



HAMAGEN

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MAGEN AVOT COMMUNITY



07891 988 201



info@magenavot.com



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From the Desk of the Editor Julian Pollard

Firstly, a word of apology.

We had hoped to publish this edition in time for the Yomim Nora'im but the best laid plans...

However, to every cloud there is a silver lining as the delay has allowed for greater contribution from our members and more variety of content. This edition therefore includes a beautiful poem by the late Malcolm Brookes z'l, an extended meditation on King Solomon by Simon Bentley, profiles of our respected Chatanim and an expression of our appreciation to the Maurer family.

So, my thanks to all of you who have taken time and trouble to contribute. I encourage everyone to consider doing so in the future because this magazine showcases and reflects the diverse and talented membership which makes Magen Avot unique.

As HaMagen has evolved the content has developed in the way many of us hoped it would from its inception, covering:-

- The life and times of our most precious assets - you the members
- Jewish religious and ethical reflections and
- Examination of issues of a wider Jewish or Israel perspective

My thanks also to our advertisers and sponsors whose kind generosity has effectively defrayed all production costs. In turn I urge our readers to support the advertisers whenever they can.

As always, we are indebted to Julian Maurer who - at short notice and despite numerous other communal obligations - manages to make time to ensure the elegant layout of the magazine and to present the content in its most appealing and readable form. Any errors or mistakes are mine, however.

Finally, I have always been convinced that each one of us has a story to tell or a point of view to express.

Please do so through HaMagen so we can all share these as a community.

Julian Pollard

Editor, HaMagen Publication



Message from the Rabbi Rabbi Kenigsberg

Dear Friends,

We have come a long way since the first edition of HaMagen was published just over a year and a half ago.

As I write these words, shul life is as close to normal as it has been over the past 2 years. All our regular services have resumed and Kiddushim have returned. Shiurim, Horim veYeladim learning and educational trips are taking place in-person. It has been particularly wonderful to celebrate so many smachot face-to-face once again. Of course, we remain cognizant that for some, communal interaction is still taking place via virtual means – and we look forward to seeing you back in person as soon as it is possible. Magen Avot has continued to grow and to thrive, thanks to the contribution of each and every one of you. Our community's success is something in which we can all take pride.

As we approach the festival of Chanukah, let me share with you a fascinating insight regarding a relatively simple question – how many candles should we light each night of Chanukah?

The answer is the subject of a debate amongst the Talmudic Sages. Our practice follows the opinion of Beit Hillel who argued that the governing principle should be "מוסיף והולך" – to increase as the nights go on. Thus, we begin with one candle, gradually increasing the light until eventually we have a full Chanukiah with eight candles burning along with the shamash. However, Beit Shammai had a different view. They argued that we should do just the opposite: begin with eight candles on the first night and decrease the light until by the final night of Chanukah we are left with just one. What is behind this machloket?

Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin, in his collection of drashot "LaTorah veLaMoadim", explained that the candles we light on Chanukah encompass two different aspects - reflected in the words we use to describe them. A central component of a candle is its flame. אש (fire) is a destructive element. It burns and it consumes. But a candle also provides light – אור. Not only do candles burn up fuel, but they also illuminate the darkness. As the verse in Mishlei says נר מצווה ותורה אור – the Torah is compared to a candle, not as a destructive force but as the glow which lights up the world.

The battle that took place on Chanukah contained both of those elements. When the Chashmonaim launched their revolt against the Greeks they had a twofold job. One was to remove the defilement in the Beit haMikdash - to eliminate a foreign culture and its influence which put Jewish life and Judaism itself at risk.

But there was also a positive message that needed to be seen and heard. They needed to rekindle the lights of the menorah, as we say in Al HaNissim "והדליקו נרות בחצרות קודשך" - to spread the light and warmth and beauty of Torah amongst those who may have forgotten.

In those days both methods were necessary. The question to be asked however is which one is to be commemorated for posterity? Beit Shammai emphasised the need to destroy that which is impure. They begin with the greatest fire on the first night, but as the nights go on and the danger dissipates, so too do the number of lights decrease.

Beit Hillel however said that our focus needs to be not on אש but on אור; not on destroying but on building. We begin with one candle and day by day the light that we shine increases, ultimately culminating with the beautiful glow that we witness on the eighth night.

The Halacha follows Beit Hillel. Though the world at times can seem very dark, the tiny candles of Chanukah are there to remind us of the lights that shone in the Beit HaMikdash. They remind us of the lights of Torah which, rather than ever allow us to despair, burn a little brighter each day of our lives and have the power to light up any darkness that we may encounter.

Chanukah Sameach!

Rabbi Kenigsberg



Reflections from our Chair Simon Bentley

We now have the luxury of being able to look back at the Yamim Noraim, Sukkot and Shmini Atzeret, happy in the knowledge that all went well for us at Magen Avot. Huge compliments have been made by lots of our members, and from our new guests, who loved the atmosphere in Shul, the quality of davening and our sensational speakers led by Rabbi Kenigsberg. Mazal Tov to our wonderful Chattanim; Dan Artman and Darren Abrahams.

The marquee is now down, and we are getting back closer to what we perhaps took for granted in the past. As you will have seen, I'm happy to say that we now have air purifiers in Shul, which means that the airflow created provides a much safer space during our davening. Indoor Kiddushim have returned 😊

Our programme of events that have happened recently and are planned, range from:

- Our being honoured to have Rabbi Joseph Dweck, the Senior Rabbi of the S&P Sephardi Community of the UK, join us for events on Shabbat Lech Lecha on Shabbat 16 October.
- Our visit to see the Cairo Genizah Collection, the world's largest and most important collection of medieval Jewish manuscripts, at Cambridge Uni Library at the end of October <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/genizah/1>.
- A British Museum tour.
- A whisky tasting evening in prospect.
- An organised tour of The Holocaust Galleries which have been newly developed at the Imperial War Museum <https://www.iwm.org.uk/transformingiwmlondon>.
- Eco Synagogue <https://ecosynagogue.org>
 - In the words of our Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis: "Ensuring environmental sustainability is a crucially important aspiration for this generation. We are mandated by the Almighty to take responsibility for cherishing and safeguarding our planet. Climate Change presents us with one of the most profound threats ever faced by human civilisation and we must all play our part in tackling it with effective action. I am therefore delighted to support EcoSynagogue and hope that many communities will utilise its Environmental Audit. This new initiative is a significant and timely development for the Jewish community."
- Under the leadership of Fiona Taylor, partnered by Tammy Beider, we will be having an EcoShabbat on 5th and 6th November during the COP26 week in Glasgow. Plans are in progress for a meaningful and productive weekend!
- Following on from our 'From Anguish to Action' Jewish Community Conference supporting the Muslim Uyghurs on Sunday 11 July, <https://www.magenavot.com/content/conference-supporting-muslim-uyghurs> a campaign is moving ahead on this with 'Stop Uyghur Genocide' <https://www.stopuyghurgenocide.org.uk> who have put together a 'Ten Ways to Help' programme covering a variety of issues including:
 - Not buying products of slave labour
 - Contacting Volkswagen HQ in Germany to close their factory in the Uyghur region because of slave labour
 - Supporting the Winter Olympics campaign branding BEIJING2022 as #GENOCIDE GAMES.

This autumn Elliot Berke relinquished his role as Y@MA Youth director. Our youth are our pride and future, and his contribution was invaluable. The Chairman and Council of Magen Avot wish to pay public tribute to his devotion and commitment to our Youth over several years and thank him for his service. We welcome his replacement Sophie Harris and wish her well in continuing Elliot's great work.

Finally, thank you to all the members of the Council and our Executive for your wonderful efforts on behalf of us all. We have lots to look forward to. Warm best wishes

Simon Bentley

Chairman, Magen Avot



Profiles of our Chattanim Chatan Torah Dan Artman

"My true passions are Maths and Leining" Dan told HaMagen on his being selected as our Chatan Torah this year.

Dan grew up in Belmont (near Stanmore) and after leining his Bar Mitzvah parasha - with the encouragement of his mother and Rabbi Roselaar- he and a circle of teenage friends began to lein sections of the weekly portion. He graduated to lein the entire sedra and was welcomed into leining at the main service at Belmont.

He then began to lein in other shuls, and he reckons that he has leined in 35-40 different shuls across northwest London and Hertfordshire. He has also delivered shiurim, sermons, acted as Baal Tefillah as well as acting as Ba'al Koreh too.

In 2011, he completed the entire set of sidrot and was given a Celebratory Siyyum and Tikkun by the Rabbi of Belmont at the time, Rabbi Feldman.

Educated in Immanuel College, Dan read Mathematics at UCL and then spent time at Shapells Yeshiva in Jerusalem. After Yeshiva and as a Maths Graduate, he drifted towards Finance and Accountancy, but he was more attracted by the part time tuition in Maths he offered A level students and soon realised that Teaching was the right route for him. He is presently a senior Maths Teacher at Hasmonean School and Head of A level maths and is about to embark on a Post Graduate Diploma in Maths at Birkbeck College - possibly with a view to returning to academia.

On moving to Hendon, Dan tried out most if not all of the local shuls before finding his spiritual home at Magen Avot.

We were joined by his wife Deborah, a primary school teacher, born in Barnet, who has 10 years' experience at Menorah Primary school. She is presently working with special needs children at Norwood.

Deborah and Dan met in Israel - they both had gone to Israel separately with groups of their own friends and are now married for five years.

They enjoy foreign holidays-Israel of course- but their most memorable vacation was to the Cayman Islands. Whether this was to enjoy the tranquil tropical beaches of the Caribbean or to check up on their offshore tax-free investments, it was not discussed!

Dan remains a lifelong "Gooner" and we sadly agreed "those were the days...!"





Profiles of our Chattanim Chatan Bereishit Darren Abrahams

"We came to England because of the vision of my wife, Anouk, and we found Magen Avot thanks to our children".

Sitting with our Chatan Bereshit, Darren Abrahams, he tells HaMagen that in 2018 life in Brussels was good, but something was missing.

Darren had been raised in Ruislip and attended John Lyon School. He went on to read Law at UCL and took a master's degree in Environmental Law there. Darren's affinity for the wider Jewish communal environment was developed during several years at the Hillel House halls of residence, where Friday night meals were welcoming with an international flavour.

He had been called to the Bar of England & Wales and in 2001 found himself in Brussels undertaking an internship with the European Commission in the field of Environmental Law. "I was supposed to return to the UK after 6 months." He met Anouk, a Parisian, a few weeks after she arrived in Brussels to undertake a Master's in European law and policy. They both became Belgian Avocats at the Brussels Bar. They married in Brussels and their three children Fay (12 and recently Bat Mitzvah) Joseph (10), and Elliott (8) were born there.

While Antwerp had remained a tight Jewish "shtetl", Brussels was secular and less welcoming to the modern orthodox life they hoped to nurture. Anouk had become increasingly concerned that a positive Jewish life for their children was not possible in Belgium. Jewish educational options were limited. School and synagogue life were typified by an army presence at the door. It was time to leave. Anouk decided on London, to the delight of Darren's parents, and the family settled in Hendon.

Their children made friends quickly at Nancy Reuben Primary School (NRPS) and some recommended Magen Avot, where they found their spiritual home and a warm welcoming environment. Their boys still attend NRPS and their eldest is now at Hasmonean Girls School.

Anouk secured master's degrees in law in Paris and Brussels but gave up legal work to bring up her family. She is now retraining as an adult and child Psychotherapist, about which she is passionate. She sits on the Council of Management at Magen Avot.

Darren now works remotely from home, which saves him an exhausting weekly commute to Brussels – rising at 4 am for the first Eurostar and returning late on Wednesday night or Thursday. His work is focused on the life cycle of chemicals and wider aspects of environmental law. He provides a global clientele with strategic advice, undertakes advocacy before institutions and agencies and litigates, in the EU and the UK, before courts and tribunals. When not doing that, the other love of his life (after Anouk) is playing jazz trumpet.

The family were recently featured in the Jewish press. When Anouk heard about the first kosher eco hotel in Europe opening its doors in Kent, she booked her family in for one of the initial stays. The Abrahams were among five families sampling the experience of the Sadeh Farm Hotel, being run as a social enterprise, and offering ethically sourced food, nature walks and a Jewish perspective on the environment. It is set in a newly renovated 17th century manor house on Sadeh's fruit and vegetable farm near Orpington. "As a family we are quite interested in ecology which is why I guess I was drawn to it," she explained.

Darren and Anouk are thrilled and delighted that he has been honoured by Magen Avot as one of this year's Chattanim





From our own Correspondents... in Netanya, Israel “The Fulfilment of a Dream” Joy and Melvin Kay

Two of Magen Avot's most devoted and respected members recently made Aliya and Israel's gain has been our loss. Joy and Melvin Kay were at the very heart of our community, and we are so very sorry to lose them. They have penned a few thoughts on their arrival in Israel in August.

“And finally, to Israel (via Leicester, Leeds, Manchester, Kenton and Finchley)- the fulfilment of a dream. It started as the germ of an idea nearly 45 years ago, our Aliyah, but only came to fruition on August 2nd, 2021.

We've always loved Israel. We've had many amazing family holidays there and we were very fortunate to be able to buy a home in Netanya some 16 years ago. All of our kids have lived there at some point, with 2 of them making Aliyah, so it was almost inevitable that one day, we should follow suit.

So, on August 2nd we turned up at a fairly empty Heathrow with our 8 suitcases and 4 pieces of hand luggage. We had a folder of documents the size of a phone directory for both the UK and Israel ends of the journey which we clung on to for dear life the whole journey!

When we got off the plane, we were met at the aircraft doors by a lovely young lady who introduced us to the other Olim who'd been on our flight. There were 3 of them, including a chaya boded who was just 19. We know their ages because our escort asked each of us how old we were! We just said: “over 21”!

The process at Ben Gurion was fairly lengthy as we had to do all the form filling/ document receiving as a group, but we finally made it to the mass COVID testing hall where 50 stations had been set up to test every arrival as they entered the country. Fortunately, as Olim chadashim we had some “proteksia” and we were ushered to the front of the queue (of hundreds!) to have our PCR test done.

And just like that we were outside, being ushered to the taxi rank for our free taxi to Netanya! Ilana, Zvi, the kids and the dog were there to greet us (not being allowed inside the airport anymore), replete with balloons, borekas and music! It was a beautiful and emotional reunion with the Israeli branch of our family.

Our escort finally found us a taxi (there's another story about that, but that's for a different time!) and we were a little concerned to see that it was a regular saloon car with a cheerful driver assuring us that the 3 cases he was planning to put on the roof rack would be “ beseder” and anyway, he wanted to check how safe the rack was as he'd only bought it earlier that day! We were looking out of the back window the whole way to Netanya expecting to see our luggage strewn across the highway!

Since our bidud ended, we've been busy visiting the various government offices all Olim need to attend to complete the immigration process. People had warned us that we should go to these appointments armed with sandwiches, a good book and perhaps even a pillow, but we've been pleasantly surprised at how efficient and punctual all our meetings have been.

COVID has helped to streamline the system and make the bureaucracy we've had to deal with quite tolerable.

It's very hot here, there's no denying it. But everywhere indoors is air conditioned, and here in Netanya there usually a lovely sea breeze which keeps the apartment cool. And whilst we're missing Adam, Nadine, and the kids enormously, we're blessed with having Ilana and co here, plus one of our Canadian grandkids who's here for high school for the next 3 years.

We hope to get to Canada fairly soon (COVID permitting); it's been way too long since we saw the Canadian crew.

Melvin plans to be back in London every month and I will join him sometimes also. I look forward to seeing our lovely kehilla soon.

**Wishing you all well,
Joy and Melvin**





The Rise and Fall of... Shlomo Hamelech Simon Bentley

Shlomo HaMelech was just 12 years old when he took over as King of Israel from David HaMelech. As it says in (3:9) מלכים א, Shlomo asked HaShem:

וְנָתַתָּה לְעַבְדְּךָ לֵב שֹׁמֵעַ לְשֹׁפֵט אֶת־עַמְּךָ לְהַבִּין בֵּין־טוֹב לְרָע כִּי מִי יוּכַל לְשֹׁפֵט אֶת־עַמְּךָ הַקָּבֵד הַזֶּה:

May You grant Your servant an understanding heart, to judge Your people, to distinguish between good and evil; for who can judge this formidable people of Yours?

Solomon wanted the ability to judge G-d's people according to his Torah, so he ignored all his other needs and asked only for wisdom.

The answer from Hashem is well-known. He said that because Shlomo requested wisdom, instead of longevity, riches, or the life of his enemies, he would have all of these. Hashem promised him a long reign, riches, and sovereignty. HaShem said:

הִנֵּה עָשִׂיתִי כְדַבְרֶיךָ הַזֶּה | נָתַתִּי לְךָ לֵב חָכָם וְנִבּוֹן אֲשֶׁר כָּמוֹךָ לֹא־הָיָה לְפָנָיִךְ וְאַחֲרָיִךְ לֹא־יִקְוֶה כָּמוֹךָ:

I have given you a wise and understanding heart, such as there has never been anyone like you before, nor will anyone like you ever arise.

Solomon became the wisest man who ever lived (3:13 מלכים א)

Shlomo composed three books that became part of the כְּתוּבִים, The Writings, in the Tanach, the Holy Scriptures:

- Mishlei/Proverbs



- Shir HaShirim/Song of Songs



- Koheles/Ecclesiastes

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The Rise and Fall of... Shlomo Hamelech Simon Bentley

It is said that these three works were written at different stages of his life. When he was a young man, he composed **שיר השירים** Song of Songs, the lyrical and passionate allegory of the love between G-d and Israel.

When Solomon was older, he wrote the book of **משלי** Proverbs, to convey his wisdom to all the world. And when he was advanced in years, he poured his disillusionment with the material world into **קהלת** Ecclesiastes. All agree that these works represent not ordinary wisdom, but wisdom that was Divinely and uniquely given. Solomon "congregated" large numbers of people to hear his teachings (Koheles Rabbah 1:2). Jew and gentile alike (Melachim 1 8:1,14). He was not content to be wise, he wanted others to realise their own potential and he wanted to elevate all nations, not merely his own.

The Megilah **שיר השירים** Song of Songs is an "allegory" for the relationship between G-d and Israel in terms of the love of a man for a woman. The "mashal," or the "metaphor," focuses on the man and the woman; the "nimshal," or referent, is the relationship between HaShem and the People of Israel.

According to the Rambam, the twelfth century Torah giant of the Jewish People, the highest form of relationship between a human being and HaShem is the relationship based on love, "Ahavat HaShem," even higher than the relationship built on fear or reverence, "Yirat HaShem.", "Just as when a man loves a particular woman, he cannot remove her from his thoughts, with just such intensity should a person love HaShem.

And since Judaism regards the relationship between a man and a woman as potentially holy, Rabbi Akiva argued (Mishna Yadayim 3:5) for the inclusion of **שיר השירים** in the Tanach when its inclusion was questioned because of the apparent earthiness of the "mashal." He said that if all the other Books of the Tanach are considered **קדושים** Holy, then Shir HaShirim must be considered "Kodesh Kodashim," the Holiest of the Holy, because both its "mashal" and its "nimshal" are holy.

His Proverbs and epigrams provided practical guidance to people who had never opened a book of Torah, but for those capable of understanding the depth of his intentions, they simultaneously illuminated the most profound areas of the Torah.

A prime example of this is the last, and most familiar, chapter of Proverbs, which includes the 22 verses of **אשת חיל** Eishet Chayil, An Accomplished Woman. The literal translation of its 22 verses, stand on their own and have inspired so many.

אשת חיל

A woman of valor, who can find? Her worth is far above jewels
The heart of her husband trusts in her And nothing shall he lack
She renders him good and not evil All the days of her life
She opens her hand to the needy And extends her hand to the poor
She is robed in strength and dignity
And cheerfully faces whatever may come She opens her mouth with wisdom
Her tongue is guided by kindness She tends to the affairs of her household
And eats not the bread of idleness Her children come forward and bless her
Her husband too and he praises her Many women have done superbly
But you surpass them all Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain
But a God-fearing woman is much to be praised Place before her the fruit of her hands
Wherever people gather, her deeds speak her praise.



The Rise and Fall of... Shlomo Hamelech Simon Bentley

These praises of the **אִשֶׁת חַיִּיל** Eishet Chayil are, of course, true taken literally, but also includes far deeper meanings. Ramban, for example, interprets the Accomplished Woman as a metaphor for the Torah. Her "husband" is the outstanding scholar, her "children" are the diligent and dedicated students, the "poor people" she helps are the masses to benefit from her teachings.

Similarly, the rest of the book of Proverbs can be understood on more than the obvious level.

Looking at the Ramban's "Drashah on Koheles", the contrast between the transitory nature of This World and the eternity of the World to Come is at the root of Ramban's response to a very perplexing problem. The book of Koheles is an almost unrelieved exercise in gloom. In it, Shlomo refers to life as a "futility of futilities". He asks:

- How can Shlomo HaMelech say that Hashem created the universe in vain?
- He wonders how Shlomo can be so despairing.
- Why does Shlomo see futility where HaShem sees accomplishment?

Ramban explains that the physical world is like raw material in the hands of people. Hashem presents us with the universe that is "very good" and it is up to us to use it wisely. Man, not G-d, is at fault when his actions cause punishment and destruction. Shlomo sees futility not in Hashem's handiwork but in Man's.

Ramban, in another interpretation, suggests that Shlomo's theme **הַבַּל הַבְּלִים** 'futility of futilities', can be translated differently. The word **הַבַּל** can mean an instruction from Shlomo to us: "Consider futilities to be futile", asking us to recognise that anything that conflicts with the Torah is of no value.

Ramban concludes that these are the themes of Solomon's three books:

- Song of Songs reflects Israel's loving relationship with HaShem.
- Proverbs charts the course that will lead people to the ultimate goal of life. and,
- Koheles warns people away from the road to futility and oblivion.

The highpoint of Solomon's life was when he completed the **בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ** the Holy Temple. He earned universal respect throughout the known world. His extravagance was a celebration of Torah study, good deeds, and service of HaShem.

He defeated his evil inclination.

It seems incomprehensible that someone as great, as G-d-fearing, as wise, and as dedicated as Solomon could slide from the summit of holiness, but that is what happened. The Vilna Gaon says that Israel is likened to the moon, which waxes to fullness and then wanes. This symbolises the history of the Jewish people. The lunar month is 29 full days, its 15th day is the time when it reaches the peak of its powers and then begins to recede.

Shlomo, the fifteenth generation from Avraham Avinu, reached the highest pinnacle in Jewish history, the first 10 chapters of **מְלִכִּים א** list his unprecedented greatness, wealth, power, and international stature. But on the 15th day of the month the moon begins to wane, and so did Solomon.

פְּרָק ב of **מְלִכִּים א** lists the seeds of Solomon's decline, which eventually led to the split of the Jewish people into two kingdoms after his death. Shlomo's sin was his failure to live up to the example of his father **דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ**. He himself remained totally loyal to G-d, but he did not prevent some of his wives from erecting idols and worshipping their gods, and for that he is condemned as if he himself had joined in their worship (Shabbat 56b).

For someone as great as Solomon, it was tantamount to the greatest of all sins. Shlomo's lapses remain a constructive lesson for us. They demonstrate our duty never to relax in striving to improve, and the care we must take against regressing.

Ultimately, even the **אֲנָשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָה**, the Men of the Great Assembly acknowledged that his greatness remained in place, because they were the ones who brought Solomon's works into the Tanach, where his books stand alongside the **קְדָשִׁים** of all time (see Shabbat 30b).



Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah Twinning Project Esther Bentley

Make your Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah more meaningful by twinning it with a young victim of the Holocaust who tragically was unable to celebrate this milestone in Jewish life.

As time passes, remembering those who were murdered in the Holocaust becomes increasingly difficult. How can we remember them not only as victims, but as individuals? We believe that to do so, it is important to understand who they were: people with families, communities, friends, likes and dislikes, goals, and aspirations.

We offer a Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah Twinning programme to enrich your child's coming of age experience by memorialising a victim of the Holocaust who did not have the privilege of such a celebration.

Researchers at **Yad Vashem** will endeavour to find a victim who has a similar name, birthday, or family connection as the young person who will be celebrating a Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah.

Family members are encouraged to use the Page of Testimony to learn as much as they can about the history of the child who they are commemorating, their family and the community he/she came from as well as learning a little about the victim's experience during the Holocaust. To facilitate this, we send a study guide together with the Page of Testimony and certificate.

Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah Tours at Yad Vashem

Yad Vashem also offers a Twinning programme. A private guided tour which is tailored to fit your specific requirements and family which take the ages of the children, family history and the interest of the Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah child into account.

This tour concludes with a visit to the Hall of Names where the Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah child is introduced to The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names and is given a certificate acknowledging participation in the program with the details of the Holocaust victim who they have chosen to commemorate.

Contact details:-

<https://www.yadvashem.org.uk/twinning/bar-mitzvah-and-bat-mitzvah-twinning-project/>

Yad Vashem UK Foundation
46 Albert Road
London NW4 2SG

Telephone: 020 8187 9881

YAD VASHEM UK FOUNDATION



TWINNING PROJECT

Make your Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah more meaningful by twinning it with a young victim of the Holocaust who tragically was unable to celebrate this milestone in Jewish life.



The photo above is of twins, Izabel and Solly Marton who came from Romania, both died at Auschwitz. They must never be forgotten.

- Research details of the family of your 'twin'
- Research the community they came from
- Learn about their experiences during the Holocaust
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**Remembering the Past
Honouring the Memory
Shaping the Future**



The World

A Poem by the late Malcolm Brookes z"l - 1938-2017

The world is such an unsafe place.
Religion against religion, race against race.
Stabbings, shootings, killings without reason.
Jealousy, hatred, corruption, treachery, treason.
Evil forces inciting violence, gaining power and ground.
Governments planning action to turn this menace around.
Terrorist groups numerous, widespread, and hard to defeat.
Worldwide powers this testing challenge must meet.
Throughout the ages, conflict has been an inherent part
Of man's nature: Cain murdered Abel, cruelty was there from the start.

And now men have harmed the environment in such a way,
The damage is increasing, is probably irreversible, scientists say.
Contamination of air, sea, rivers, and land
Caused by a disregard for consequences that we did not always understand.
Radioactivity, pollution, greenhouse gases are rendering regions lethal for decades ahead.
Erosion of the ozone, droughts, forest fires, hurricanes, tsunamis, bring havoc, leaving thousands dead.

In Genesis we learn that God created Earth and it was good in His sight.
Then He created man and gave him free will to choose between wrong and right.
God gave man dominion over the creatures of air, waters, and land.
He entrusted them into man's care as He had planned.
Men have not been good caretakers of this Earth or its indigenous life.
Although there are countries at peace globally, there are too many incitements to violence and strife.

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and His laws, a firm foundation.
Faith, worship, rules, ethics, and justice made the Israelites a nation.
Moses passed on those laws to the elders of Israel
Explaining their meanings and what they would entail.
And although the Jewish people have suffered persecution, attempted annihilation, and war,
We have survived because of our faith in God and the guidance of Torah Law.

In Isaiah we read that the Jewish people "should be a light unto the nations", to set an example of righteous living for other peoples to follow.
And yet Israel and the Jews are constantly watched and accused of being the source of the world's disruptions, unrest, and sorrow.
But with the blessing of the Hashem, once again Jews are in the Promised Land.
And will stay there until Mashiach comes, protected by God's loving hand.

Kindly provided by Eileen Brookes

Editor's Note:

Malcolm Brookes was registered blind and composed this and many other poems on a very basic Doro mobile phone. He could not see the keys on the screen but learned that three taps on "2" produced a "C", two taps on "8" produced a "U" etc. By this method he wrote many poems such as "The World".



A Life in the Day of... The Maurers Esther and Julian Maurer

Esther and Julian Maurer constitute the glue which holds Magen Avot together. Both are self-effacing but nonetheless provide the dedicated and behind the scenes contribution without which the shul could not run so smoothly and successfully. We felt their contribution should be individually recognised so we decided to highlight the amazing work they, as a couple -and their family- bring to the MA experience.

Esther Maurer

The casual visitor to any MA service will invariably be greeted by Esther who dishes up the Cholent and Kugel at our welcoming Kiddush. However, her pivotal role in the foundation of the Synagogue must be acknowledged.

Born in Hendon to parents and grandparents steeped in communal service it is no wonder that Esther has always thrown herself into the creation and development of our community. The Maurers were one of the 10 founding families who turned the dream of creating a vibrant young modern Orthodox community in Hendon into a reality.

Esther was instrumental in determining from the outset of the founding of Magen Avot, the ethos which guides our community including promotion of the roles of women in as many facets of our religious and communal life as halacha permits. Her passion is matched by her work as Head of Psychology and Hasmonian Boys and Girls Schools. She has taught there for 18 years (apart from her time in Israel). She set up the department which has grown as increasing number of pupils engage with a subject which is both relevant to their lives and informative of how their roles and personalities develop. In short it is a subject to which students relate in an increasingly complex world. Esther is so proud that this year three female pupils secured places for Psychology degrees at Cambridge University.

She derives the greatest satisfaction in seeing how her own children have developed and become integrated with the community and take a meaningful role. Rafi and Natan already take an active part in our services, Daughter Libby is in Seminary in Israel and youngest daughter Maayan was recently Bat Mitzvah. In the past, the participation of Bat Mitzvah girls was limited or even frowned upon so one can understand how many girls were intimidated by the prospect of the big day, such was Maayan's confidence that she took the day in her stride and asked when she could do it again!

Esther was just 19 when she met Julian at a local pizza restaurant. He happened to be down in London for the day from his native Manchester when Esther noticed a friend of hers, popped in and began to chat to Julian. They were married within a year in Kenton and set up home in Manchester initially.

Julian Maurer

Julian was born in north Manchester, the son of a well-known local baker. He attended Yeshiva in Israel before returning to take up a place for Computer Science at University of Salford. Having met Esther and getting engaged in 1994 and married in 1995; it was only in 1998 they came to London (with 9-month-old Raffi).

He took up a job placement which eventually led to his joining Glaxo Wellcome (later GlaxoSmithKline) in their IT department where he stayed - with increasing seniority - for 10 years until in 2009 they decided to make Aliya. By then they had three children with one on the way.

They set up home in Ramat Bet Shemesh but increasingly missed the family atmosphere which only parents, grandparents and siblings can provide, and their children were growing up without those important family bonds. They concluded that it was best to return to London which they did in 2012 Olympics year and have never regretted the move.

In 2015 they played a key role in setting up Magen Avot and took leading roles on the shul council. Esther is particularly proud of the success of Magen Maxis- a youth service which is educational in outlook designed to prepare children for taking an active role in services as they grow up. They are encouraged to take Shabbat services and lein also – "it's a learning community not just a club" says Esther.

Esther and Julian derive great satisfaction from the way the community has developed since 2015. It has attracted a diverse age profile with young and not so young mingling happily. Their eyes remain fixed firmly on our youth and the need to nurture and encourage them.

Julian's daily efforts are unstinting. He produces the weekly Newsletter, helps prepare the synagogue in ever changing venues and is instrumental (and ably assisted by Raffi) in designing and preparing the layout for this magazine. He gives many hours each week of his time and commitment and is an unsung hero. At the same time he has through his company (Maurer Consultants) held down contracts at GSK for nearly ten years and has just started a new contract in November 2021 at AstraZeneca.

They are at their happiest enjoying the peace and quiet of their own company and in their (limited) spare time Esther enjoys reading, Julian relaxes to "Marvel" films - he has seen everyone - and both are serious Star Trek aficionados. As this community owes both Esther and Julian a huge debt of gratitude one can only say (to quote Mr Spock): "Live Long and Prosper".



An action plan Some after thoughts Barak Seener

In March 2020, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) published a report "Uyghurs for sale: 'Re-education', forced labour and surveillance beyond Xinjiang", which identified 83 foreign and Chinese companies as allegedly directly or indirectly benefiting from the use of Uyghur workers outside Xinjiang through potentially abusive labour transfer programs.

ASPI estimated at least 80,000 Uyghurs were transferred out of Xinjiang and assigned to factories in a range of supply chains including electronics, textiles, and automotives under a central government policy known as 'Xinjiang Aid'. The report identified 27 factories in nine Chinese provinces that are using Uyghur labour transferred from Xinjiang since 2017.

ASPI reached out to the 83 brands to confirm their relevant supplier details. These included Abercrombie & Fitch, adidas, Amazon, BMW, Gap, H&M, Inditex, Marks & Spencer, Nike, North Face, Puma, PVH, Samsung and UNIQLO. Apple, Esprit, and Filia did not respond.

Against this background, in April 2021 British MPs voted to declare that China is committing genocide against the Uyghur people in Xinjiang province. In response, Beijing's embassy in the UK accused the MPs of having "cooked up" the motion "with a view to discrediting and attacking China". Nigel Adams, the Asia minister, admitted there was credible evidence of widespread use of forced labour, internment camps, and the targeting of ethnic groups. The actions amounted to clear and systematic abuse of human rights, but he said the UK's longstanding position was that determining genocide is for "competent national and international courts".



Magen Avot's Response

It was during the height of lockdown when each of us were leading isolated and atomised existences that Magen Avot decided to promote Chessed and raise awareness of the genocide facing the Uyghur population in Xinjiang. Naturally the plight of the Uyghur Muslims resonated in the collective consciousness of our local community as well as the broader Jewish community viewing history from the prism of the Holocaust.

At a theological level, we are sensitive to the common destiny Jews share with all mankind as we express in the Yamim Noraim tefillah, 'Chamol al Ma'asecha - Have mercy on all your creations'. Yet, it was not enough to privately express empathy and speak at the pulpit. Magen Avot went a stage further and decided upon organizing the international 'From Anguish to Action' conference on the genocide confronting the Uyghurs that was to include practical take-aways for the public that includes political action, how to place corporations to decouple their supply chains from benefiting from slave labour, and how individuals could be more cognizant of ethical consuming.



An action plan Some after thoughts Barak Seener

Being a religious body does not relegate it to being a provincial organisation. Rather, it is precisely the fact that Magen Avot is a local synagogue that it is endowed with the credibility to be a trailblazer and spearhead the international 'From Anguish to Action' conference and global initiative.

The unprecedented nature of a local Synagogue to arrange the conference led to the participation of national and international states-people that included among others: Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP, Ambassador Kelley Eckels Currie, former UN Ambassador at large for Women's issues and former U.S. Representative at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, Bennett Freeman – Former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights & Labour, Rahima Mahmut – World Uyghur Congress, Rodney Dixon QC – Human Rights Expert who works at the International Criminal Court in the Hague, and Rahima Mahmut – World Uyghur Congress.

Moreover, a Synagogue being a key component within civil-societal organisations could command a broad-based coalition of partnering organisations as Magen Avot did attracting the Jewish News, Office of the Chief Rabbi, United Synagogue, Board of Deputies, Union of Jewish Students, Yad Vashem UK, Uyghur Human Rights Project, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Makkah Mosque, World Jewish Relief, Hampstead Synagogue and Muswell Hill Synagogue.

In turn, 'From Anguish to Action' addressed the ethical component of preserving human dignity and preventing suffering, it included an interfaith dimension that included among others: our own Rav Kenigsberg, the Chief Rabbi, Imam Qari Asim MBE – Senior Imam at Makkah Mosque in Leeds and Benedict Rogers – Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

This served to heighten the Kiddush H-Shem by demonstrating the universality of Torah values and as a result, the Jewish concern for the international community of nations. It was striking how the words of our religious representatives resonated with policymakers at the conference, who in turn were inspired to refer to them in their speeches.



Yet hosting a conference does not afford us to the luxury of lying on our laurels while women are forcibly sterilised, people massacred and at best displaced with families torn apart as members are subjected to slave labour and forcibly re-educated in camps. Rather than 'From Anguish to Action' being an end in and of itself, the strategies offered by speakers must become a springboard to ongoing campaigns that are either led by Magen Avot or individually advanced by members of the public.



In an era of globalisation where we have become increasingly interconnected, being a 'light unto the nations' does not need to be a pronouncement made within our provincial echo chambers.

'From Anguish to Action' has proven that as we have become more cosmopolitan, Jewish communities do not need to be inwards looking, but can feel emboldened to venture forth confidently and project our value system to the international community.

In the digital age, performing a Kiddush H-Shem at a global scale can be achieved virtually at the touch of a button. Our challenge is to smartly conduct public relations to amplify our voices and use the array of tools offered by strategic communications to project our values. As such we can transform the notion of being a 'light unto the nations' from being an abstract cliché into a practical reality.



Eco-committee update

Fiona Taylor

"Judaism understands us not as masters, but as trustees, of God's creation. We have a primary responsibility to care for the earth and leave it to our children in a state of wholeness and health." – EcoSynagogue website

In the last edition of HaMagen, I wrote that we had been invited to join EcoSynagogue, which is a cross communal project, supported by our senior communal leaders in partnership with the Board of Deputies. The aim is to promote environmental sustainability and engagement across the Jewish Community.

I'm writing this on the first day of the COP26 – the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties which is hosted by the UK this year in Glasgow. Since the first Climate change summit in 1995, climate change has gone from being a fringe issue to a global priority. More than 190 world leaders are expected to arrive in Scotland, together with tens of thousands of negotiators, government representatives, businesses, and citizens for twelve days of talks. Most experts believe COP26 has a particular urgency.

To understand why, it's necessary to look back to another COP. COP21 took place in Paris in 2015. For the first time ever, every country agreed to work together to limit global warming to below 2 degrees (since the industrial revolution) and aim for 1.5 degrees, to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate and to make money available to deliver on these aims. The Paris Agreement was born. The commitment to aim for 1.5 degrees is important because every fraction of a degree of warming results in the tragedy of many more lives lost and livelihoods damaged.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries committed to bring forward national plans setting out how much they would reduce their emissions - known as Nationally Determined Contributions, or 'NDCs'. They agreed that every five years they would come back with an updated plan that would reflect their highest possible ambition at that time. However, the problem is that the targets announced in Paris would result in warming well above 3 degrees by 2100 compared to pre-industrial levels.

The world needs to halve emissions over the next decade and reach net zero carbon emissions by the middle of the century if we are to limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees. This is what will be negotiated at COP26.

FAQs about climate change will be published in future newsletters.

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Generating your own renewable energy for your heating, hot water and electrical supply saves carbon and can also feed back into the grid. Solar panels, generating clean electricity, have reduced in price steadily over the last few years, as their manufacturers steadily refined the production process.



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Walking to the local shops or taking public transport could reduce your carbon footprint significantly. If you really want to make an impact look in to getting an electric car and reduce emissions. Electric cars twinned with Solar Panels is a great investment.



STAND UP AND GET INVOLVED

VOICE OUT YOUR CONCERNS

We are the first generation to know we're destroying the world, and we could be the last that can do anything about it. Speaking up is one of the most powerful things you can do especially if it's to the right people. Talk to your MP. Tell them to commit to action to protect our natural world.



Unless drastic action is taken to protect our planet there will be severe consequences for human kind.

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Shabbat in Acapulco

Shoina and David Kass

Some years ago, we were finishing a cruise that was due to arrive in Los Angeles on Shabbat morning.

Not being able to disembark on Shabbat, we searched for an alternative, and discovered that one of the ports of call prior to Los Angeles was Acapulco in Mexico.



On further enquiry, we discovered that there was no Jewish community in Acapulco, but that during the winter months from Hanukkah to the end of January, there were usually facilities for observant Jews available at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Doing a detailed search, we discovered that there was a Kosher restaurant, Shul, Shabbat Lift and even a Mikvah on the premises.

We naturally booked and arrived in Acapulco before Shabbat, to spend one of the most delightful weekends that we have ever had. We were amazed to discover that this was a 4/5 Star hotel, of the leading brand chain of Hyatt Regency, with a wonderful huge double shaped swimming pool situated in the midst of lush gardens, with more than enough sunbathing space for all the occupants.

In the middle of one of the swimming pools, joined by two causeways, was a snack bar/restaurant covered with an awning similar to an open sided marquee so that whilst eating, one could view the swimming pool, or indeed the sea, enjoying the sea breezes whilst still being sheltered from a fierce sun. This was the Kosher restaurant, which was wholly supplied from the Jewish community in Mexico City under Glat Kosher supervision, even insisting on Kosher milk under the auspices of a permanent Israeli shomer.

The menu during the week was a standard breakfast with an Israeli style menu, but on Friday evening and Shabbat, one could pre-pay for a full, hot buffet at both meals, including Challot and wine.

On Shabbat, the hotel management changed one elevator in this 24-storey building to a regular Shabbat lift, stopping at every floor on the way up and the way down.

The "piece de resistance" was the Shul, which would have done any community proud. Considering that this was a temporary community, the owners had provided, in the basement, a large area with beautiful seating, stained glass windows set out in a semi-circular formation with a Mechitzah, a plush carpet, central bima and an ornate double Aron Kodesh as the focal centrepiece of the beit kenestet.

There was a twice-daily minyan of approximately 30 people in the Sephardi style and we were absolutely amazed when we came to Friday night to find more than 100 people, men and women, in attendance for the service.

We were a small group of Ashkenazim and quickly ascertained after the service on Friday night that we had sufficient talent amongst us to run our own Ashkenazy service. We asked permission from the leaders of the community, who kindly allocated to us a separate room in the Shul complex, and on Shabbat morning, we made our own minyan using one of their Sephardi Sifrei Torah for the weekly Sedra.

Our service was somewhat shorter than theirs and we quickly repaired to the restaurant for the tail end of breakfast.

We all joined together again in the late afternoon, when one of their number gave a public shiur and then we all dovened mincha together followed by a joint communal Seuda Shlishit at which many interecine jokes were told with the utmost good humour, and a real spirit of comradeship and achdut was apparent between the fifty people who participated on long tables, in yet another hall that had been made available by the management.

We subsequently dovened maariv together and made a communal havdalah in a joint Ashkenazy and Sephardi ceremony and shared stories with each other of our origins and upbringings in different parts of the world, which were diverse in the extreme.

We did a little more investigation to find out how such a wonderful facility came to exist in such a faraway place, a major Playboy holiday area, with no Jewish community.

We discovered to our amazement that the Hyatt Regency was part of a franchise and that the owners of the hotel in Acapulco were two Sephardi brothers who were not even Mexican, who had bought the hotel as an investment.

As part of their investment programme, they ran holidays at Pesach time and in high season from Hanukah onwards and had gone to the trouble and expense of putting in place this wonderful facility for Jewish holidaymakers, which was available from time to time during the year.

Although we never had the opportunity to meet with them, we extend to them our thanks and blessing for having enhanced and given so much pleasure to so many people in a wonderful communal Shabbat in Acapulco.

1

Are the Taliban descendants of the Lost 10 Tribes of Israel?



Amid the soul searching and reflection on the 20th Anniversary of the 9/11 attacks some of our readers may have missed an item published on 9th September in the Jerusalem Post. Author Michael Freund penned an article under the stark and shocking title above which merits reconsideration. Extracts appear below with due credit being given to him and the Jerusalem Post.

"Pashtun practices include circumcision on the eighth day and refraining from mixing meat and milk — Is there a connection to ancient Hebrews? By Michael Freund, 9 September 2021 (The writer is founder and chairman of Shavei Israel (www.shavei.org), which reaches out and assists the Lost Tribes of Israel and other hidden Jewish communities).

With the fall of Kabul into the hands of the Taliban just shy of the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, the world's attention has once again turned to Afghanistan which has long been home to one of the more intriguing unsolved mysteries of Jewish history: the fate of some of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

Periodically over the past two decades, newspaper headlines have raised the tantalizing question of whether the Pashtun tribes (who make up most of the Taliban) are in fact our long-lost relatives, descendants of the Israelites who were cast into exile by the Assyrian empire more than 2,700 years ago. The evidence suggests that it cannot and should not be dismissed out of hand.

The Pashtuns, or Pathans, are said to number in the tens of millions, with the bulk living in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. They consist of several hundred clans and tribes that have fiercely preserved their heritage amid waves of foreign conquest and occupation. Prior to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region, many of the Pashtuns declared themselves to be what they referred to as Bani Israel (Sons of Israel), an oral tradition that their ancestors passed down through the generations.

This was noted by various Islamic travellers and historians, stretching as far back as the 13th century, when there was hardly any advantage to be gained by asserting an ancient Israelite identity in Central Asia. Over the next 400 years, other Islamic scholars and writers noted the persistence of the tradition.

In the 19th century, a number of Westerners who visited the region became convinced that the Pashtuns were in fact descendants of the Israelites.

In his 1858 work, *History of the Afghans*, Joseph-Pierre Ferrier wrote that the chief of one of the main Pashtun tribes, the Yusefzai (Sons of Joseph), presented the Persian shah Nader Shah Afshar "with a Bible written in Hebrew and several other articles that had been used in their ancient worship and which they had preserved."

Similarly, Major Henry W. Bellew, who served in the British colonial Indian army, in his 1861 work *The Lost Tribes*, wrote regarding the Pashtuns that, "The nomenclature of their tribes and districts, both in ancient geography, and at the present day, confirms this universal natural tradition. Lastly, we have the route of the Israelites from Media to Afghanistan and India marked by a series of intermediate stations bearing the names of several of the tribes and clearly indicating the stages of their long and arduous journey."



Old Rabbi Praying

Old Afghan wearing a prayer shawl (saadar)

2

Are the Taliban descendants of the Lost 10 Tribes of Israel?

More recently, the late president of Israel, Yitzchak Ben-Zvi, in his 1957 study about far-flung Jewish communities *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, devoted an entire chapter to "Afghan tribes and the traditions of their origin." Ben-Zvi wrote, "The Afghan tribes, among whom the Jews have lived for generations, are Moslems who retain to this day their amazing tradition about their descent from the Ten Tribes." While he cautiously notes that, "the evidence in our possession is, of course, insufficient for practical conclusions to be drawn therefrom," he nonetheless correctly asserts, "The fact that this tradition, and no other, has persisted among these tribes is itself a weighty consideration."

Modern day scholars have added greatly to our stock of knowledge on this subject. Dr. Navraz Aafreedi, an Indian academic in Kolkata who hails from a Pashtun background, has written extensively and persuasively about the evidence of an Israelite connection, and Dr. Eyal Be'eri, the leading Israeli scholar on the Pashtuns, has recorded a series of their customs and traditions that are identical to those of Jews.

There are, of course, other theories regarding the origins of the Pashtuns as well as scholars who discount or reject the contention of an ancient Israelite connection. But given the Pashtuns' ancient civilization and far-flung diaspora, and their key political and demographic role in various parts of the Asian subcontinent, it would seem prudent for the Jewish people to seek out avenues of dialogue with them if and wherever feasible.

The mere possibility of a shared historical identity could serve as a basis for discussion between Jews and Pashtuns, one that could lead to a dampening of hostility and suspicion and perhaps lay the groundwork for a stronger relationship in the future.

In light of their fanatical theology, the Taliban are of course not an address for such efforts. But there are plenty of other Pashtuns worldwide with whom we should seek to build bridges, whether or not one believes them to be our long-lost cousins."

The late Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail was one of the persistent voices claiming that the Afghani warrior tribes of Afridi, Lohani, Jaj, and Rabani, are the heirs of the tribes of Ephraim, Levy, Gad, and Reuven, four of the Ten Tribes of Israel the Assyrian empire exiled in 722 BCE.

According to Rabbi David Pisanti, director of a research institute that was sponsored by the late Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, 20 million or so Pashtuns (out of around 63 million – the last official census in Afghanistan was conducted in 1979) identify themselves as "Bnei Israel," and are known as such by their Muslim neighbours.

Rabbi Avichail believed some of the Taliban came from the "Israelite" Pashtu and as such bore the spirit of the warlike tribe of Reuven.

The common tradition of Pashtuns and Jews are many and specific and may be considered more than mere coincidence:-

- The days of the week are called by their numbers, like in Hebrew
- Except for Friday which is called by its Arabic name Jummah جمعه (it is a holy day for Muslims)
- Saturday is called Shambah in Pashtu and in the Torah (and in Hebrew) it is called Shabbat
- Lighting candles before Saturday (Shabbat)
- Not eating sea-creatures such as lobsters, shrimps, and crabs
- Not eating animals like camels and horses
- Not eating meat with cheese
- Circumcision on the 8th day
- Wearing a small hat, (i.e., a form of Kipa)
- Wearing a square prayer shawl



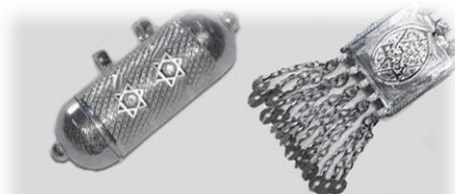
3

Are the Taliban descendants of the Lost 10 Tribes of Israel?

- Levirate marriage where a man marries his dead brother's widow if the brother didn't have children. In the Torah it is called Yibum.
- Places of refuge for unintentional criminals
- Pashtun constitution resembles the biblical constitution of a soul for a soul, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth
- Chupah: in Weddings there's a piece of fabric hanging above the marrying couple. In Pashto it is called Dolaye
- In some Pashtun weddings, the bride breaks a glass (in particular, it is done by Pashtuns in Kandahar). In Jewish weddings the groom breaks it. This is actually a relatively new tradition that Jews do for the remembrance of the destroyed Temple, so it is likely that Pashtuns heard of this tradition after they have already been exiled and added it to their other Israelite traditions.
- Some Pashtun women grow side brows (called Kamsai in Pashto) as do Hasidic men and Yemenite Jews. Jews and Pashtuns are probably the only ones in the world who do this:



- Using names like Yaakov (Christians use Jacob but only Jews and Pashtuns use it as it should be pronounced), Israel, Barak, Asaf, Benyamin, Kenan, Tamir, Timor, Shir, Sahar, etc.
- Other evidence includes names of places in Afghanistan and Kashmir that resemble ancient towns in Israel that are mentioned in the bible.
- There are also the names of tribes that resemble the children of Yaakov (the names of the Israeli tribes), like Lewani (Lewi), Daffali (Naftali), Yusufzai (children of Yussuf-Yossef), Rubanni (Reuven), Afridi (Efrayim) etc.
- Some Pashtuns also have Jewish artifacts.



Afghan (Pashtun/Pukhtun) Taaweez. These are lockets worn around the neck. Notice the Star of David.

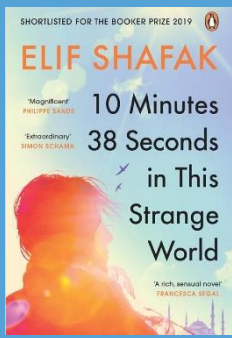
The Assyrians conquered the kingdom of Israel some 2,730 years ago, scattering 10 of the 12 tribes into exile, supposedly beyond the mythical Sambatyon river. The two remaining tribes, Benjamin, and Judah, became the modern-day Jewish people, according to Jewish history, and the search for the lost tribes has continued ever since. Some have claimed to have found traces of them in modern day China, Burma, Nigeria, Central Asia, Ethiopia and even in the West.

But it is believed that the tribes were dispersed in an area around modern-day northern Iraq and Afghanistan, which makes the Pashtun connection the strongest.

The Pashtuns have a proud oral history that talks of descending from the Israelites. Their tribal groupings have similar names, including "Yusufzai", which means sons of Joseph; and "Afridi", thought by some to come from Ephraim.

Navras Aafreedi, an academic at Lucknow University, himself a Pashtun from the Afridi tribe can trace his family roots back to Pathans from what is today north-west Pakistan, but he believes they stretch back further to the tribe of Ephraim. "Pathans, or Pashtuns, are the only people in the world whose probable descent from the lost tribes of Israel finds mention in a number of texts from the 10th century to the present day, written by Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars alike, both religious as well as secularists," Aafreedi said.

And Shalva Weil, an anthropologist and senior researcher at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem comments:- "Of all the groups, there is more convincing evidence about the Pathans than anybody else, but the Pathans are the ones who would reject Israel most ferociously. That is the sweet irony,"



Book Review “10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World” by Elif Shafak

Stumbling upon a new and unknown author can prove an unexpected delight. In the case of Elif Shafak it is a revelation. One day I accidentally found a TED broadcast online and Ms Shafak was speaking.

Her intelligence and honesty shone out. She is passionate articulate and deeply personal in her speeches, and it seems in her novels. Much of her inspiration is kindled by her longing for her abandoned homeland Turkey and in particular Istanbul which she deserted when the political forces of inter-communal hatred and anti –democratic nationalist fervour swept the country. Her adopted home is London, but her outlook is international and intra-national. Her love of the Middle East extends to Eastern Mediterranean also.

“10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World” has an extraordinary beginning. The reader is immediately introduced to a murdered Istanbul prostitute, dumped lifeless in a garbage truck as her life ebbs away. The title of the book refers to perception that for 10 minutes or so after “death” one’s mind does not switch off but slowly drains away. This story retells the life of the heroine “Tequila Leila” (for she is nothing less than heroic) during those 10 minutes as she vividly and evocatively recalls episodes in her turbulent life. Each Chapter title counts down the remaining minutes she has left.

With simple language Shafak creates deeply personal scenes where one can smell the perfume of blossom and taste the meals created with love by the women in her life. There are several.



We witness with her the enjoyment of the spiced goat sacrificed by her father to celebrate the birth of a long-desired son. Later in her life, the aromatic cardamom coffee she shares with a handsome student in the brothel where she works. Every aspect of her bittersweet life is painstakingly revealed. The reader is swept up in a hypnotic tale.

She is not afraid to portray the unpleasant even shocking side of life, but she does so with integrity honesty and profound compassion. Every character is so well drawn you feel as though they are in the room with you.

Shortlisted for the 2019 Booker Prize “10 minutes..” has received international approbation and is a perfect starting point to being exploring Shafak's work.

Catch the TED broadcasts too!



Chessed Committee Report

The Chessed Committee, in conjunction with input provided from Rabbi Kenigsberg and Cecil Taitz the financial representative, act discreetly to ensure that members who are facing hardship whether through illness, financial difficulties or bereavement are assisted in a way that the shul feels is appropriate.

In addition, as the major festivals such as Pesach and Rosh Hashanah draw near, the United Synagogue head office works with the Chessed teams from all United Synagogues to provide guidance on what can be offered, and Magen Avot fully participates in their excellent Chessed initiatives.

While the Chessed team tries to be truly inclusive, they are not always aware of the circumstances faced by of all the Magen Avot members. If you feel that you have been missed by the Chessed team, we would first like to apologise and would encourage any member to contact the Rabbi or financial representative in the strictest of confidence, so they can be made aware of personal circumstances and provide emotional and practical support and advice.




In early September Magen Avot relaunched its Hospitality Initiative so that as a community, we could offer meals in our homes to anyone who would like an invitation and enjoy the company of others over the Chagim and Shabbatot.


If you would like to be a host or a guest, please text or WhatsApp **Toni Zekaria** (pictured below) on **07956 844 193** to let her know.





Chanukah Recipe Chocolate Bomb Dreidels Penina Ehreich

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simply.pea Chocolate Bomb Dreidels · A bit of fun and something different to make for Channuka!

Super easy and you can make with the kids!


Melt in the microwave for 1.5 minutes covered using @covermatecovers
2 oz Chocolate Chips

Pour 1 teaspoon of chocolate into each of the @thekoshercook @kosherkingdomuk Silicone Dreidel Molds.
Use a new clean paintbrush to coat the sides as chocolate cools and then turn upside down onto greaseproof paper and pop in to freezer for 5-10 minutes.

Remove from molds.
put into 1 half of the dreidel
1 teaspoon @cadburyuk Drinking Chocolate
4 Mini Marshmallows @shneidersofficiel

Warm a frying pan very slightly and press the other side of the dreidel on it to melt a little and the seal the 2 halves.
Top with a mini marshmallow!

Heat milk for 1.5 minutes in a microwave on full power and drop the Chocolate Bomb Dreidel in and watch the magic!





The neo-Nazi and the 1960's Synagogue Arson Spree

The recent TV series "Ridley Road" may have brought to the attention of our younger members for the first time the activities of a nasty bunch of right-wing fascists here in London half a century ago.

The early 1960's saw a disturbing rise in right wing anti-Semitism and the resurgence of small but fanatical fascist organisations. They failed to achieve any success at General Elections, but this did not deter their planning and execution of hate crimes.

The National Socialist Movement ("NSM") was founded in 1962 by Colin Jordan with another rabid anti-Semite called John Tyndall from the ashes of the National Union of Fascists (founded and led by Sir Oswald Moseley in the 1930's) and its various later reincarnations as the Union Movement, the League of Empire Loyalists, Greater Britain Movement, the infamous National Front and more recently the British National Party (BNP).

A NSM rally in Trafalgar Square in July 1962 attracted 5000 attendees degenerated into a riot and both Jordan and Tyndal were arrested and jailed.



Brondesbury Synagogue today



The neo-Nazi and the 1960's Synagogue Arson Spree



Colin Jordan and his wife Francoise

This merely encouraged them and antisemitic violence erupted in Stoke Newington and then in other Jewish communities as the scourge of anti-Jewish race hatred spread alarmingly. In 1963 pig's ears were nailed to the front door of a shul in Edgware. By 1965 arson attacks were instigated and this included a five-month long campaign of firebomb attacks against more than a dozen synagogues around London. The shuls targeted included Brondesbury, Bayswater, Borehamwood, Stanmore, the Spanish & Portuguese and New Southgate.

Shortly afterwards there were arson attacks in Edmonton and Tottenham, the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue in Heneage Lane City of London, then the New West End Synagogue in Bayswater, Borehamwood & Elstree, Bayswater shul, S&P shul in Maida Vale, its branch in Lauderdale Road and at Finchley Road. Then Southgate and Palmers Green and Stanmore shuls were hit. Ilford district Synagogue and then Sha'are Shomayim shuls were next to be attacked.

On 14th March 1965 the writer's first shul - Brondesbury Synagogue - was completely destroyed by fire with damage estimated at £120,000. 40 fire fighters attended the blaze.

The old Brondesbury Synagogue had been built in 1905 close to Queens Park in Willesden was one of the famous "Cathedral style Synagogues" which the United Synagogue then treasured. It catered for a burgeoning Jewish community in NW London and Willesden itself boasted several active shuls catering for a broad spectrum of observance including several shteibels.



Tyndal (right) and his successor Martin Webster (also imprisoned)



The neo-Nazi and the 1960's Synagogue Arson Spree



Soon afterwards a riot developed in Ridley Road Dalston. The local mayor was struck with an iron bar and required medical treatment. Cars drove down the road with occupants shouting "Heil Hitler" and "Keep Britain white". The next day violent disorder broke out at Bethnal Green. - 40 arrests were made. A fortnight later fighting again broke out in Ridley Road.

Jordan and Tyndal had by now fallen under the spell of Jordan's wife Francoise.





The neo-Nazi and the 1960's Synagogue Arson Spree

Police soon uncovered a plot hatched by the NSM at the instigation of Francoise Jordan. Born Francoise Dior, she was the wealthy niece of fashion designer Christian Dior and "a fervent admirer of the Nazis and everything to do with Nazism. She was an absolute Jew-hater" and nicknamed "The Queen of British Nazis". She even advocated for an Act of Parliament to see all synagogues burned.

She married Jordan in 1963 at Caxton Hall Register office and demonstrators pelted the couple with eggs. The honeymoon in Scotland was marred by Jordan's mother joining them!

In October 1965 a young fascist who had been convicted of possession of an offensive weapon had a change of heart and begun to make incriminating admissions which incriminated Colin and Francoise Jordan. The DPP considered there was insufficient evidence against her on this occasion.

But Francoise then chose to attend court in defence of others accused of swastika daubing and arson. She strutted into Court No 1 at the Old Bailey in a black leather coat, boots and wearing a swastika around her neck and a similar armband. The Trial judge instructed her to remove the offending insignia. Her efforts were in vain, and the defendants were jailed.

The evidence at this trial indicated that the NSM had been secretly infiltrated by members of the anti-Fascist (mainly Jewish) Group 62 and the trial judge congratulated them. Gerry Gable (of "Searchlight Magazine" fame) was among them.

The net was closing in on Francoise – now separated from husband Colin- and in 1966 she fled to France with her 19-year-old male secretary.

The Brondesbury shul arsonists were arrested in 1965 and they were tried and condemned in 1966, Mrs Jordan was not one of those put-on trial at the time although she had once been arrested in France for posting swastikas on the walls of the British embassy. Finally in 1968 she was arrested and tried., When she was asked if she was responsible for planning and organising the fires, she replied: "I do not start fires. If I say I want something done which should be done and it is done, I am not responsible if I am not there".

She was sentenced to 18 months in jail, after which she left England, never to return. She died in 1993. Colin Jordan died in 2009 and Tyndall in 2005.

[Postscript- by the time of the writer's Bar Mitzvah in May 1966 the Brondesbury Synagogue remained a charred shell where temporary services were held in the basement behind drapes erected to hide the burnt timber. The smell of burning remained ever present even a full year later. The shul was rebuilt but in the 1970's the community was merged within the former Willesden Synagogue, and it is presently an Ismaili School]



Visit to the Cairo Genizah Collection in Cambridge

In October the shul provided an opportunity for Magen Avot members to visit the Cairo Genizah Collection housed in the Cambridge University Library. It is a rare if not unique collection of manuscripts containing information on Jewish history, religion, and culture. Most significantly these shards of paper or vellum cast light on the everyday lives of Jews in Cairo and beyond. From the personal and mundane to the spiritual and religious.

Archive Description

The Cairo Genizah Collection is an enormous collection of medieval and early modern Jewish manuscripts, formed principally from the Taylor-Schechter Collection of more than 193,000 fragments removed from the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat, Old Cairo, by the Cambridge scholar Solomon Schechter in 1896–7.



Further fragments have been added from the Lewis-Gibson Collection (jointly owned with the University of Oxford) and the Jacques Mosseri Genizah Collection, currently on loan in Cambridge. The material has been cleaned, conserved, and digitised. It is accessible both online and for consultation and viewing in person.

The collection contains a broad array of texts, encompassing all genres of literature, from sacred to profane, as well as a remarkable documentary archive of letters, legal deeds, and other writings of everyday life, allowing us to reconstruct in great detail the literary, economic, and social history of the Jews of Egypt over centuries. Particular treasures include not only the earliest known copies of many Jewish sacred texts, but also the autograph writings of major medieval figures such as Judah ha-Levi. Another manuscript, written by Moses Maimonides, is a hand-written draft of the Guide for the Perplexed.

Titled "Discarded History," the exhibit displays a small percentage of 300,000 manuscripts originally found in the genizah, some documents date back over 1,000 years. In order to ensure that the name of G-d was not being violated, even accidentally, the Jews of Fustat periodically collected their worn-out texts and documents and placed them in a storeroom.

In 1896, Scottish twin sisters Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson visited Cairo during their many travels in the area. The twins, members of the Presbyterian Church, were both Semitic scholars who were well versed in ancient and contemporary European languages. During their travels in Egypt, they bought bundles of manuscripts, some of which had been taken from the genizah of the Ben Ezra Synagogue.





Visit to the Cairo Genizah Collection in Cambridge

On their return to England, the sisters showed some of their purchases to their friend Solomon Schechter. Schechter was a rabbi and academic who, at the time, was teaching Rabbinics and Talmud at Cambridge University. Schechter was already familiar with the existence of the genizah but did not realize the extraordinary significance of its contents or the fact that the documents spanned 1,000 years of Jewish history and personalities.

He decided to go to Egypt to investigate further. Schechter received permission to examine the contents of the genizah and to take whatever he liked. As he later said, "I liked it all." Schechter subsequently removed most of the manuscripts from the Ben Ezra Synagogue genizah and brought them back to Cambridge. As he began to evaluate hundreds of items, he realized that this collection of documents was an unprecedented window on Jewish life.



Solomon Schechter studying fragments from the Geniza
(University of Cambridge, permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library)

The religious and civil documents discovered in the Cairo Genizah provide scholars with copious pieces of information that, when they are all itemized and collated, will be a window on Jewish secular and religious life over the past 10 centuries. The range of material is staggering.

Ranging from the poignant final letter from the brother of Maimonides.

Last letter of David Maimonides
Cambridge University Library Or.1081 J1

Letter, Judeo-Arabic; Ayyhah, Sudan; ca. 1170 CE; paper

One of the gems to be found in the Genizah is this affectionate personal letter from David who, disobeying his older brother Moses Maimonides' strict instructions, was about to embark on a sea voyage to India. This was David's last letter as it was on this trip that he perished.

"To my beloved brother R. Moshe, son of R. Maimon ... David your brother who is longing for you ... To make a long story short ... I thought about what I had endured in the [desert and how I was saved]; then it appeared to me an easy matter to embark on a sea voyage ... do not [worry]. He who saved me from the desert with his [dangers] ... I will save me while at sea ..."

About eight years later Moses Maimonides described his feelings thus:

"The greatest misfortune that has befallen me during my entire life – worse than anything else – was the demise of the saint, may his memory be blessed, who drowned in the Indian sea ..."

To his succinct response on an issue of halacha..

Rambam responsum
Cambridge University Library T-S 12.202

Responsum; Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic; Egypt; 12th century; paper

The questioner politely inquires of Maimonides (described as 'the precious diadem' and 'the great councillor') whether a certain man may legitimately marry his nephew's widow. Maimonides' magnificently succinct reply occupies the small amount of blank space left underneath the question at the bottom of the leaf:

*The answer:
He is permitted to marry her. Written by
Moses.
(lines 19–20)*

To a child's alphabet primer... to an amusing pre-nup.... to an amulet to ward off the evil eye... to a document cursing an enemy.. complete with review by a satisfied customer! Even a Fifth Question at Seder night.

Online Accessibility

The Cairo Genizah collection is almost completely digitised and can be accessed online via The Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society web portal following a free registration. Digital catalogues of the material can be found on the Cambridge University Library website in two collections: The Genizah Collection and the Lewis-Gibson Collection. But a visit in person is much to be preferred.

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