

June, July,  
August 2016

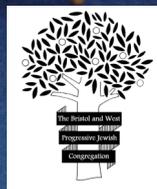
Iyyar, Sivan,  
Tamuz, Av 5776



# ALONIM

# עלונים

## Summer Issue



The NLPS Trust  
for Progressive Judaism

Magazine of the Bristol & West  
Progressive Jewish Congregation



**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 cultural and communal reviews, information concerning synagogue activities, letters and feedback, and articles of Jewish cultural and religious interest. Typically, contributions of approximately **350 words** are preferred.

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 Editors.

Contributions and communications can be sent directly to the **Editor** at [alonim@bwpjc.org](mailto:alonim@bwpjc.org). For postal contributions please contact the editor on **07989 974133**. Copy date deadline for submissions is notified opposite. 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.

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<b>Issue</b>	<b>Date</b>
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***Front cover photograph:***

Derek Brown wearing his Purim  
costume

*Photographer unknown*

## Editorial

**Sheila Brill,  
Editor**



**O**ur community is constantly evolving. Council has recently carried out a survey of members. **Read the highlights of this survey on page 32.**

Alonim now has a number of regular writers who write about lots of different subjects. We still have news items and our regular features. I'm delighted to receive additional articles providing I can find the space for them! Keep 'em comin'!

## Membership news



**Sheila Wilson Membership Secretary**

We've all been aware of the many celebrity deaths over the last few months, and very sadly, in our community we have lost our own "celebrities"

They might not have been known to millions around the world, but within our community Peter Hyams and

Lynn Johnston will be sorely missed as they had devoted so much time and energy over the years and contributed so much to the strength of our community.

Condolences to the family of Richard Buckley who sadly passed away recently. Also condolences to Gary Webber and his family on the death of his father Stanley.

We wish all those who mourn for their loved ones a long life.

Mazeltov to Shaunna Plunkett on her new job at Taunton School.

Mazel Tov to David Memel on the birth of his grandson.

It wouldn't be membership news without mention of subscriptions. I haven't heard anything from quite a few of you, and you will be shortly be receiving an email with a polite reminder!

Please email me at [sheilapotash@gmail.com](mailto:sheilapotash@gmail.com) if you would like to add any notices to the next edition of "Membership news".

## Changing the conversation

Jane Clark,  
Chair of Council



I'm right, you're wrong, and you're getting on my nerves". Too often I have heard debates in our synagogue in which that is effectively what each side is saying to the other.

All institutions from workplaces to families have to deal with disagreement. Two problems peculiar to voluntary organisations can exacerbate disagreement. First, the stakes are low. In voluntary organisations, there are always some who are much more willing to "fight to the death" because they have no livelihood or family to lose. Secondly, it is often unclear what the objectives of an organisation are. Businesses can use money to measure success. It is far from clear what success is for us. This can cause considerable disagreement.

I'm sure you remember the how Jacob and Rebecca diddle Esau out of his inheritance. Years

later, word reached Jacob that Esau was on his way with four hundred men. Of course, Jacob was terrified that this would turn into a biblical version of High Noon. Jacob could have dealt with this problem with a pre-emptive strike to neutralise Esau's hosts. But he didn't. He took the risky course of talking to Esau, and found to his surprise that his twin brother had neither wish to reclaim his inheritance nor hostile intent. Jacob got a good outcome by choosing to ignore those counselling that this was an attack. He and Esau talked to their best selves. The possibility for high feeling about the inheritance was openly acknowledged and defused.

It can be a bad idea to assume that silence means agreement. Indignantly to claim that "Council unanimously agreed XYZ" may be to exaggerate and misunderstand your support. Maybe, just maybe, they didn't speak up because they had heard more than enough from you about XYZ, which was never a burning issue for them. If you were later to pick a quarrel over XYZ, these people are unlikely to come to your aid;

and you would discover painfully that you were out on a limb, probably without understanding why.

It is equally bad for the silent majority to fail to acknowledge your strong feelings. If both sides would only listen to one another without leaping to judgement, and test their assumptions in an un-lecturing, unthreatening way, the next big synagogue *broiges* might not happen.

The person claiming that Council had agreed to XYZ may have a point. Agreements should be carefully drafted.

Vague agreements that the committee believes that the sky is blue are useless, because you can't determine whether they have been carried out. It is much better to draft agreements around actions. "The Cheder parents agree that, on sunny days, children playing outside will be given suntan lotion". We can measure whether it happened, the teachers know what they have been asked to do. Furthermore it is almost impossible to try to misuse this ruling where it does not apply, e.g. using the blueness of the sky to determine when a festival

ends.

Acknowledge that disagreement may lead to conflict. Like Jacob, develop curiosity in difficult situations and look for unexpected ways out of difficulty. In particular, explore what you have in common with other people, where you agree and how you can build on that to find beneficial ways forward. That's what Esther did to save the Jews from Haman. Going well outside her comfort zone, she got the king to agree that his it was outrageous to pass a decree attacking his wife's people.

Esther and Jacob are role models for all of us. They felt great fear but sought the win-win situation anyway.

# Dancing to the beat of a Jewish heart



## Rabbi Monique Mayer

*Previously broadcast on BBC Radio Bristol "Thought for the Day".*

Many years ago, while cycling in Boston, I pulled up to an intersection alongside a lorry that appeared to be going straight. The traffic light changed green, and – before I knew it – the lorry began turning in front of me. As the vehicle rounded the curb, the side of the lorry swung toward me and I jumped away, watching as the lorry rolled over my bicycle where I had been only moments before. The lorry driver--who immediately came to check on me--was clearly spooked by how close he came to killing me. He hadn't signalled and he hadn't noticed me pull up next to him. People are losing awareness of who and what are around them. The recent statistics from Bristol police of over 500 near-misses of cyclists reflects an increasingly dangerous lack of attention. I have seen motorists so focussed

on texting or phoning that they are oblivious to the more vulnerable bicyclists or motorcyclists around them. As a passenger, my pleas to friends and family to watch the road – not their phone – often go unheeded. And walking on the pavement, I'm busy sidestepping individuals with their nose so buried in their smartphone that they risk walking right into me. Several have.

This lack of awareness is also causing people to miss out on real life. According to a recent article in the London Economic, four in ten UK adults are so busy taking pictures for social media that they "have not truly experienced significant moments such as a child's first steps or graduation".<sup>1</sup> A few years ago, my husband and I attended the Bristol balloon festival and – after several attempts to capture the light show on my phone--I suddenly realised that in my futile efforts to hold onto the moment, the moment was slipping away. Tucking the phone in my pocket, my mind and body gratefully relaxed and I was enveloped by the wonder of music, balloons, and light.

Jewish tradition teaches that we should say at least 100 blessings a day. Each time we say a blessing, it focuses our attention on the object of our appreciation—food, natural wonders, study, good news, a job well done—just to name a few. And I think this approach of saying blessings, cultivating gratitude, could be the antidote to inattention. To be able to find enough opportunities to say 100 blessings—or even half that number—we have to tune out our phones, and tune in to the world and the events and people around us. Only by being fully present can we fully appreciate each moment and live life to its fullest.

<sup>1</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/gv5jmu8>

## Shabbat experiment



Rebecca Lissak

I did a Shabbat experiment this weekend I thought I would share with you. I left the flat with my handbag, keys and purse inside, but without my mobile or any other connective device. I stepped out enaked and it was great!

I was thinking this morning that the virtual and physical worlds are, in reality, mutually exclusive. You can't give your conscious attention, your being, to both at the same time, as any minder of small children knows very well. it is one or the other. yes, you can be physically present in one world while your mind is in the other, and physical presence in itself is not to be discounted, but your attention can only be in one or the other, not both.

Being able to flip between the two gives us an impression that we can be in both, have our

cake and eat it, as it were, but sitting next to someone while they are in the virtual world we know they have temporarily left us.

I think this would not be problematic if the virtual world did not demand our attention and involvement in ways that make the idea that it is voluntary to enter it or not ridiculous. We are more and more obligated to enter the virtual world, more and more frequently, even for accessing public services and once we have entered, like walking into a party to borrow a cup of sugar, it is hard to leave.

The virtual world is a portal out and in to our most intimate spaces, a portal that moves around with us wherever we go, connecting us to an alternative virtual universe whenever we switch our attention either voluntarily or by obligation. It diminishes our sense of being alone but also our privacy and our sense of being physically present wherever we happen to physically be.

The telephone and mobile phone only ever connected us to one person at a time and so promoted dialogue, intimacy and connection. the virtual world connects us to a host of others, the social, both known and unknown others and promotes something akin to talking to oneself with an audience or rather something not quite dialogue but monologue or monologue dialogue. This being an example!!!

If God is indeed in the still quiet voice, as Jewish tradition promotes, how will we ever hear her?

# Sharing space

## Peter Brill



*This article was previously published in the Bristol Post.*

As I watch with dismay the views of the political far right gaining strength across Europe, and Britain's Labour party trying to disentangle itself from accusations of Anti-Semitism, I am pleased to see some glimmers of hope closer to home.

First, Bristol now has a mixed race Mayor. While I'm sure he wasn't elected because of his ethnicity, it's a clear demonstration of the diversity which has become a celebrated feature of our City. Long may it continue and let's hope Marvin Rees uses his new role to further develop the strengths of Bristol's communities.

He has already made a start with an early consultation on a bid to make Bristol the European City of Culture. But he also needs to work on maintaining local cohesion at a time when so much political debate is focused on issues that can only divide and polarise. I

wish him every success.

Then there is the launch of the Shared Spaces Festival. While not on the scale of The Festival of Ideas, which is also underway and will jointly host some activities over the coming month, Shared Spaces encompasses a great deal for Bristol to be proud of.

Created by the Muslim Jewish arts and media charity, Salaam Shalom, Shared Spaces is a celebration of both the history and range of music, poetry and art that demonstrates the similarities – rather than the differences – between the two cultures.

Following a successful Muslim Jewish Art exhibition held at the Colston Hall last year, Shared Spaces has expanded the concept dramatically, helped by funding from the Arts Council England. At a time when fundraising for any charity is a challenge, financial support from such a prestigious organisation is clear recognition of the contribution that Salaam Shalom has made, and continues to make, in stimulating dialogue between Bristol's communities and beyond.

Already underway is an exhibition of archives from Bristol's Jewish and Muslim Communities, at the Central Library, which will also host a 'Live Night' of spoken word and music tomorrow night (25<sup>th</sup>). The jewel in the Festival's crown will be the Art Exhibition at the Grant Bradley Gallery in Bedminster, starting on 3rd June, which brings together Muslim and Jewish artists from Bristol and beyond.

Why does a festival like this matter? Because at a time when multi-culturalism and multi-nationalism seem to be political and social targets for those who cannot, apparently, see beyond their own selfish, short-sighted worlds, there is clearly a very real need to remind Bristol, the UK and beyond that sharing space with other creeds, cultures and countries is, and always has been, a force for good.

*You can find out more about Shared Spaces at [www.sharedspacesfestival.co.uk](http://www.sharedspacesfestival.co.uk)*

## Meet our new webmaster (and family)



**Evan Rudowski**

*Evan has recently taken over Ruth Weinberger's role as webmaster for the BWPJC website. He introduces himself and his family below.*

Jeanne and I and our sons Gabriel and Joshua live in Bath. Jeanne and I are native New Yorkers and have lived in the UK since 1998; the boys were born here. I have worked in the digital sector since the late 1980s and I am the founder and managing partner of Atlantic Leap, a consultancy that helps digital media and advertising companies to expand internationally. I have a Bachelors in Communication Arts from Hofstra University in New York, and a masters from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at NYU. I am a long-time member of the global Entrepreneurs' Organization.

# Out and proud

## Surat-Shaan Knan, Twilight People Project Manager

*(This article was previously published on the Liberal Judaism website.)*

*Liberal Judaism has always been at the forefront of exploring and engaging in contemporary issues facing the Jewish community and society at large, keeping the principles of equality, compassion, and justice at its core. Questions around gender and identity are not new, but the challenges of misconception and prejudice remain.*

*The following article was published in a recent edition of LJ Today reflects on transgender and highlights one of the latest projects proudly hosted by Liberal Judaism.*

*Rabbi Monique*

**3**<sup>1st</sup> March was Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV), the annual day to show your support for the trans community. It aimed to bring attention to the accomplishments of trans people around the globe, while fighting transphobia and cissexism.

Many in the wider Jewish community will have heard of Transgender Day of Remembrance, but TDOV is very different – it's not a day for mourning, but one of empowerment and celebration. This year's day had the theme and hashtag #MoreThanVisibility – with a call to use visibility as a vital tool for justice.

But how does this theme resonate with trans people of faith? Has being more visible helped trans Jews, like me, in the UK and worldwide? In the past two years we have certainly seen increased global coverage of trans issues in the mainstream media, and celebrity coming out stories a la Caitlyn Jenner. Visibility has certainly had the effect that most people nowadays would have come across the word transgender. It helps. But does it help everyone? And has this 'mainstreaming' made things better overall? Amazon's Emmy Award-winning programme *Transparent* – about a Jewish family coming to terms with their father's decision to transition – has perhaps allowed viewers to develop a greater understanding of the transgender experience in a faith context.

But, despite all of this, many trans and gender nonconforming Jews have experienced first-hand that visibility is not enough. Personally, I am probably one of the trans Jews who is blessed enough to benefit from certain privileges. I am an out and proud Progressive Jew, and international LGBTQI campaigner with my latest project being Twilight People, the UK's landmark multi-faith heritage project exploring gender & faith beyond the binary, which is hosted by Liberal Judaism. My family, friends, work place and faith community are supportive. I don't mind my picture and story being out there – as long as I am portrayed in a respectful and authentic way, of course. So far, I have been lucky and it's been a positive journey for me. Yet, some participants in Twilight People had to remain anonymous. Others did not take part at all, fearing reprisal from their religious community and family. Not all branches of Judaism, or indeed all faiths, are as welcoming as Liberal Judaism.

A friend of mine, a British trans woman who came out after a long struggle within her ultra-Orthodox Charedi community, told me: "The government should demand that every school be exposed to [trans

issues]. I've had to spend countless hours explaining to Charedi Jews that this [being trans] is not a choice, it's real. "I have not seen my kids for so long – the court system is too slow. I have received death threats and so have my friends. These threats are made indirectly, so the police are not interested in dealing with them as a result. "The law has to change. I had to move away; I cannot move around my hometown freely anymore. I wouldn't feel safe."

It really seems, that visibility is not enough anymore and never was enough for some trans and gender nonconforming people of faith. I believe we now need better education around trans issues, improved legislation, especially when it comes to dealing with hate crime.

I am excited to be working alongside groups like Stonewall and on projects such as Twilight People, and hopefully beginning to change hearts and minds in the more conservative faith communities.

*Surat-Shaan Knan works for Liberal Judaism and runs the [Twilight People](#) project. He is a member of the [Stonewall Trans Advisory Group](#).*

# My Working Life



Wendy Kingdom

I am a freelance medical writer. Medical writing broadly divides into medical communications and regulatory writing. The medical communications writers prepare manuscripts for publication and poster presentations of medical scientific work, prepare slide sets for presentations at meetings, write up the outcome of symposia, craft the wording for websites and so on. I lack the imagination to do any of this and am very firmly a regulatory writer. My job is to prepare any of the documents required for clinical trials that have a regulatory purpose of some sort, from describing the methods of a planned clinical trial to summarising the results of numerous studies. Usually, the product is a drug but occasionally I work on medical devices.

Some people think that regulatory writing is boring; I think it is fascinating.

Regulatory writing is about drugs, and drugs are taken by people who are unwell whether with some minor but uncomfortable ailment such as acid reflux, or with an aggressive cancer. While it is true that I spend all day sitting at my computer tapping away on the keyboard, the work requires effective communication.

Medical writing work involves summarising, condensing, working out what the messages are and telling them clearly. Before starting to write any document, it is important to identify and empathise with the readers. It is also important to recognise that everyone is very busy so language needs to be concise. Each type of document has a different purpose, a different audience, and every drug is different.

A protocol is like a recipe for a clinical trial. It needs to be clear to all of the staff at the investigative site who will do what, when and how. It also needs to be practical; for example, you can't measure blood pressure and take a blood sample at the same time, and you can't ask people to go to a

hospital every day for a week to try out a new treatment for dandruff. The study has to be able to happen in real life, so while writing out the methods, you have to visualise how it will unfold in practice. Then, for every protocol, there has to be a patient information leaflet. I particularly enjoy writing for the public. Having written a protocol, which requires giving clear and concise instructions to people with a high level of knowledge of clinical trials in general, you have to stop and look at the trial from the viewpoint of someone who is unlikely to know the jargon and who has to understand what will be done to them if they agree to take part in the study. It is quite a challenge to stop thinking about the whole trial and see it from the viewpoint of an individual who will be on the receiving end of the procedures.

A lot of my work is writing up the reports of completed clinical studies. An army of people will have been involved in conducting the trial, managing it, monitoring it, collecting and checking the data, organising and analysing the results. My job as the medical writer is to

take the data and turn it into information. What I find so interesting is that the outcome of every study is different and you can never predict exactly what the results will be. So although there is a standard format for study reports, you are always thinking about the messages that come out of the data. The usual questions you are looking to answer depend on the study design but might include, do patients treated with the active drug do better than patients who took placebo? (if not, that is the end of that product), or do patients treated with the active drug do as well as patients who took a known comparator? The answers to these questions are often not clear cut. Then there are the safety results. All drugs - including natural products - have side effects. Not everybody gets them but it is important to find out what the side effects are, whether they are severe or serious, whether they stop when treatment is discontinued and so on.

Before a drug can be prescribed to patients, it has to be approved by the Regulatory Authorities. This is an enormous task and requires summarising

everything that is known about the product, from how the substance is made, to all of the results of the clinical trials. Usually results from treatment of several thousand patients are summarised for a submission to regulatory authorities and so each summary document will be tackled by a different writer. I tend to prepare the safety summaries because I find them particularly interesting.

While the writing itself is a solitary activity, it is not a solitary occupation. The medical writer is part of a large team. My job is to get the words on the page but it is up to the whole team to agree the wording. A small project team will include a medical expert, a project manager, and a statistician. However, my clients range from large pharmaceutical companies to small biotechnology companies. I also work for contract research organisations, which are companies that provide additional resource without having products of their own. The large pharma companies can put together enormous teams, which generally results in every document taking twice as long

to prepare as the same documents for clients from smaller companies.

I do go on outings occasionally but when travel arrangements go wrong, again, it reminds me why I would rather be at home with my husband and dog, going for a walk in the fresh air at lunchtime, and relaxing at home in the evening.

I feel very fortunate to enjoy the work that I do.

### **Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**

There are individuals in the community suffering financial hardship. This fund makes it possible for the Rabbi provide assistance to those in need.

Donations may be made directly to the Fund by cheque, payable to "Bristol & West Progressive Jewish Congregation", and marked "ATTENTION: Rabbi's Discretionary Fund". Monies may also be transferred directly.

Please email Rabbi Monique on [rabbi.mmayer@gmail.com](mailto:rabbi.mmayer@gmail.com) if you would like to help or need help. All enquiries are kept confidential.

# Don't stand by – a trip to Lesvos

Lisa Saffron



Lisa wearing one of the fake life jackets sold to refugees as they boarded the unseaworthy overcrowded rubber dinghies in Turkey bound for Lesvos.

The most dangerous part of my trip to Lesvos was leafletting my neighbours in Lockleaze. In my eagerness to put leaflets through their letter boxes requesting donations of clothes, I tripped and sprained my ankle. A week later, I showed my still hurting ankle to a volunteer paramedic from the United States in the Lighthouse Refugee Relief Camp<sup>1</sup> on the north shore of Lesvos. It was a stormy day and the sea was too rough for the refugee boats to leave Turkey. So the camp was empty except for a team of volunteers working in the rain to get the camp ready the next flotilla of boats. And though a sprained ankle was inconvenient, the leafletting had resulted in a sizable donation of woolly hats, scarves, warm gloves and good wishes from my neighbours. I had wanted to

involve my neighbours in my trip to give them the opportunity to be there with me in spirit, if not in person. When the doorbell rang and a neighbour I'd never met before handed me a beautiful hand-knitted hat, I knew I had succeeded.

I felt moved to go to Lesvos as my way of practising what I consider to be the essence of Judaism, the mitzvah from Leviticus chapter 19: 16 *Do not stand by the blood of your neighbour. I am the All That Is.* 18 *You shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am the All That Is.* This is an all-encompassing and terribly daunting mitzvah - it governs our relationship with the All That Is, with ourselves, and with each and every one of our neighbours no matter how badly they behave and no matter how evil we believe them to be.

But it's not a simple thing to know how to live by this mitzvah, especially when we are bombarded by news of our neighbour's suffering in every part of the planet as well as at home and in our families. Often I do stand by - I close my eyes, I

don't get involved, I become paralysed by feelings of being overwhelmed and of unworthiness. Sometimes I am able to remind myself that I am not the All That Is, that I can't see the bigger picture, that 'this too is for the good.' I find Rabbi Tarfon's comment particularly reassuring: "It is not your responsibility to finish the work [of perfecting the world], but neither are you free to desist from it." (Talmud, Pirkei Avot 2:16)

So in the spirit of not desisting from the task, I asked friends, family and people from my neighbourhood for money and clothes to help the refugees and make the trip possible. Although I went as an individual, not connected to any NGO or organisation, I felt part of an international movement of people, a wave of humanity intent on offering humanitarian aid, each of us adding our drop to the ocean of compassion.

Before I went, I signed onto the invaluable Facebook page – *Information Point for Lesvos Volunteers*. I decided to offer my services to the Dirty Girls of Lesvos<sup>2</sup> set up by Alison Terry-

Evans last summer. My task was to pack the wet clothes into bags and pile them by the side of the road where they were picked up by a commercial laundry. Then bring the clean dry clothes to the clothing tents at the reception camps to be distributed to the next boatful of people. This work benefits the refugees who are at risk of hypothermia in their wet clothes, the Greek economy by giving business to a local laundry and the environment by keeping many tonnes of usable clothes out of landfill.

In January, it was colder in Lesvos than in Bristol. There was snow, torrential rain, fierce wind and an icy sea. There were also bright sunny days when the sea was calm though no warmer.

*The life jackets are filled with layers of packing material that could not float.*

On those days and nights, a steady stream of inflatable dinghies left the Turkish shore packed with people from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Morocco. Boat after boat after boat. An unstoppable flow of

humanity, of people just like you and me.

Among the volunteers, everyone I met was doing the best they could. It wasn't always efficient but it was effective in what we set out to do - offering dry clothes, a hot meal and a warm welcome to people in need of kindness. While kindness is what citizens of the world can offer, the refugees need something only world leaders acting co-operatively can offer - safe passage, settlement in a country with opportunities for jobs, housing and education, acknowledgement of the threat felt by many Europeans at the influx of refugees into their already divided societies and a global 'Marshall Plan' to bring peace and justice to the Middle East.

*Smuggling people is a hugely profitable business encouraged by closed borders and restrictive immigration policies. Tighter border controls increase the costs to the refugees and the profits to the smugglers.*

Until world leaders awaken and start responding with compassion, I believe it is the

responsibility of individual citizens to add our own unique drops to the ocean of compassion and not sink into despair and cynicism. My task is to remind those of us living in safety and comfort that we are one humanity, as expressed in this poem I wrote on my return.

### That Woman on Lesbos

That woman,  
the one climbing out of the  
sinking boat  
the one with blue lips in a light  
summer coat  
the one whose life jacket does not  
even float.

That woman could be me.

That man,  
the one with holes in his worn  
out shoes  
the one who has nothing left to  
lose  
the one you saw on the six  
o'clock news.

That man could be my  
brother.

That elder,  
the one so weak she can barely  
stand  
the one clutching grandchildren  
in each hand

the one uprooted from her  
ancestral land.

That elder could be my  
mother.

That little girl,  
the one too dazed to take sweets  
or fruit  
the one not crying, the one who's  
mute  
the one Assad's soldiers didn't  
shoot.

That girl could be my  
daughter.

That toddler,  
the one who arrived sick and  
damp  
the one who was crying and  
suffering from cramp  
the one playing happily in the  
refugee camp.

That boy could be my  
grandson.

That fisherman,  
the one overwhelmed by the  
thousands who flee  
the one fishing bodies out of the  
sea  
the one abandoned by the powers  
that be.

That man could be my father.  
Those people,  
the ones selling life jackets -  
useless and fake

the ones smuggling people in  
boats at daybreak  
the ones who are desperate for  
money to make.

Those people could be us.

Those people,  
the ones on the shore offering  
sweet cups of chai  
the ones handing out clean  
clothes that are dry  
the ones who can't bear just to  
stand by.

Those people could be us.

That politician,  
the one for safe passage, who  
won't let folk drown  
the one welcoming those who flee  
their hometown  
the one opening borders, not  
closing them down.

That politician could be .....

And friends, those people are us.  
We are those people.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lighthouse relief.org>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/  
dirtygirlslesvos/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/dirtygirlslesvos/?fref=ts)

<sup>3</sup> The Global Marshall Plan: A National  
Security Strategy of Generosity and  
Care, Network of Spiritual  
Progressives - [http://  
spiritualprogressives.org/newsite/?  
page\\_id=114](http://spiritualprogressives.org/newsite/?page_id=114)

## On praying in English

*Comments on a recent D'var Torah given by David Jewell*

**Kalev Amit Israel**

Yesterday we had a very enjoyable service by David [Jewell] and he quoted a statement from Rambam where he says (It is better to pray in a language you understand so that you may pray with Kavvanah (understanding) than that you pray in the Holy Tongue without Kavvanah. For prayer without Kavvanah is nothing.

Now although I have a great respect for Rambam I don't agree with him on this. I myself always find the praying in Hebrew adds a special dimension that makes me feel more connected to G-d, my people and my heritage so for me praying in Hebrew means far more than just praying in English.

As I see it the problem with praying only in a language you understand is that we run the risk of Hebrew becoming a dead language again or at least becoming that which is understood by a select few. That being said if we all just babel

away in Hebrew with no understanding then I agree this is meaningless.

So what am I saying, my hope and dream it that those who have had the privilege of being taught Hebrew take it upon themselves to teach others who do not speak or understand Hebrew. Likewise those who for whatever do not speak Hebrew I hope they will see the need to learn to speak and understand Hebrew so together we can all pray in the Holy Tongue with Kavvanah but until that day I'm glad that our Siddur is in both Hebrew and English.

**Ben Weinberger**

It's more important that people learn Hebrew - and we do what we can to help that - rather than focus on local languages. There is something far more spiritual about visiting a shul in another country and having a common language that you can pray in together. The Catholic Church really hurt itself by changing its prayers to local languages. It ruins the international sense of unity.

*See p.22 for David's reply.*

## *David's response*

**T**hanks for giving me the chance to answer. I agree with Ben: good to learn Hebrew so that one can feel comfortable in other communities (though given different accents, liturgies etc it may not be enough). I wasn't saying we shouldn't be able to read or understand Hebrew. It would be odd, since I spend quite a lot of time teaching bnei mitzvah children. But Kalev gets to the heart of it, that speaking the Hebrew without understanding can easily become empty ritual. Of course it would be ideal if we all understood every Hebrew word as we say the prayers, but I doubt if that would ever happen. I understand the LJ liturgy quite well, but even so it is all too easy for me to utter the words without consciously keeping the meaning foremost in my mind. When that happens I cannot be sure I am praying with kavannah – sincerity. I accept that for some people the sense of being connected to the ancient language of the Torah, is what makes them feel Jewish and is vital to their kavannah,

but it is simply not true for me. I want to be thinking all the time whether I really believe what I am saying and what it means to me. For that it's much easier if it is in English. And because I retain, even now, some of the arrogance of my youth, I want everyone else in the congregation to be doing the same.

At the same time, I was using the quote to introduce a service where I was trying to make a more general point about the importance, for all of us, to understand what it means to be progressive Jews, and to maintain our commitment to a questioning attitude to belief and liturgy. The language we pray is an important element of that, but the fundamental principle goes way beyond that.

## Purim



## Peace vigil

Synagogue members Lisa Saffron, Clare Sandler and Madge Dresser were among the 30 or so people attending the vigil on 29th March commemorating the 70 people recently killed in a terrorist attack in Lahore . They are pictured here with Councillor Afzal Shah, Aftab Feroz, Shazia Malik and Maria Kennedy. George Ferguson, Marvin Rees and members of the Labour Party and refugee groups spoke briefly and it was pointed out that Muslims are more often than not the victims of such violence by Islamist extremists. Madge said a few words on behalf of the Jewish community.

# Walking through briars

Jack Wolf



I spend a lot of time walking. It takes my mind off things when I'm stressed, gives me a chance to relax and reflect on stuff without being wrapped up in it. It's impossible to respond to an annoying email from an objectionable colleague while I'm tramping through woodland or over a muddy field, trying not to get stuck. Walking forces me to focus on whatever is right in front of me, right now, and deal with it in a way that requires patience rather than sudden decisiveness. If I try to drag myself violently out of sticky mud, I will lose my boot; likewise, when trying to find a way through a thick patch of nettle or bramble scrub, sudden violent movements lead only to a torn sleeve, a scratched arm, a nettled knee. And I do find myself in bramble scrub while out walking more often than you might expect. Sometimes I will follow a deer or badger path through what seems quite open

woodland, only to find myself suddenly confronted by a wall of hawthorn and briar which I have no choice but to push my way through, somehow - because on the other side of it is the lane leading home, and if I turn back and wander through the wood to the place where I got in, I will certainly not get home before dusk.

So slowly, I step forward. If I'm wearing a waterproof, I zip it up - some protection is better than none - and then I begin to weave my way in and out between the stems and thorny boughs. I know better than to break them down or drag them out of my way - the thorns on both species are sharp, and often vicious, and it is better not to touch the plant at all than to wind up stuck in a bush, unable to move, because if I let go of the stem I have just grabbed, it will whip up and tangle itself in my trouser leg, or worse. I weave and wriggle like a gymnast, or the Mission Impossible guy evading a laser array. Slowly, gently, softly; these are my watchwords. The wild plants are not just things, I tell myself; not mere obstacles, to be broken through because it



suits me; they are living entities, which have a right to grow here as they wish; it is not my place, here in the wildwood, to be anything other than a wind passing through, a brief encounter that neither does harm nor sustains any. Moreover, they are home to many creatures that I really love - goldfinch, wren and various species of warbler all nest in bramble scrub, and without it many of them would disappear. These thorns deserve my respect.

Most times, I get through unscathed; sometimes I get a scratch or two. It's only reasonable: I'm not really Tom Cruise, after all. But the point is that I do get through; and while the tangle is unbroken behind me, now I have a deeper understanding of it, and a respect for it as something separate from myself, that deserves a thoughtful, careful and gentle approach to deal with properly.

This new found insight doesn't always easily translate to my everyday life, I must admit. Sometimes, I go back to my computer and within minutes I

am as stressed as before; but other times, I find that whoever I am in conflict with has ceased, somehow, to be a thing, an obstacle to be overcome. They are a briar bush. And if I can scramble through the real thing unscathed, and without doing any damage of my own, I can certainly deal with them. I kick off my wellies, and I get to work. more hidden, often visually in

### **Multifaith walkers**

On 12th May we were delighted to welcome the Bristol Multifaith Group of walkers. They were making their way around various places of worship in the Easton area and about ten walkers arrived with us just before lunch.

Then David Dwek and I together told them a little about Liberal Judaism, the making of our building and introduced them to some religiously significant objects. Time flew, so they had their lunch break with us and continued to chat and exchange experiences.

They enjoyed themselves and so did we.

**Clare Sandler**

## Peter Hyams



*This is an edited version of the eulogy Rabbi Ron Berry gave at Peter's funeral.*

Born London 1st July 1933; Died Saturday 30th April 2016

I've always thought of Peter Hyams as a man compounded of sugar and steel: he married Mavis, a strong woman and they had three daughters, Sarah, Becca and Polly all with equally strong characters, so he had to have a sweet way of staying in control of his life, which he was able to do as he was a strong family man whose sole wish was to guide his girls into safety throughout their lives, in which aim he was surely very successful. He was able to maintain both his personal dignity and considerable joie de vivre despite the disabling illness, which gradually affected him more and more during his

life. He greeted everyone cheerfully and never complained. He kept his sense of humour and stocked an admirable repertoire of jokes to make us laugh and enjoy his company. He was an admirable blend of fortitude and charm, wit and wisdom, kindness and generosity, in short, a real mensch.

Peter was born in the West End of London in July 1933. Fashion was to be his profession during his working life. He is Job, 5, 26 1 described as 'a good looking young man, always well turned out'.

When he was seven he went to the USA with an aunt and returned aged 11, then described as; 'noticeable because of his long corduroy trousers, Californian tan and beautiful teeth'. He volunteered for the RAF and served as an Intelligence Officer in the signals branch, being posted to Iraq. He had a strong sense of adventure so used his opportunity to travel in the Near East and visited Petra and The Western wall of the Jerusalem Temple, in what was then Trans-Jordan. He liked to ride, so regularly exercised

his commanding officer's horse. When he came out of the Armed Forces Peter became a company representative in the fashion trade. Once when he'd lost his job he went round all the fashion companies and found himself another position as agent with responsibility for this part of the country. He specialized in the South West of England. He'd known Mavis all his life as his two aunts had both married her two uncles, so they'd been brought up together as cousins and always been friends. When Mavis came to Bristol University to study he looked her up when he visited. They enjoyed going to jazz clubs together and shared similar cultural tastes in literature, enjoying reading, the theatre and the cinema. Mavis was a strong feminist but told me that Peter 'swept her off her feet'. Peter and Mavis enjoyed 59 years of married life together, combining contentment with travel, domestic bliss with a trio of daughters and camping and caravanning all over France and Britain, especially Cornwall and Brittany. Mavis, you told me how he warned you once when pitching camp in a field; 'don't encourage the cows' but you

would talk to them and they walked right through your tent!

Sometimes, when Mavis couldn't get away due to pressure of work Peter went off with just his daughters. He was a wonderful father who took his parental role seriously and encouraged them and mentored them. He also took them shopping, cooked for the family and escorted them to hospital when they had their little childhood traumas. Sarah told me how her father read stories to all the girls and also how he liked to treat them to ice-creams. Peter was immensely proud of Sarah when she graduated and qualified. When she wanted to buy her own apartment after graduating Peter helped her achieve independence in her own home. Becca was always known as a 'daddy's girl' when she was younger. She used to follow Peter around when he was mending and fixing things around the home. Peter taught her how to ride a bike. Peter supported Polly when she wanted to buy a moped so she could travel independently. He made sure she researched the available models thoroughly together and took advantage of

the training so she stayed as safe as possible. He was proud of her when she qualified as a nurse and as a midwife. As a lifetime Zionist Peter was very proud when Polly made *Aliyah*. Peter was a lifetime supporter of the State of Israel and proud of his two Israeli grandsons Arieh and Lior to whom he passed on his wonderful sense of humour, fun and jokes. He was also very proud of his grand-daughter May and her academic achievements. Peter liked watching rugby and had a season ticket for matches at Bristol Rugby Club, taking his daughters with him. He was also a member of the Labour Party until a few years ago, serving as Treasurer of two local groups. For 22 years he volunteered at St Peter's Hospice – first as a driver, then on the reception desk. Perhaps, most significantly, he served the community was together with Mavis as founder members of the Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation, which he served as Membership Secretary for many years. His energy, time, dedication and commitment are amongst the strong roots through which our Congregation sustained itself

through its formative years of growth and development. We can always feel grateful to him for what he did to nourish our community.

Our memories and recollections of Peter will always be with us and can continue to guide us, lighting our way as we bring them to mind occasionally. We can think of Peter from time to time with enduring affection and gratitude for all he did for us. We all understand how Peter's spirit will persist in its presence and in its influence. He has touched our souls! The power of the personality transcends the ending of a person's life. Peter has died, but we have not lost what he gave us, for he was a righteous man. He served others and motivated others throughout his life. The cloud of sorrow we all feel can be brightened by the shining memories of our love. All the good deeds Peter did, and all the true and beautiful words he spoke, are our treasures. May they be for all of us an incentive to follow him along the pathways of righteousness.

# DAVAR: 'Hidden in Plain Sight'

Jeanette Monaco



A review of 'Hidden in Plain Sight', a DAVAR talk by Nathan Abrams  
Jeanette Monaco

Nathan Abrams, Professor of Film Studies at Bangor University, delivered a thought-provoking talk recently (12.4.16) for DAVAR on the role of Jews and Jewishness in British film, television and popular culture. While there has been much audience and academic familiarity with the abundance of popular representations of Jewishness in the United States, Abrams reminded us we have not witnessed the equivalent attention over here in Britain. The main objective of the collection of essays edited by Abrams, *Hidden in Plain Sight: Jews and Jewishness in British Film and Popular Culture*, is to address this oversight.

Abrams opened with a look at early examples of silent film as

an illustration of a history of western cinema that is bound up with troubling, derogatory representations of Jews. A strong Jewish presence in the British film industry was recognised in well-known German-speaking emigres such as Peter Lorre, Ken Adam, Emeric Pressburger, and early producer pioneers such as Alexander Korda, G.B. Samuelson, Michael Balcon, and Oscar Deutsch. The mention of the first 'News Cinema' in Aberdeen marked an interesting point in history as it was opened in 1936 by businessman Ernest Bromberg who exemplified the inter-war diversification of Jewish families at that time in Scotland. This example challenged any problematic assumptions that Jews possessed inherent talents for the film industry; they were merely practical people who found a means to transfer their skills from their work in the *schmatte* trade and textiles industries into areas where there were opportunities to start business without much capital and, most importantly, where they were 'let in'. Over time this access would result in their creative input in films in which the

expression of Jewishness was not outward or celebratory (as it has been in US cinema), but more hidden, often visually in set design or characterisation. Where the James Bond novels had specific references to Jews and the Holocaust, this content was taken out of the film adaptations (most likely from an anxiety that audiences would not want to see it on the big screen) and replaced with a set of subtle codes that more knowing viewers could interpret and enjoy. In Stanley Kubrick films, Abrams argued, 'Jewishness bubbles beneath the surface' of the fictional world. Jewish viewers can take pleasure from films such as *Dr. Strangelove* with its war theme and which cast Peter Sellers, an actor well-known for identifying as Jewish and for his mastering of mimicry (which can be seen as a sign of the Jewish condition, as Jews have had to assimilate in society).

Abrams extended this line of enquiry to other examples of early television such as *Doctor Who* with a look at how Daleks act as a symbolic representation of Nazis who want to 'exterminate, exterminate'. If

anyone has followed the new *Doctor Who* in which the series' creator Russell T. Davies was committed to following closely the history of the programme, you would have noticed a clear parallel to the Holocaust in one episode in which a group of undesirables are being taken away in vehicles to be exterminated. While there was some mention of the presence of Jewish female actresses in the discussion of film it was largely in passing, which left me wondering if some of the essays in the collection might include content about specific Jewish women's contributions. With reference to *Doctor Who*, Abrams noted the Jewish influence at the BBC at the time but did not mention explicitly the BBC Producer, Verity Lambert, who was Jewish, and that she played a key role in ensuring *Doctor Who's* early success.

What about current British examples with Jewish themes that present Jews as far less exaggerated figures than what we've grown accustomed to seeing in Woody Allen films where there are clearly recognisable features in over-bearing Jewish mothers and

neurotic, urban Jews (often male and the product of the over-bearing mother)? Some viewers might have argued that dramas like the BBC miniseries, *The Honourable Woman*, offered us characters who just didn't feel Jewish enough in their polite, Anglicised, constrained sensibilities, and whose casting of a non-Jew (Andrew Buchan as Ephra Stein, the brother) was akin to a slap in the face to Jewish viewers who know better (although Jewish actors are cast in non-Jewish roles all the time). But I am referring to western, English speaking film and television here, which has dominated many of our experiences of representations of Jews and Jewishness and has thus shaped certain expectations, at least for older viewers. As Abrams later suggested if we turned to other examples and asked younger generations of Jewish viewers from other parts of the world about their viewing experiences we might hear a different story.

All of this has left me pondering for some time about the ways in which we, as part of a wide, diverse Jewish diaspora, attempt

to understand ourselves through popular media representations. How do film, television and popular culture inform the judgements we make about what is supposedly 'authentically' Jewish? Do some film and television Jewish narratives and characters, particularly if they draw on dominant versions of Ashkenazi Jewry, reassure us about our Jewish identities more than others? Finally, how do we negotiate representation and the terms of our Jewishness with our other identities (racial, gender, as Liberal converts who may have previous religious histories, or as children from mixed marriages which may present a challenge to what it means to be Halachically Jewish in the Orthodox tradition)?

# The BWPJC Survey 2016: some highlights

Peter Brill,

Council Member

In April this year, the community was asked to complete an online survey covering a variety of aspects of BWPJC activities and culture. Although not as extensive as the survey held some five years ago, it has still provided Council with a helpful overview of the thoughts of a significant number of members.

The survey focused mainly on Services and Festivals. However, it also asked members' views on the synagogue building, the welcoming nature of the community, adult and child education and volunteering. It was completed by 58 members. Huge thanks are due to Miranda Harris for compiling and analysing the survey.

## Services and Festivals

Regarding Synagogue services in general, 56% stated they are extremely, mostly or relatively happy with the current services. However more than one third (36%) described stated they are sometimes, occasionally, or

outright unhappy with services.

With more detailed questioning, the majority (48%) are happy with the level of variety in the services, although a quarter (27%) would prefer less variety, against 19% wanting more.

The balance of views relating to 'conventional', versus 'meditative' or 'creative', services does offer some broader insight. Overall, 42.5% were happy with the current number of conventional services, but a further third (33%) want more, with just 11% wanting less. Some 42% want fewer creative services (just 22% want more); 38% are happy with the level of 'meditative' services (the remainder equally balanced in wanting more or less). When it comes to 'learning' services, 32% were happy with the current level, while a further third (32%) would like to see more of this type.

**In summary, it would appear the majority of respondents would prefer to remain with, or lean further towards, more traditional forms of service, with the potential to add more learning elements.**

When it comes to the levels of Hebrew and English in services,

the message was again fairly clear: **48%** did not want English-only services (**36.5%** happy with existing levels); **53%** were happy with the existing level of Hebrew, but more than a third (**31%**) want more Hebrew to be included.

One clearly express view (**42.5%**) was a desire to include more LJ Youth-style services. The same percentage is happy with the existing level of cheder services, although **35%** would like to see more.

### **Amongst the comments:**

*"I'm not normally one for 'conventional' - but on a Saturday morning, I find that sticking to service structures that I know frees me up to do individual prayer.*

*Creative services or ones with lots of explanations are perfectly interesting and enjoyable once in a while, but generally reduce my kavannah."*

*"Services are core to our purpose and community. It feels important for us to embrace a variety of service styles and continually extend our Jewish understanding of the meanings of prayer, using a variety of tools to help us achieve this."*

*"I guess I enjoy services with a confident leader who comes across as though they are enjoying the process*

*which includes a mix of Hebrew and leading with singing that most can follow and join. I don't mind a bit of variety but overall, to be honest, I guess I find the conventional approach reassuring after many years of following it."*

*"The variety of service leaders and the type of service they lead is important to the culture of BWPJC."*

### **The Synagogue Building**

Questions on this section were qualitative and comments highlighted minor work required to enhance and tidy the kitchen, further improve the decorative condition of the building and enhance accessibility for less able members.

### **A welcoming community**

The single quantitative questions revealed the vast majority of respondents (**52%**) felt the community was 'very' or 'usually' welcoming and supportive. However, **21%** believed the community was only 'sometimes' or 'rarely' supportive.

### **Comments included:**

*"When you first come to the Shul you get a fairly warm greeting depending on whether you are Jewish or not or how well known you are. It is hard to*

*break into the inner groups and if you are a non-Jew or a Convert it can be hard to become connected to the social life of the Community."*

*"There are some truly wonderful, welcoming, friendly and warm people in our community and there is a real sense that BWPJC wants to be welcoming and supportive. I suspect, however, that many folk are not aware of how intimidating it can be to walk into a synagogue for the first time...to get beyond 'ritual and cliché' in establishing relationships with other community members, to feel 'part of the tribe' rather than a 'stranger'.*

*" There are Jewish people in Bristol who have told me they'd like to join our shul but that they have felt judged and rejected in the past."*

## **Education**

Overall views on Lamdeinu (children's religion school) included a later start on Saturday mornings, encouraging the older children to attend certain sections of the adult service and involving more adults and post-B'nei Mitzvot young adults in teaching.

Of those interested in adult education, the vast majority (61%) preferred it to take place either before or after the Saturday service.

## **Volunteering**

Of those that responded, the majority were already volunteers or had been and were currently taking a break. Six new people offered their services.

## **Other comments**

Highlights of general comments made include:

*"Thank you for continually striving to improve and support our community. Our diversity is a strength."*

*"Thank you so much for canvassing views and inviting suggestions. It is always tempting to rant or vent...but I hope that my comments will be seen as suggestions for enhancement of what is already a truly amazing and impressive community.*

*"There is much kindness in the community, many people show acts of kindness, but we are not what you might call institutionally kind...I've seen too many moments when unkindness goes uncommented or unchallenged. Individually, we can show much care towards visitors. But there's no real system to make them welcome."*

# My creative life

Alfred Emmott (aged 11)



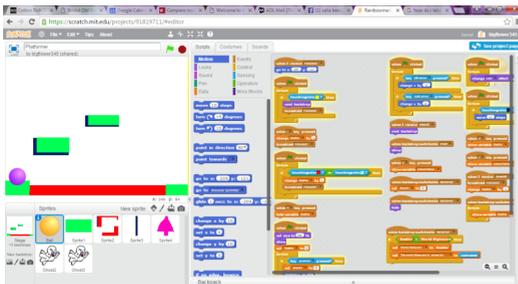
Alfred received a pear tree from the council via his school as part of the 'One Tree Per Child' planting programme. He waters it every evening and reports on the growth of new buds and leaves.



Cooking is something Alfred loves to do and was the theme of his 11<sup>th</sup> birthday party with friends at Bordeaux Quay in May 2016.



Alfred has been learning to play the piano since age 6 and loves jazzy numbers and old favourites like 'Für Elise.' He also is learning the recorder.



Alfred has a Raspberry Pi and has been learning computer coding for the past few years in his school's coding club and at home. Here is a game he created on Scratch. You have to jump from level to level without falling into the lava!



In Year 6, Alfred and his team of classmates had to develop ideas for products they could make and sell during Mini-Enterprise week. He chose to sew fabric bags filled with scented herbs. The proceeds went towards their class trip.

## Ethiopian Israelis' visit



(l to r) Nadine, Shlomit, Dekel and Valerie

### Nadine Ford

**D**ekel Akela and Shlomit Zinba were touring the UK from IDC Herzilya where they are both students. West of England Friends of Israel invited them to Bristol's Progressive synagogue on Saturday 12th March to share their stories with the congregation.

Shlomit began by describing her parents' difficult journey from Ethiopia on foot to Sudan in the early 80s. They were a young couple, only 16 and 17 with a very young daughter, fleeing the hostility of the new communist regime after hearing a rumour that Israel was taking Ethiopian Jews in. It took them four months of trekking through the blistering heat of the desert, having given everything they had managed to bring along to the various highwaymen who hassled them along the way, to reach a refugee camp in Sudan. Shlomit's mother gave birth

again after they arrived in the camp, where they stayed for eight months. Her father learnt Arabic and managed to get some work in shaping steel.

After being flown to Israel in secret, they were taught Hebrew and given a home after a stay in another refugee camp. The adjustment was hard though, as they had no experience of modern appliances – they did not even have electricity or running water in their village in Ethiopia – and Israel itself was still new to the concept of this long-lost member of the Jewish family. However, they overcame the obstacles enough to have good lives as Israeli citizens. Shlomit's father joined the IDF and became a career soldier – his knowledge of Arabic helped with this – now he is a tank engineer. Her mother now translates for new arrivals from Ethiopia – something which was unavailable when she arrived herself.

Shlomit herself was born in Israel, but was exempted from military conscription for medical reasons. However, she wanted to serve her country so she volunteered anyway, and served

in a unit which assisted with the rescue of Ethiopian Jews, which felt to her as if she had gone full circle – she was doing for other Ethiopian families what other Israelis had done for her family. She is now studying communications at IDC Herzilya and also helps other Ethiopian Israelis get the full scholarships they are entitled to – this applies to any Ethiopian Jew who made Aliyah after 1980 or the children of a couple who both qualify. They are also entitled to stay in an absorption centre for two years and up to 3000 shekels to put toward a mortgage.

Dekel told us of his father's solo journey to Israel in the late 70s to escape the terrible fate which befell many of his friends – that of being forced into fighting on the front lines of the civil war while they were only children – which most did not return from. Dekel's father was able to get a scholarship in Addis Ababa which put him in a better position to escape Ethiopia; he procured a fake passport and flew to Kenya, and from there to Israel. He found it very difficult in Israel to start with; he had no language in common with

anyone else, had no family or anyone else to be with, and most Israelis knew nothing of the Ethiopian Jews at that time, as the rescue operations hadn't happened yet. He adapted though and volunteered with the IDF, and he now does woodwork for the military industry.

Dekel is the product of what he calls an unusual union – an Ethiopian and an Iranian Jew. His mother arrived in Israel from Iran at a very young age, and their marriage is indeed uncommon in Israel. He spoke of his own military service which began with a paratrooper brigade and continued with counterterrorism work. He served for five and half years and reached the rank of captain. After his service, he joined the Jewish Agency and volunteered in Ethiopia helping people prepare for Aliyah; like his father and Shlomit's parents, they knew no Hebrew and nothing of Israeli culture or modern life. He is now studying business administration at IDC Herzilya.

Shlomit and Dekel are both in agreement that it is the second generation of immigrant families which really 'makes it' in the new country – themselves, in this case. It is great that Israel helps families to settle in and so give their children the tools and opportunities they need to be successful.

They both described their experiences of visiting their parents' hometowns in Ethiopia, and how they were given warm welcomes, especially Dekel's father who was recognized by the locals even after so many years. They also gave us a flavour of the rich traditions among Ethiopian Jewish families and some insight into their way of life. They were both informative and moving, and also added touches of humour throughout.

## Psalm 23: Being ethical in the world

Michael  
Picardie



Psalm 23 must be the best known praise of God in the Jewish and the Christian Bibles. It even got to the far-flung reaches of the British Empire, Johannesburg, where I was educated at King Edward VII Preparatory and High Schools from 1943 to 1953. When we were 7 or 8 years old we knew it by heart. When the South Africans joined with the other Commonwealth armies in fighting and defeating Field-Marshal Rommel's Afrika Corps It must have been a comfort to boys at K.E.P.S. whose fathers were killed or wounded or taken prisoner in the war in Libya, Egypt and then during the invasion of Italy. My cousin Lulu (Louis) Berman was captured at Tobruk and sent to a German P.O.W. camp and all the family recited something like this fervent hope: "The Lord is my shepherd..." I thought of

him and my uncles Dr Ben Bloomberg and Dr Alec Packard who were serving in the Medical and Dental Corps. As they dealt with the traumatised and the wounded they knew the heat and terror of battle and they could see and hear El Alamein and Tobruk.

One can actually imagine soldiers going silently into battle mentally praying:

“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name sake,

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil for thou are with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.”

“Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies, thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

On one of his leaves during the war my uncle Benny Bloomberg travelled to what was then British Mandated Palestine and wanted to settle there by the still waters of Kinneret or the green pastures of the Galil - after the hostilities were over. This would have been too stressful for his wife my aunt Sarah Bloomberg who was tied into an extended family of two sisters Anne Idelson my other aunt and my mother Minnie and their poor parents Rose and Philip Sacks. Benny was a distinguished consultant pathologist and in no way an ordinary religious believer but a Zionist. The Lord was not his shepherd in any fundamentalist religious sense. He showed me his copy of Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics* and urged me to read it - Spinoza, the heretic Jew from Amsterdam who was excommunicated by both Ashkenazi and Sephardi synagogues in the 17<sup>th</sup> century for pan-en-theism: the belief that God was an expression of reason and rational causation and everything was in God. Even evil.

Terrible evil was to fall upon Bennie and Sarah Bloomberg when their younger daughter

was killed in her early twenties by a drunken lorry driver in Johannesburg. This cousin of mine was Michelle. Her daughter Kerry who was in a baby-seat in the back of Michelle's car survived, Until her father Clive re-married, Kerry was brought up by Michelle's sister, my other cousin, Ilana and of course her brother-in-law Clive.

This Psalm calls out to God in the face of evil and misfortune – ultimately death: “Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” One of our enemies is accident, mischance, misadventure. The Psalm speaks of “the LORD” which in Hebrew is not Elohim but Adonai the pronunciation of the sacred name YHVH. To Moses YHVH says at the burning bush that his name (Jahveh) means *I am that I am*, (*Eheye Asher Eheye*), or *I will be that I am*, or *I will be what I will be*. Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre speak of us as Being-in-the-World which *can* be made ethical at least in Sartre when Being causes us to act with a good will. Even Heidegger regards guilt as inherent in our freedom to choose to act –

presumably according to a rational Aristotelean *logos* as much or more than in the name of whoever (Hitler?) claims to be inspired by being-in-Being. Although the universe is partly chaotic and violent it is also lawful.

Being ethical and authentic in the world is being sustained in the valley of the shadow of death by the spirit of Being as ethical being. This happens when we relate to beings and Being transcendently even when we face them as enemies – that is we are ready to make peace. For Hitler and the Nazi gangsters there could never be peace because their world-view entailed the total destruction of the Jewish “race” everywhere on earth. No theology or ideology or philosophy transcended their race-hatred. This wasn't true of the Afrikaner Nationalists like F.W.De Klerk or Nelson Mandela or most of the ANC leadership. “*Wat is verby is verby*” – what is past is past – said Mandela at his inauguration in 1994. He shook hands with Percy Yutar in the 1990s when he left prison after 27 years. Percy Yutar is an orthodoxly religious Jewish

advocate and was the chief public prosecutor of the Transvaal who had asked for the death penalty for Mandela and the other Rivonia trialists in 1963. Most of the whites on trial, like Denis Goldberg, were Jewish – Marxist atheists and members of the SACP. They certainly walked through the valley of the shadow of death – Goldberg also was imprisoned for 25 years.

“Dwelling in the house of the Lord forever” in Emmanuel Levinas really means being-with the face of the significant Other and waiting for us to be able to signal to each other this message - “I will not kill you!” In Martin Buber dwelling in the house of the Lord forever means moving from I-It relationships of instrumentality to “I-Thou” relationships of mutual respect or love.

## **How can we further help to support refugees and asylum seekers in Bristol?**

Many of us are already responding in various ways to the increasing number of people from war zones and oppressive countries seeking refuge in Europe.

David Dwek has written a briefing about the important organisations currently working with refugees and asylum seekers in Bristol, and points to some possible things that we might do as individuals and as a community.

**Please read the article which is signposted in the [BWPJC website](#).**

There is also going to be a “skills and experience” audit form which you might also think about completing.

Finally, there will be a discussion and planning meeting at Synagogue on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June at 7.30 pm. Please let David know if you are able to come: [d.dwek@virgin.net](mailto:d.dwek@virgin.net)

## Pesach at BWPJC



Freda's Pesach breakfast of matzah and Nutella



Elijah's cup by Sophia Shishkaryov

We really enjoyed taking part in the Matzah Ramble. For us it was a great introduction to the synagogue community and our Jewish neighbours in the area around Bath. It really helped us to feel a part of the community and to get to know everyone better.

Thanks!

Evan

## Matzah ramble



It was a very pleasant stroll again for all ages and some new people this year, using a new route that Ismet and Iris had 'reccied' for us the previous day. From wooded paths into an open field where we lazed in the sunshine and ate our matzah sandwiches and lunches, on back to their place for some very tasty cakes and plenty of chatting and catching up. It is a real highlight of our community's year. We owe Iris a huge thank-you for volunteering in this way and for bringing us all together.

Love, and shavua tov,

Valerie

The Matzah Ramble was one of the nicest, most relaxing days I've had for some time. Being able to chat with friends from the synagogue while walking gently, and with no pressure to be somewhere else, was just perfect. There was a yummy tea when we returned, and the sun was shining!

Thank you Iris and Ismet for a delightful day.

Love, Brenda xx

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