

June, July, August 2018

Tamuz, Av, Elul 5778



ALONIM


עלונים

Summer Issue

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@bwjpc.org. For postal contributions please contact the editor on 07989 974133. Copy date deadline for submissions is notified below. 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.

 ALONIM copy date deadline	
Issue	Date
Autumn	10th August 2018

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Front cover photograph:

Nimrod's Castle—
*You can read about Valerie's and
Jennifer's Israel trip in the next issue of
Alonim.*

Photographer: unknown

Editorial

Sheila Brill



The more observant of you (and I'm not talking about religion now) will have noticed that this edition of Alonim is running rather late. I have a good excuse! I was on the organising committee for Limmud Bristol SW which happened on 10th June. Being part of the team was all-consuming so I decided to postpone working on Alonim till after it had happened.

Towards the end of the day at Limmud I ambushed several people to write down their thoughts about the day. I'm pleased to say that most people were very positive. You can read more about Limmud Bristol SW on pages 12-18.

Speaking of asking people for their opinion, some of you completed the Alonim survey which was long overdue. Thanks to all who responded – the response rate was around 31% which I'm told is quite a decent figure.

I'm thankful that almost all the people who completed the survey (94%) think it's important for BWPJC to have a magazine! That's a relief.

The biggest 'take away' from the survey is that readers want the magazine to be more community focussed.

You can see the survey responses in detail on pages 24 and 25.

Several people have offered to help with production of Alonim. I'll be approaching those who offered to discuss how you can do this. In the meantime, Sam Waite and I are getting together to make a start on Alonim's future and I can honestly say, I'm very excited about it. Our plan is that over time, we will respond to the comments in the survey so you will begin to see a number of changes to Alonim.

Membership News

Sheila Wilson



A few weeks ago I went to my great-niece's bat mitzvah in New Jersey. It was wonderful to see the family and take part in the celebrations. My niece and nephew are members of an Orthodox synagogue with a very large membership in a very large community in a very large synagogue (they do everything large in the States). For all that it was as intimate and as warm as any of the simchas we have in our shul. Goes to show, it's not size that matters, it's the people within the community.

Wishing a warm welcome to our new members: Eilah Berlow, Sam and Alexandra Cohen, Tracey Maggs, Ben and Linda Motz and Lisa Waite.

Our sincere condolences to the following members who have recently suffered a bereavement in their family: Yvonne Crawford, Kalev Israel, Lisa Sacks, David Dwek, Jane Clark and Nigel Finkel. We

wish them all long life.

So very glad to hear that Nadine Ford is making a wonderful recovery and wishing Robert Hurst well after his recent operation. Get better soon - I need to hear you singing in shul.

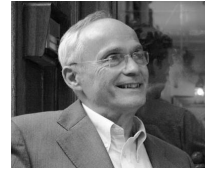
STOP PRESS!!!

Bring and Buy Sale

At the last count the proceeds from the sale were close to £140. Thanks to everyone who helped, but particularly to Sheila Wilson for conceiving the idea and making it happen.

STOP PRESS!!!

Richard Stone Centre for Social Change



Former BWPJC member Richard Stone is launching a centre for social change later this month. For more information about the centre, see <https://www.richardstonecentre.org>

Round-up from the Chair

Jane Clark



Visit of Thangam Debbonaire MP

The Member of Parliament for Bristol West was our guest at the Sabbath morning service on 26th May. As is no doubt now well known, a few months ago she joined a demonstration against antisemitism outside a meeting of the Labour Party's National Executive. An unsuccessful attempt was made by certain activists in her local party to deselect her for attending this demonstration.

Building

We are going to refurbish the downstairs toilets this summer. Many of the walls in the toilet area are structural walls which can neither be moved nor removed. Building manager Steve Harris, his helpers and advisers have devised a cunning plan to work around all this. We still plan to end up with three unisex toilets downstairs, one of which will be adapted for disabled access.

Evan's application for a grant to refurbish the library was successful. We have been awarded £3,500. This will cover most of the cost of refurbishing the library and making it a nicer area. If volunteers help, we will be able to do the whole job for about an extra £1,000. Again, the work will be done over summer when Cheder is not in session.

Council felt that we cannot also afford to refurbish the kitchen this year, so that job has been postponed.

Constituency Assistant Jonathan Downing also attended the service. He is a theology graduate, which gave him a certain perspective on our service.



He rang me up beforehand to confirm all the arrangements, and mentioned that Thangam has become a vegan. Not without apprehension I rang Viviane Bowell, who had offered to donate the Kiddush. Viviane took this in her stride and said that in that case she would make the whole Kiddush vegan, which she did.

The service was very well attended, especially since it was a bank holiday and Cheder was not in

session. Members made the guests very welcome. It did not escape my notice that Thangam has a remarkable memory for names. More generally, Vice-Chair Peter Brill is taking a lead for us on tackling the upsurge in antisemitism, and we made plans to involve Thangam in this effort.

Grand Ifthar

If you don't know what this is, please don't feel bad: I didn't either. Ifthar is the breaking of the fast after sunset during Ramadan. The Muslims of Bristol chose one day in Ramadan to hold a street party. I had an exam the next day, but went anyway, along with Peter Brill. Peter and Sheila kindly let me crash out on their sofa beforehand to stock up on sleep.

So along we went. I had no idea what to expect, but was made very welcome. Peter introduced me to the 'machers' of Muslim Bristol. At one point just as the fast ended I was given a microphone and invited to the platform. The last thing I expected was to speak publicly so I had no words prepared, but managed to mutter a few words about how honoured I felt to be invited and how there is more that unites our communities than divides them. I was given a meal, which I ate while talking to the Mayor of

the West of England, Tim Bowles. One of the next people I bumped into was our recent visitor Thangam Debonnaire. She introduced me to Kerry McCarthy, the MP for Bristol East, and told her how welcome we had made her, and how impressed she was that we had laid on vegan food. It's little things like that that make friends. Nice one Viviane!

Dancing to the beat of a Jewish heart



Rabbi Monique Mayer

There are moments that keep playing in my mind around the Saturday evening campfire at Deanfield— toasted marshmallows and improvised s'mores, plates of burgers and fresh-roasted corn-on-the-cob, familiar strains of the *havdalah* melody and stumbling through *American Pie*, laughter and quiet conversations. Deanfield is magical that way. It enables us to experience time and each other at a slower pace, without external distractions and pressures. We build on old friendships and make new acquaintances. We let down our hair, try our hand at painting or yoga or archery even when we swear we can't do it. And we joke and smile and chat and support each other in the process.

Limmud Bristol SW had many similar elements, enabling those who attended to meet familiar and new people from other communities while encountering ideas that challenged, surprised and delighted. At both Deanfield and Limmud Bristol SW there was a lovely sense of

community, which showed itself through the efforts of the organisers as well as the enthusiasm of the participants; and an oft-repeated comment was that people want that feeling to continue, and that we must find a way to keep the momentum, keep in touch, and create more positive experiences for themselves and the wider community.

And now, the memory of Deanfield, Limmud Bristol SW, and the summer of 2018 are fading. We have passed the summer solstice, and the days are getting shorter. On 12th August we begin the Hebrew month of Elul and the period of self-reflection leading up to the Days of Awe between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. How did we do this year? What changes did we intend to make for the better? In our relationships, have we strengthened the important ones or perhaps those that we wanted to be important? Have we made promises to drop a line, phone up, pop in to make sure someone is okay? And, yet, did we let moments for connection slip away as time marched on? One of the traits that the Mussar (Jewish ethical) tradition encourages us to strengthen is *zerizut*, often translated as alacrity or enthusiasm. The Mussar teachers draw a

connection between gratitude and enthusiasm. The more we appreciate and acknowledge each other, the more we generate enthusiasm and the desire (and actions) to strengthen connections with each other. I am grateful, as many in the community are, for the opportunities of new connections and reconnection that Deanfield and Limmud Bristol SW gave to me this summer, and feel renewed sense of energy. May we all find and commit to *zerizut* in our relationships as we approach and enter the Festival season.



Deanfield 2018



Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

There are individuals in the community suffering financial hardship. This fund makes it possible for the Rabbi to 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 if you would like to help or need help. All enquiries are kept confidential.

Education at Lamdeinu



Learning about blessings before and after Torah reading



Learning about final blessings of the Amidah



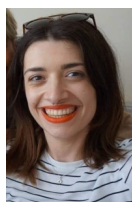
Using the children's library



Matching game

My PGCE

Hati Sparey-South



As some of you might know, I recently undertook a year-long Post Graduate Certificate of Education course to become a qualified Secondary School Teacher. I have to say, this has been some of the most rewarding work that I have ever undertaken, and I couldn't be happier that I found this path in life.

Some of this reward came in the unlikely guise of some extremely damaged and badly-behaved children and young adults.

Now I'm no child psychologist but, as someone who has spent a good deal of her young and teenage life dealing with a turbulent home-life and crippling depression, I know a few things about how this can present itself in children and teenagers. Children who present

these 'difficult' behaviours are often met with anger, frustration and punishment not only from their families but also from school teachers and friends.

Behaving in this way, and the impetus behind it, can often be isolating and incredibly self-sustaining so can be hard to overcome and repair any damage caused. As part of my course, I was inspired to conduct a study on what kinds of behaviour management strategies would have the greatest positive effect on these kinds of students.

From my own practice, I realised that when I gave students compliments and positive reinforcement they reacted extremely well. They would often look surprised, become overwhelmed and form attachments to me, so much so that they would follow me around and act as a 'mini teacher' during lessons; instructing other students to be quiet and help with classroom maintenance.

One student struck me so profoundly it was hard for me not to become enraged with society and with our education system. He was the youngest of three and they were all brought up by his single mother. He was angry, refused to do work and often threw things across the classroom and swore at me constantly. I soon realised, during our lessons together, that he

was an incredible cook. He had such a way with the ingredients and flavours that I was always impressed and overwhelmed with his work. I made sure to compliment him during the lessons and after two lessons I noticed a profound difference in him. He was compliant with instruction, worked extremely well and never again had an outburst at me or others in the classroom. Throughout most of that placement, I did not have to sanction him a single time and this was the finding through my entire study.

It is important to give children boundaries, structure and discipline as well as love, comfort and opportunities. It is even more important that neither positive nor negative reinforcement is favoured over the other; balance is key. Too much positivity without consequence, children can become unable to deal with negativity or failure. Too much sanction without motivation, students become deflated and unable to self-motivate.

To conclude, children who are unable to behave should be approached with careful understanding, comfort and education; it is our society's responsibility to educate these students on how to behave but also to have belief in their ability to change.'

Hati is Lamdeinu's administrator and Gimmel teacher.

A review

David Jewell



On 10th June more than 240 people gathered for a day's celebration of Jewish culture. Limmud has now been running for more than 35 years, primarily as an event over the Christmas holidays lasting several days. It's been so successful that the model has been copied overseas, and in shorter events around the UK. For anyone who has been asleep for the last few months, a group of Jewish people from Bristol created a programme that managed to attract enthusiasts from all over the south west.

It took place in the Cathedral School, just down the steps from the cathedral. Arriving around 10am, the committee appeared even to have achieved the extraordinary feat of getting the cathedral bells rung to herald this symbolic act of ecumenism. In his talk on the history of Jews in Bristol Alex Schlesinger pointed out the irony – that we were meeting in the shadow of the former St Augustine's Abbey,

where the deed chest of the medieval Bristol Jewry was kept under lock and key. Equally ironic that the Jews have returned while the abbey itself was suppressed in the sixteenth century, unlikely ever to return.

The programme reflected the breadth of Jewish culture. Six parallel sessions containing a total of thirty talks. There was a theme of Jewish history with talks on what archaeology can (or cannot) confirm of biblical history; how everyday Jewish life over the centuries is reflected in the Ashmolean museum's artefacts; Jews' involvement in the Atlantic slave trade; one talk on the holocaust as well as Alex's account of our local history. Jewish music appeared with Alan Schiller's personal history, Mark Solomon teaching different ways to sing kaddish, an account of Jewish influence on Broadway musicals (both with audience participation), together with two talks about the problems of bringing plays and musicals to the stage, plus a wonderful musical performance on double bass and oud. There was Jewish literature (US literature after Philip Roth) and art (Marc Chagall and David Bomberg). Jewish thought appeared in a talk on Philo of Alexandria and an account by Jonathan Wittenberg of an extraordinary figure, Rabbi

Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro, who continued to teach and write his thoughts while confined in the Warsaw ghetto. Then there was a range dealing with contemporary issues: our responses to food (the growth of veganism) and the environment (a talk from Limmud's only begetter, Clive Lawton); the plight of Jews still living in Ethiopia; and our response to the current refugee crisis, put into context by another talk on the contribution that refugees from Nazi Europe have made to British culture. There were also four different explorations of the continuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories, balanced by two talks showing that there is more in common between Jews and Muslims than division between them, and how in Bristol the two communities have managed to work together.

For me one theme that resonated through several talks was set by Madge Dresser's account of the Atlantic slave trade. Jewish involvement, though minor in the overall traffic, was significant. It came out of Jewish literacy, mobility, and the contacts with other Jews across continents. In other words the familiar tale of Jews occupying a space in between other more established groups, enabling them to spot and exploit

opportunities, explore and synthesise different disciplines and styles. So, for instance, Gershwin's musical style is a unique combination of jazz and classical styles. My interpretation of the talk on David Bomberg was that his failure to attract a following meant he was never pigeon holed into one style and was able to explore many of the different genres around him, while Chagall's own very personal style also emerged from him drawing on a variety of influences and not being confined to one particular school. There was a talk on radical Jewish women, whose contributions to thought and history is inseparable from their status as outcasts. Izzy Posen's moving account of his journey from Charedi community in Stamford Hill to the secular world of Bristol University (itself an expression of cultural mobility, albeit hard won) included the thought that the secular world could learn from the yeshiva's habit of chavruta study. Gene Feder & I pointed out how, as diaspora Jews we are freer to move between and within Israel and Palestine than either Israeli Jews or Palestinian Arabs.

The feedback, not surprisingly, was warmly positive, with many commenting on the range, and on the frustration of only being able to attend one out of every six

sessions. People found it inspirational and commented on the welcoming atmosphere. The committee received well deserved praise on the superb organisation, the catering, and even the weather. Ominously there were also suggestions about what the participants would want to be included next time. (Next time?) Everyone involved: committee first, but also volunteers, security staff, lunch suppliers and all the presenters deserve our warm thanks and praise; and perhaps the committee has earned a short rest. Finally, it was a great example of all the Jewish groups in Bristol working together.

An exhibition of David Bomberg's work will be on show at the Ben Uri Gallery in London, 21st June until 16th September.

With thanks to Yoav Ben Shlomo, Viviane Howell, Sheila Brill, Linda Hurst, Wendy Kingdom and Alex Schlesinger, all of whom contributed to this article.

My day at Limmud

Sam Waite



I started my day by attending “Faith beyond patriarchy” led by our own progressive Rabbi, Monique Mayer, and Shereen Williams, a Muslim local government worker and community activist based in South Wales and originally from Singapore.

During the session, both women spoke about their respective upbringings, inspirations and sometimes of their struggles overcoming patriarchal traditions within faith. It amazes me that in 2018, on the centenary of voting rights for women, there are still people who can't accept women as equals and Rabbi Monique spoke of her own experiences of encountering people who still question the validity of her position as a Rabbi – based solely on gender.

Both Shereen and Rabbi Monique cited strong-willed, female family members as important role models in giving them the determination to follow their aspirations.

The next session, “The story of the Jews of Bristol and Bath” was a real highlight for me, as a keen amateur genealogist and local historian. Alex Schlesinger, who gave the talk, took us on almost a thousand year's

worth of local Jewish history in just under an hour – no mean feat!

Alex took us back to 1142 when Jews were encouraged by King Stephen to come to England (for financial money-lending purposes) and established of a Jewish quarter in Wine Street and the Jewry (what is now known as Nelson Street). The medieval Jews of Bristol had a synagogue in the cellar of St Stephen's church – the only case of a synagogue and a church operating within the same building in Europe.

We learnt that there is a medieval Jewish cemetery buried underneath the foundations of the QEH school in Clifton and that Jacob's Well in Hotwells is Europe's oldest known Mikveh.

After taking in a thousand year's worth of history, it was time for lunch and browse of the many stalls in the foyer. From Davar promoting their many impressive cultural events in Bristol to a fantastic Waterstones stall selling a large selection of Jewish interest books, there was lots to interest almost everyone.

After lunch, my third session was "Jews and the Atlantic Slavery – beyond the polemics" by Dr Madge Dresser.

This was another particularly interesting session for me, as many assertions about Jews controlling the Atlantic slave trade form the

basis of many antisemitic canards on the internet and social media so therefore it's important to look at the facts and latest academic research on the role Jews played in the matter.

Dr Madge Dresser gave a compelling seminar, focusing on the facts and examining antisemitic discourse around the matter. Out of all the sessions I attended at Limmud, this was probably the most though provoking and unequivocally the seminar that evoked the most discussion.

After a session discussing an intense and upsetting period of history, the next session "The Jewish birth of the Broadway musical" provided a much-needed hour of fun.

The quote from the Spamalot song "You Won't Survive on Broadway If You Don't Have Any Jews" seems to have an element of truth in it, or so it would appear, after attending Robert Hurst's fabulous talk on the contribution and importance of Jewish composers in the 20th Century.

Robert took us on a musical carpet ride, from the arrival of Jewish immigrants in the United States at the turn of the century, embracing vaudeville and musical theatre and enriching it with their own roots in Yiddish theatre, to the amazing truth that a Jew, Irving Berlin,

wrote one of the most well-loved Christmas songs – “White Christmas” and George Gershwin’s famous “Rhapsody in Blue” containing an unmistakably Klezmer style clarinet.

The highlight of this session was the whole room unexpectedly singing Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah”, and Robert posing the question – “without music, would we even be Jewish?”

My fifth and final session of the day was “The Jewish Journey: 4000 years in 22 objects” by author and journalist, Rebecca Abrams.

Rebecca began the session by putting to us the notion that Anglo-Jews are masters of assimilation and “blending in” and highlighted the recent “Enough is Enough” antisemitism protests in London as going against the grain of this.

Her talk then showcased 6 of the 22 objects from her recent book “The Jewish Journey” that are on display at the Ashmolean in Oxford.

All these objects had one thing in common, they weren’t obviously Jewish!

Several of the Limmud talks will be available on a separate YouTube channel available via the website www.limmudbristolsw.co.uk but you please be patient as this will take time. some time to upload.

What followed was a fascinating insight into the less obvious of Jewish history in one hour.

That completed my day at Bristol’s first Limmud, there were so many seminars I wanted to see that it became hard to narrow it down. I left the event feeling enriched and hungry for more, so please Limmud come back to Bristol in 2019!

My day at Limmud

Michael Picardie



The highlights of Bristol Limmud for me were Kurt Lampe’s session on the Greek-Jewish intellectual of Alexandria, and the sessions on Marc Chagall, David Bomberg and Philip Roth.

Philo flourished in the first decades of the first millennium. He spoke and wrote Greek, not Aramaic or Hebrew. Greek was the lingua franca of hundreds of thousands of Alexandrian Jews. Hellenism was not the threat to Jewish life portrayed by historians of the revolts against the Greek-Syrian Seleucid dynasty in ancient Palestine. Philo tried to assimilate Hebrew theology as represented in the Torah into Platonic philosophy. So in the creation in the first verses of Genesis in Philo’s re-

interpretation of "chaos and void" ("tohu v'bohu") is a background assumption that a spiritual world of ideal forms exists either in the human mind or in reality or in both - a state argued for in a number of Plato's dialogues. Greek ontology - the study of Being - is structured much like the mind of God in Maimonides, a mind "read" by the great Sephardi rabbi in terms which preclude anthropomorphising God.

It is ironic that in post-communist Belarus, in Vitebsk, Marc Chagall's home city, his family house has been reconstructed and his paintings in the national museum, with all their impressionist, magical shtetl imagery, so much at odds with socialist realism, are the main attraction for tourists.

David Bomberg's impressionistic paintings of life in the East End of London were born in social conditions of poverty and now fetch huge prices in the commercialised market of art investment.

Who will succeed Philip Roth as the most influential writer interpreting Jewish-American life? A number of Jewish women novelists have emerged whose careers are burgeoning and at last we don't have to blush when we mention to those who have never read it what exactly Portnoy's 'complaint' really was.

A major milestone

Peter Brill



This is an edited version of an article which was previously published in the Bristol Post.

Education doesn't stop after school, college or university.

On 10th June, the South West's Jewish Communities celebrated a major educational milestone here in Bristol, by holding the first ever Limmud event in the region.

Over nearly 40 years, Limmud – the Hebrew word for Learning – has developed into a global charity with a single purpose at its core: to enable every participant take one step further on their Jewish journey. This almost entirely volunteer-run organisation has staged regular events in Bogota, Beijing, Johannesburg, Moscow, New York...and now Bristol.

If Jewish communities were businesses, you'd call Limmud "Continued Professional Development" (CPD) for their staff. Perhaps, in this case, it should be renamed Cultural Personal Development. Whatever you call it, communities of all faiths, cultures and backgrounds need the chance to explore what makes them communities; what binds them together.

In the case of Limmud Bristol South West, the topics were many and varied. From archaeology to music, politics and feminism to dialogue theatre, slavery and refugees. The depth and breadth of the topics reflect the diversity and development of Judaism in general over thousands of years and, in particular, the evolution of faith, culture and communities here in the UK.

For any community, learning how cultural activities, religious and secular laws, music and even recipes have become part of every day life is important in understanding the development of individual beliefs and values. CPD is also a way of hearing, recognising and debating alternative views and perspectives in a safe environment, with expert knowledge to tap into.

As Bristol's Muslim communities explore their own faith and beliefs through the month of Ramadhan, they too will be engaging in a personal journey; taking time for CPD. Almost every faith and culture has these opportunities. They may not call it Limmud, but they will recognise the benefits of reflecting on where they have come from and where they may be heading.

This should not be just an inward-looking process, examining their own religious or cultural perspectives.

It should also allow individuals and communities time to reflect on the impact they have on others – locally, nationally and internationally – and how other communities impact on them.

Recognising, understanding and embracing our rich histories, should help Bristol's communities focus on an exciting future too.

Community Parcels

Rabbi Monique



Six years ago, our community took up a tradition of making and delivering parcels at Purim and Rosh Hashanah to various people in the community. At Purim we send hamentaschen (this year complemented by other baked sweets), and at Rosh Hashanah we send challah, apples, and honey. To keep costs to a minimum, we have had a number of the items or baking ingredients donated by local businesses. What is so lovely about the tradition is that it brings joy to both bearers and recipients. It also enables people to participate in different ways: baking, card-making, parcel assembly, delivery, and schmoozing.

The number of households we reach has grown and—in a perfect world—every single household in the community would receive one. However, knowing we’re “not there yet”, I review the membership to compile a list which is then looked over by Council. I have a rough idea of how many parcels will get delivered—about 40-50 at present—and try to populate the list accordingly.

So, what puts someone on “the list”? The list may include any of the following: newish members, those who suffered bereavement or major illness in the family, given a lot of time to the synagogue, enjoyed a major celebration, gone through a difficult year; or sometimes people who we haven’t seen in a while and we want to keep in touch with. This coming Rosh Hashanah, we are again needing bakers for challah, and donations of applies and honey. We invite you to participate in any and all ways so that you can to bring joy through this mitzvah.

Supporting isolated members of our community

Some of you may have seen a posting by Rabbi Monique on our BWPJC Facebook page asking for volunteers to keep in touch with more isolated members



of our community. I thought it might help if I explained a little more about what this would mean, because it may just appeal to YOU to be involved.

As you may imagine, several of our members are more housebound. We can easily take for granted the fact that the rest of us have a choice to attend Synagogue, pop round to each other, socialise and generally keep in touch, but imagine how different life is for people who are without that contact choice?

It is our hope that we are in touch with one another as a community, focussing on these valued members. We would like a small group of people to take on this mitzvah, with a phone call perhaps once a month to about three such members. That way, you can reach out and make them feel included.

In the past, we have focussed such phone calls around Festivals and High Holy Days - always a good reason initially to be in touch.

It is not an onerous task, just a few minutes of your time, and think of the benefits all round!

Please have a serious think about this and do get in touch with Rabbi Monique or myself if you would like to know more. Looking forward to your response.....thank you.

Linda Hurst Lindahurst1@gmail.com
0117 950 5005 07730 805145

My working life

Linda Motz



I was desperate to do my civic duty and give blood from the moment my Brownie Guides trooped to a donor session, long-suffering but full-blooded grownups at the ready. As soon as I was 17 and could legally do so I lay heartbroken on a fold-up bed in the local Church hall while a well-meaning Donor Carer mashed a needle around in my arm trying and failing to get a decent flow. During my M.Sc. in Toronto I wept impotent tears because my blood was certified dangerous, having flowed in the UK during the CJD epidemic. Of course I couldn't settle in Canada! Rushing to the Donor Centre the second I stepped off the plane, I at long last saved a life, before persistent low iron on the next three times I tried got me barred. I was almost glad when I haemorrhaged after Iris was born - at least that settled the issue once and for all.

By then I had found other ways to help the blood service. I started out in a Manufacturing pod, turning donation into product: centrifuge the blood, squash off the plasma,

massage in the preservative without damaging any of the red cells, add a label fifty times an hour. That's for two people manning a pod together. The real challenge is, if you're one person alone for half an hour, say you're covering tea breaks, can you process 20 units alone? Even better: can you maintain idle chit-chat with your pod buddy for 8 hours straight? Or for the truly enthusiastic amateur: can you learn the script of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* while processing the blood? (Yes. But your pod buddy won't like it.)

At the time, NHS Blood and Transplant was still interested in CJD. So was I; my M.Sc. research was into a prion in yeast and what it does when you chop various bits out of it. The prion lab was an exotic location on the other side of a thick plexiglass window accessed by people wrapped head to toe in paper gowns, and I was hankering after proper science, having rather rashly abandoned my Ph.D. for a life on the stage some years before. I volunteered my services and wound up testing CJD testing kits. Let me tell you: they're not great. Detecting a couple of rogue-folded copies of a normal cellular protein

and predicting whether they are a problem is not a trivial matter, and automating to screen all blood donations neither possible nor desirable. Since the height of the BSE epidemic in 1998 all blood donations are leukodepleted, their white cells removed by filtration; there have been no cases of vCJD spread by red blood cells since. Prophylactics were better than screening.

There's an awful lot of other screening applied to blood donations. Mostly quick STI and hepatitis tests, but in the case of platelets, which require storage at 22C, continuous bacterial screening is required during the shelf-life of the product. Since the shelf-life of platelets is only seven days from point of donation, the poor staff in BacT - me, that glorious summer I escaped the manufacturing floor - have to start sampling the product at 05:30 the morning after it's been produced, so it can get to hospitals in time to be used. We had to keep hold of the platelets for six hours after bacterial monitoring began, just to make sure there weren't levels of contamination high enough to trigger an immediate alert, so we had to start pretty early. Pity the

poor night shift who had to make the things in the first place!

I am manufacturing again now, but a very different sort of product. At first in the Protein Development and Production Unit I made antibodies for hospitals and research groups around the world from cells in a petri-dish, and now I am developing soluble recombinant blood group antigens. When patients receive repeat transfusions, they often make antibodies to mildly mismatched blood. Some of these antibodies aren't important clinically, but get in the way of a diagnosis; we make antigens to mop up the insignificant antibodies in a patient serum sample and clear up the test results. We have one such product on the market; Knops Inhibitory Reagent. We hope that the strategy works universally; we're throwing everything we've got at it.

But if it doesn't work out, I'm sure that life on the stage will. I've written a play about organ donation, you know. It's about this woman who gives her husband's organs away against his wishes. You have all signed the organ donor register, haven't you?

Candle chemistry

Derek Brown



As a devotee of the Erev Shabbat services at Synagogue, I enjoy the moment of lighting the candles as a marker in time between the hurly-burly of the working week and the beginning of the Shabbat rest. Frequently, I find that my favourite time in the service is the period given over to personal prayer and meditation, when I often gaze at the burning candles as a focus for my meditation. I am sure many of us will experience the same kind of link between the candles and the sense of change in mood at home for Erev Shabbat, and for other occasions when candles are burnt. But what is happening when we burn a candle?

To begin with, consider what makes up a candle. We have wax, the fuel, and we have a wick, a kind of 'string' that is porous and can 'soak up' liquid. We also have a supply of oxygen from the air, something that is not part of the candle, but is vital to the combustion process, naturally. Candle wax is mostly a long chain of carbon atoms, each linked to two hydrogen atoms.

When we light the candle, the first thing we need to do is melt some wax, so that it can flow and be picked up by the wick. Once the

wick is filled with liquid wax, the wax ignites and the wick provides a stable flow of wax so the flame can stay alight.

So, we have a burning candle and the supply of oxygen now becomes important, as there is a lot of oxygen at the edge of the flame, but it is being used up as it burns wax. As we look further into the centre of the flame, there is little or no remaining oxygen and nothing much can burn. The material of the wick remains uncombusted.

Now, as our eyes move up the flame we see the light given out by the candle, with a central zone of no light around the wick. What is happening here? In fact, what is happening is that the material of the wax is burning in a particular way. The hydrogen atoms in the wax burn preferentially before the carbon atoms, giving us energy as hydrogen combines with atmospheric oxygen to give water in the form of steam. This leaves the carbon atoms with insufficient oxygen remaining to form carbon oxides. Thus, the carbon remains as carbon atoms forming tiny particles of pure carbon which the energy from the hydrogen reaction heats up to red heat, or even hotter. These particles then glow with the red or brighter light given out as any extremely hot material glows.

But, as we have discussed earlier, the wick doesn't burn. Or does it?

A very clever piece of materials science causes the wick to burn, but only when we want it to. Until quite recently (a hundred years ago or such) wicks did not burn. They got longer and longer as the wax burnt away. A long wick means that there is much more wax provided than the flame can burn. More and more carbon particles are made and the candle becomes very smoky. Every 15 minutes or so, someone would have to take a pair of scissors and trim the wick to keep the smoke level down.

Nowadays, the material of the wick is treated so as to have different stiffness in one axis to that in another at right angles. It has similar stiffness to a piece of paper, which if you hold upright taking the two lower corners of the page in each hand, will flop over such that the face of the page, having very low stiffness, will curl over but the length of the page, having high stiffness, will resist curling over. As the wick gets longer with the burning away of the wax, the wick curls in a controlled way. In this way the 'top' of the wick approaches the edge of the flame, where there is more oxygen, and the top of the wick can now slowly burn. Modern wicks are 'self-trimming', and modern candles burn with much lower smoke levels than in days of yore. It was finding out things like this that guided me to the Materials Science path when I was working out

which route to take, career wise. I find little 'tricks' like this to be extremely clever, even fascinating!

One final thing to mention is that when a candle goes out it seems to continue to smoke, much more than it did when burning. How can this be?

When there is no more flame, there is still a period of time when the wax is hot enough to boil off from the wick, and this gaseous wax condenses into tiny wax particles. This is much the same as water vapour condenses into steam from a boiling kettle. These droplets are held in a column of air that is sufficiently hot to carry on rising in the cooler air around it. This is the 'smoke' that only forms after the candle is no longer burning, even though the candle was producing no smoke while it was alight.

All that going on in a candle! So much to meditate on for Erev Shabbat! I find appreciating the processes going on during meditation brings a greater sense of wonder to the occasion.

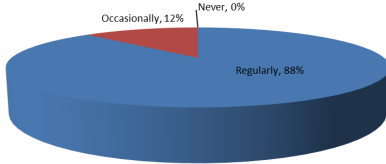
Hopefully it might bring something similar to you?

Alonim survey results

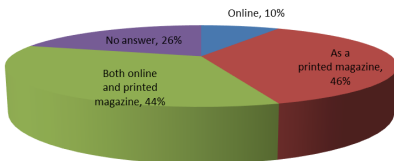
(Best read online because of the colours!)

With thanks to Miranda Harris for compiling this report.

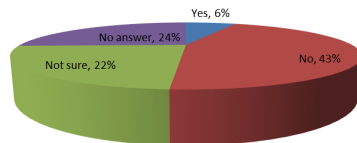
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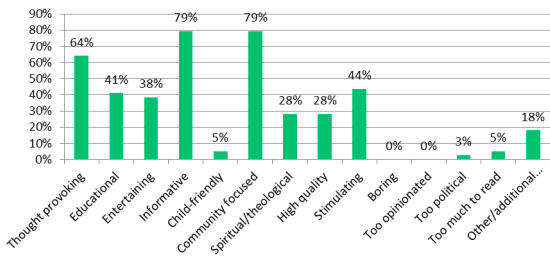
In what format do you read Alonim?



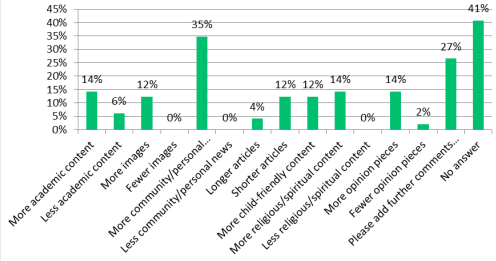
Images are important in Alonim and are available in full colour in the online edition only. Would you be prepared to pay a subscription for a full colour edition of the printed magazine?



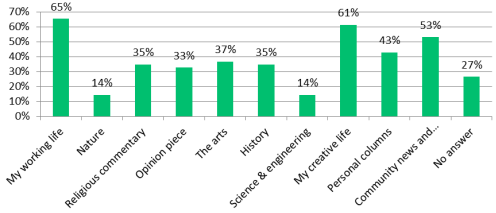
Which of the following words or phrases best describe Alonim?



How could Alonim improve?



Most issues of Alonim have regular features often written by the same people. Please tick the ones you enjoy.



What other content would you like to see in Alonim?

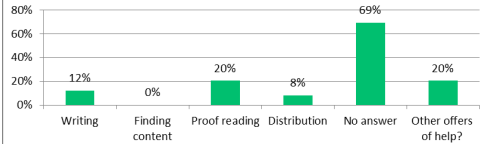
Council news
Community
Calendar - festivals etc
Recipes for dummies

Some debate pieces where two or more people take different stances on topics to provoke thought. Let the younger generation have a page they can call their own. Short feedback from Council meetings would make the community aware of the (non-confidential) issues being discussed. This might encourage members to join Council.

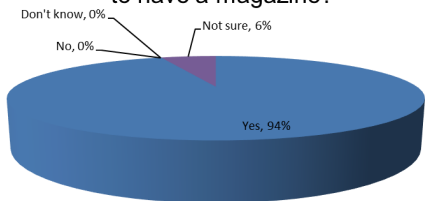
Comments

Just have so much to read , it sometimes gets left out. Keeps me in touch with the community and informs me about what fellow congregants do Not child friendly and usually rather heavy. Needs some lighter warmer articles Creates 'glue' linking the community more closely Variable. Some writers are better than others Interesting We just like to keep in touch.

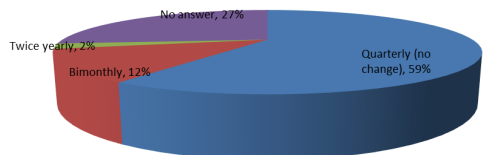
Alonim is written and compiled by dedicated volunteers. If you would be prepared to help with the production of Alonim, please tick the appropriate boxes



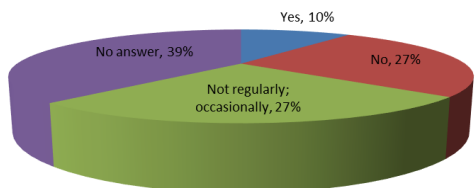
Do you think it's important for BWPJC to have a magazine?



Alonim is currently published quarterly. Please indicate how often you think Alonim should be published.



Would you be prepared to write regularly for Alonim?



Covenant of Circumcision

ברית מילה



Rabbi Emeritus
Francis Ronald
Berry

This is the second article on circumcision following on from David Jewell's commentary in the previous issue of Alonim.

Whilst working in Africa long ago, I heard about a survey taken amongst the prostitutes of Johannesburg. This was during the period of white minority rule, so the women were asked to classify their customers in order of preference according to racial characteristics prevalent at that time, that is whether they were African, Indian, mixed race, Boer, English or Jewish. Jewish men came top of the list as preferred customers. The reasons given were that the women found Jewish men to be both cleaner and more respectful towards them.

I like to think that these features might be connected in some way. Perhaps the practice of ברית מילה has cultural effects greater than many of us realise. Most people focus upon the surgical aspects of circumcision, but the Jewish practice has much more effect. It is a sign of a covenant between us and

God. It is the 2nd commandment [Genesis 17] the 1st being to have a family [Genesis 1, 28] but these are connected in an interesting way, as it is the transmission of Jewish culture across the generations which perpetuates this covenant of circumcision, just as male seed passing through the circumcision causes the pregnancy hopefully leading towards the birth of our next generation of children.

Baby boys are entered into the Covenant on the 8th day of their lives, which I have heard, is when the level of antibodies is highest in their blood, so as to be able to fight off any infection caused by the operation, though it has to be said that I've never heard of any baby being affected in this way. Perhaps the healing response could even be strengthened by the challenge. Later on in life there might be more health benefits, as I've heard that the rates of cervical cancer is lowest amongst nuns and Jewish women whose husbands are not promiscuous. I've also heard that it is considered to be more hygienic to be circumcised. Of course Jewish men who are uncircumcised are still Jewish. Many non-Jews practice circumcision too; half the tribes in Africa practice circumcision and I've heard that aids transmission rates are lower amongst the men of such tribes even though their promiscuity is similar to that of the

uncircumcised tribes. However the health and hygiene resulting from the surgical aspects of this practice are not what I consider to be the most important aspects of it. As a religious leader in Israel it is the spiritual benefits that I want to focus on.

I consider sexuality an aspect of spiritual feeling. Jewish life is centred on the family. Within the family prayer and good deeds, mutual respect and regard, kindness and generosity, listening and helping, guiding and nurturing children, blend into a mixture of social attitudes cultivating positive attitudes and feeling within our community and contributing towards a better society at large. The parents of baby boys have the religious responsibility enter their child into the covenant both for their own spiritual benefit as well as his.

Just as parents have to feed and clothe and educate their sons they have to spiritual responsibility to have them circumcised by a מוהל or מוהלָת in a traditional Jewish way, which involves prayer as well as surgical technique. It is an expression of love to take care of the emotional attitudes people learn whilst growing up, which is affected by whatever happens earliest in life. This is why I started this article

with my anecdote about the prostitutes of Johannesburg. The kindness of their clientele might not have anything to do with the fact that they were circumcised, but it might have to do with the way they were brought up generally, by Jewish parents with Jewish values, which included the observance of this particular commandment.

Circumcision alone doesn't make a man Jewish and there are, of course many uncircumcised men who are kind and respectful towards women, clean and healthy too. I'm sure there are also unkind, dirty, circumcised Jewish men. However

I've not heard that מילה has ever diminished the sexual vigour of Jewish men. These days it is the headlines about media moguls which catch our attention. However, the casting couch has been common knowledge for many years and isn't really 'new news'. The reason I was asked to write this article was because of the news that the government of Iceland plans to ban the practice of circumcision. There are also parents concerned that they do not cause pain to their newborn son, nor compromise his bodily integrity. However hundreds of Jewish generations have flourished whilst continuing with this covenant. I'm honoured to have been invited to participate at many מילה ceremonies. I've

witnessed that the pain is minimal and transient.

When we lived in Reykjavik, also long ago, there were about half a dozen Jews and only half of them were female, so this wouldn't have affected many people. Now I'm told there are about 250 Jews living in Iceland so a substantial number might have their religious rights impaired. I think this wrong! There are many Icelanders who believe in dwarves, trolls and so on. I don't; but do feel toleration for their cultural attitudes and beliefs. They have tattoos and pierce their bodies. I don't, but consider people who want to do this to have a perfect right to do so. I just wish others would respect us and allow us the right to observe our Jewish practices. It is anti-Jewish not to and we must, sadly, accept that anti-Jewish feeling is probably behind such moves. It is possibly an attempt to weaken Jewish culture and prevent its transmission into the future, but, like the Nazis, I think that it is bound to fail. During my rabbinic work I had many approaches from parents, especially mothers, asking for advice about where they could find a מרהל as they were expecting a son. They were often not members of a synagogue, often told me that they, 'weren't religious', yet this was an important matter for them! So, my feeling is, that this covenant will

continue to link the generations, from our Hebrew history to our eventual Jewish destiny....

Going on an archaeological dig



Tamar Hodos Lucas

For the past year, I have shared with you archaeological news from the ancient eastern Mediterranean. Have my contributions to Alonim inspired you to think about going on an archaeological excavation yourself? There are many projects in Israel that accept volunteers.

Archaeological excavations are undertaken around the year in Israel, although most run during the summer. Some require a commitment of only a week; others three weeks. There is usually a cost for volunteers, but that cost will include accommodation, food, and on site training and supervision by experienced field archaeologists, who will teach you the skills of excavation and recording. In the evenings, there are also often supplemental lectures about the site, its history in literature and through excavation, and about the methodologies you are using and

why. Some projects additionally offer a programme of field trips to other archaeological sites and places of interest. Accommodation can be in a modest hotel with a pool, a kibbutz, or in a tent.

The working hours of an excavation usually run from very early in the morning until early afternoon. Sometimes, there may be additional working hours in the late afternoon to sort finds brought in from the field, although this work is likely to be undertaken by specialists. As one of those specialists, myself, I have always welcomed volunteers to help me sort the hundreds of sherds that have been left each day to dry on my pottery finds table.

There are several websites you can explore to find a project that interests you, whether because of the period(s) being uncovered or because of the location of the site itself. Biblical Archaeology Society has a substantial list of projects that accept volunteers to dig in Israel, as well as Jordan, Egypt and Cyprus. Although the website currently includes sites in Turkey, the Turkish government very recently curtailed the number of foreign participants allowed on site in favour of Turkish students. Several projects have had to ask specialists not to come out this summer in order to comply with this sudden and unexpected change. For

better or for worse, archaeological excavation is just as much a part of contemporary politics as it is about discovering the past. <http://digs.bib-arch.org/>

The Israeli government has more modest list of Israeli project that accept volunteers. <http://embassies.gov.il/MFA/IsraelExperience/history/Pages/Archaeological-Excavations-in-Israel-2018-.aspx>

While it may be too late to book onto a project for 2018, hopefully these resources will enable you to begin to think about uncovering our past next summer. Happy digging!



The site of Tel Dor on the Carmel coast in northern Israel.

Image copyright: Tel Dor Excavation Project

How We Remember – a novel

J.M Monaco



own terms. Within this frame is a part coming-of-age, part retrospective narrative with the main character, Jo, telling the story from her first person point-of-view.

It's time to shout out to all about a project that's kept me busy over the past three years or so. I've been working on a novel, spending endless hours reading, writing, more reading, frequently staring off into the distance with a dazed expression – lost in other fictional worlds, drafting, revising, cutting, writing more, cutting again, getting feedback, revising again, finding a publisher, more editing – and now the time is near to publication. What follows here is a summary around the novel's inspiration, themes and content, and other practical things like how you come to the book launch and/or buy a copy if you think it's your cup of tea.

What is the novel about?

How We Remember is my first novel. After putting on hold for many years my creative writing interests from my undergrad days when I dabbled in short stories, I decided the time was right to return to my love of fiction writing and commit to a novel. Reflecting a tradition of North American fiction that centres on dysfunctional families, the novel is about a family that is struggling to survive on its

Every family has its secrets and some have sibling rivalries. When Jo O'Brien returns home (to the US) after her mother's death she is forced to confront both. An unexpected inheritance fans the flames of existing tensions between Jo and her brother, and it's their mother's long-forgotten diary that recalls the messy aftermath of an uncle's sexual advances towards Jo when she was a teenager. Like the diary, Jo's memory of events is full of gaps, but one thing is certain – she will never regain what was lost. *How We Remember* traces the effects of alcoholism, mental illness and abuse on one Irish-Italian-American, working-class family. Jo's narration weaves together past and present stories, creating a complex portrait of her family's life, one that will shape Jo's future choices when faced with the tragedy of mismanaged grief. RedDoor Publishing is excited to make the claim that the novel will attract fans of Anne Tyler and Sylvia Brownrigg. Book clubs will love it for its probing possibilities.

What inspired the idea?

Early ideas emerged some months after my own mother died and I was grieving, trying to make sense of the complexity of family dynamics, their histories and secrets. I had also been reading Siri Hustvedt's novel *The Sorrows of an American*, an interesting tale of a lonely male psychotherapist from New York City whose father dies and leaves behind his work-in-process memoir. Amongst other things, this led me to ask what might happen to a family after the 'manager of family relationships', or the 'glue' that holds the family together, dies. I then pondered about the nature of inheritances, not so much in the financial sense (although this features in the book), but the ways in which children inherit their parents' histories and then adopt certain characteristics within family dynamics. What evolved was a story about a middle-age female protagonist who is a failing academic (and in failing health) who must come to terms with her mother's death while also making decisions about her future (distant) relationship with her brother and father. On the surface Jo gets by just fine in her London life, but her emotional chaos is brought to the surface upon her return to the US. I used the idea of the mother's diary as a vehicle from which Jo can narrate multiple stories about her

family's past, including the turmoil and pain caused by an uncle. It's a key moment that comes back to haunt her, and it's one that has made a major impact on her life.

Is there going to be a book launch?



I have a book launch date confirmed with Waterstones in The Galleries, Broadmead, for Saturday evening, 13th October, 2018 (check website for exact time and details – tickets may need to be

booked – doors should open at 7pm). I'd love to see many friends and new faces there. We'll have a reading planned with Q and A and some book signing over a few drinks.

Where can people purchase *How We Remember*?

How We Remember is due to be published on the 13th September, 2018. It is available to pre-order now in various formats through RedDoor Publishing, Foyles, Waterstones and Amazon (UK and USA).

If anyone is on Twitter they can follow me for updates. I'm on @jm_monaco2

March of the Living

Debbie Staniland



I was honoured to participate in the 2018 March of the Living (MOL) UK. Only 10 years ago, I naively believed that most of the Jewish Communities were completely non-existent in Eastern Europe. When I met Eastern European Limmudniks at my first UK Conference 9 years ago I was completely blown away as to how many communities of Jewish people there are in Eastern Europe and of course all over the world. When my daughter, Rose, of 19 requested to join me on the trip to Poland I was delighted to be able to share this experience with her and very touched that she wanted to take such a difficult journey.

Once I agreed to join The MOL UK 2018 trip I became extremely apprehensive and nervous as to how I and Rose would cope with such an extremely challenging journey. MOL UK must be commended on the fantastic itinerary they have developed. With fantastic educators and great logistical planning.

The balance of the programme, from the initial pre-meeting in London to the very end of the trip took us on

a journey of discovery, learning, horror and joy. Hearing from our fantastic educator, Angela Gluck, about the pre-war Jewish Polish community in Warsaw, Lublin and Krakow through the fascinating Warsaw cemetery, Polin Museum and Lublin Yeshiva, which set the scene to understanding the extreme enormity of the task that the Nazi's had to obliterate this vibrant community.

Seeing the Milk Caskets of the Oneg Shabbat archives was a great privilege after having studied about them a few years ago on a Melton course. It was wonderful to see the actual stored material so painstakingly handwritten, collected and stored under the ghetto for us



to have the honour of seeing what existed then.

Lighting memorial candles

Doing this trip on a bus with participants of all ages some who are survivor children or partners and having a survivor, Eve, with us on most of the journey was extremely enriching. One of my reasons for concern regarding this trip was that in the 80s I tried to visit Dachau and was emotionally not

able to go past the gates. Being with a group of warm people and hearing the stories from those who shared about those who perished made everything come to life and I felt a very deep emotional sadness throughout most of the few days.

What made it even more emotionally difficult was seeing the belongings of humans that were so brutally murdered. But..... even with all this horror there is much joy.

Yes, we have survived, communities are growing, people are discovering their Jewish roots and wanting to learn. 11 000 people young and old walked from Auschwitz to Birkenau some singing and some going quietly for this remarkable event. It was a sea of Blue and White.

We are now all witnesses we will never forget and we will continue to tell the story. We need to continue to grow communities of Jewish people wherever we are, in an inclusive and meaningful way.



Remembering children killed in the forest

horrors of the Shoah and more recently from assimilation. I have brought up my two children in Jewish tradition and am very proud to say they both have a strong Jewish identity. Born out of this was my energy to partner with friends



At the beginning of the march

to grow a new Jewish Congregation in Cape Town and then to volunteer for Limmud in South Africa and now in Bristol and Internationally. This trip to Poland has reinforced and informed what continues to motivate me to support and help grow a strong a vibrant International Limmud family that takes many different types of Jewish people one step further on their Jewish Journey.

I have always felt very strongly about not contributing to the diminishing Jewish population that has resulted from the

Our creative lives

Nicky Spencer-Hutchins



On holiday in Belgium

Having a work/school life balance is essential part of how I try to manage my little family's life. As an occupational therapist by trade I am very aware of the important it is to our mental and physical health and wellbeing to have an occupational balance however much of a juggle it can be at times. I have been working hard since turning 40 (a few years ago now) to have the courage to embed this really seriously into my life personally and my children's without any guilt attached. I am a big believer that adults need to relearn how to play and I hope that I am able to be a role model for my kids in that way. Appreciating life and making the most of all the opportunities available to us feels like the path to happiness. So what do we do...

We love to have adventures and as much as possible we head off, on a shoestring budget, with our tents or in Airbnb to different places round the country or elsewhere. We love to travel, be outside surrounded by

nature, visit friends, go to festivals, try new things, make mistakes (ask us about our train trip to Croatia) and lose some of the boring restraints of day to day life! Tom and Shay are great companions in this way. They are never fazed by trying any new physical activities, meeting new friends, heading off to demos, joining in with some spiritual/religious event, singing and dancing round the kitchen (they will kill me for writing that bit!). The more spontaneous the better! When we are not being so spontaneous and adventurous we have an allotment and a blow up boat that we take to the marine lake in Clevedon. Boys do the usual BMXing, St Johns cadets, gaming, cycling, swimming and chilling. I love them to experience the world- to see lots of different ways they can live their lives and learn to interact and enjoy being with different people from all walks of life.

As for me, I made a conscious decision that life is too short and being jack of all trades and master of none was absolutely ok. So in my free time, I sing, do five rhythms dancing, walk a lot in the countryside, paint, do yoga, play squash, gardening, go to gigs, see friends and family (super important), read, play the native American flute and engage in as many spiritual and political activities as time allows. My work life is very demanding so I love having time on

my own to recharge and feel very lucky to co-parent my children with Chris so that I do have a little bit of me time whilst they have another loving parent to do lovely things with. If I'm really lucky I can sneak a few days off by myself to St Ives or somewhere like that- away from lots of people and shopping centres - an opportunity for as simple living as possible! Being outside in any weather is absolutely essential for my soul. We are often doing quite wonderful and unusual things- feel free to join us!

Love this poem and try to live by it (though don't worry my house does get a dust from time to time!)

Dust If You Must

by Rose Milligan

Dust if you must, but wouldn't it be better

To paint a picture, or write a letter,
Bake a cake, or plant a seed;
Ponder the difference between
want and need?

Dust if you must, but there's not much time,

With rivers to swim, and mountains
to climb;
Music to hear, and books to read;
Friends to cherish, and life to lead.

Dust if you must, but the world's out there

With the sun in your eyes, and the
wind in your hair;
A flutter of snow, a shower of rain,
This day will not come around again.

Dust if you must, but bear in mind,
Old age will come and it's not kind.
And when you go (and go you must)
You, yourself, will make more dust.

*First published in "The Lady", 15th
September 1998*

Jewish Adult Education

Sam Waite



In early May, the shul's adult education class were given the task of giving a fifteen-minute presentation each on a Jewish interest topic of their choice.

A few weeks and many hours of research later, the presentations began.

I got the ball rolling on the first Wednesday with a presentation on Yiddish culture, language, theatre and some of the more typical Ashkenazi food. I find Yiddish fascinating, and therefore it wasn't too much of a struggle to talk about it for 15 minutes (occasionally scanning the room to check I wasn't being too shluffedik).

We then had an amazingly well researched presentation by Donovan on Jewish ideas around the afterlife who I think was very pleased to have given his presentation – so he could stop carrying around the mountain of books he was using! The ideas surrounding an afterlife are not clear cut in Judaism, but Donovan highlighted several varying opinions and sources which gave us food for thought.

Talking of food, Martine followed with a presentation on, what else – Jewish food. Sharing her own personal memories of growing up in France and the traditional Ashkenazi food she ate growing up, Martine took us on a journey of culinary delights – which made us all very hungry on a Wednesday evening!

During the second session it was the turn of Tracey to start the session.

Tracey gave a very passionate talk about the Ukrainian-French early 20th century artist, Sonia Delaunay, co-founder of the Orphism movement, showing us images of her work which the whole class agreed was very modern for its time.

Lisa presented us with a very thought-provoking talk about Jewish poetry at the time of the Great War.

Reading poetry by Bristol born Isaac Rosenberg as well as Siegfried Sassoon, Lisa highlighted their use of Jewish symbolism within their poems and tackled some of the antisemitism within T.S Eliot's poetry.

Last but by no means least, was Rose's presentation on the mystical elements of Judaism. Rose had given us a taster on Shavuot with her research surrounding Jewish angels and expanded on this by exploring a history of Jewish mysticism

including its biblical origins, influences from Greek philosophy, the emergence of Kabbalah in the Middle Ages, its development in the modern period and the resurgence of its popularity in the 20th century.

What really shone through whilst taking part in and watching all these presentations was how passionate each of us were about our chosen subjects – it really came across and showed what a diverse class we have.

First Orthodox female rabbi

Dina Brawer has become Britain's first female Orthodox rabbi after attaining her *semicha* (religious ordination). You can read more about this here:

<http://www.liberaljudaism.org/2018/05/liberal-judaism-congratulates-first-orthodox-female-rabbi>

Reflections on Israel tour

Jacob Freshwater

In the first week of Israel tour, after we landed at the airport we immediately got a coach to a viewpoint overlooking the sea and the harbour, an insight the numerous viewpoints we visited and the countless beautiful views throughout the four week experience, not to mention the days out to the vibrant colourful markets, the hikes across the desert plains and up the treacherous mountains, effortlessly floating across the salty surface of the dead sea and immersing ourselves in the fascinating history of each city and building.

Not only did we tour Israel, but alongside that we uncovered its religious history and current political situation, with first hand accounts allowing us to truly understand the importance of what has and is going on in Israel surrounding the political and religious unrest. Visiting the Western wall was both challenging and amazing, everyone taking a different experience away from it. A similarly challenging and intensely moving experience was our visit to Yad Vashem, the holocaust museum. Having an in depth tour of the museum and time to think and

discuss the topic ourselves made the museum a key part in our Israel experience, as well as an unforgettable life experience.

Living first hand on a Kibbutz made it possible for us to view life as a working Israeli citizen, whilst taking the time to experience the brilliance of how different each Kibbutz and the people who live really are. Moving from Kibbutz to Kibbutz took us from one end of Israel to the other, making a memorable stop off at the infamous dead sea to experience the wild wonder of floating gently across the surface, bringing a sense of freedom and appreciation for the uniqueness of Israel's natural environment. Taking a break from Kibbutz's and hostels, our stay in the endless and visually exquisite Negev desert competes to be thing that tipped the Israel Tour experience. Each having our own sandstone carved hut in the middle of the monstrously vast Negev granted us the ability to see out of the eyes of a Bedouin tribesman, feasting on handmade dessert delicacies. Surrounding our dessert village were numerous rocky mountain outcrops, offering the most gorgeous view of the Israeli sun setting over the sleeping dessert inhabitants. Without tour

slowly coming to an end, we took a trip to gleaming modern city of Eilat where we were able to cool down from the scorching sun and study Israel's aquatic life as we snorkeled along the coast. Leaving Israel was both hard and yet rewarding, knowing that this amazing four week journey across the incredible country of Israel was over, however also finding that sense of achievement and happiness knowing how much you have accomplished in such a short period of time, endless hikes and wondering first hand at the unthinkable views and surrounding environment you can only dream of walking in.

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