



HAMAGEN

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MAGEN AVOT COMMUNITY

Includes HAMUSSAF: Our Arts and Crafts Supplement



From Seven Circles by Karina Katz

*And who by fire, who by water
Who in the sunshine, who in the night time
Who by high ordeal, who by common trial
Who in your merry merry month of May
Who by very slow decay
And who shall I say is calling?*

[Leonard Cohen]

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General Information

Our Ethos

- Modern, orthodox, inclusive community that is welcoming to all
- Provision of opportunities for learning that are both intellectually and spiritually stimulating
- Promotion of women's involvement and ways of making women feel included within halachic guidelines set out by the United Synagogue and Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis
- Supportive of Israel and its national holidays
- Involvement and encouragement of children and youth
- To support and advocate for the interests of those in need including persecuted groups in the UK and abroad, consistent with Torah principles

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From the Desk of the Editor Julian Pollard

This has certainly been an eventful year at Magen Avot since our last Edition of HaMagen. We are welcoming a new and dynamic Rabbinic Team and this Edition of HaMagen will feature an interview with both Rabbi Yoni and Rebbetzen Dina Golker and hopefully give them an insight into the diverse talent pool of our community.

HaMagen contains some innovative and, I hope, entertaining content. We include an interview with our vice-Chair Patti Adler and a reflective piece from her husband Elkan and profiles of our Chatanim Rabbi Golker and Richard Herman.

Prior to the recent departure of Rabbi Kenigsberg and his family for a prestigious Rabbinic Appointment in Jerusalem, Rabbi Joel and Rebbetzen Sarah contributed a farewell assessment of their time with us at Magen Avot. Their farewell Shabbat on 16th July was a truly memorable occasion, graced by the Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and provided the Community with a final opportunity to express our collective thanks for the Rabbi and Rebbetzen's dedication, leadership, wisdom and encouragement at Magen Avot.

I am very pleased to include an Arts and Crafts Supplement highlighting once again the extraordinary talents in our community.

We remember our Yom Yerushalayim celebrations. Ruth Ehreich reflects on influential Jewish teacher mentors and celebrate our Eco Synagogue award.

Daniel Greenberg provides an insight into the need for reform of Beth Din attitudes about Get (Jewish Divorce) laws, Simon Bentley reflects on "Letting go of hate" and Linda Wolffe recalls Holocaust Commemoration in (the not very Jewish) Stamford. Eileen Brookes provides a further poem from her late husband, Malcolm. Hopefully something to cover every taste.

I am increasingly encouraged by the numbers of members who now feel comfortable contributing to this – your – Magazine. I believe this annual publication is one medium through which we all get to know each other better, so a genuine "thank you" to all who have done so.

Particular thanks, as ever, to Julian Maurer for his advice and expertise on the layout and design of HaMagen. And finally, to Linda Wolffe for her meticulous proof reading under very tight deadlines.

Any errors or omissions are my responsibility alone.

Julian Pollard

Editor, HaMagen Publication



Greetings from our Chairman Simon Bentley

Welcome to our HaMagen magazine. Our enormous thanks go to Julian Pollard for all the work he has done in putting this outstanding publication together.

We are now going through a time of change and have much to look forward to. After three glorious years being led by Rabbi and Rebbetzen Kenigsberg, we have now had to say goodbye following their return to Israel. Rabbi Kenigsberg has accepted appointment as a Rabbi at Beit Knesset Hanassi Yisrael Hatzair Rechavia, a Beit Knesset situated in the heart of Rechavia. We wish him and all the Kenigsberg family enormous success in the future and are grateful for the massive impact and contribution they have made to our community here at Magen Avot.

We are looking forward to Rabbi Yoni and Rabbanit Dina Golker joining us as our new Rabbinic Couple. They will be starting from Succot. I'm happy to advise that Rabbi Golker has accepted our invitation to be our Chatan Torah this year. He will be joined by our greatly respected and admired member, Richard Herman who has agreed to be Chatan Bereishit. We look forward to working with Rabbi & Rabbanit Golker as we together develop our community and take it to new heights.

Our Events and Guest Speaker programme has been well received and attended. Full details of what's in store and the events that have taken place are provided on our website under 'Events': <https://www.magenavot.com>.

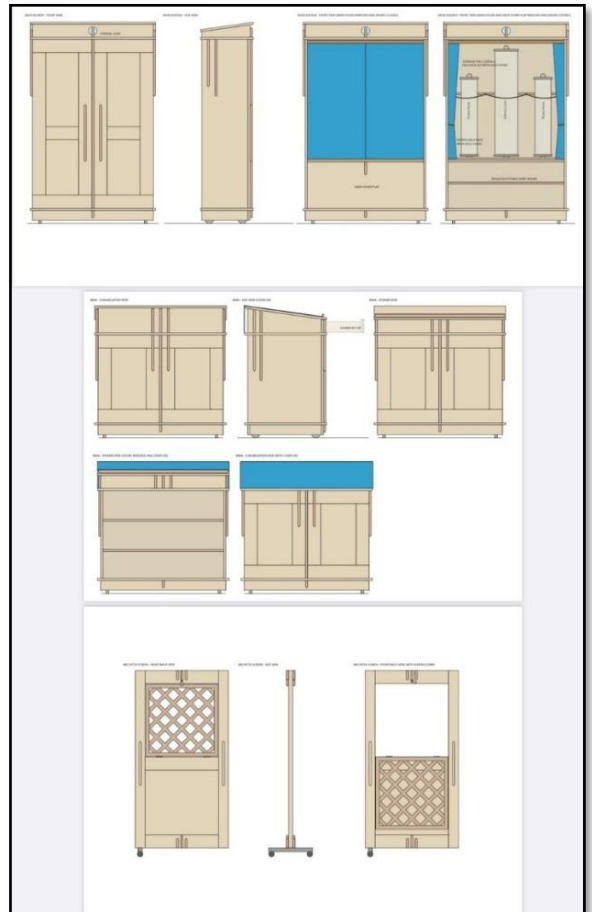
I'm happy to advise, after long and great service, that we are shortly going to be replacing key parts of our Shul furniture. A new Aron Kodesh, Bima and Mechitza, as can be seen pictured on the right of this page, are in the course of being made by specialist craftsmen and will hopefully be in place in time for Succot.

A warm and appreciative thank you to all the members of our Executive and Council for your commitment and work on behalf of us all. We have so much to look forward to.

Warm best wishes

Simon Bentley

Chairman, Magen Avot





Greetings from Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

בס"ד

Office of The
CHIEF RABBI

The Chief Rabbi's Rosh Hashanah Message 5783

In his book entitled 'Messy', the economist Tim Harford tells a remarkable story about the pianist Keith Jarrett.

In January 1975, arriving at the Cologne Opera House to play a Jazz concert for 1400 people, Jarrett was horrified not to find the grand piano he had been expecting. The piano was far too small to achieve any quality of sound, the keys were sticking, the pedals didn't work and the felt was worn away in the upper register. Jarrett explained that the event would have to be cancelled, but the inexperienced concert promoter begged him to reconsider. After much pleading, Jarrett took pity on the young promoter and agreed to perform on the unplayable piano.

A moment of musical history followed. Forced to adapt and improvise, Jarrett energetically achieved the necessary volume from the defective piano. He avoided the tinny high notes and focused instead on the middle register. Remarkably, Jarrett brought the house down and the recording of this concert became the best-selling solo Jazz album and the best-selling piano album of all time.

In some respects, our post-pandemic experience feels like being asked to perform on an unplayable piano. During an exceptionally challenging period, we longed for a time when we could step back out onto the stage of our lives, free of restrictions. Baruch Hashem, this has indeed transpired, but the world we have returned to is not the one we expected. The enduring impact of the pandemic and the devastating invasion of Ukraine have been compounded by political instability both at home and abroad. Many people are struggling financially. Significant aspects of our national infrastructure, from healthcare to travel, seem to be in turmoil. Many societies are polarised and fractious. We are far from where we want to be.

Rabbi Joseph B Soloveitchik differentiated between the concepts of 'Goral' (fate) and 'Yiud' (destiny). Our fate is the hand of cards that we are dealt; our destiny is the way we choose to play it. Responding positively to the external forces beyond our control, we have the capacity to carve out a glorious destiny by adapting, learning from our challenges and becoming stronger because of them.

In Parashat Noach, Hashem declares, "When I cause clouds to cloud over the Earth, then the rainbow will be seen amongst the clouds." The most spectacular rainbows, bathing the heavens in an arc of beautiful colour, are not created despite the clouds, but precisely because of them.

Like a rainbow of spectacular beauty breaking through the darkest of storm clouds, you have responded to the pandemic with an unprecedented outpouring of lovingkindness, fundraising and volunteering. However, as we consider our shared purpose over these High Holydays, many serious challenges remain. This is a time to focus on our spirituality and the real purpose of our existence, to redouble our commitment to our families, as well as to our communities and to society, and to do more for the most vulnerable. In this spirit, we will succeed in not only playing the unplayable piano, but also in creating something of immeasurable and lasting value.

Valerie and I extend our heartfelt wishes to you all for a happy, peaceful and fulfilling New Year.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis





Greetings from the President of the Board of Deputies

For the past two years this message has focused on a pandemic which took our loved ones from us, destroyed incomes and tore families apart. Mercifully, the worst appears to have passed but, despite this, life for many of us has not been easy this year. The cost of living has spiralled out of control, with energy prices and household bills at a higher level than any of us can remember. Like the Covid epidemic which preceded it, there is not a huge amount any of us can do to change the situation as individuals. However, as a community, what we saw during Covid was a wonderful willingness to help our friends and neighbours, the elderly and the less able among us. This spirit is just what we need now when so many people are experiencing so much hardship. I hope and trust that we are all doing everything we can to help those in need.

Of course, we don't need to be reminded that there are millions suffering in Ukraine, as Russia continues its senseless aggression there. We continue to both be inspired by the resolve of the Ukrainian people, and to pray for peace. I urge all those who are able to donate towards the charities collecting on behalf of the victims of this terrible conflict.

On a happier note, this summer we celebrate the second anniversary of the Abraham Accords which brought together Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco in a landmark agreement which has sparked new hope in the Middle East and the prospect of a peaceful future to the region. Sadly, not all parties have bought into the spirit of reconciliation which is why we campaigned hard for the UK Government to ban Hamas in its entirety and were delighted with the legislation which means that the organisation is no longer able to lobby for support in this country.

Over the past 12 months, we have advocated for the small but vibrant Belfast community which found itself struggling for its very existence after the Northern Ireland Protocol cut off its supply of kosher food.

When local, regional and Devolved Assembly Elections took place, we ensured that every candidate had access to a copy of our Jewish Manifestos, which outlined all of the key areas of interest and concern for Jewish communities across the country. And online, thanks to Board of Deputies campaigning, the Government wrote to social media companies asking for the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism so that racists will no longer be able to harass Jewish users with impunity.

Recent weather events have highlighted the importance of action against climate change. We have been working with our partner organisation EcoSynagogue to make a difference within our community and were out in force at the COP26 summit last November.

We are also working to facilitate the implementation of the ground-breaking Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community, which considered 17 areas of Jewish communal life and made 119 recommendations. We provide official inspection of religious education in Jewish schools through the Pikuach organisation and our team monitors and protects our religious freedoms.

The Board of Deputies is here to help and support Jews across the UK, whatever their interests and concerns.

I wish everyone a Shana Tovah and a happy year ahead.

Marie van der Zyl

President, Board of Deputies of British Jews



**BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF
BRITISH JEWS**

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Greetings from the President of the United Synagogue

Message from the President of the United Synagogue

September 2022
Tishrei 5783

United Synagogue

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One of my favourite prayers in our Shabbat liturgy is often overlooked. Just before the Prayer for the Royal Family we say a prayer to bless all members of our shul and the wider Jewish community. The prayer begins "May He who blessed our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, bless all this holy congregation". We ask God to bless "those who unite to form synagogues for prayer" which speaks, I feel, to the United Synagogue's history.

Back in 1870, five synagogues decided that they were stronger together and joined forces to become, via an Act of Parliament, the United Synagogue.

Instead of duplicating resources, they worked together for the good of the community. This was a revolutionary idea and although we have since grown and changed considerably, it still underpins what we do a century and a half later.

The prayer asks God to bless everyone who comes to shul to pray and those who make donations to the community ("those who provide lamps for lighting and wine for Kiddush and Havdalah, those who provide food for guests and charity for the poor").

Finally, we ask God to bless "all those who occupy themselves faithfully with the needs of the community". To me, this line is absolutely critical, because volunteering is at the core of the United Synagogue. Across our communities we are blessed to have well over 1,000 people who give of their time week in, week out to support their shul and community.

Whether it is running children's services, doing security, preparing the kiddush, arranging events, supporting our older and vulnerable members, inviting speakers or *davening* and *leyning*, there is a dizzying array of activities carried out by our volunteers.

And on top of that, each of our communities is led by a local team of committed lay leaders who direct the day-to-day running of communal life and implement its development plans. Communities differ in size, geography and members' backgrounds, so our structure empowers local people to make local decisions.

Research shows that volunteering together builds community, helps us make connections with each other and improves our wellbeing. We know from experience that the greater our sense of engagement with our communities, the more we are able to find a shared purpose.

If I may ask one thing of you this Rosh Hashanah, it's to see what you can do to help your community. Whether it's once a year or once a week, your time will make a real difference: our amazing communities can only thrive with the support of volunteers.

Slightly paraphrasing the ending of the prayer, may God send you and your families blessings and success in all you do and may He bless our entire community. Shana Tova.

Michael Goldstein
President, United Synagogue

Treasurer: Maxwell Nisner
Trustees: Andrew Eder, Rachel Hartog, Claire Lemer, Fleurise Lewis, Nicola Rosenfelder, Barry Shaw, Saul Taylor, Jacqui Zinkin
Chief Executive: Steven Wilson





Reflections by Rabbi Kenigsberg on his time at Magen Avot

Q: Rabbi, tell us about why you decided to come to Magen Avot?

A: In 2018 we came on shlichut to London with Mizrachi UK. At that time Magen Avot was a relatively new community that hadn't yet appointed a Rabbi. As hashgacha would have it, we happened to be living just a 5-minute walk from the shul and MA was actually the first shul in Hendon that I came to for Shabbat davening. I still remember the warm atmosphere I encountered, the beautiful davening, and the invitations for a meal that I, as a complete stranger, already received upon walking into shul that Friday night. About 6 months after we had arrived in the UK, Magen Avot began to advertise for the position of Rabbinic couple. Based on my experience at the shul and our knowledge of the community and its ethos we decided to apply for the post. And the rest is history...

Q: What have you most enjoyed about your time at Magen Avot?

A: I've long felt that what defines a community more than any other is who davens there, or as the Chief Rabbi once put it – it's not about the binyan (the building), but about the minyan. I think that one of MA's greatest strengths is that it's a community of diverse membership where everybody feels welcome. People often comment how impressed they are at the decorum during Shabbat morning davening, and I see that as a real compliment to the shul and reflective of the fact that those who come to daven here do so because they feel at home. There are so many special individuals with unique strengths and contributions who make up the community and it has truly been a privilege getting to know each one of you. In addition to Tefillah, the other central pillar around which a community is built is of course Torah. And it's a further strength of MA that whilst being engaged with the modern world, we are firmly rooted in and committed to Torah. I've particularly enjoyed the opportunity to learn and teach Torah here in a way that is both intellectually stimulating and spiritually engaging.

Q: What has been the greatest challenge in your leadership of the community?

A: I'm sure it won't come as a surprise when I say that Covid made things more difficult than anyone could have imagined. We had barely been appointed to the shul when the pandemic began and quite unbelievably, along with many other communities, we were forced to close our doors. Ironically, the period when the shul was closed was probably busier for me than when services were running normally! Pastoral care took on a whole new meaning, and without the opportunity to see people week-in week-out, we had to find other ways of keeping contact and being available to offer support where it was needed. Of course, we couldn't have done any of this without a dedicated team of volunteers from within the community who were absolutely superb in this regard. The need to pivot shul life from an in-person activity to online programming came with great challenges and was certainly an experience that made our tenure in MA vastly different to what we had anticipated. We created a whatsapp group where I shared voicenotes and videos of sermons to continue to engage, connect with and inspire members of the community. We organised a diverse program of zoom shiurim and events, including guest speakers from across the world, to try to cater for everybody's interests. I have particularly fond memories of the Friday morning zoom chaburas over lockdown and the virtual Horim veYeladim sessions with the Kahoot quiz over the Winter. It obviously couldn't match the experience of being physically present in shul, but I think it was a great substitute under the circumstances – and I'm sure the families who participated enjoyed having pizza delivered to their house at the end of the season!

Q: Is there any one event you can look back at and point to as a highlight of your time at MA?

A: It's difficult to choose as there are so many. We've had the opportunity of bringing some amazing speakers and going on unique experiences with the shul. The Melave Malka where we heard from Rami Sherman, one of the soldiers who took part in the Entebbe Operation, sticks out in my mind, as does the trip to the famous Cairo Genizah in Cambridge. The return of Shabbat UK (coinciding with Mizrachi's weekend of inspiration) was very special too – particularly after Covid and so long waiting to be able to enjoy communal events together again. In addition to 3 world-class speakers that we were privileged to host (Rav Herschel Schachter from YU, Rabbanit Shani Taragin and Rav David Milston), there was a sense of cohesion and warmth throughout the community that week that is hard to describe. Another memorable experience was Yamim Noraim davening in the marquee. There was so much uncertainty in the days leading up to it and at one point we weren't even sure if services would take place at all, but in the end, with a lot of siyata diShmaya we were able to enjoy wonderful and uplifting davening about which people remarked "it felt just like Rosh Hashana!" But if I had to single out one highlight of being part of the Rabbinic couple of MA I would say it is the connections we made, the relationships we were able to build and the opportunity this role gave us to touch people's lives – sometimes in ways we were able to see and sometimes in ways we might never know.

Rebbetzen Sarah:

I agree completely and would just add how much I've enjoyed getting to know the entire community across all age groups – from Minis to Maxis to the Youth and Adults too. Whether it's through children's services, the Bat Mitzvah course, Youth dinners at our house or shiurim and Kiddushim in shul – it's been a pleasure being able to connect with you all. Everyone has their own unique contribution to make and it's that combination that creates such a special community. In any kehilla the youth have such an important part to play, and it's been a particularly meaningful part of this role to watch them grow and be part of their journey.

Q: Rabbi and Rebbetzen, where to from here?

A: It's been a fantastic 4 years and we are so grateful for the experience we've had with this community. When we first interviewed for the position we were asked if we would consider staying longer if things went well. Our answer then was that we would hope it would be difficult to leave, but that our intention was firm that after a few years we'd be going back home to Israel. Today we're happy to say that both parts of that statement are true. Magen Avot will always have a special place in our hearts, and we look forward to watching this community continue to flourish from afar, under the leadership of a wonderful new Rabbinic couple. As for us, we are excited to be moving back to Jerusalem, to be taking up a position as Rabbi of Bet Knesset HaNassi in Rechavia. Please come and visit!



Introducing our new Rabbinic Team

Rabbi Yoni and Rebbetzen Dina Golker

This July the community unanimously extended an invitation to Rabbi Yoni Golker and his wife Dina to become our new Rabbinic couple and they will take up office in time for Succot.

Rabbi Yoni and his wife Dina were since 2016 the Community Rabbi and Rebbetzen at St John's Wood Synagogue where they were responsible for working with all age-groups within the community in partnership with the senior rabbinical team and the Youth Directors.

Rabbi Yoni grew up in Golders Green and spent three years at Yeshivas Beis Yisroel. He is an experienced educator and seasoned public speaker. He is known for his remarkable educational programming and especially his creative virtual programming during the pandemic, where he conducted over 100 interviews with renowned people across the Jewish world, with hundreds of thousands of online views.

Prior to joining St John's Wood Synagogue, Rabbi Golker taught for over a decade at JFS, where he was head of Upper School Jewish Education. Between 2013 and 2016, the Golkers were the directors of the Ezra Youth Movement and oversaw the educational and social provision and vision and direction of the organization. Rabbi Golker is an experienced educator and seasoned public speaker. Rabbi Golker delivers cutting edge educational programming. Between 2008 and 2014, Rabbi Golker was the Youth Director at Dayan Ehrentreu's Shul.



In September, Rabbi Golker will be taking on the role of Deputy Head Teacher and Director of Jewish Life and Learning at Immanuel College.

Rebbetzen Dina is a graduate of Michlalah seminary in Jerusalem. She holds a PGDip in Psychological therapy and is a qualified Psychology teacher. Dina is currently a clinical manager at NOA, a charity which supports girls from the Orthodox Jewish community aged 12-24. Dina has a passion for supporting other people and is very much involved in Pastoral care within the community. This summer, Dina will graduate the Chief Rabbi's Ma'ayan Programme for Jewish female educators.

Rebbetzen Dina studied psychology at undergraduate and postgraduate level, specialising in counselling psychology and is also a qualified secondary school teacher. Rebetzen Dina leads the Babes in the Wood group for mothers and babies at St John's Wood and also delivered ladies shiurim as part of the Taste of Torah series on selected Shabbat Mornings. Dina is part of the Chief Rabbi's Maayan Programme for high-level educators for the Jewish community, as well as advisors in the area of Taharat Hamishpacha (laws of family purity) and women's health issues.



Introducing our new Rabbinic Team

Rabbi Yoni and Rebbetzen Dina Golker

The Golkers were responsible for education and programming within the community and worked with that community's Young Professionals/Young Jewish Network, engaged and newly marrieds and Rabbi Yoni has also organised many of the successful educational programmes for various groupings in the community. The Golkers played an active and leading role in local Young United Synagogue events with other US Shuls. Rabbi Yoni also played a full role in lifecycle roles for members of all ages within the community as well as delivering shiurim and classes.

The Golkers' pride and joy are their five children, Yosef (aged 10), Leila (aged 7), twin boys, Abie and Gadi (aged 6) and Herschel (2 years old). HaMagen caught up with this dynamic couple recently.

Q: Firstly, welcome to Magen Avot, Rabbi Golker. We are delighted to have you as our spiritual and communal head. What attracted you and your wife to this new and relatively small community and what do you hope to bring to it?

A: It was serendipity, or as we Rabbis prefer to say, Hashgacha Pratis! We both have close family ties with -and we ourselves live in- Hendon. It was a wonderful coincidence that this position became open to us at a time when I was applying for a senior post as Director of Jewish Life at Immanuel College. It was the perfect fit and the interview process was quick and smooth- and relatively painless! What became apparent immediately from the discussions we had with the appointment team -and this was reinforced when we met the community in early July -was the fact that this shul was vibrant, energetic, committed and above all, community-led. Magen Avot has a mixed demographic in terms of age but the passion and involvement of so many members is evident and encourages us to believe we can further enthuse and develop this dynamic community.

Q: What's your first priority?

A: To get to know each and every member as well as we can and as quickly as possible so that we can better understand what we can do for each of you and tailor our programmes accordingly.

Q: Will you adapt your role from that undertaken in St John's Wood- a larger and more established community?

A: Dina and I are an enthusiastic and motivated team and together we hope to bring many forward many successful initiatives we developed in SJW. These will include educational programmes- some aimed at the women and others at the dads and their sons - and we found away days and weekend trips proved popular too. Dina has run many successful programmes too, including business networking for women, learning events for women at Shavuot, Kabbalat Shabbat and Seudah Shlishit events. She is already in touch with Patti Adler about the Bat Mitzvah classes. We have also run "road shows" with educational events in members' houses and these encouraged guests who were non-members to join in. We sense there is an untapped source of local Jews ready to sign up to the Magen Avot experience.

Q: I notice that SJW held joint events with the Saatchi Synagogue- you seem to have had a close working relationship. Do you think this model might work for Magen Avot to co-operate with other local communities – such as Alei Zion, Bet Gavriel or even Od Yosef Chai in the same way?

A: Yes absolutely! We look forward to participating and partnering with our neighbouring Kehillot when it makes sense to do so!



Introducing our new Rabbinic Team

Rabbi Yoni and Rebbetzen Dina Golker

Q: You have established a reputation as “the YouTube Rabbi” having undertaken dozens of interviews with prominent Rabbis, politicians, musicians, business leaders and artists. Is this a concept you would like to continue?

A: The interview series was hugely successful during the pandemic, when we were having very limited interactions face-to-face but now we can't wait to do this in person! With that said, social media, and online education is also important and great ways to reach out, especially to those who attend Shul less regularly. We would certainly want to try to continue to use these ways to interact with as many of our members as possible.

Q: How do you see the future of Anglo Jewry and this community in particular?

A: While the statistics show that soon one in four observant British Jews will be Charedi, we firmly believe that the middle ground- “Torah im derech erez” is important and viable. We believe Magen Avot to be such a community and that's the challenge we relish.

Q: And the role of Israel in this process?

A: Our love and commitment to Israel is unconditional and firm. Both of us spent time in Israel and while educated here our hearts lie there. I was named after a family relation who served as a Sergeant in the IDF and fell in the Yom Kippur War fighting for the State and Dina's family come from seven generations living in Teverya. Israel is misunderstood and we must better prepare our students for University life where anti- Israel rhetoric and BDS movements are inadequately challenged.

Q: Rebbetzen Dina, you will find that the role of women within Magen Avot is active committed and expanding both in terms of education, public speaking but also community endeavour, and organisational involvement. For example, we see increasing involvement in social issues (Our Uyghur Conference, the eco synagogue project, Jubilee tree planning, Bat Mitzvah programme, medical issues and halachic exploration). How do you see your role in this expanding process?

A: Yes, the involvement ability and commitment of the women members at Magen Avot is evident already and I am excited about working with them and developing programmes with them. At SJW we had a large community but only a small percentage were truly involved regularly. I believe at MA a much larger proportion are involved and committed and that makes our task so much more rewarding. I hope to continue the very successful programme of mothers and infant children meeting socially before shabbat

Q: How will you manage the demands of five young children, supporting your husband and working with our own members?

A: Although I work at Noa I will be commuting much less, and Yoni and I believe we have complimentary skills and by now I hope I have mastered the art of juggling several balls in the air at once- and I am very confident that with the support and goodwill of MA we will work effectively constructively and happily. We are looking forward to this new chapter in our lives with great anticipation and hope. As we roll out an exciting programme of events we hope to offer something to attract everyone at Magen Avot.

Thanks Julian for this opportunity to reach out to our new community. We look forward to get to know everyone in the weeks and months ahead! Wishing you and your families a שנה טובה ומתוקה.



Our Chattanim: Chatan Torah – Rabbi Yoni Golker

A detailed profile of our Rabbi is carried out in our previous article. Rabbi Golker was delighted and honoured to be our Chatan Torah and said:-

"I'm deeply honoured to be the Chatan Torah at Magen Avot. Simchas Torah, is our annual 'Siyum' on the finishing of the Torah cycle. It is that pivotal moment where we pause, reflect, and celebrate the "journey" of Torah and its centrality to our life. As the Golkers begin our journey with Magen Avot, we can't think of a more exciting way, than by being the Chatan Torah!"





Our Chattanim: Chatan Bereishit – Richard Herman

Richard was raised in Dollis Hill and went to North West London Jewish Day School and later to Hasmonean School. Dollis Hill shul itself held fond memories for Richard and it is now a school (Torah Temimah) where his wife Dinah is School Manager After taking a course in Retail store display he became a youth worker at the United Synagogue organising programmes for JYSG and taking Israel Tour for several years. His artistic and design talents found expression in several outlets including Totally Communications – then owned by the Jewish News Group. He designs and produces marketing material and packaging for pharmaceuticals, puzzles and games, charities, magazines, newspapers and now for his own client base as well as producing his own product range. The decorative Magen Avot mugs being just one example.

Richard's family moved to Hendon in July of 1976 and joined Raleigh Close shul. Richard became a Gabbai there – which was not without its challenges. He recalls being regularly berated by members who complained about not being given an Aliya. Despite his sympathetic and conciliatory approach, they would not be satisfied.

Seven years ago, a friend mentioned that Magen Avot was being set up and he found himself at the first shabbat service at the Hendon Hall Hotel and has never looked back. Richard is one of the members who ensures that our weekly Kiddush is prepared and laid out and that ample helpings of malt whisky are available to a discerning community.

Asked when he met Dinah, Richard thinks it was when they were just 10 years old at Hendon Summer Scheme at Raleigh Close, but they were in the same social network for several years before marrying at Hampstead Garden Synagogue where Dinah's parents Bernard and Naomi Taub were and remain active and committed members.

Richard's mother, Nina Herman, is also a regular at Magen Avot and really enjoys the warm communal atmosphere and genuine friendliness of its members.

The Hermans have two daughters - Talia who is engaged and due to marry any day and will live close by in Hendon. And Ariella who is due to make Aliya later this year.

To relax, Richard enjoys films and the novels of Stephen King.

Richard says:-

“ I am delighted and truly honoured to be Chatan Bereishit this year and especially happy to be sharing this coveted acknowledgement with our new Rabbi. We have very high hopes for the continued growth and development of the community under the guidance and leadership of Rabbi and Rebbetzen Golker and we are blessed with a diverse and committed kehilla. Dinah and I thank the community for this honour which we deeply appreciate”





Holocaust Remembrance

We Must Never Forget

by Linda Wolffe

More than twenty years ago our youngest daughter, Claire, intimated to John and me that it would be a very nice idea for us to be in touch with the parents of her then boyfriend, now our much-loved son-in-law Edward Saffer, as Claire thought Edward might in future be a permanent part of our lives – but nothing official. We were, of course, delighted, so I telephoned my now machatanista and we had a very pleasant chat, and decided to have an informal meeting. It has been a slight disadvantage to our wonderful relationship with the Saffer family that our machatonim live in Leeds. Nothing daunted, we decided to meet half-way, and a rendezvous duly took place one sunny Sunday, in a tiny village in Rutland, exactly half-way between Leeds and Elstree, where we then lived.

What does all this have to do with the Shoah? That initial meeting in Rutland led us to many happy holidays in this delightful part of the East Midlands, and particularly to the discovery of an unusual Holocaust Memorial about which very little is known. This led us on an interesting quest to find its origins and made me realise how important it is to support and continue Holocaust awareness and education in these troubled times.

The most interesting town in the area is undoubtedly Stamford, just over the border in Lincolnshire. It is mainly stone built with some lovely old homes and shops. Although you will find the usual high street chains, the centre of Stamford has lovely little boutiques and beautiful walks by the river. The town centre has been pedestrianised, and the sun always seems to blaze down when we are there. There are lovely gardens and benches and street markets and entertainers, and it is always enjoyable to stroll around.

We were sitting on a bench in the central gardens one day when I noticed something glinting in the grass near to us. I went over to see what it was and was amazed to see a brass plaque set on a concrete plinth dedicated to the Victims of the Holocaust. Jews are found in all corners of the United Kingdom, we know, and there must be some Jews in Stamford as the Stamford Sainsbury's has an extensive kosher section, but there are no organised communities, to our knowledge, between Peterborough and Lincoln. Where, then, had this Holocaust Memorial originated and who had funded it?





Holocaust Remembrance

We Must Never Forget

by Linda Wolfe

We went to the local Tourist and Arts Centre to enquire. They were very helpful, but nobody there even knew of the existence of the Memorial. The staff there were keen to learn but after some months of enquiries we were all none the wiser.



I then contacted the Holocaust Education Trust, who were interested, but knew nothing about the Stamford Memorial. They are not responsible for Memorials, so they directed me to the Imperial War Museum, which is charged with maintaining Holocaust records and keeping information on Holocaust Memorials. The Museum too were unaware of the Stamford Memorial.

I put the whole subject on the back burner, but my mind kept returning to the subject. How could it be that someone felt passionately enough to fund a Holocaust Memorial, but nobody could tell me who? Part of teaching today's and future generations about the horrors of the Holocaust must be the histories of those who seek to educate about this episode in history.

During the COVID lockdown I had some more time on my hands to research, and one day I happened upon a YouTube video of a Holocaust Memorial Day service. This was conducted in the centre of Stamford, next to the Memorial, and was a joint venture between Stamford Council and the Peterborough Jewish Community.

At last! I had found people who would be able to tell me all about the Stamford Memorial. I contacted both the Mayor of Stamford, a delightful lady named Gloria Johnson, who had conducted the Holocaust Memorial Service on the video, and Graham Berkman, of the Peterborough Jewish Community – and what could they tell me – absolutely nothing at all! However, Councillor Johnson was also intrigued as it had not occurred to her to question the origin of the Memorial, so she started her own search in the Stamford Council archives.



Holocaust Remembrance

We Must Never Forget

by Linda Wolffe

Finally, last November I heard from the Civic Officer of Stamford Council, who gave me all the information they have, and I first learnt the name of Harry Skells, who was a Councillor and then an Alderman of Stamford. He was born in 1880 and served in the First World War in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He then became a successful farmer and international executive who became Vice Chairman of National Savings. He and his wife had no children, so Harry set up a charitable trust. When he died in 1955 he stipulated that after his wife's death the estate and charitable trust be used to fund projects to beautify Stamford, and particularly to improve parks, recreational areas and the appearance of Stamford's streets. In 2001 it was decided that a grant from the Harry Skells Trust be used to establish a Holocaust Memorial in Stamford, and this was finally unveiled in 2006.

I was very pleased to have discovered as much as I have, but I am still intrigued that Stamford should have this Memorial. In many ways I feel more comfortable to be a Jew in the United Kingdom than I did when I was much younger. I remember many public figures who were openly anti-semitic immediately after the war – you only have to look in Hansard at the records for the late 1940s and early 1950s to see how Members of Parliament would make dreadful anti-semitic remarks in Parliament.

When my family moved to London in 1956 from our home in Surrey where my family had been evacuated during the Blitz, I was amazed to learn that several local selective schools had a 10% Jewish quota on each year's intake, and the local golf club in Mill Hill had a complete bar on Jewish members. Now we have so many beautiful Jewish state schools, synagogues aplenty, wonderful kosher shopping, a magnificent Jewish Community Centre, public lightings of Chanukiot and we are proud to celebrate openly. We should feel so comfortable as Jews in the Golah, but in spite of that I was terrified when Jeremy Corbyn was leader of the Labour Party and at one time appeared to be electable as Prime Minister. I still sense the shadow which the Corbyn years cast over us. Those who wish us harm now feel entitled to attack us unfairly. How quickly people dismiss and forget the tragedy which befell European Jewry in the twentieth century, and how little some younger people know of the Shoah.

As happens every year, I was deeply affected by Holocaust Memorial Day in January, and since then we have experienced the horrendous days since the Russian invasion and destruction of Ukraine, its inhabitants and infrastructure. I witness the millions of refugees, and I imagine my own family fleeing from religious oppression. My maternal grandfather was from Lvov, now Lviv, and John's maternal grandfather came from Odessa, now Odesa. I see them with their packages and small suitcases fighting to board overfull trains and wondering if there would ever be another meal and warm bed. Now as I write Pesach is practically upon us and amid all the preparation and schlepping of kelim we are trying to find a minute to collect our yellow candle for Yom HaShoah. Our Seder celebrations will have an even more significant meaning as we enjoy our freedom – certainly not a luxury available to many people today.

Holocaust Remembrance

We Must Never Forget

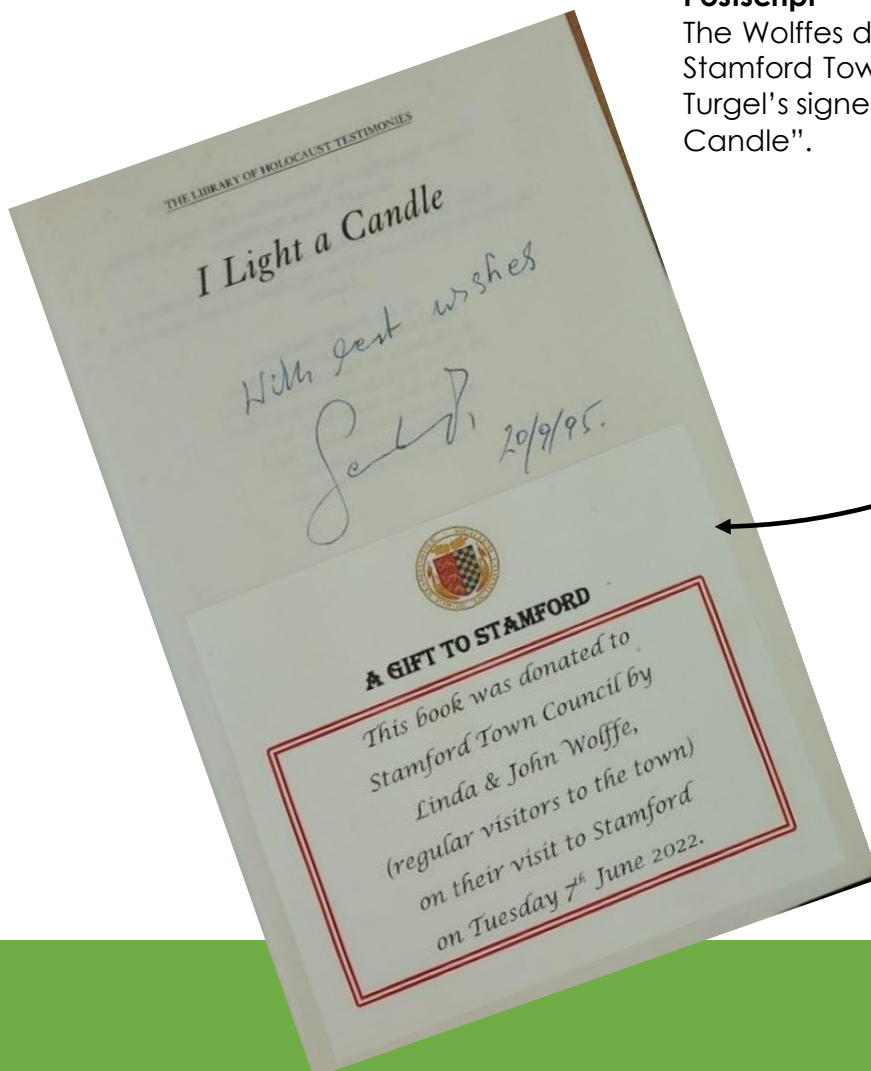
by Linda Wolffe



We all have an obligation to fight to ensure that Holocaust education remains an essential part of educational curricula for now and generations to come. History must teach us the lessons to make the world a better place for all mankind, but obviously we need to do much more. Stamford in Lincolnshire can make its citizens aware of the Shoah with a permanent Memorial and an annual service, and so Holocaust education must be an integral part of our National Curriculum so that we can teach everyone about the Shoah and its relevance today.

Postscript

The Wolfes donated some books to the Stamford Town Council including Gena Turgel's signed autobiography; "I Light a Candle".





ECO SYNAGOGUE

Award

On June 12th the Magen Avot Eco committee joined communities from across the UK in Kew Gardens. From Brighton to Edinburgh, these communities are leading the way in learning, understanding and environmental action. The awards ceremony was hosted by Eco Synagogue, a project, that in partnership with the Board of Deputies, is guiding communities towards a net zero carbon future.

Communities were awarded gold, silver, or bronze awards, based on the changes they have implemented in the preceding year. Teaching, community engagement, consumables, as well as eco-changes to buildings all qualify for points.

Magen Avot reached over 40 points which qualified our shul for a bronze award. Our community Eco-Shabbat, with an address by the Chief Rabbi, changes to our kiddish disposables and our youth engagement initiatives – working with youth from Y@MA, gained us the points we needed. Representatives from the Magen Avot Eco Committee accepted our award from Rabbi Mason, Rabbi of Muswell Hill United Synagogue and one of the co-founders of Eco Synagogue.



Eco Synagogue is a cross communal organisation, with Rabbis from the United Synagogue, Spanish and Portuguese, Masorti, Reform and Liberal communities. It was uplifting to see people coming together with shared goals, able to learn from each other's achievements and celebrate them. One common struggle we all shared was how to bring new ideas into our communities and make changes that members will endorse and be excited to implement. The way we live our lives does not easily lend itself to sustainable living and as Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said when he addressed us on Eco Shabbat, most sustainable changes will make our day-to-day life a little more uncomfortable.

Environmental sustainability is one of the biggest challenges facing our generation, and it is difficult to see what impact we as individuals and even communities can make. Eco Synagogue has provided a toolkit for communities, with small tangible goals that feel achievable and don't come with great sacrifice, for example using less plastic waste at shul events, or reducing energy consumption in shul buildings. All these small things add up, and for Magen Avot, they added up to Bronze Award, here's hoping for Silver or even Gold next year.

P.S Don't forget to buy your tree for the Plant a Tree for the Jubilee. The United Synagogue in collaboration with the Woodland Trust, is planting a Jewish communal grove in honour of the Queen's Jubilee. If Magen Avot members buy 750 trees, we will get our own allocated grove. <https://www.theus.org.uk/category/plant-tree-jubilee>.



A Life in the day of... our Vice-Chair Patti Adler



Patti Adler - wife to Elkan and the other half of the Adler team - has been our Vice-Chair since 2021. She managed to find time one evening recently to tell HaMagen what drives her and why she - together with her husband Elkan - give so much of her time and effort to Magen Avot. With 2 of her children about to undertake GCSE Exams the house was a hive of activity.

Born in Vienna to parents of Hungarian and Austrian heritage, Patti has led a somewhat peripatetic life. But certain passions have guided her wherever she has been living.

Her parents were ardent Zionists, and her father went to Israel as a teenager after the war and became a citizen before returning to Vienna to marry although her parents did manage to move back to Israel once the children grew up. This was to have unforeseen consequences many years later when Patti having spent time before her Baccalaureate in Israel was stopped at the border on seeking to exit the country by officials determined for her to remain to undertake army service as an Israeli citizen (which she inadvertently acquired by virtue of her father having made Aliyah years previously). " Maybe worth mentioning I didn't actually join the army" she observes.

Patti had left Vienna to study at Bar Ilan University and undertook a course in Advertising and Public Relations and Languages. She was invited to the Aufruf of a friend and met Elkan there. In fact, it turned out that Elkan-unknown to Patti- had met her brothers some years previously. They married in Israel and (after a honeymoon spent on the ski slopes) returned to London to live in Hampstead Garden Suburb-closer to where Elkan's mother lived.

Patti began work as an events planner for the UJIA and Elkan was building his career as a lawyer. He was seconded to work in the New York office for Clifford Chance shortly after the birth of their first child- Yonah. Patti arrived in a strange city with an infant child and initially found it a lonely and intimidating experience. Even the local Jewish community in Manhattan proved less welcoming than she had hoped. She did however spend many hours visiting the Museums of New York with a relative.

When Elkan's time to leave New York ended they had to decide where they were going to live. They had talked of making Aliyah within 5 years but on returning to London Yonah became settled in school and children Eliana (she was born in America) and Vivi came along, and their roots became firmly established here.



A Life in the day of... our Vice-Chair Patti Adler

Elkan threw himself into the life and heart of shul activities and is now one of our esteemed Gabayim. Patti was reluctant to become a Council Member at first but was prevailed upon to do so and last year became our Vice-Chair.

Apart from bringing up a growing and active family and devoting many hours each week to shul activities, Patti is also Admissions Governor at The Nancy Reuben Primary School. This demanding position requires her to determine which child is admitted to the school and while most yearly intakes balance out occasionally the demand exceeds the supply, and some parents are inevitably disappointed.

Asked if she and Elkan were professional “machers” she conceded that her father, brothers and husband were properly described as such but that they undertook communal service out of love and devotion to the community, so this was a badge of honour she was proud to share.

No-one meeting Patti finds her other than charming, self-effacing, and courteous. She constantly feels “humbled” and “grateful” to be asked to undertake roles of communal service. Asked how she manages to balance her onerous work as school governor, Vice-Chair at the shul and busy mum and devoted wife Patti shrugs this off but does concede that Covid lock downs and changed work hours means she sees Elkan rather more than in the past when he would leave for work before she awoke and often returned home when it was late at night.

As to the shul's priorities, she is excited at the appointment of a new Rabbinic Couple and her long-term aspiration is a shul of our own where we can offer daily minyan services not just Shabbat and Chagim. She admires the extraordinary breadth of talent and commitment of our members and of the increasing role women take in our communal life. She wears her feminist credentials lightly and feels no obligation to publicly demonstrate her own personal commitment to equality. “I am comfortable with who I am”.

Patti relaxes with reading anything ranging from philosophy, historical and also less demanding novels and bingeing on Netflix movies. But it is evident her greatest pleasure is her family life. “It sounds a cliché” she says, “but I just enjoy my time with my family. Amazingly they still find time for me, and I know that all too soon they will be off. We still all look forward to all our holidays and all, thank G-d, enjoy the thrill of skiing regularly as a family”.

We talked about the great success of Shabbat UK in June and how it brought together many Members who were able to engage with each other over a shared meal and how important such relationships should be nurtured and encouraged.

As a community we are all grateful and indebted to Patti her for care and devotion and quiet - and largely unsung -commitment.

Finally, a personal tribute from our Chairman Simon Bentley who works with her on a daily basis is most appropriate: “I know I speak for all who have the pleasure of working with Patti, in saying that she is a delightful, hospitable, hard-working, totally committed member of the Magen Avot team. We are all, and I am in particular, so grateful to her.”



Getting a Get - Why It Matters

by Daniel Greenberg CB

In his new book *“Getting a Get- Issues relating to the Law of Jewish Religious Divorce as applied by Batei Din in the UK”* our own Daniel Greenberg examines the role of Jewish Religious courts and how he believes they are misusing their powers. Being a Parliamentary draftsman but with unique halachic insight he has advised the Government and interested stakeholders on how legislation should be framed and how these abuses can and must be curtailed.

After excoriating criticism of the inability, lack of integrity and ineffectiveness of the Batei Din in this country and their lack of moral authority (coupled with failure of oversight by the Chief Rabbinate) his arguments focus on what he views as collusion by the Dayanim with reprehensible coercive behaviour of some litigants. He pulls no punches.

“The batei din seem entirely inured to impropriety or illegality on behalf of litigants before them”.

“Taken all together, a complete lack of accountability and transparency combine to make it difficult to treat the UK batei din with respect” and as such they “cannot be considered fit to handle sensitive matters like gittin”.



Outrageous financial demands to enable or speed up a Get being granted are simply - blackmail. Moreover, he fears the failure of Dayanim to prevent such demands lays them open to criminal liability for aiding and abetting what is in effect blackmail.

Daniel explains:-

In the summer of 2021 during the passage of the Domestic Abuse Bill through Parliament I was approached by a journalist on one of the Jewish newspapers for comment on legal aspects of get-related amendments being tabled by a group of Jewish peers, in the hope of bringing pressure to bear on get exploiters through the extension of criminal offences relating to coercive control and domestic abuse.

I gave an attributable quote, as a result of which I received a number of inquiries from people with particular stories of injustice at the hands of former spouses and batei din.

These inquiries led me to carry out a little bit of investigation into the way that the get process is presently weaponised as a tool of continuing abuse. Although doing no more than scratch the outer-surface layer of events, I quickly became aware of a communal scandal and disgrace of a depth and extent which I had not previously guessed.



Getting a Get - Why It Matters

by Daniel Greenberg CB

Since my involvement in addressing abuses in the conversion system in the UK, I have firmly believed that we need to be prepared to wash our dirty linen in public. Private laundries simply never seem to have the time or inclination to do any real washing. Based on what I have done about gerus, therefore, I set out to publish a short book detailing some of the results of my research and setting out some hopefully helpful practical advice based on one particular case in which I had intervened and, by explaining to the bet din that they were committing a criminal offence of facilitating blackmail, obtained in a few days a get for which the woman had been waiting for many months. My book exposes the human rights breaches involved in the state of marital captivity which arises when one party to a marriage is prevented from leaving it, to any extent. I also discuss the application of the new criminal law on coercive control, as well as of the pre-existing law of blackmail, as well as civil legal issues relating to the interaction between the civil and religious authorities. I also discuss some of what I perceive to be the flaws of the way the UK batei din approach the get process, particularly their involvement in child-access and financial matters for which they have neither training nor inherent aptitude and as to which they have no legal jurisdiction; and I make recommendations for reform that are designed to be helpful to batei din as well as to those who use them.

I decided to use the same opportunity to publish some of my papers from the first occasion when the secular law was amended to aid in get abuse, back in 1996 to 2002, when the law was changed to allow judges of the secular family courts to adjourn a case pending the delivery of the get. Those amendments were fashioned by a group including Dayan Berkovitz o'h and the Chief Rabbi Jakobovits o'h to cover this: I had the pleasure and privilege of assisting them with the production of drafts and discussion of Parliamentary strategy, and I particularly wanted to publish some of the papers of the correspondence between us as a matter of Jewish public record.

While I was engaged in producing this monograph, the Jewish peers involved in the amendments of the 2021 Bill and others had decided to create an All-Party Parliamentary Group on get refusal to draw attention to this particularly pernicious form of domestic abuse. Lord Mendelsohn, one of the peers involved, with whom I had been in contact in the summer of 2021 concerning their amendments, learned of my book and invited me to present it at meeting of the All-Party group, an event which took place with attendances in person and remotely in July of this year.

As a founding member of Magen Avot, I hope that at least some of my fellow congregants will regard efforts to address marital captivity and the weaponization of the get as reflecting the values of the congregation, which has always believed in pursuing justice and truth. We rightfully concern ourselves as a community in the plight of the Uighur Muslims: how then can we not similarly wish to do anything we can to resolve the plight of our own sisters and brothers who are being subjected to excesses of cruelty and misery as a result of greed and intransigence?

“Getting a Get” is published by Daniel Greenberg Limited and can be purchased via: info@danielgreenberg.co.uk.



Jewish Education in the UK

by Ruth Ehreich

I have recently retired after working as a Limmudei Kodesh teacher for most of my life and was thinking about some of the most dedicated educators I have been privileged to know over the course of my career. These are just a few of the people who had the most impact on me.

It sometimes seems unbelievable to us, but many years ago, children with special needs were hidden away as if they were shameful. They were brought up in foster care or in residential care and not by their own parents. Often people outside their families didn't even know of their existence! How different things were then and how grateful we must be that things have changed, and these special children and adults are now fully accepted into society.

When I worked in Menorah Primary school I met a very special teacher called Mrs Chava Lehman. At the time there were a few special needs children in the school for whom there was little provision and Mrs Lehman made the brave decision to open a school for children who so desperately needed a different kind of education. She set up the well-known school that she called "Kisharon" which recognised that every child has his/her special talents, initially for those children who were in mainstream schools but not really catered for in that environment.

Suddenly it appeared that there were many more children than was previously thought who were applying for places at Kisharon. As many of us are aware, the school went from strength to strength and has now opened adult education centres and workshops. The school has recently been renovated to the highest standard and the children continue to thrive there thanks to Mrs Lehman and her courage all those years ago!

As a girl, I attended the Cheder commonly known as "680" but attached to "Munks" now Golders Green Beis Hamedrash. There I was taught by Rabbi Munk himself. At the time it was frowned upon to discuss topics relating to scientific studies such as the age of the world, dinosaurs etc. Rabbi Munk had studied Parashas Beraishis in depth and wasn't afraid link the two, the ultimate truth of the Torah with the evidence of scientists. This was something I have never forgotten and all those years later I remember him fondly and can picture this great Rabbi sitting at the head of the table with us girls transfixed and hanging on to every word.

I have known Rabbi Chaim Warshawsky for most of my life, first as a member of the North Hendon Shul where my father Rabbi Cooper was the Rav and later as head of Kodesh in Menorah Foundation School. He not only cared for his pupils but if he saw children in the school who appeared to be troubled or in need of help he would appear at their homes offering practical assistance. Always with a wide and friendly smile. And nobody outside these families knew about it. He had the ability to come into a noisy lunch hall or classroom and just stand still till the pupils saw him and instantly there would be silence. And not only would he support and love his pupils, but he would also support his teachers, always with a smile on his face.

Then I come to my own mother, Mrs Cooper, who spent her whole life teaching. I came into her classroom whenever I could to watch her in action and learned so much from her. Even now past pupils come up to me in the street asking how she is and remembering her lessons when they were in the Reception Class. They invariably tell me how they can still picture her teaching them the Aleph Beis.

These are some of the great educators that I have known over the course of my teaching career. These are the people who set up such solid foundations in the children they taught. How much we owe to the teachers who formed our lives.



New Year's Greetings

Shana Tova



Daniel and Julia Greenberg and their family wish the whole of the community a k'sivo v'chasimo tovo.

With all best wishes for 5783. Shoina & David Kass.

Julian and Joan Pollard and extended family wish the entire Magen Avot community a k'sivo v'chasimo tovo.

Esther and Julian Maurer and extended family wishes the entire community a happy and healthy new year. Special mention to great-grandma Anita who is in her 102nd Jewish year! Shana Tova!

Linda and John Wolffe send warmest wishes and greetings to all the Magen Avot community for a Shana Tova u'metuka and wish everyone Chatima Tova.

Chag Sameach and best wishes, Baruch & Toni Zekaria.

The Magen Avot Council and Executive wish the community a wonderful 5783 filled with much health, wealth and happiness!

Wishing our wonderful Magen Avot community, a
Ketiva V'Chatima Tova
- a happy, healthy and successful year

We look forward to seeing our Shul
continue to thrive and grow

Grateful thanks to the Executive and Council
for all their hard work

Karina, Ashley, Joey and Minna Katz



Letting Go of Hate

by Simon Bentley

"To be free, you have to let go of hate" (Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt'l)

In the words of Moshe Rabeinu: "Do not hate an Egyptian - because you were a stranger in his land" (Devarim 23:7). This is a very strange command. The Egyptians had enslaved the Israelites. They had initiated a policy of slow genocide, killing every male Israelite at birth. Moshe had begged Pharaoh repeatedly to let the people go and he had refused. Moshe knew this chapter of our history was not accidental or incidental.

As a nation it was their formative experience. They were commanded to remember it forever, enacting it once a year on Pesach, eating Matzah and Maror. All these, on the face of it, were reasons to hate the Egyptians or at the very least to look back with a sense of grievance, resentment, animosity and pain. Why then did Moshe say the opposite? Do not hate them because you were strangers in their land.

Because to be free, you have to let go of hate. That is what Moshe was saying. If the Bnei Yisrael continued to hate their erstwhile enemies, Moshe would have succeeded in taking the Israelites out of Egypt, but he would have failed to take Egypt out of the Bnei Yisrael. Mentally, they would still be there, slaves to the past, prisoners of their memories. They would still be in chains, not of metal but of the mind. And chains of the mind are sometimes the worst of all.

Religion leads to violence when it consecrates hate. That was the tragedy that befell the church in the fourth century. Enshrine hate within a culture, and it will remain dormant but still alive and potentially deadly. Christians did not kill only Jews. They killed Muslims, heretics, witches and sectarians, for the greater glory of G-d and in the name of the religion of love. Yet Christianity changed.

Today the epicentre of hate is radical and neo-traditionalist Islam.

You cannot create a free society, on the basis of hate. Resentment, rage, humiliation, a sense of victimhood and injustice, the desire to restore honour by inflicting injury on your former persecutors, are conditions of a profound lack of freedom.

What Moshe taught his people was this: You must live with the past but not in the past. Those who are held captive by anger against their former persecutors are captive still. Those who let their enemies define who they are, have not yet achieved liberty. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks said that he learned this from Holocaust survivors. He came to know them when he became a rabbi. They became one of the great inspirations of his life.

At first it was difficult to understand how they survived at all, how they lived with their memories, knowing what they knew and having seen what they saw. Many of them had lost their entire families. The world in which they grew up was gone. They had to begin again as strangers in a strange land.

Yet they were, and are, some of the most life affirming people he had ever met. What struck him most was that they lived without resentment. They did not seek revenge. They did not hate. They cared, more than anyone else he knew when other people were being massacred in Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo and Sudan.

They let their pain sensitise them to the pain of others. In later life they began to tell stories, especially for young people. They used to visit schools. Sometimes Rabbi Sacks went with them.

They spoke about what happened, and how they survived. But the fundamental message was not about the past at all. What they wanted young people to know was how precious freedom is, and how fragile.



Letting Go of Hate

by Simon Bentley

They spoke about what happened, and how they survived. But the fundamental message was not about the past at all. What they wanted young people to know was how precious freedom is, and how fragile. What a miracle it is that there is food to eat, windows you can open, gates you can walk out of, a future to look forward to.

They spoke about tolerance and how important it is to care for the people who are different from you. Never take freedom for granted. That was the message. Work for it, fight for it, stand up especially for minorities, and never give way to hate even when others do.

The late Viktor Frankl found that even in Auschwitz he could retain a sense of freedom and dignity.

Atonement is the ultimate expression of freedom because it brings together the two mental acts; repentance and forgiveness, that have the power to break the iron grip of the past. Repentance testifies to our ability to change. Forgiveness expresses a refusal to be held captive by ill-will.

Atonement is where divine and human freedom meet and create a new beginning. It is the act that defeats tragedy in the name of hope.

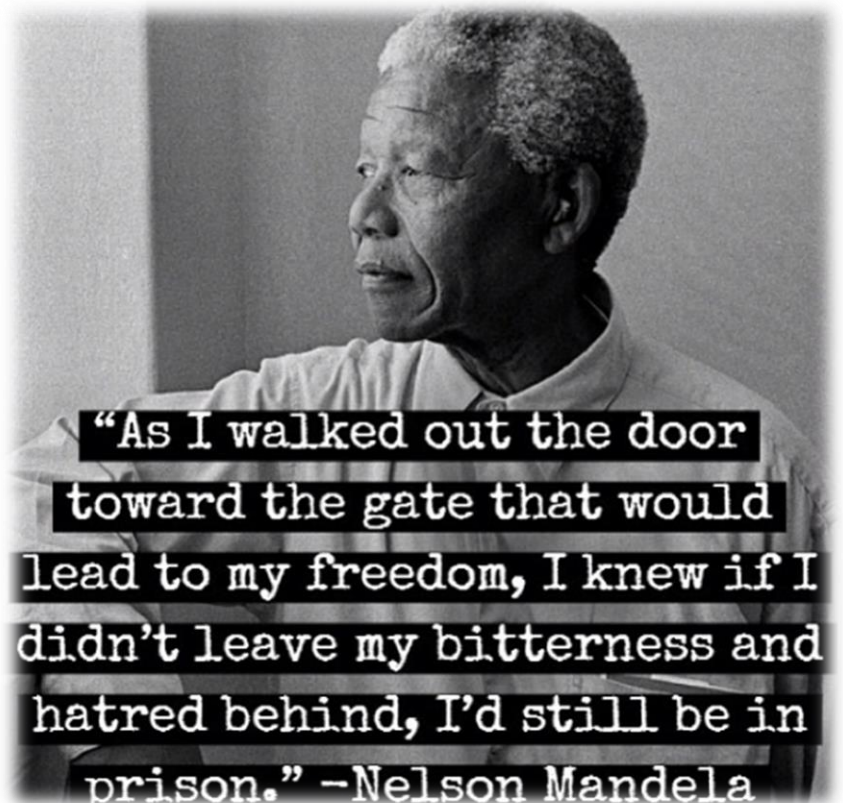
Hate and the blame culture go hand in hand, for they are both strategies of denial: 'It wasn't me, it was them, I acted in self-defence, I am the victim not the perpetrator.' The murder of the innocent then becomes a holy deed. Victims do need our support.

Taking responsibility for your own fate is not a luxury of the moral life, but a necessity. First build a future: that is how you redeem the past.

Freedom involves letting go of hate, because hate is the abdication of freedom.

That is what Moses taught those who were about to enter the Promised Land. Don't hate the people who persecuted you. Instead, learn from that experience how to build society without persecution.

It is what the Holocaust survivors taught Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: look forward, not back. Build a life, a family, a future, a hope. Hate makes us slaves; therefore, let it go. Do not Wage War on the children of darkness. Make sure instead you and your children are sources of light.





Yom Yerushalayim Celebration BBQ at the Katz's

Ashley and Karina Katz hosted a wonderful Yom Yerushalayim Bar B Q party at their house in late May. The weather was good, the event well attended and the food delicious. This was the first post Covid function where members could mix outside shul and was a great success.

The evening was enhanced by contributions about their experiences of the Six Day War by three of our members.

Moshe Langerman - himself born in Jerusalem in 1967 - recounted how the blinds in his family home bore shrapnel holes sustained in June 1967. But he recounted how the Six Day War included modern day miracles-many of them untold to this day. How, for example, the Egyptian High Command were all flying when the war began, and anti-aircraft defences were "turned off" by the Egyptians to avoid shooting down their own planes. Warnings of the imminent Israeli bombing of the Egyptian airfields was ignored because out of date warnings codes were given.



Henry Ehreich had his own recollection. Monday 5th June 1967 dawned bright and sunny in London. There had been a steady build-up of tension in the Middle East with Syria, Jordan and Egypt (the United Arab Republic) issuing multiple threats against Israel. Of course, the tension was felt mostly in Israel, but Jews in the Diaspora could not escape what was going on in the Holy Land. I recall that special sessions for the recitation of Tehillim were arranged at Mincha in the weeks before at the Shul where I davened in North London. I remember coming home from Shacharit on that fateful Monday at about 7.55am. My late mother greeted me in the kitchen with the "good" news that "something was going on!"

Here we need to insert a few words of background information. We are nowadays used to instant and constant news updates. In 1967 things were much different. The schedule of programmes on the BBC Home Service (now Radio 4) carried few formal News broadcasts.

Now back to the morning of Monday 5 June 1967. My late mother had just turned on the radio and the religious slot "Ten to Eight" (still broadcast nowadays as "Thought for the Day") had been cancelled. Of course, when the News came on at 8.00am, we heard, with trepidation, what was going on in Israel. I then left for work (which at the time was in Hatton Garden) and during the morning we tuned in to the news in French from RTF, since the BBC had no news until 1.00pm. I also went down from the office to buy an early edition of the Evening Standard only to find that the newspapers were all sold out!

As the BBC newsroom was preparing the 1.00pm news, they received a report that the entire Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian air forces had been destroyed on the ground and that, bar the shouting, the war was over and had already been won. The BBC refused to believe this report. Had they actually believed the report their news coup would have trumped every TV, radio and newspaper organization in the whole world! But they refused to believe the report. It was only on the BBC1 TV programme at 8.00pm that Robin Day gave this incredulous news.



Yom Yerushalayim Celebration BBQ at the Katz's

So, how did the BBC get this potential news coup? We must remember that the BBC reporter in Israel at the time was the much respected and hugely experienced Michael Elkins. Michael was born in New York to a traditionally Jewish family whose parents spoke Yiddish at home. Self-educated, he later fell in with some hoodlums in New York before moving to Los Angeles where he became a film scriptwriter. He moved to Europe and worked for the Office of Strategic Services (forerunner of the CIA). In 1947 he met future mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek and following this meeting, he organized illegal shipments of arms to the Haganah in Palestine. The FBI were soon on his case and, with his wife Martha, he fled to Israel. In 1956 Elkins began broadcasting with the CBS and covered the Suez crisis. He later joined the BBC whilst still freelancing for CBS and was the BBC's only reporter in Jerusalem for 17 years. Famous for his New York growling accent, he was the only BBC correspondent ever in Jerusalem, and, in addition without an anti-Israel bias.

Anyway, on the morning of the 5th June, there had been a cabinet meeting in the Knesset. As the ministers were leaving the cabinet office, they were met with a bevy of international news reporters, but nothing was given away and no comments made. Except that Michael Elkins, who, of course, understood perfect Ivrit, overheard two ministers saying that the three air forces had been destroyed. He called the BBC who did not believe him and the BBC Radio 4 one o'clock news went out without the story. He also wanted to call CBS, but the censors insisted that he hold back the story and when he eventually gave the news to CBS they also did not believe him at which point he resigned from CBS. Of course, he was later accused of bias for Israel seeing that he was Jewish, but, to their credit, the BBC stood by him until he retired in 1983. That is the story of the missed news scoop. The story emerged in a book written by years later Randolph Churchill, son of former Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and together with his son also called Winston S Churchill, called "The Six Day War" and the story appeared in the Appendix to the book which discussed news reporting of the Six Day War.

The BBC's "Daily service" programme for Monday 5th June 1967 included recitation of Psalm 33, verses 13-21.) "From heaven Hashem looks down. He sees all mankind. From His dwelling place He oversees all the inhabitants of the earth. He Who fashions their hearts together, who comprehends all their deeds. A king is not saved by a great army, nor is a hero rescued by great strength. Illusory is the horse for salvation, despite its great strength it provides no escape. Behold, the eye of Hashem is on those who fear Him, upon those who await His kindness. To rescue their souls from death, and to sustain them in famine. Our soul longed for Hashem – our help and our shield is He. For in Him will our hearts be glad, for in His Holy Name we trusted"

Very apt words on a very special day!

Linda Wolfe recalled a visit in 1967 just after the 6 Day War: "In fact, Moshe was not the only shul member to be in Yerushalaim in 1967. John and I spent our honeymoon there. We married in December 1967, and when we were planning our honeymoon we didn't consider Israel as we wanted to go somewhere where we would not have legions of friends and family. However, at that time talk was of peace and giving back land, and we so wanted to see the Old City, so we decided to ignore all the good advice. We would not have wanted to have missed the experience of that time so soon after the Six Day War, exploring the Old City, and particularly the Jewish Quarter, and seeing how the IDF had restored our holy places to us.

We had, of course, previously visited the parts of the Old City accessible from West Jerusalem and seen the original Chamber of the Holocaust in Migdal David. At night it was possible to see some of the buildings of the Old City from high points in West Jerusalem and you could catch glimpses of the city's walls where they were floodlit, but not much more. We didn't quite know what to expect as we walked from Zion Square down Gershon Agron Street as all we previously remembered was a huge wall. As we neared the bottom of the hill we could see that part of the wall was still standing, but there was a huge, jagged hole in the wall from top to bottom as if a huge bulldozer had driven straight through the wall from Gershon Agron.



Yom Yerushalayim Celebration BBQ at the Katz's

We picked our way over the rubble and found ourselves near the square just inside Sha'ar Yafo. It was like stepping back one thousand years. That part was the shuk, little shops with their offerings tumbling into the narrow streets. It was difficult to walk over the huge uneven stones – the large numbers of donkeys walking up and down, very heavily laden, were much more sure-footed. We did not see a single woman, and all the shopkeepers wore kaffiyehs. They were furtive and sullen and avoided our eyes – none of the forthright marketing you have now. There was plenty of fresh food, of good quality. There were some locally manufactured items which might be interesting for tourists, but there were very few tourists. There was a quiet and resigned atmosphere – none of the noisy shouts you hear in the shuk today.

We picked our way through the streets – they were full of people – and plenty of Israeli police and soldiers with the shopkeepers, so we felt quite secure. There were signposts already in place directing you to the main points of interest. We went to the Jewish Quarter, which was completely in ruins. The lovely arch of the Hurve Synagogue, now beautifully restored, was lying in chunks of stone on the floor. It was difficult to walk there because most of the buildings were no longer standing but were rubble in the streets. I am reminded of the sight when I see the recent news coverage of Mariupol in Ukraine and see the devastation of the city, and I mourn the many people who must have lost their lives in the fighting.

Finally, we came to the Kotel. There wasn't much to see as houses had been built up to the stones, but the Israelis had already started to take down the buildings. It seemed that they were using the same method as they had used on the wall at the bottom of Gershon Agron – a bulldozer straight through the middle.



We went for a tour to Har Moriah, to see the two mosques. There was a more pleasant atmosphere there amongst the people who came to pray than there was in the shuk. The decoration on the exterior of the Dome of the Rock is fabulous – blue tiles and the huge dome glinting in the sun.

It is difficult to put into words how different Yerushalayim looks today compared to the sights which greeted us in 1967. It was also difficult to comprehend how we could walk freely in the Old City. Previously, the Jordanians would regularly fire on Israeli convoys, particularly those travelling to the Israeli enclaves established after the War of Independence. Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus had to be abandoned in 1948 after the cessation of hostilities of the War of Independence. Although the site was guarded by Israeli personnel and the Jordanians were supposed to guarantee safe passage of the medical staff, in reality the convoys were under constant attack and various facilities in West Jerusalem were used instead.



When we visit now and see how the Old City is restored we are so grateful and humbled by everyone who cherished the dream of seeing Yerushalayim reunited and once again free for all Jews to visit and worship at the Kotel”.



HAMUSSAF

THE SUPPLEMENT OF THE HAMAGEN MAGAZINE



ARTS AND CRAFTS SUPPLEMENT

Contents

It may come as no surprise to discover that our community boasts many talented women with a wide-ranging and impressive list of artistic skills, and we decided to feature a section devoted to the particular passion of some of them - namely in the field of Arts and Crafts.

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Taylor Made

Fiona Taylor

Fiona Taylor is a practising doctor; she works in London as a Consultant Liaison Psychiatrist and specialises in treating patients with co-existing complex medical conditions. Married to Richard and with three young children she relaxes by expressing her skill and dedication to sewing and knitting and fashion design.

"I began knitting blankets while a young pupil at North London Collegiate School, but my interest was only rekindled when I was pregnant for the first time and decided to knit a baby cardigan and matching hat from a John Lewis pattern. In truth it has always fired my imagination and I just love the creativity it stimulates, and I have a hundred different ideas in my mind of clothes I wish to design and create. It's just a question of finding the time.

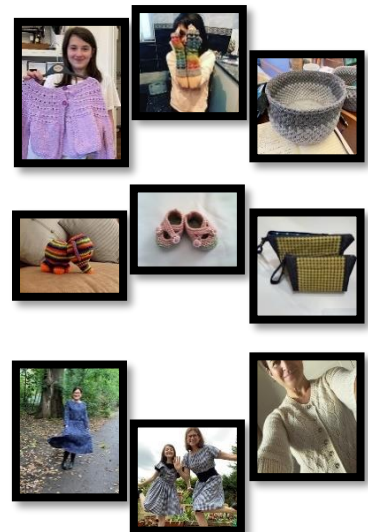
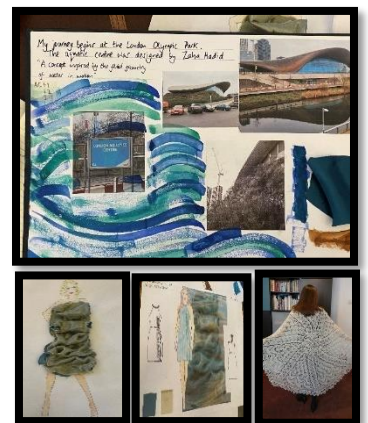
Planning each garment takes time and producing it can take several days as I fit it in between a demanding work schedule.

I knit while watching TV - to Richard's gentle annoyance as the needles clatter and I often fail to keep up with the programme's storyline. During the first lockdown I devoted more time to this hobby and began sewing. I enrolled at a course for Fashion Design and Pattern Cutting in Camden, and I am currently working towards the second stage of diploma - which could allow me to take a degree course.

I am a keen member of Ravelry a website dedicated to knitters, crocheters and fibre artists. I work with wool cotton, hemp and other materials and collect esoteric yarns in my travels around the country. Some wools from local craft shops in villages in Wales and the Lake district still smell of sheep. I have worked with specialist wools -such as those from Iceland- which are especially warm. Other yarns are multi coloured. Knitting is really quite simple- only a couple of types of stiches are used- but the creative process is most demanding"

Fiona then produced part of her College Folder which demonstrated how the creative process develops. The dress design below resulted from Fiona's visit to the Olympic Stadium and the flowing design of the Zaha Hadid's iconic the Aquatics Centre. And the fluid motion of aquatic animals such as whales and waves on the sea.

"Our daughters have adopted knitting and D'vorah is really quite accomplished in her own right and proudly models the clothes I have designed for her as well as showing her own work".





Teacher, Artist, Ceramicist, and Calligrapher Leila Behrman

Leila is an artist and teacher, and her wide portfolio of work extends to teaching art to children. She is an accomplished ceramicist and combining her skills in painting and Hebrew calligraphy she produces colourful Ketubot.

Leila originally trained as a primary school teacher but always pursued her love of art and after retiring from class teaching began to specialise in teaching art to adult beginners (called "Art for the Terrified") and also to groups of children. Leila is very enthusiastic about how young children become engaged in art appreciation and how they develop their own individual creativity. She told HaMagen "Its therapeutic as well."

At one stage she developed her talents for sculpting human heads but after a shiur she was persuaded that reproduction of the human form was not the Jewish tradition, so she began to develop her skills in other directions. These representations are part of her earlier work.

She attended ceramics classes at the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute and when it closed at the beginning of Covid she bought herself a pottery wheel and is planning to start children's ceramics classes in the autumn. Her ceramics are delightful and attractive.

Her intricate and personal Ketubot are a highlight of her recent work. Some take up to three months to prepare and finalise. Having completed 49 Ketubot -most to the personal design of the engaged couple she is about to complete her half century. The style she adopts is known as "Yerushalmi" but points out that the wording differs slightly for Israeli Ketubot where extra wording is included. She explained that she is self-taught and has adapted her own-possibly unique style. To ensure the margins on each side of the Ketubah are justified she writes the words from left to right (Hebrew is of course written from right to left!) i.e., she writes backwards! This ensures proper spacing (as each word is not blocked by her hand) and avoids smudging the ink. Each Ketubah is intricately surrounded by water colour patterns -often flowers or abstract designs- chosen by the parties.

"At present I teach at Beis Yaakov one day a week, undertake some private teaching and conduct a class at Jewish Care in Golders Green. If any Magen Avot members are interested to explore their hidden artistic talents I will be only too happy to talk to them. And I will be truly delighted to discuss personalised Ketubot with any engaged couples getting married soon and have places available for childrens' classes in September".

Some years ago, a six-year-old student of Leila's produced his own interpretation of "Sunflowers" by Vincent Van Gogh: His name - Yoni Golker!

Leila can be reached at: leilabehrman@gmail.com and her works can be seen on her insta handle: @leilabehrman.



Artist and Designer Karina Katz



Karina's style is eclectic and reminiscent of the "pointillist" style of French Impressionists such as Georges Seurat. Themes of Israel, Judaica and her homes (past and present) clearly enthuse her.

"As a child I drew all the time but when Art course clashed with History at school I dropped formal art study so in effect I am wholly self-taught. I trained to teach English and later taught TEFL students and used cartoons to illustrate points I was trying to put across. Until we moved to our present home I did not have the space to devote myself to my love of art but now I have a small studio and lockdown was the catalyst for my being able to finally express myself. My teaching work ceased and for the first time I had the time and space to give free reign to my passion.

During the depths of Covid I found this outlet both therapeutic, relaxing and productive. As you can see I am drawn to certain recurring themes- Israel and its holy sites, Jewish Festivals and places which have special meaning for me- such as our home and my parents' home.

[Readers are referred to the front and back covers of the main HaMagen Magazine]

I have no chosen style although I do agree the items presented here do hint of the Pointillist style. Rather pictures evolve and I have no idea how then will end when I start the process. But the all-pervading feature which I think comes through is my passion for colour. I love bright and radiant colours and use many shades.

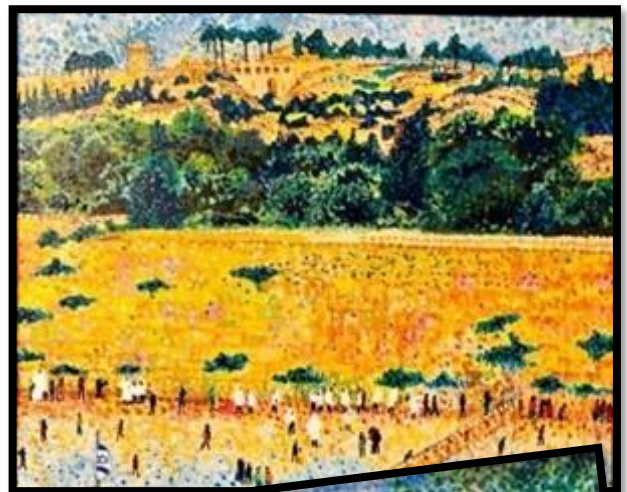
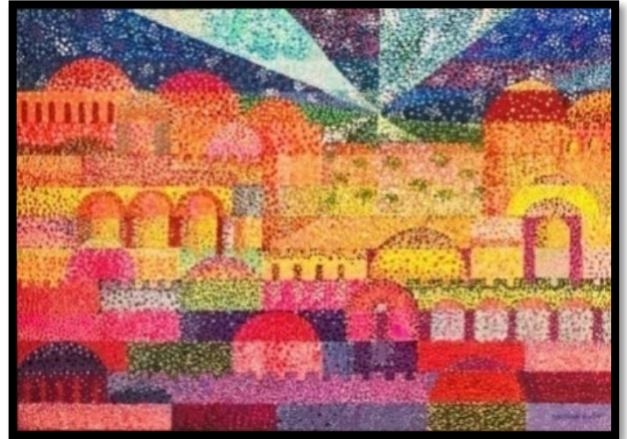
I start with the overall design, add patches or blocks of colour and then apply the "points" to highlight shading, depth, perspective and dramatic effect.

This picture of the Kotel deliberately sets the scene within the context of the land behind on which the Temple once stood"

And her own home also features

"I have not yet exhibited my work but may now be encouraged to do so having taken the plunge and shown my work to readers of HaMagen."

Anyone interested in exploring her work further can contact Karina on: karina@katzdomain.com.





Modern Jewellery Designer Michele White

Michele lives in Birmingham but as mother to our own Sara Spizzichino she often comes to Magen Avot as a welcome visitor - in essence, an honorary member!

Michele is an acclaimed British contemporary jewellery designer producing innovative and progressive collections in precious metals and gemstones. She set up her own Jewellery design business in the famous "Jewellery quarter" of Birmingham some years ago and she tells her story here.

"I can't remember a time when I didn't make things. When I was at primary school I embroidered a matinee jacket for the baby of one of our teachers. As a teenager I was always wanting to knit something but as I couldn't afford the wool and anyway didn't want so many sweaters I answered an advert and knitted fair isle sweaters for a shop in London selling children's clothes. In a strange way this led to my learning to make jewellery many years later. Early in our marriage we acquired a white Persian cat and because she had a long white coat I needed to comb her every day. Therefore, I had bags full of this hair. I felt the need to be learning something new so decided to spin this hair and knit something from it. After queuing for hours to enrol in a spinning evening class I reached the desk and was told there were no evening classes in spinning.....only day classes which I was unable to do at that time. Looking down the list my eye lighted on jewellery, so that was it! I wasn't going to go home empty handed! My parents were both very artistic. My mother a very talented dressmaker who taught herself pattern cutting, and my father was a lithographic artist who, once he retired, painted in oils, watercolours etc. The secondary school I went to was very academic so I didn't really get a chance to do anything arty until I was in the sixth form but there I discovered clay and later became an art teacher for a short time until the first of our three children were born. Fast forward to the jewellery evening class. After two terms the class was closed 'to save X thousand pounds a year'. I managed to transfer to the famous jewellery school in Birmingham where we now lived. An interest in minerals and gems led to a gemmology qualification and a visit to an exhibition of the work of René Lalique led me into making the sort of work you can see here.

It wasn't only the art nouveau style of the work which attracted me, it was also the philosophy. Although he made work for the rich and famous it was the beauty of the constituents which was important to him, not whether they were precious or expensive. All his pieces tell a story and, in some ways, so do all of mine.

I also teach my grandchildren how to knit.

Here are the website details for my own work www.michelewhite.com and my gallery www.artisan-alchemy.co.uk.

Please email me at any time on: info@michelewhite.com or better still come and visit next time you are in Birmingham."



Michele White being presented to HRH Prince Charles in 2000 at the opening of the new gallery of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists. She was elected President in 2005.





Portraitist Ruth Ehreich

Ruth took up painting only recently and has embarked on painting her extended family and here is a sample of her work - an excellent likeness of her daughter Esther! See who else you can spot from the paintings below....



Ruth has always been creative and interested specifically in painting from an early age attaining her O'level in Art. Ruth also used to attend an evening art class before her children were born. Recently when Ruth moved from full time to part time in her job she took up again a daytime once a week art class in portrait painting.

During lockdown Ruth embarked on a project to paint each of her children and grandchildren. Ruth managed to complete 22 portraits in total and is now painting her married grandson's wife.

Her proudest moment was painting the current youngest member of the family – Charlie!





Jubilation by Malcolm Brookes z"l (With thanks to Mrs Eileen Brookes)

Written on the Occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of HM The Queen

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary, born in 1926 — now eighty-six years old,
Oops! Should not have said — a lady's age should not be told.

Educated at home, in what subject did she excel?
Probably "Queen's English, she speaks it so well.

Beautiful Princess Elizabeth, with bombs dropping, showed courage and grit
During the Second World War by joining the Auxiliary Territorials to do her bit.

In 1947 excitement and romance came into her young life,
She fell for dashing naval officer Philip and became his wife.

Happily married, Princess Elizabeth with Prince Philip at her side
Was on holiday in Kenya when her father George VI died.

It was the 6th of February 1952,
A Monarch's heavy responsibility she would now assume and do.

In Westminster Abbey, in 1953, Elizabeth was crowned Queen,
People rushed to buy their first TV to watch it on the screen.

Elizabeth II became constitutional monarch of seven independent states it's true,
And head of the growing number of Commonwealth nations too.

Recognised by so many diverse people it can be seen,
It is not only us who respect and love our Queen.

Prince Philip, as the Duke of Edinburgh became known,
In his inimitable way has been a great support to the throne.

The couple touring the world on the royal yacht Britannia made a great impact,
The Duke of Edinburgh became well known for his charming lack of tact.

They had four children during the following years.
Like most families, children bought them pride, joy and some tears.

The Queen follows her mother's love of a good horse,
And the sporting challenge of the racecourse.

Corgis, the Queen's favourite dogs, in the Royal Household can be found,
With legs so short their bodies almost touch the ground.

Whether sunniest day or blackest clouds
Our Queen is welcomed by adoring, cheering crowds.

In the face of such adulation how does she behave?
With a gracious smile and her famous royal wave.

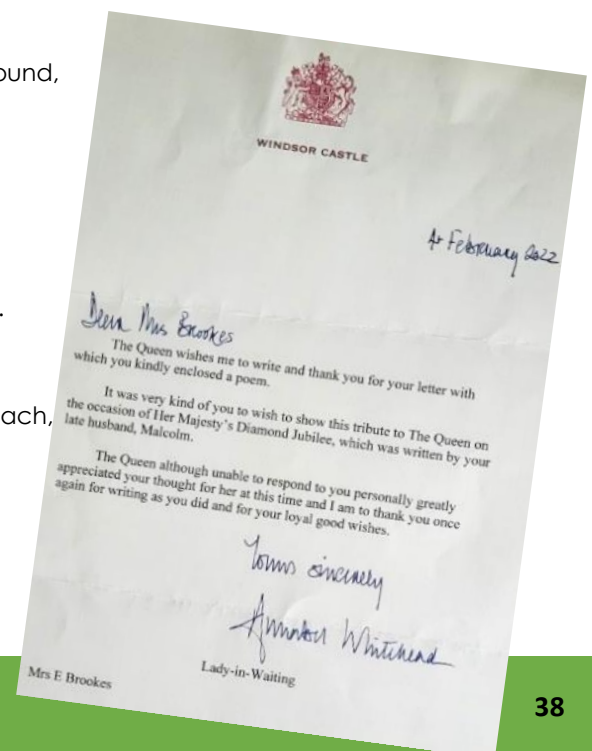
This loyalty, love and support we share,
Shabbat and Holy days for Queen and Royal Family we say a prayer.

We wish her "long life" — if she passes 100, hoping she may,
Will she send herself a telegram to mark the day?

Head of the Armed Forces and the Church although she doesn't preach,
Each year the whole world eagerly awaits the "Queen's Speech".

Years of ruling her people without fuss,
Loved because, although royal, she's one of us.

Her 25th and 50th jubilees were celebrated joyously by the nation,
But the diamond 60 will be celebrated with even greater jubilation!





How the German high command allowed Rabbi Schneersohn to escape Warsaw in 1939 by Julian Pollard

On Oct. 5, 1939 Hitler triumphantly reviewed his troops in Warsaw. It was that day that the fate of more than 3 million Jews in Poland was largely sealed.

Among those trapped in Warsaw was the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, and his extended family. Leaders of Chabad in the United States set about the difficult process of rescuing their beloved leader from the Nazis; what they developed was an extraordinary plan to bring him to the U.S. in the months following the German military victory.

It depended on international diplomacy, secret intelligence work and cooperation from the highest levels of the Roosevelt administration. However, the plan would not have succeeded if it did not have the support of some of the most prominent Nazis in Berlin. In "Rescued from the Reich – How One of Hitler's Soldiers Saved The Lubavitcher Rebbe" by Southern Methodist University historian Brian Mark Rigg, the story has been revealed.

Chabad had been in America since the mid-1920s, and the Rebbe had visited in 1929 and met President Herbert Hoover at the White House. At the start of World War II, though, the Lubavitchers were a mere shadow of the rich and politically influential worldwide movement it has become in recent decades.

Still, leaders of Chabad were able to find the support of prominent Americans including Sol Bloom, the head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives; Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis; and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, whose wife had a Jewish father – early in their campaign to save the Rebbe.

The United States was officially neutral in 1939, and thus high-ranking State Department official Robert Pell – who had good contacts in Berlin – was able to convince Helmuth Wolthat, the head of Germany's Four Year national economic plan, to help. Wolthat found a sympathetic ear in Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, a career military officer, who led the Abwehr-Germany's intelligence service.

Canaris had several trusted officers under his command who were part-Jewish; they were what the Nazis described as Mischlings, meaning they had been "aryanized" under Germany's racial laws. Canaris chose three of them – including Major Ernst Bloch, who had a Jewish father – to work with the Abwehr office in Warsaw. The trio's task was to find and safely rescue the Rebbe and his family before the Nazi SS or the Gestapo murdered them.

It would take them nearly two months in their quiet search through the rubble of Warsaw to finally locate the Chabad leader. Meanwhile in the U.S., Chabad officials and their lawyer Max Rhoades began the difficult process of securing visas for the Rebbe.



Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn pictured in New York, which he visited in 1929.

PHOTO/courtesy Bob Bahr





How the German high command allowed Rabbi Schneersohn to escape Warsaw in 1939

by Julian Pollard

It was a quest that was complicated by often anti-Semitic officers of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and hostile American diplomats in Europe and the United States. What's more, the Chabad officials also needed the cooperation of a reluctant Latvian government, as the Rebbe was a citizen of that still independent Baltic nation.

In what could only be described as an extraordinary – even miraculous – accomplishment, the Rebbe, his family and several of his followers finally left Warsaw under Major Bloch's and the Nazi government's Abwehr protection on Dec. 22, 1939. They travelled by train through Poland to Berlin, passed through hostile document checks by the SS, stayed the night in Berlin's Jewish Federation offices and then journeyed to Latvia and ultimately to neutral Sweden.

Their visas were finally granted in early January 1940. Ironically, it took longer to get the visas from the American government than to rescue the Rebbe from the Nazis, but on March 19, 1940, the Rebbe, his wife, several family members and a few other Lubavitcher Hasids finally set foot in America and began their work to rebuild the Chabad movement in its new home. Rabbi Schneersohn's beloved library of 135 crates of books was saved, too, and arrived from Warsaw a few months later.

Despite a severe heart condition and multiple sclerosis, the Rebbe continued to work tirelessly to lay the groundwork for a vibrant post-war Chabad. He died in 1950 at the age of 70 and was succeeded by his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, whom he had helped rescue from Vichy France.

The evidence that Canaris was playing a double game grew, and at the insistence of Heinrich Himmler, Hitler dismissed Canaris and abolished the Abwehr in February 1944. Some weeks later, Canaris was put under house arrest. He was released in June 1944 but rearrested on 23 July 1944 on suspicion of involvement in the July plot to kill Hitler.

No direct evidence of his involvement in the plot was discovered, but two of the men under suspicion as conspirators who were known in Canaris's circle, shot themselves.

Investigations dragged on inconclusively until April 1945, when orders were received to dispose of the various remaining prisoners of the plot.

Canaris's personal diary was discovered and presented to Hitler in early April 1945, which implicated him in the conspiracy. Canaris was placed on trial by an SS summary court. He was charged with treason, convicted, and sentenced to death.

Together with his deputy general, Hans Oster, the military jurist General Karl Sack, the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Ludwig Gehre, Canaris was humiliated before witnesses.

Canaris was led to the gallows naked and executed on 9 April at the Flossenbürg concentration camp, just weeks before the end of the European war.

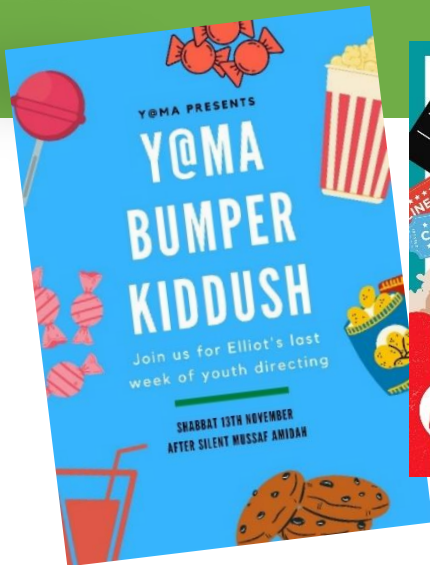
For his role, Chabad have petitioned Yad Vashem, to have Canaris declared an official Righteous Gentile. So far this has not been granted.



Memorial at Flossenbürg concentration camp to the German resistance members executed on 9 April 1945.



Y@MA Update by Sophie Harris



Y@MA has grown and flourished over the last year at Magen Avot.

Our groups are based on Shabbat morning, where we explore ideas in the Parasha through learning, debates, discussions, games and related activities. We have formed a strong group of passionate young people eager to get thinking, and for involvement in their community - beyond the Sushi kiddushim!

We have also enjoyed some activities in addition to our regular Shabbat sessions, including an incredible Tikkun Leil, a movie night, a games evening and a Friday Night Dinner and oneg at the Kenigsbergs.

Magen Avot has enjoyed seeing our youth become an active part of igniting their own religion. We can't wait to continue in the coming year, where Rosh Hashana and the Yamim noraim will kick off a new year of youth involvement.





Book Review: “Mother’s Boy” by Howard Jacobson

This affectionate but honest retrospect of Jacobson's formative years in working class 1940's Manchester is full of his trademark humour and entertains at every page. Jacobson's books are invariably suffused with his Jewish roots and how those influences have informed the Booker Prize winning author he became. Indeed, he concludes that his efforts to finally become the writer he always wanted to be only crystallised when he embraced his Jewish identity from which he had been running for years.

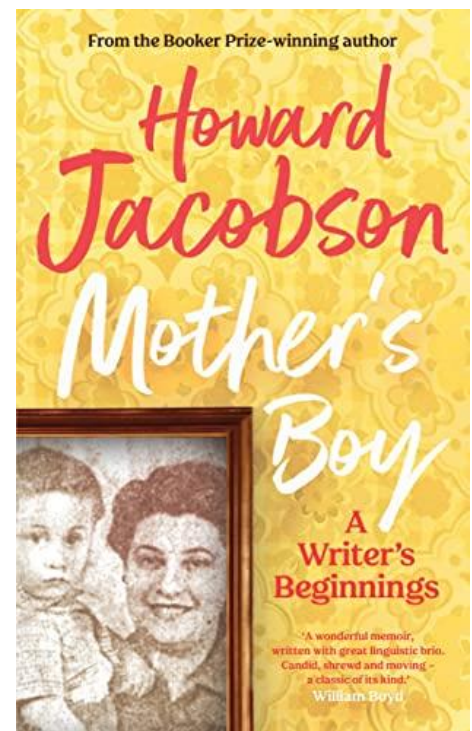
His novels (Kalooki Nights, The Finkler Question, J: A Novel, Shylock is My Name) and his non-fiction works (Roots Schmoots and When will Jews be forgiven the Holocaust?) invariably return to the core of his literary endeavour – what it means to be Jewish. We quickly learn that it goes far beyond religious observance (in his case almost non-existent). What some may perceive as intangible ties of culture and heritage, Jacobson reduces to personal anecdotes about his family- some flattering, others less so- but always retold with warmth and a bittersweet empathy. Mother's Boy also examines the motifs which permeate all his works- a self-deprecating guilt, persistent shame (but also) pride about his (non observed) faith and, ever, present antisemitism.

Raised by his mother, grandmother and Aunt Joyce, his mercurial father was absent for much of the time being a regimental tailor, market stall holder, a taxi driver, and bizarrely even a balloonist (an entertainer who manipulates balloons into animals for children- not an aviator!) and magician. Tales of his father's alleged wartime derring-do at the Battle of Arnhem in 1944 do not cut much ice with Jacobson. “He was a tailor” he sceptically quips.

His father did “see action” however by attending anti Moseley Rallies and aiming a punch at the Leader of the British Fascists - he missed and injured the horse on which Moseley was sitting.

He recalls his Bar Mitzvah speech (“my mother wrote half of it”) telling his family that “my cup of happiness is overflowing to be with you today...”. That he concedes was a lie. “Everyone knows I've never had a cup of happiness let alone one that overflows but, for a barmitzvah boy, allowances are made”.

His interest in love of literature and writing was sparked by his mother and also her sister- his spinster aunt Joyce. Her encouragement during his school days has left a permanent legacy but in his teens he became ashamed to be seen with this old-fashioned woman and increasingly shunned her. He recalls this now with shame and disgust.





Book Review: "Mother's Boy" by Howard Jacobson

As a child he had accompanied his father on the market stalls of Manchester where stall holders would display their wares. Some had the gift of the gab (the pitchers)- others (like Jacobson) were "shtummers" who couldn't offer the usual salesman patter and merely let the goods sell themselves.

From the age of 13 he began to excel and revel in table tennis (explored in "The Mighty Walzer")-representing his County, Country and University and reaching the top 10 UK Juniors. That such success barely achieved any recognition at his school is accounted for as part of the antisemitism he witnessed there. After a return from Jewish holiday absences one teacher would snidely remark that his fellow Jewish pupils had "a San Tropez suntan"- the clear implication that they enjoyed expensive vacations or that God caused the sun to shine on them even indoors.

Casual antisemitism was rife. Sometimes hit by stones thrown by "the prefab boys" from beyond Heaton Park or sworn at in the street and told "to go back where you come from" he replied, "Do you mean Altrincham?" He takes such incidents in his stride without long lasting bitterness.

School and university were unhappy experiences. Jacobson appears a shy introvert and slightly neurotic loner. Never meeting the exacting standards of being a "man" that his father had set, his romantic expectations of the female cohort at Cambridge were rarely met. There the "melancholy boy" grew into a "fully fledged depressive man".

Nonetheless he meets a hairdresser from Manchester and falls madly in love with her and after a conversion ceremony (her father was a successful Jewish Manchester stall trader, and her mother was.....named Mary) the happy couple marry and depart for Yenevelt- in this case Australia.

The rest of his life plays out- divorce, remarriage and a hugely successful literary career. Beneath it all we understand the forces which have shaped this unique observer of Jews and Jewish values from the perspective of his Manchester childhood. Always entertaining and amusing, his anecdotes ring true and familiar and will engage the reader of this excellent and absorbing book.

Julian Pollard





MA Year in Posters





MA Year in Photos





The Existence of the House of Ya'akov and the Existence of the House of my Father by Elkan Adler

My father - Bernie Adler, Yissochor ben Meir o'h (known to my sister and I as Pappi or Pa) - passed away when I was quite young. I have only limited memories of him. I remember that he was a thinking man, and my mother has told me that he was interested in philosophy – existentialism in particular. We have a lovely black and white photo of him from when he was studying medicine in Lausanne in the post war years. He is sitting in a café with a fine-looking bowtie. If I let my imagination run a little, I can well see him sitting there debating existentialist ideas and gesticulating with his cigarette as if he were deep in conversation with Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Albert Camus in Café Flore... Who knows.. That is actually part of my problem – I have no way of engaging with him, debating with him or asking him what his thinks.

This article is based on a shiur that I originally gave on Shabbes morning in Magen Avot shul on Parshas Miketz, 2 weeks before my father's 35th Jahrzeit. It is an attempt to look at the path to greatness which Yosef, Yehuda and Moshe took and considering whether existentialism can help us understand their stories and our stories, a little better. In this, maybe some kind of dialogue is created in which my father would have been interested. I am no Torah scholar or le havdil expert in 20th century philosophy, but I hope that this will be thought provoking, nonetheless.

Some may question the validity or the correctness of trying to apply a philosophy such as existentialism to Torah commentary – or for that matter any line of thinking which is not embedded in our mesorah/tradition, particularly in this case when the existentialist philosophers I refer to were agnostics or hardened atheists. My approach however is one which looks to apply principles espoused by what today is commonly known as "Modern Orthodoxy" and I think can be traced through Rav Soloveitchik, Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, the Rambam and indeed much earlier. Does ben Zoma not say "Who is wise? He who learns from every person as it says (Psalm 119) "From all my teachers I grew wise)" "בן זומא אומר, איזהו חכם, הלומד מכל אדם, שנאמר (תהלים קיט) "מכל מלמדי השכלתי כי עדותיך שיתיה לי". Here is not the place to discuss the Modern Orthodox Weltanschauung but for what it's worth I think that Existential concepts developed by in particular Sartre help us (or at least helped me) to understand a different angle in the Torah's account of Yosef, Yehuda and Moshe, which is what I would like to present here.

As part of researching this article I have spent many hours reading up on Existentialism and its proponents. I can certainly guess what would have attracted my father or any thinking person to be honest. It's breath taking and so a word perhaps too on Existentialism and in particular Sartre's philosophy. Sartre famously said that "existence precedes essence". Having found myself alive in a certain existence, I go on to create my own essence (who I am). As Sartre said in his lecture Existentialism is a Humanism: "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards".

We are all born into a certain condition, but the challenge of Existentialism is to recognise that this condition or set of circumstances should not define us. Neither does anyone else have the right to define us in any such way. If we don't live in a way which stems from this freedom but on the contrary simply continue in a role defined for us by others, by society etc. we are living in "bad faith" or "mauvais foi". This sense of existential freedom is on the one hand totally liberating but on the other comes with great responsibility as we recognise that we must assume the burden of our own choices. The freedom to act and respond in the given circumstances and the resulting unavoidable need to take responsibility for our actions, is at the core of the existential ideal. And, I would argue, a Torah way of life.



The Existence of the House of Ya'akov and the Existence of the House of my Father

by Elkan Adler

Yosef

My starting point is an alternative explanation given by Rav Yoel ben Nun to the famous question posed by the Ramban as to why Yosef never contacted his father once he had risen to power as Paroh's second in command (if not before). Now is not the place to go into this in detail but in short, Rav Yoel argues that until Yosef began to put the pieces of the puzzle together during his conversations with his brothers (Parshas Miketz) he was under the impression that his kidnapping and sale was sanctioned from the Highest levels. After all, in each of the 2 preceding generations, at least one child did not stay part of the covenantal family, tasked with the destiny of becoming the "Chosen People". None of Yishmoel, the children of Keturah or Esav received the brocho of Avrohom passing on the task of spreading ethical monotheism. If that was the case, then Yosef assumed that he too was deemed not to have made that cut and was thus "out". After all, his father told him to go to Doshon to see his brothers and they promptly threw him into a pit. Was that not the end of his family and spiritual ties?

In that context, nothing was keeping Yosef to his father's house – neither physically, philosophically nor spiritually. He was quite alone and alienated. Free to design his own behaviours. How would he respond? Who would see him if he gave in to the advances of a married Mrs. Potiphar? Who would know? Further, who would know if he decided to seek revenge on his brothers when they presented themselves to him years later – indeed as he first threatened by putting them all in prison? If, as Rav Yoel suggests, Yosef thought that he had been cast out – there would be no one to hold him to account. Now as Viceroy of Egypt second only to Paroh he was free – free of the expectations of his father's house and his father's God....

This is where Yosef distinguishes himself I believe. He became no longer simply the dreamer, the adolescent who was dressed up by his father and who seemed to lack the emotional intelligence to build relationships with his brothers – and possibly also not with Hashem. After all, until he is sold, in no account which Yosef gives, does he mention God once. This changes from the time he reaches his nadir. Once in Egypt until his death he mentions God more than any other person in the Torah, referring to Him even when he stands as a disgraced prisoner before Paroh. Yosef moves and grows to become a person who follows what is right – not because he has been brought up that way or because of his family's expectations but because he decides to define his essence as a God-fearing ethical person.

I heard a wonderful explanation by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom of Yosef's dreams which I think illustrates Yosef's development here. Recall that Yosef dreamt that the brothers' sheaves bowed down to his and the 11 stars (initially thought to represent his family) also bowed down to him. Firstly, let us note that part of the ambiguity here is whether the dreams are in fact prophetic. The Tenach has no qualms in saying when a message is clearly the word of God or a prophecy but that is not the case here. Yosef's brothers do not take them for prophetic of course and his father also seems to have doubts. How will Yosef respond? Initially these seem to be taken by him as a sign of power over the rest of the family however by the time his brothers come to see him and he begins to understand what the true cause of his abduction was and where his father stands on all of this, Yosef learns a different and more ethical interpretation. Let us remember that in the Tenach, bowing is not always obsequious. It can also denote acknowledgment of responsibility or supervision. Ya'akov's family were shepherds – why was Yosef dreaming about sheaves of wheat? Wheat symbolised the staple food of the time. In his position as Viceroy of Egypt, Yosef found himself in a position of economic strength. His sheaf stands tall. He ruled over the breadbasket of the ancient near eastern world. His brothers came to him in a time of extreme famine and were therefore bowed. Now how would Yosef react? Were the dreams, dreams of power or responsibility? At this point he chooses ethically and sees them as an opportunity to take responsibility for his family and provide them with food and survival.



The Existence of the House of Ya'akov and the Existence of the House of my Father

by Elkan Adler

Likewise, the dream concerning the stars. If we think about the Bereishis narrative thus far – stars remind us of Hashem's promise to Avrohom that Am Yisroel would be like the stars of the Heaven. As opposed to the physical sand of the sea, the stars connote a spiritual theme. Again, Yosef now understood the dream as one of responsibility and not power. He saw this as a call to take responsibility for the spiritual welfare of his family and so settled them in Goshen and far from the corrupt Egyptian city centres where the brothers and families may soon have been assimilated in Egyptian culture.

The Torah therefore describes Yosef as developing into Yosef HaTzadik. Yosef who stands up and is counted as an ethical person as an ethical leader as someone who in the freedom of the ability to choose, chooses the just way and saves his family and thereby partners with God in saving the nation too.

Yehuda

I think a similar trajectory can be traced in Yehuda's life – albeit his fall is to a darker ethical place. Following Yosef's sale, the Torah switches focus to Yehuda "וַיֵּרֶד יְהוּדָה מֵאֶת אָחָיו" "And Yehuda descended from his brothers" Rashi (following the midrash Tanchuma) suggests that the phrase refers to a metaphoric lowering of Yehuda's status after the sale. When the brothers saw their father's grief, they regretted their actions, and blamed Yehuda for being the instigator of the sale. R"Y Bekhor Shor and the Tzeror HaMor similarly connect the opening to the aftermath of the sale but suggests that Yehuda lowered himself; he could not bear the anguish he had caused his father and decided to move out of the house. I will not repeat the story here but after losing 2 sons who married Tamar in succession, he forbids his last son from marrying her, leaving her to be a type of agunah – not able to marry anyone else and in a state of limbo. The story here is not a happy one but is a story of low moral values and dysfunctional family. As already mentioned, Yehuda seems to have removed himself or been forced out from his family and again – like Yosef I would argue alone. Far from his father's home we watch how Yehuda after initially sinking to an ethical low, tries to stand up to the moral challenges his life presents him with and at first does not seem to do well. He does not seem to care for Tamar's situation at all and also has no qualms in seeking out (who he thinks is) the services of a prostitute.

So, when Yehuda declares Tamar guilty for becoming pregnant with "another man" are we really so surprised that he summarily condemns her to death? Who cares about another Tamar after all? And who is there to observe his decision? He is an Outsider in this society and far away from his own. We are then most very surprised when upon Yehuda understanding Tamar's message to him and acknowledging his own responsibility for the situation, he steps up and saves her instead. Trampling on his own reputation to save an innocent. The pesukim hint to us that the parallels with the sale of Yosef were too strong – the deception involving clothing (Yosef's cloak dipped in blood to fool Ya'akov and the dressing up by Tamar as a prostitute to fool him) and the words used by Tamar "Haker Noh" being exactly the same as Yehuda used to Ya'akov forcing him to look that the cloak dripping in blood to acknowledge (what Yehuda knew to be a lie) that Yosef had been torn apart by an animal – leading to the years of irreconcilable anguish of his father. At that moment, Yehuda decided who he was going to be - what ethical choices he was going to make, and he stepped up and claimed that Tamar was more righteous. And so was created the Davidic and messianic line.

Once on this trajectory, Yehuda seems to return to his father's house and becomes the paradigm for someone who is able to pick himself up from sin and soar (so like his descendant David ha'Melekh), displaying his mettle when stepping in to save the falsely accused Binyamin.



The Existence of the House of Ya'akov and the Existence of the House of my Father by Elkan Adler

It is to that saving of Binyomin by Yehuda that we now turn. Yehuda's speech to the unrecognised Yosef/Egyptian Viceroy is worthy of deep study. It is multi layered, deep, strategic and beautiful.

For our purposes I would like to pick up on a couple of points which I believe demonstrate that Yehuda is no longer trying to change the dynamic of Ya'akov's family and the status of the children of Ya'akov's most loved wife Rochel (Yosef and Binyomin) nor is he trying to seek glory for himself – rather he accepts the context in which he exists but categorically decides to be the master of his own essence, follow the moral path and save Binyomin and not allow the second of Rochel's sons to be lost to Ya'akov.

A word here on Ya'akov's relationship with his children. I think this is an incredibly difficult topic to try and unpick and this is certainly not the place to try. The Pshat presents a man who has a favoured wife who gives birth to 2 favoured children Yosef and Binyomin. In particular the elder Yosef to whom the special cloak had been given. Many of the classic commentators and midrashim take a very dim view of this. Some (e.g., the Abarbanel) going so far as to blame the Egyptian servitude on Ya'akov's actions (the favouritism led to jealousy on the part of the other brothers, who set into action the chain of events ending up with Yosef and then the rest of the family coming down and living in Egypt and ultimately being enslaved). I think the Torah's report of the interaction with Ya'akov during the famine and Yehuda's speech makes it very clear that Yehuda was cognisant of the fact that this ongoing favouritism of Rachel's children still influenced Ya'akov's actions. To give an example, in Berieshis 42/38, in response to Reuven's plea (which we assume all the brothers became aware of) to allow Binyomin to return with them to Egypt per the Viceroy's demand to secure more food as well as Shimon's release, Ya'akov's first response is "My son shall not go down with you [to return to Egypt] because his brother is dead, and he is the only one left". In light of the other 9 brothers standing there that is a rather shocking response – particularly when one bears in mind that Shimon, another son was still being held captive pending Binyomin's arrival. Are the other brothers not also Ya'akov's sons? Do they not all have equal rights? Well, the answer seems to be yes technically but no in terms of importance to their father.

I would argue here that Yehuda has the second realisation in his context. He is not as important to his father as Yosef and Binyomin. Neither are his other siblings, the children of Leah or Ya'akov's other brothers. He is alienated from his father and maybe his brothers still too. He is in a way quite alone. His family is broken, his father doesn't value him or his mother as much as others, one brother is in prison, another is about to be thrown into prison.... But how does Yehuda react? Who could judge him now for shrugging and walking away? Yehuda's answer is that notwithstanding that he is free to leave Binyomin to his fate and that his existential context would justify walking away, he defines his essence as a moral being, one driven to do the correct thing, learning from the past – and so he steps up and puts himself on the line to save Binyomin and his father from the loss of his other favourite son.

All the time though in the background, we hear his cry to his father. His short speech mentions the word father 14 times! Counting other words which sound similar too, if we listen, we hear him call out "Aba, Aba, Aba". Take 44/32 as a small example "Ki avdecho orav es hana'ar meim ovi leymor im lo avienu elecho vechotosi leovi kol hayomim. **כִּי עֲבָדְךָ עֲרַב אֶת-הַנְּעָר מֵעַם אָבִי לְאִמְרָת אִם-לֹא אָבִיאָנּוּ אֵלֶיךָ וְחָטָאתִי לְאָבִי כָל-הַיָּמִים.**
Aba where are you. I need your guidance; I want to know what you really think ...

Ultimately Yehuda does not let his family or social relationships define him. He is not the passive being, resigning himself to his pre-allocated position in the family pecking order, nor does he become for ever weighed down into inactivity by his previous actions. He steps up and spiritually soars, so much so that it is from the mettle of this character that David's line is to stem. Favourite or not favourite, living parent or no living parent, at home or in Egypt, Yehuda defines his essence. No one else or nothing else.



The Existence of the House of Ya'akov and the Existence of the House of my Father

by Elkan Adler

Like Yosef, Yehuda had enough flaws in his character and upbringing to allow his existence - the cards dealt to him and the ones he initially played - to keep him down but Yehuda and Yosef both recognise that until the day we die, we are free to decide who we are. We need not be defined by our circumstances and the view that others take of us.

I think this is all the more powerful when one considers that the brothers are the first generation to whom Hashem does not speak to directly. Avrohom, Yitzchak and Ya'akov all have dialogues with Hashem and receive assurances from Hashem regarding their future. That was something for them to cling on to and to drive them forward (however testing some of their situations may have been). The Torah does not report the same by Yosef and Yehuda. There was no Lech Lecho moment for them or promises made to them or guidance given to them directly by the Divine. To my mind their ultimate moral decisions are therefore even more heroic. They were truly "alone" when they made their momentous decisions.

And so Yehuda and Yosef step up become two of our greatest leaders and role models.

Yishmoel, Benei Keturah and Esav

Once Yishmoel, the children of Keturah and Esav felt they they were "out", they allowed their own families and children to lose the values of Avrohom and Yitzchok. They had the freedom to choose how to respond to their circumstance and so in a way, I think the choice ultimately rested with them whether to be part of the so called "Chosen People" but unlike Yehuda and Yosef, they did not step up to the challenge.

Like Ya'akov, the Torah describes both Yishmoel and Esav, as having 12 princes/tribes descended from them. I think there is an obvious parallel and parity being indicated here but devoid of the way of life associated with promulgating the Ways of the One God and rising to the ethical challenge as did Yaakov's family, all ended up creating corrupt societies – Amolek being perhaps the worst example.

Moshe

I think this analysis helps us understand the Torah's framing of Moshe's early years too, generations later. The Torah's initial account in the opening of the Egyptian story of slavery contains no names. Shemos 2/1 "And a man from the house of Levi took a daughter of Levi". וַיִּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת-בַּת-לֵוִי. In the second possuk she has a boy. His sister watches over him and the daughter of Paroh (via her maid) takes the boy from the basket. Moshe is then named but that is the first name in the account. The names given to the midwives who we meet in the first paragraph are according to some commentaries not their real names but rather nicknames or names given to that profession. One gets the sense that Paroh is the only one in that pyramid society who is worthy of a name – albeit as we know Paroh was not actually his real name, rather a title. In ancient Egyptian Paroh apparently meant "great house" a meaning that the Torah goes on to play with through the story of the plagues and redemption. As someone who grew up in Britain where the vestiges of the once "great" noble and royal houses still hang on by their fingertips and people cling to the traditions harking back to a time when their families and "houses" were "great", one gets a sense that the inheritors of these titles are fated to try and keep their family "name" going, at almost any price. Was Paroh the same? These pesukim certainly portray a collection of alienated people – defined if at all, by others.



The Existence of the House of Ya'akov and the Existence of the House of my Father by Elkan Adler

And here comes Moshe. Who will he be? Is he Egyptian, Israelite, royal, commoner, anyone? From the early accounts in the Torah, Dr Yael Ziegler calls him the "Universal Man of Justice". He fights against injustice where he sees it and refuses to be defined by any grouping until he accepts the mantle of the leadership of Am Yisroel (albeit as the Torah recounts, utterly remarkably only after God spends a long time convincing him). In Chapter 2 he tries to save an Israelite from a non-Israelite (an Egyptian), an Israelite from another Israelite and a gentile from other gentiles. Yisro's daughters certainly think he is Egyptian when first seeing him (Shemos 2/19). But Moshe is too great to let anyone else define who he is. His original existence might have been somewhere between the death on the Nile and the grandeur of the Ancient Egyptian palaces, but Moshe insists on choosing his own essence. There is a marvellous machlokes (argument) amongst the Rishonim (medieval commentators) as to how to translate the phrase (Ibid 2/11) "And it was in those days that Moshe was older and he went out to his brothers and he saw their oppression". וַיְהִי אִבְרָם בְּיָמֵי הָהֵם וַיֵּצֵא אֶל-אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסֹבְלֵתָם. Which brothers and whose oppression? Could it be that Moshe went out to see his Egyptian brothers to see what they were doing concerning the oppression which they/their society was causing and so shocked with what he saw, Moshe decided that his Egyptian palace friends were no longer his brothers and he threw his lot in with his oppressed Israelite brothers instead?

Freedom

Freedom is one of the key themes of the Torah and Judaism. Am Yisroel's slavery and subsequent freeing and exodus is recounted again and again throughout the Torah, referred to in prose, poetry, law, rite, education and covenant. It is key to the understanding of the concept of the Am Segulah or Chosen People because it is the beginning of a particular journey of a particular people who are charged to represent God. A God who tells us His ways are ways of kindness, righteousness and justice and requires us to act this out day after day through the halakhich and ethical framework of the Torah. This people are not to let themselves be defined by other cultures or other priorities but to adhere to this Divinely ordained essence. This freedom therefore comes with great responsibility.

This focus on freedom is one of the key messages of the Existentialist. Too easily though I think this can "just" be seen as a call to give any purpose to our otherwise meaningless life and absurd existence. What's lacking here is what Judaism drills into us, that we have specific Purpose defined through the word of the Divine in the world of Torah. That directive may be expressed in many different ways (fear of God, keeping mitzvos, following in the ways of God as a few examples) but it is fundamental to our essence and is the path to connecting to something infinitely greater – to Hashem.

We, the inheritors of the House of Ya'akov – the current generation of those who are the next link in the chain – are faced with a challenge. Are we simply to be defined by our circumstances, this context and this tradition – as in Sartre's bad faith. Or are we able to take a step back, understand that we are free – and then a priori embrace the goal of making Hashem's name great, furthering the cause of ethical monotheism, walking in the ways of God and partnering with God to make the world a better place – not simply because it is our "House" or tradition but because in our essence, each as an individual, we bring our full individual selves to the cause as no other person in history will ever be able to and so partner with the Divine.



The Existence of the House of Ya'akov and the Existence of the House of my Father by Elkan Adler

I hope I have shown how an existentialist lens can help us understand better some of the struggles and triumphs highlighted in the Torah's account of some of our great personalities. I hope too that my father o'h would have found food for thought here. I am conscious of one of Sartre's most famous quotes – "L'enfer ces les autres" or "Hell is other people". This quote is often misunderstood. Sartre was not saying that everyone else is hellish – rather and in the context of his play *Huis Clos* (No Exit), he was commenting that we are often unable to escape the view others have of us and therefore even though during our lives we must not live in bad faith and allow ourselves to be defined by them, their view of us, particularly when we are dead(!), is rather out of our control.

I therefore hope I am not imagining conversations that my father would not have engaged in or have been interested in or that I paint him in an incorrect light. I have to ultimately admit that all this is, on that front, an attempt at chasing shadows.

Primarily therefore I hope that the devar Torah will be thought provoking and of interest to those who read it and that the Torah I have tried to discuss here will be in my father's merit and will be the source of encouraging some good. May his memory be a blessing.





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Watch out – there are scammers about! by Esther Cantor

I was scammed. Me. the person who had fun during the pandemic spending time on the phone frustrating the scammers. Giving them a hard time. Well, it happened to me!

At 7pm I get a call from “Santander” bank informing me that there has been fraudulent activity on my account. Another call comes shortly after from “Metro Bank” telling me the same. Well, the solution, I was told, is to move my money into a “new account” with Metro Bank that would be set up in my name. After some discussion I was given an account number and told that it was my account. I used my landline to call the number that “Metro Bank” used to call my mobile and it had the same message as Metro Bank, so I had no reason to doubt it was indeed Metro Bank.

In addition, most banks have protective measures in place. If the account number does not match the account name, a message is generated, and the funds cannot be transferred. I have now discovered that Metro Bank do not have the same protection. Metro Bank transfers funds to the account numbers without checking the name of the account holder.

At 8.02pm the deed was done; the phone was disconnected, and I was left bereft of my hard-earned funds. The timing is vital as at 8pm most banks shut their telephone!!!

Beware. It took three weeks for the bank to agree to refund the money even though they are contributors to the Contingent Reimbursement Model and therefore customers are entitled to refund whilst the investigation is ongoing. Lesson to be learnt is never give up, persevere and you need a lot of time and patience. I called twice a day for 2 weeks and then I emailed the CEO several times. Keep calling, emailing and don't stop until you are reimbursed.



SEVEN CIRCLES BY KARINA KATZ

Karina comments:

“This painting – the Seven Circles- was created and finished during covid lockdown and was an attempt to demonstrate the continuity of Jewish observance of the main Festivals at a time of uncertainty and disruption. While the world was turned upside down, the observance of our festivals was a rock we could rely on.

Depicted here are Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Purim, Chanukah, Shavuot, Yom Kippur and Succot. The mood was intended to be celebratory, and I deliberately included women in some of the panels to reflect their role and centrality in these Festivals. The background is the eternal Universe”.