he had that quality about his personality that could awaken good feeling and companionship.

Malcolm sometimes gave those who knew him a difficult time. But then, life itself may have given him a difficult time on occasion so it is not to be wondered at that he had to pass that on. He lived all his life with a demon on his back; perhaps a couple of them, actually. We will never know the difficulties and dangers that he faced throughout his formative years, firstly during his childhood and then whilst he was a young man. Fortune may not have smiled on Malcolm during some of his life. He had a particularly sensitive disposition.

Malcolm Rawles was born on 9th September 1942, during World War II. He went to school in Brentwood, but he didn't make friends easily when growing up, as he was always a different kind of person, who stood apart. He had a complicated personality, so has never had a peaceful life. He had a gift for languages, but wanted to become a scientist, so life was rather a struggle. He became a

marketing man, and went abroad, working firstly in Australia, then in Eastern Europe for many years. Here he was able to exercise his linguistic talent, especially in Poland, Hungary and Rumania, the former Czechoslovakia and East Germany. He also travelled widely in Finland and the former Soviet Union. More recently he read successfully for a Degree in German and French at Birkbeck College, University of London, which explains his skill with Yiddish. In Sydney, Australia Malcolm read successfully for a Dentistry BDS Part 1, but he was prevented by lack of funding from ever completing his dentistry studies. Malcolm never married and lived alone, another feature of his life which I know made him feel sad and regretful. Though highly strung and something of a worrier he could be very kind, protective, empathetic and generous. He was literary, knowledgeable about music and had a good little library of books and records.

Later in life, when he moved to Bristol and was working as a translator and tutor in Modern Languages, Malcolm joined the Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation. He found faith and seemed to find some comfort from it. He came to study with it for a read, attending my Basic Judaism/Beginners' course. He was able to gain some satisfaction and friendship by sitting on our Synagogue Council, with especial responsibility for maintenance, which he attended to conscientiously and with a sense of duty. He also assisted Judy Lazarus with the production of our synagogue magazine, so he certainly contributed to our community more than he took out. It has



- In Memory of Malcolm Rawles

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been for me both a challenge and a pleasure to have known him.

His brother, Richard told me that he remembers a very loving big brother, who was very dear to him when he was a little boy. A brother you could look up to, who would pick you up and put you to bed when your parents were arguing. His sister, Carol told me how charming Malcolm could be; that he had a particular way with older women; how fascinated he was by his first landlady, who was Jewish, how he shared with her the collection of photographs he had made of houses where their family used to live. Though the relationship cannot have been easy, his family was very important to Malcolm.

Malcolm had a full life, much travelled, lived generously, with friends around the world, in Finland, Canada, Russia and the United States, whom he enjoyed visiting during this last summer. He loved salmon fishing. He was a convivial companion with a marvellous sense of humour. He had the ability to comfort others, combined with great personal warmth. We who knew him have so many reasons to be grateful to him. We can keep alive that awareness! Think of him, not every minute of every day, but from time to time, with abiding gratitude, respect and affection.

Rabbi Francis Berry



I know I am not the only one who has watched with astonishment and anger the way the JC has transformed itself over the recent months. The changes were introduced with a flourish: “Your New Look Jewish Chronicle”. Everything was suddenly bigger. Headlines over articles large, black, bold. Indiscriminately: The Six-Day War, or How to Share a Flat, or What to Wear at a Simchah.

More pages – more glossy supplements – reams of pathetic, ridiculous trivia – a “Guest List” to rival OK! or Hallo – a new habit of magnifying small matter out of all proportion in tabloid-style sensationalism. And a creeping determination to ‘sex it up’. From purile nudge-nudge innuendo to visual material that’s well nigh soft porn.

The scandal is that the JC has some excellent writers and commentators, and access to the highest quality thinkers. Why are they rubbishing them? Who are they trying to impress with their grandiosity?

First published in 1841, it has had an enviable reputation as a responsible journal in a constantly changing world. The main point, however, is that it has a monopoly: there is no other Jewish weekly published in Britain, no-one they need to compete with. I’ve thought of cancelling my subscription, but where else could I get the news I need?

I’ve written twice to complain, to little effect. I hope others will complain, and persist. So far they’ve not printed any of the feedback they asked for. Perhaps they hope protesters will get tired and quietly disappear. I shan’t. Jews and language are inseparably connected, and how we use or abuse the written word is essential to our survival.

Alix Pirani



This is the sign for the Alonim furniture store in Talpiot, Israel, kindly sent to us by Michael Green.

We really hope things are still going well for you, Michael.



Jewish Women's Aid

Jewish Women's Aid (JWA) is the only specialist charity in Europe offering support to Jewish women and their children affected by domestic violence. It runs a refuge in London, which provides a safe haven for up to eight women and twelve children.

The Refuge observes Kashrut, Shabbat and all festivals and is open to all Jewish women, whatever their level of religious observance.

JWA volunteers also operate a national, free-phone helpline. Speaking to a Jewish service which listens, believes and supports them can be a turning point for many. In addition, JWA provides outreach support and counselling for women in their own homes while still living with their abusive partners. The counselling and support services are also available for those in the refuge and those who have moved on to new and safer lives. All services are confidential.

JWA also seeks to raise awareness of domestic abuse within the Jewish community and works towards its total eradication.

The Jewish community is no different from the rest of society. Statistics show that one woman in four is likely to experience domestic violence at some point in her life and those affected will come from all strata of society. Domestic violence happens across the board; within all socio-economic groups, within religious and secular families, to those with higher education and those without. It happens in professional, affluent households as well as in poorer homes. In 90% of cases of physical abuse, the children are in the same room or in the room next door.

The abuse may be physical or emotional. Many women have said that the emotional scars, which destroy their self-esteem, can be longer lasting and more painful than those left by physical assault. Women may be deprived of any contact with family or friends or denied access to their own money. Women who in other spheres of their life are competent and effective may be virtually imprisoned in their own homes. They sometimes arrive at the JWA refuge with nothing more than the clothes they stand up in. Frequently the children who come to us are completely traumatised by the domestic violence they have witnessed.

For any woman to admit to herself that she is experiencing domestic violence is very hard. A sense of failure, guilt and shame and the fear of not being believed prevent women seeking help earlier. On average, women are abused 35 times before they confide in anyone. It is widely believed that Jewish women wait even longer before seeking help. The emphasis on family values has made it difficult to raise the issue of domestic violence in the Jewish community. JWA has tackled the issue and is doing something about it.

Please contact us if you would like more information, or to join JWA and help us to help others.

If you would like help, please call us for free confidential support, assistance, advice and information, a friendly face and a listening ear.

HELPLINE: 0800 59 12 03: calls are free, untraceable and confidential. www.jwa.org.uk

Nigerian (Igbo) Jews

I came across these fascinating websites regarding Jews in Nigeria who purport to predate colonisation.

There's a film being made about them by a young Jewish filmmaker in LA.

1. <http://www.blackjews.org/Nigerian%20Report%20Rabbi%20Funnye.htm>
2. <http://www.re-emergingfilm.com/Screenings.html>
3. EKWE NCHE ORGANIZATION

Madge Dresser



When I was ordained and first served the Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation I will always remember Robert as an efficient and reliable Administrator of our Religion School. He came regularly with his daughter Annie, who told me how, even though the journey made her feel sick because he filled up the car both ways with his cigar smoke, she always loved coming to the synagogue regularly with her dad when she was a little girl.

Latterly he served as Warden and always fulfilled this rôle seriously, conscientiously, with authority but never with any pomposity. Nevertheless, when he didn't approve a situation he was able to get it changed for the better, for example when he wrote to the synagogue Rites and Practices Committee complaining about the misuse of Wardens for security duty, which put the onus on the Synagogue Council to take the security situation seriously and appoint a person dedicated to that issue. Robert was constructive and irreverent simultaneously, which was one of the reasons he was respected and appreciated by so many of us who knew him.

Robert Eisenthal was born in London in 1936. His parents came originally from Krakow in Poland, but he was brought up in Belgium until the Germans invaded, when the family escaped. First they came to England and then went on to America, where he was brought up in Manhattan, New York. He was always interested in Chemistry, so he attended the Bronx High School of Science, going on to University in New York, then Amherst. He did postgraduate work in North Carolina then

postdoctoral work in Seattle, before moving back to England where he worked at the Universities of Cambridge, East Anglia, and London. He was an organic chemist but his speciality was in Biochemistry. He did ground breaking research on the biochemistry of enzyme kinetics for which he became world famous.

As well as being a brilliant research scientist, Robert taught at the University of Bath for 40 years, becoming Professor of Biochemistry. Robert trained and sent out into the world, year after year, superb scientists who would be able to go on making their contribution in their way. Robert developed and kept up to date what is arguably the best Biochemistry course in the country. He was loved and respected by generations of students who found him inspirational as he engaged with undergraduates in such a way as to encourage and develop their fullest potential

Robert wanted to make a major contribution to the advancement of science and that he certainly did. He gained an international research reputation in the field of enzyme kinetics writing over 80 excellent papers and co-editing several important books in the field. As an intellectual Robert was meticulous in the design, application and analysis of his experimental work. As a biochemist involved with the development of specifically targeted delivery of healing treatments he brought his expertise, ingenuity, skill and caring to the benefit of humanity.

Robert started his family life with his wife Mary. His daughter Deborah was born first.



- In Memory of Robert Eisenthal

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In 1967 the family moved to Bath where they settled. David, Daniel and Naomi were born. He divorced and married Janet, with whom he had daughter Annie in 1984. Recently he became a grandfather to Henry and baby Davey.

I'm told that Robert was fun to have as a father, with a knack for making life interesting and a quirky sense of humour. He embarrassed his children in front of their friends, sang loudly, was social and genial and was always interested in taking an experimental approach to life, just to see what might happen. He enjoyed creating the opportunities for developments to occur and when they did, he loved to explore them in the company of others, friends and family, colleagues and fellow congregants. He was always relaxed about the way things developed, not the sort to become tense or stressed.

As well as his scholarly and paternal accomplishments Robert took delight in life; he enjoyed his food with pleasure and brightened up people's lives with his humour

and his creative approach. He made people wonder; "What's he going to say next?" because he had that knack of always making life interesting. He liked playing games, such as bridge and cribbage and enjoyed being able to answer the quiz questions for undergraduates on the TV show 'University Challenge'. When he was over 60 years old he took up scuba diving, carrying on with this sport until June this year, determined to enjoy his opportunities for living life as long as possible, almost making his century in dives.

All who knew him have gained so much from knowing Robert, whether as friend, colleague, fellow congregant, father, or husband, he was a wonderful human being with a handsome breadth and depth to his personality. I extend condolences to Janet, Mary and all their children. May the warmth of their memories soften the blow of bereavement and may time distil comfort from the glow of the recollections of their time with Robert.

Rabbi Francis Berry



I have always wanted to go to Israel but for one reason or another it has never been possible. Then my children announced that for my 60th birthday present they had bought me a week long tour of Israel which included visits to just about everywhere I'd ever wanted to go*.

So in mid-October I found myself in a group consisting mainly of Americans visiting Jerusalem (including the Old City, Yad Vashem, the Western Wall, Mount Scopus, Mea Shearim and the Israel Museum), Qumran, Masada, Tel Aviv, Caesarea, Haifa, the Galilee, Safed, the Golan Heights, Capernaum, Tiberias and the West Bank and numerous places of interest in between.

Israel is a curious mix of the modern and the ancient. Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv is brand new and puts Heathrow to shame. The country's roads are excellent. In traffic-choked Jerusalem they are building a new light rail system. Israelis chatter on their mobiles incessantly, even more so than in the UK. Technologically, Israel is as advanced as anywhere in the world. But they are proud of their historic past as well and have spent a lot of money excavating and preserving it. They have truly made the desert bloom. Security is ever present but not oppressive. There is a feeling around that somehow nothing is impossible. I encountered none of the legendary rudeness one is meant to experience with Israelis. I thought it was all absolutely marvellous.

It is very easy when visiting a foreign country where we don't understand the language to get the feeling that they have none of the day to day problems that we have at home. But that, of course, is not true. Israel has its problems just like everywhere else. My visit coincided with a major strike of secondary school teachers which was causing concern because hordes of teenagers were congregating on the beaches and in the shopping malls. The cost of renting a flat in Jerusalem has sky rocketed in the past two years. There is concern about the dominance of the national supermarket chains. It all sounded terribly familiar.

And, of course, Israel's ever present worry is security. Condeleezza Rice was visiting when I was there, laying the groundwork for the international conference to be held at Annapolis. CNN and the Jerusalem Post (a very fine newspaper) reported considerable opposition to Israel giving any further concessions to the Palestinians.

Just a week or so before my visit, the Israeli Air Force had destroyed a target in Syria. Uniquely, absolutely no-one in authority will talk about this although it is assumed the target was high value and probably nuclear. The view of both our guides was that the raid was a warning to Iran and Russia that they should be in no doubt that the IAF can penetrate their latest air defences. They both felt that when it came to it, Israel would have to do the 'dirty work' on behalf of the West.



Jerusalem was, well, Jerusalem - unique but very familiar because we've seen the sights so often on television. I didn't see much of Tel Aviv and wasn't that thrilled with what I saw. The beach was nice though. To my surprise I thought Haifa was just wonderful. I had always thought it was a grotty industrial city and it is indeed a port with oil refineries and suchlike. But it is also the hi-tech capital of Israel with the Haifa Technion being like MIT or Imperial College. From what I saw of it, the city is far more attractive than Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, set in a wonderful position by the sea on the slopes of Mount Carmel.

Of all the places we visited, the one I had most wanted to go to for many years was Safed, high up in the Galileean hills. Safed was the home of the Jewish mystics and of Rabbi Yosef Caro, who wrote one of the definitive texts of Judaism, the *Shulchan Aruch*, which he completed in Safed in 1542. We visited 'Caro's shul' and although it wasn't the actual building in which he'd prayed (that was destroyed by an earthquake in 1837) it was rebuilt on the same site so we stood where he had stood near enough. That was very special.

One night we stayed in a hotel on a kibbutz and after dinner went to a very interesting talk about the kibbutz, one of the first to be established after the War of Independence. The kibbutznik who gave the talk told us that no kibbutz can now make a living out of farming and they all rely on diversification to keep themselves going. In this particular kibbutz they manufacture high quality synagogue furniture and run a big hotel. Most

of the collective ideas of the pioneers have been abandoned and the traditional kibbutz is, effectively, dying.

There were just three other places I had wanted to visit – the city of Akko and the tombs of Maimonides and Rabbi Akiva near Tiberias. We passed nearby but they were not on our itinerary. Another time.

What do I want to go back and see again? Most of it really, and in cooler weather, but one thing stands out.

At the entrance to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial, they show a short continuous film which has been put together from newsreels of Jews living in Germany and Eastern Europe before the war. The film runs in partial slow-motion and has been cut and reprinted in such a way as to look almost like an animation. I do not do it justice with this description. It shows the ghosts of the victims of the Holocaust in their innocence of what was about to happen. It is haunting beyond words. I could watch it for hours.

The Israelis have built a wonderful country. *Baruch hashem*, keep Israel safe.

Richard Buckley

* Classic 8 night tour operated by Diesenhaus Tours and sold in the UK by Travelink, 0208 931 8000