



HAMAGEN

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MAGEN AVOT COMMUNITY



"The sages said that, at the crossing of the Red Sea, the simplest Jew saw miracles that the greatest of later prophets were not destined to see. That, surely, was the privilege of those who witnessed Israel's rebirth and youth. The messiah has not come. Israel is not yet at peace. The Temple has not been rebuilt. Our time is not yet redemption.

Yet many of the prayers of two thousand years have been answered. No one, reviewing this singular history, can doubt that faith makes a difference; that a nation's history is shaped by what it believes."

Rabbi Lord Sacks zt'l



*Celebrating the 75th Anniversary
of the Founding of the State of Israel*



PESACH 5783 | ISSUE 6

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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
- Promotion of good decorum in shul
- 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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- WhatsApp Community Umbrella Groups: <https://tinyurl.com/macommunitygroups>
- WhatsApp Broadcast Group: <https://tinyurl.com/mabroadcast>
- WhatsApp Social Group: <https://tinyurl.com/masocialgroup>
- WhatsApp Chesed Group: <https://tinyurl.com/machedes2023>

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From the Desk of the Editor Julian Pollard



As we plan each edition of HaMagen I often harbour doubts as to whether we will receive adequate thought-provoking contributions from our members. Every year my fears are proved to be entirely misplaced.

This edition celebrates not just Pesach - the central family celebration of Judaism - but also the landmark of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel - one of the guiding ethos of this community. I hope you find the content diverse informative and stimulating.

My heartfelt thanks are extended to our design and print team and our valued advertising sponsors.

But mostly I wish to thank those of you who have taken time, effort and thought in providing the wonderful content of this edition.

Julian Pollard
Editor, HaMagen Publication



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MESSAGE FROM ONE OF OUR SPONSORS (SEE BACK PAGE): A Pesach Message for our Challenging Times

In preparing for Pesach this year, I am reminded of one the most oft-cited teachings of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, zt"l, a personal mentor who shared Tzohar's vision on behalf of the people of Israel and the Jewish world. Rabbi Sacks noted that likely the mostly fundamental lessons that Moshe Rabeinu imparted to Am Yisrael was that of V'higadeta L'bincha – that the lessons of the present must be carried on to the next generation. Moshe realised that the day would come when Jews would ask what do they need it all for? What is the value of these traditions in a world that is all too different from that of hundreds or thousands of years ago? The importance of tradition is more critical today in 2023, than perhaps more than ever before in Jewish history. Somewhat tragically, the well-known metaphor of the four sons is one which is becoming ever-less relatable in our world. For today, there is a fifth son who avoids the table completely. And even among the other four, there are inevitably some unwilling to respect, or even speak, with the other. Tzohar was founded with a mission that we need to find a way to bring us all back to that table- because the very existence of our modern Jewish society depends upon it. Pesach 2023 in Israel in particular, but in the Jewish world in general, comes at a time of deep social tension that has reached disturbing heights. Our firm belief is that we need to return to that lesson of Moshe Rabeinu. We must remind our people that every Jew has a seat at the table and by allowing all to remember and appreciate those original traditions we can again rediscover those bonds that are so necessary for our religious and national survival. As we sit with our families at the Seder this year, may we all merit to internalize that lesson and be blessed with a Chag Pesach Kasher V'Sameach. **Rabbi David Stav, Tzohar Chair and Chief Rabbi of Shoham.**



Greetings from our Chairman Simon Bentley

We are now in new, exciting times, with Rabbi and Rebbetzen Golker at the helm. We have particularly enjoyed the series of "Friday Night Alive" sessions over the winter which proved hugely popular. Huge thanks once again to Julian Pollard for all the work he has done in putting together this edition of the HaMagen magazine.

My fellow members of the Executive and Council are all dedicated and totally committed to Magen Avot. My warm and appreciative thanks to all of them for ensuring that everything gets properly organised on time and in the right way.

The new marquee is fully in use for our Kiddush preparation each week, as well as providing an additional storage area. We are all now enjoying the renewed lighting in Shul, and the use of our new Shul furniture. Two additional matching Mechitza sections are on order.

We are grateful to our loyal supporters, and, in particular, I thank Bobby Jacobs for sponsoring the Yizkor booklets we will be able to use throughout the year.

Y@MA is continuing to grow and flourish. Our strong group of young people meeting on Shabbat mornings, exploring ideas in the Parasha through learning, debates, discussions, and related activities, are an inspiration. A big thank you to all those who take/supervise the youth and children's services and activities.

The Eshet Chayil Shabbat in February was a great success. It was a privilege to honour Fiona Taylor as our Eshet Chayil this year. We continue to be committed to regular high standard women speakers in Shul and as part of The Women's Programme. We also continued to run a series of Women's only Kabbalat Shabbat of which I am immensely thankful to Chaya Langerman.

Our Chesed, Tzedek, and Mishpat programme, under Elkan Adler's leadership, is developing from our initial work in relation to the crimes against humanity and possibly genocide against the Uyghur population in China.

We have a lot to look forward to. The Scottish Whisky distillery visit, and tasting is taking place in May. We're looking forward to visiting and sampling a range of Speyside whiskies with professional guidance in prospect from our valued member Josh London. Thanks to Julian Pollard for planning and taking care of all the arrangements involved. In October/November this year (dates to be confirmed) we will be hosting and welcoming a group of IDF veterans on the Peace of Mind programme run by the Metiv Israel Psychotrauma Centre in Jerusalem. In the words of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l "These are the soldiers who give Israel peace of mind. So, friends it is our duty to help them find their peace of mind."

The regard in the United Synagogue for Magen Avot is high. We have a small and influential membership.


Warm best wishes

Simon Bentley

Chairman, Magen Avot



Pesach Message from Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis



תשפ"ג

Office of The
CHIEF RABBI

Pesach 5783 / 2023

A Time for Charoset

The maror we eat during the Seder represents not only the suffering of our ancestors in Egypt, but also the inescapable presence of bitterness in every person's journey through life. What we do with the maror is therefore a powerful expression of our Jewish response to suffering.

By reciting a beracha over the maror, we acknowledge that blessing is to be found in the midst of the curse. Dipping the maror into charoset, a sweet paste of wine, nuts and fruit, we emphasise the bitter-sweet nature of life and the silver lining that every dark cloud has.

While the pessimist bemoans the bitterness that spoils our sweet experiences, the optimist celebrates the sweetness that softens the sharp edges of bitterness in our lives and provides us with opportunities for a life of hope and joy.

The 19th century German scholar, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, gave a most profound interpretation of King David's desperate cry (Psalm 22:2) *Keli Keli, lama azavtani?* – My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Rabbi Hirsch points out that the Hebrew *lama* (why?) can also be read as *lema* (wherefore?). King David was calling out Heavenwards: For what purpose, God, have you given me this agony? What must I now accomplish as a result of it?

On Pesach, we recall that the *Korban Pesach*, the Paschal Lamb offering, had to be a lamb, which was deified by the Egyptians. We took the very essence of idolatrous practice and used it to thank Hashem for redeeming us. A similar message is conveyed by our production of matzah, which must be made from grains, which, when fermented, become chametz. What can spoil our festival is used to celebrate it!

Viktor Frankl, the Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, believed that suffering is an inescapable part of human life, which can be given meaning and purpose according to the way we choose to respond to it.

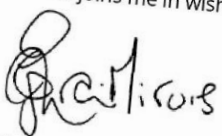
This is the spirit in which our communities have responded so admirably, with tenacity and determination, to move forward positively following the Covid pandemic. Yet, the world today still feels particularly fragile and precarious. The impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a cost-of-living crisis and serious mental health issues have devastated numerous lives.


On my visits to communities around the UK, I have been deeply impressed by the way in which communities have adapted and responded to such extraordinary adversity, often enhanced by funding from our Project Welcome initiatives. Today, countless communities provide unprecedented levels of support for the financial, emotional and psychological needs of their members.

So, this Pesach I would like to thank you all for your wonderful communal achievements, which have been accomplished under the most trying of circumstances.

Thank you for adding the charoset to our maror!

Valerie joins me in wishing you all a Chag Kasher Vesameach.


Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE





Pesach Message from Rabbi Yoni Golker

Warmest greetings for a חג קֶשֶׁר וְשִׁמְחָה to all our members and huge thanks to all those who have made this Pesach publication possible!

Seder night is one of מִסּוּרָה, tradition, a time when we pass the baton of faith on to the next generation. Through this experiential evening we rekindle our joy at being Jewish and celebrate our freedom.

But what precisely does this concept of freedom entail?

Does it mean that we have unbridled liberty to do as we please, without any thought for the rights of others, whose own rights and liberties may be adversely impacted by our actions? Clearly not! Proof of this is contained within the תּוֹרָה itself. The קֶרֶבֶן פֶּסַח, ordained as an annual offering to הַשֵּׁם in thanksgiving for our deliverance from Egyptian bondage, was to be consumed communally, in groups comprising at least ten persons, rather than by each individual alone. And subsequently, just six weeks after our people had left Egypt, they all stood together at Har Sinai as a united nation – 'בְּלֵב אֶחָד -כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד' - ready to receive the Ten Commandments, which heavily curtailed their liberty. 'You shall not murder', 'you shall not steal', 'you shall not covet that which belongs to your neighbour' – all place fundamental restrictions upon our freedom.

In light of this, it is clear that the notion of freedom as generally understood must be significantly qualified. What then was the true message of the יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם, an historical event that has inspired so many other nations besides ourselves? The renowned 16th century Italian biblical commentator, Sforno, has summed it up most succinctly. Commenting on the words in the תּוֹרָה text: 'This month (נִיסָן) shall be for you the head of months', he writes: 'Henceforth the months will be yours, to do with them what you will, in contrast to the era of slavery when your days did not belong to you but rather to the (enforced) service of others and their will! From now on, you will possess freewill!'

By doing this, we will be able to appreciate the true power of our freedom and the profound meaning of Pesach in our own lives.

Service of הַשֵּׁם imbues the most trivial of acts with sacred purpose. It says that a person can perfect him or herself, and the entire world, and sets out a path towards that destination. And this is why the תּוֹרָה can claim that its adherents are truly, ultimately, happily free.

This פֶּסַח, may we truly celebrate and recognize what we have — the tool for ultimate freedom!

Dina and I wish you and all your loved ones a חג קֶשֶׁר וְשִׁמְחָה.

Rabbi Yoni Golker

Rabbi, Magen Avot



Dr Fiona Taylor Eshet Chayil 5783

The weekend of 3-5th February 2023 was celebrated as Women's Shabbat across the country. At Magen Avot a variety of celebrations were enjoyed including a women's only Kabbalat Shabbat and an Oneg Shabbat held at the Fiona and Richard Taylor's home, but the highlight was the presentation after the Shabbat Service to our own Eshet Chayil, Fiona Taylor of her award by Rebbetzen Dina Golker.

She referred to Fiona's outstanding contribution to all elements of the shul's activities and enthused as to how she managed to do so with her work commitments as a Hospital Psychiatric consultant and a busy mother.

Fiona's response was gracious and modest and by popular demand we are delighted reproduce in full here the address she made to a packed congregation. It was entirely typical of Fiona's kind and generous nature that she proceeded to thank everyone else in the community. As you will see her remarks were witty, personal, and warm and were received with enormous warmth and respect.

Eshet Chayil Speech

"Thank you everyone for this honour. It is truly an exciting Shabbat for me, and my family and I feel very valued and appreciated.

I hate speaking in public. I get so nervous that I might not even make it to the end of this speech. But also, there's all this stuff I want to say.

Recently I keep having a strange middle-aged daydream that one day I might be a castaway guest on radio 4s desert island discs.

In case some of you are not familiar with this radio classic, it was first broadcast almost exactly 81 years ago this week on the 29th January 1942. Each week, a guest is invited to choose 8 recordings (usually music), a book and a luxury item that they would take if they were to be cast away on a desert island, whilst discussing their life and the reasons for their choices. It is a wonderful program because it is about the music but at the same time we learn about the guest's inner world, with music as a proxy for life events, sometimes good, sometimes bad and how those experiences shaped the person.

So today, since this is Shabbat Shira, and I'm still waiting for the BBC to call, with apologies for all the bad jokes and cliches, I would like to be a castaway on Magen Avot Island and I'm going to tell you my discs in relation to our life since coming to Magen Avot...





Dr Fiona Taylor

Eshet Chayil 5783

1. My first song is "Hello" by Lionel Richie. This is the welcome that Karina has said to me every single week since coming to Magen Avot. It doesn't matter when, but at some stage during the davening, she will make eye contact with me and smile, nod hello, mouth the words shabbat shalom. Feeling you belong somewhere and are valued is very special. When I first started coming here, I wasn't sure how I would experience it. I hadn't always liked shul and I didn't know what my commitment would be. Karina saying hello each week made me feel that whatever happened next week, for this week I was welcome. Thank you Karina. In the same way, my children were never very happy to be in a children's service until they came to Ruth Eereich's fabulous Magen Maxis and I am very grateful to her for making them comfortable to stay and daven so that I could also be in shul.
2. My second song is "The show must go on" by Queen. I cannot tell you how many times Patti has saved entire shul events by her complete dedication to making sure that the show will go on. Patti will be standing here in this hall half an hour before Yom Tov covered in cholent oil sorting out the hot cupboard, or squeezing things into the fridge, or she will be here earlier in the week making sure that there are enough bowls for kiddush. She thinks of things that no one else will think of, and she will be the first person here and the last to leave, not just because she can't stop talking, but because she will not stop until everything is tidied up and sorted out. Thank you Patti.
3. My third song is "We can work it out" by the Beatles. In my work life, I am used to working in teams, but I don't think I have ever been in a team that functions as well together as our current shul council. In the council there is plenty of debate and there are plenty of opportunities for division. We are all very different, with different backgrounds, with different ideas for the community and different ways in which we want to represent the community. Under Simon's leadership we speak respectfully to each other and we draw on our different views and experiences to work together effectively. I am very grateful to this group of people who I have learnt from. I'm also grateful for the hours of work that everyone puts into each aspect of the running of the shul. I don't have much to do with this side of the mechitza, but I know that Daniel and Elkan run a tight ship and are completely committed to making everyone's experience of shul a good one. Julian starts the newsletter each week on a Sunday and adds and refines it as the week goes on, often multiple times, fitting new events into an already full newsletter and balancing what people can absorb with giving as much information as possible. And he also uses recycled paper!
4. My next disc is actually a quote by the anthropologist Margaret Mead, who said "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." In our community I have found a space where we are allowed to combine our Jewishness and love of Torah with wider global issues. For me personally, some of you might know that I feel strongly about climate change and our responsibility to environmental conservation. Although we still have room for improvement, every time we stop and think about what disposables to order for kiddush, every time we recycle the bottles and newsletter after shabbat, and every time we have a conversation about vegetarian cholent, we are acknowledging that our decisions and our actions affect the people who will come after us and I am grateful that this is a space where we can have these conversations. In the same way, our collective social action project to highlight the plight of the Uyghur Muslims in China has led to ripples throughout the UK Jewish community, with other shuls and organisations collaborating on raising awareness and taking action. On the other hand, this is also a space for us to come to shul, daven, have a whisky and go home. We don't always have the energy or desire to change anything. Sometimes we need shul to just be shul, and that's magnificent too.
5. My fifth song is Miriam's song from today's Parsha. Miriam was a prophet and leader and in this week's parsha she led the women in song and dance as Bnei Yisrael walked through the sea. Last week when the Chief Rabbi came and spoke to us, he said that women showed hope and optimism as they packed their instruments with them, knowing there would soon be an opportunity to celebrate.



Dr Fiona Taylor Eshet Chayil 5783

This US women's Shabbat is about role models. I would like to thank Chaya for being such a wonderful role model for the women of our community. She has an infectious energy. She gives us opportunities for our voices to be heard, both in song and otherwise, and she advocates for us in all circumstances.

6. My next song is my biggest cliché yet "Stairway to Heaven" by Led Zeppelin. Rabbi Yoni and Rebbetzin Dina. You are such a wonderful asset to our community. You are very busy with full time jobs and 5 young children and yet you are available for us when we need you, both for serious important things and also for the little things. Thank you for being so open to us and so generous with your time and enthusiasm.
7. My last song today is "Tradition" from fiddler on the roof. This is for my parents who both made it here today specially to see their daughter reluctantly stand here and speak and for always being proud of me even when I don't deserve it. Thank you for bringing me up with our traditions so that I would be able to pass them onto my children.

The luxury item I am going to take to Magen Avot Island is my husband (and I suppose the children must come too). I met Richard when I was 16 doing work experience at a hospital before I applied to study medicine. Richard was a handsome, slightly dishevelled, intelligent, funny, and serious medical student on the team that I was attached to, who allowed me to follow him around a bit in A&E and let me sit in a tutorial. After spending 1 day with him, I knew that I wanted to marry him. 31 years later I thank Hashem for letting me find him. He is true inside and out and will not compromise his Judaism whatever the circumstances.

He respects me as an equal partner and supports me every way he can.

Life can throw all sorts of challenges at people, and I know that whatever ours are we will face them together. Thank you Richard. And by the way I've had a look at desert islands, and I think Mauritius looks really nice.

We are finally getting to kiddush now. There are so many people here that have enhanced my life without even knowing it. My experience of Magen Avot is so rich and fulfilling and it means so much to me and my family. This shabbat is really a celebration of us all and thank you for being you."





Order, Order!

Daniel Greenberg CB

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards ("PCS") is an officer of the British House of Commons. The work of the officer is overseen by the Commons Select Committee on Standards.

In January 2023 our own Daniel Greenberg CB became the new PCS and explained to HaMagen what his new duties will be and how he will undertake them.

Duties

The commissioner is in charge of regulating MPs' conduct and propriety. One of the commissioner's main tasks is overseeing the Register of Members' Financial Interests, which is intended to ensure disclosure of financial interests that may be of relevance to MPs' work.

The Commissioner is the decision-maker in cases from the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme where the respondent is a Member of Parliament. If the Commissioner deems a sanction warranted, they refer cases to the Independent Expert Panel so the appropriate sanction can be determined.

The PCS is appointed by a resolution of the House of Commons for a fixed term of five years and is an independent officer of the House, working a four-day week. His remit does not include the House of Lords.

History

Previous Commissioners have had to deal with controversial political hot potatoes such as the cash-for-questions affair, Peter Mandelson, and a large loan which he had failed to declare in the Register of Members' Interests, George Galloway and Derek Conway.

In 2018 Daniel's predecessor Katherine Stone was appointed. Her high-profile cases included finding against the prime minister Boris Johnson over a free holiday he took in Mustique courtesy of a Tory donor. She took over responsibility for the inquiry into Keith Vaz's behaviour when she complained that he had "failed, repeatedly, to answer direct questions, given incomplete answers and his account [had], in parts, been incredible".

In 2021, she found that the MP Owen Paterson had breached the MP's Code of Conduct, a finding which resulted in the Parliamentary Standards Committee recommending a suspension from the Commons for a period of 30 sitting days.[5] Despite the fact that the prime minister encouraged a three-line whip on an amendment to change the standards system, the public backlash caused a reversal of policy and the next day Paterson resigned.

In August 2022, she found that both Labour leader Keir Starmer and Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy had inadvertently broken the MP's code of conduct.

HaMagen – conscious that Daniel could not discuss sensitive investigations already in the public domain – nonetheless obtained the following revealing work he is undertaking and the way in which he will discharge his duties.



Parliamentary Standards: Naivete in Action Daniel Greenberg CB

Daniel comments...

"On being asked to provide an early impression of my role as Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, the word "naivete" sprang irrepressibly into my mind.

Which seems highly appropriate for the Pesach issue of HaMagen. Pesach represents the triumph of a stubborn refusal to give in to reality. Against all sense and reason, a portion of the Jewish people insisted upon a respect for minority rights and individual religious freedom of a kind that was simply unheard of at the time and, in the face of opposition from a powerful and ruthless empire, they sort of won.

I say, they "sort of" won because a victory that results in the entire dismantling of one's own physical security, as well as everybody else's, and emergence into a precarious and nomadic existence in a bleak desert landscape might be seen, as a qualified victory, to put it no higher. But that was, of course, the very essence of the victory that was Yetzias Mitzrayim: as God puts it later (rather neatly) "I remember the kindness of your youthful naivety, following Me into the desert without physical security".

Being Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards at a time when the reputation of politicians as a class is probably as low as it has ever been and is certainly dangerously low for the maintenance of governance by consent on which rests the rule of law, regularly feels like the stubborn triumph of hope over experience. But that brings with it, the same feeling of challenge and excitement that characterises any determination to pursue the ideal, and not to be deterred by mere reality.

The Nolan principles of public life, on which the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members expressly rests, are profound and strong ethical principles of which any organisation could be proud. Their focus on integrity and honesty, on selflessness and leadership, matches core Jewish values very clearly, and has made it easy for me to integrate my professional brief with my personal religious ideals.

They remind me, too, of a fundamental tension at the heart of Jewish experience. Concerned that observant Jews might become preoccupied with the performance of ritual mitzvot at the expense of their ethical underpinnings, the rabbis long ago gave vent to the famous aphorism, "derech erez kodma laTorah" – that decency and humanity are pre-requisites for asiyas hamitzvos.

I feel rather the same about the Nolan principles of public life and their relationship to the Code of Conduct. Much of the Code deals with minutiae of the registrability of interests and similarly practical and detailed matters. One of my early actions as Commissioner was in response to media (not entirely accurate) revelations about Members' earnings, to issue an Advice Note reminding members not to allow preoccupation with the precise obligations of the Code to distract them from the underlying principle of transparency.

I am still very much at the beginning of my time as Commissioner, but acutely conscious that five years will flash by very quickly. The support of the vast majority of MPs whose commitment to high ethical standards in their public life is strong has made me determined to concentrate on serving them and facilitating their dedicated service to their constituents, and to focus as little as possible on the relatively small number of politicians whose contemptible behaviour inevitably traduces the reputation of the whole.

My task is to aim to restore that reputation at least somewhat by highlighting and improving good conduct, as well as punishing bad conduct: a suitably naïve aim which I look forward to "sort of" achieving".



HAMUSSAF

THE SUPPLEMENT OF THE HAMAGEN MAGAZINE





Israel Passport 00001 by Danny Gance

The father of one of our own members was a British soldier who fought in Israel's War of Independence before embarking on a ground-breaking advocacy trip around America and owned the first Israeli passport.

Daniel Gance's father Leonard (known to all as Arye) was born in London and had been a member of Hampstead Synagogue. He left his parents and two sisters in Stepney Green, East London, to make Aliyah alone in 1947 at the age of 23.

A machine gunner, Aryeh he took part in the battles of Lydda and Jerusalem during the 1948 war that led to the establishment of the Jewish state. After victory had been achieved, Mr Gance was one of 10 soldiers who were chosen to tour the United States as part of a youth mission to encourage Americans to get behind the country the young troops had fought to create.

As was reported at the time in the US Press:-

Five Israeli soldiers became the principal attraction in Statuary Hall of the Capitol recently when they were almost mobbed by friendly congressmen.

The revered statues in the Hall suddenly lost all their appeal for sightseers who crowded as close as possible to the living heroes. Senator Irving M. Ives grasped the hand of Captain Gershon Geyra, nephew of Israeli President Chaim Weizmann, and said, not only the Jews but all civilised humanity can be proud of the achievements of the Israeli Army. Expressing enthusiastic agreement with Senator Ives, Senator Claude Pepper and other non-Jewish congressmen pressed through the mob to shake hands with the Israelis.

Captain Geyra commanded part of the forces which surrounded the Egyptians in the Faluja pocket in the Negev. He was accompanied by Lt. Azaria Rapaport, Captain Nahman Kaplansky, Private Aryeh Gance, and Lt. Shulamith Krinsky, a young woman.





Israel Passport 00001 by Danny Gance



It was for this trip that he was given the first ever Israeli passport - number 00001.

During the five-month tour, Arye met luminaries from inside and outside the Jewish community, including former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who interviewed him on NBC radio. He returned to London in 1951, but only following a period in India, where he worked as a shaliach and encouraged a number of Jews in the southern city of Kochi to move to the Holy Land.

Daniel Gance, said his father had remained humble about his military and diplomatic endeavours, rarely discussing them with his family. "He never made a big deal about it, and he never spoke about the passport. There are things I would have liked to know I never asked," he said. "I'm very proud, but he was very humble, so I didn't know half the things he was involved in - that's just how he was. He did what needed to be done but made no song and dance about it."

His father "was very proud that he was there at the beginning of the state, proud that he had a direct involvement in its beginning. Israel was close to his heart. He was a strong believer in the Jewish state." It was in Israel that the soldier met his wife, and he always intended to return to the state he had helped bring into existence. In 2005, Mr Gance made Aliyah again, living in Israel until his death in 2012.

Arye's story is now to be covered in a two-part BBC Documentary entitled "The Holy Land and the Untold Story" which was scheduled to be shown in March in time to mark the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the State.

'The Holy Land and Us: Our Untold Stories' explored the personal stories of families of Jewish and Palestinian heritage and followed actor and writer Sarah Agha and barrister, author and broadcaster Rob Rinder, MBE, as they explored personal family stories, and the ways in which the four families have been defined by events in Palestine and Israel.

Sarah's family fled their village in Galilee in 1948, and Rob followed his relative's journey to escape the horrors of the Holocaust and start a new life in the recently established state of Israel.



Israel Passport 00001 by Danny Gance

Through powerful and profoundly moving family stories, this series got to the heart of what happened to people on both sides of the conflict as the Middle East was reshaped. Rather than presenting a comprehensive history, the series let the human stories of the time speak for themselves, enabling viewers to reach a richer understanding of the divisions that have lasted to this day.

Danny's son David had been contacted by BBC researchers who interviewed them after the story of Passport 0001 emerged and took them to the scenes of Arye's battles in Palestine and the then newly founded State of Israel. The family could then understand his role in the fighting and how, in the overall context of the war, crucial it was. Arye had also written extensive letters home -effectively a daily diary -which Danny allowed the BBC to inspect.

Danny had hoped to engage with the Arab families after the filming was over, but the producers were adamant that this was not possible as they were keen to keep any political elements wholly off limits.

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THE MIRACLE OF THE SIX-DAY WAR

Israel Ovits recounts his experiences as an IDF soldier during the 1967 Six-Day War
Edited by Marc Ovits

Born in Romania, raised in Israel, Israel Ovits now lives in Edgware, is married to Jacky and is father to his dear children Marc, Elan, and Eli. Israel had the Zechut to serve in the IDF during the Six-Day War. Below, Israel tells his story of the lead up to as well as the actual events of the Six-Day War.

Aged 18, in 1965 I was called up to serve in the IDF. I was sent to an absorption centre near Tel Aviv where I undertook two months' basic training. My next 2½ months were spent in Camp 80 Pardes-Chana, just north of Hadera where I learned how to use a rifle, an Uzi machine gun, to throw grenades and, above all, discipline, and guard duty. Camp 80 was also used to train paratroopers and Nachal (Noar Halutzi Lohem – literally Fighting Pioneer Youth). The training was extremely demanding but if you behaved, you were rewarded with a weekend off every three weeks.



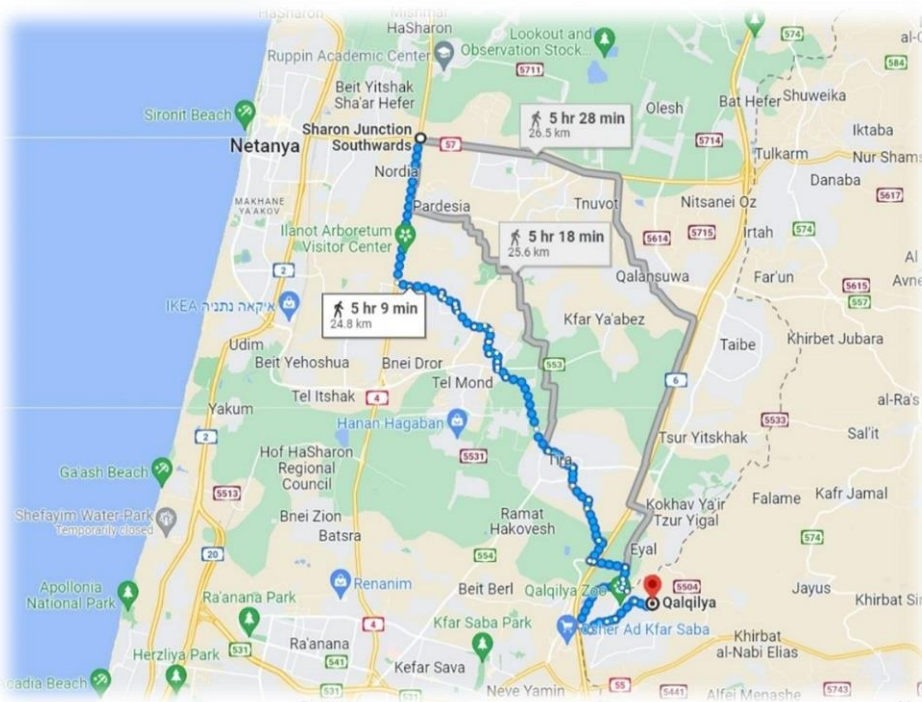
“After my initial training, I was sent to a camp in Central Israel to study to become a cannon locksmith. A cannon locksmith repairs rifles, machine guns (0.5 and 0.7 mm) and cannons, including the twenty-five pounder British cannon and the cannon on M1 Sherman tanks. The IDF placed me in this unit to take advantage of my former study of hydraulic technology.

Two months later I was sent to a camp by what was back then known as the Beit Lid Junction – today it is known as the HaSharon Junction, close to Netanya.



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The camp was divided into 3 sections – paratroopers, ground engineers and tanks (all M1 Shermans). I was part of the ground engineers’ team which included mechanics, electricians, cannon locksmiths and communication technicians. Our job was to ensure all the weaponry functioned as necessary despite continuous usage regularly causing weapons to fail. Everyone took their duties extremely seriously and the camaraderie we had in my unit is something I will never forget.





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Pre 1967 Israelis had very limited access to Jerusalem. Immediately after the War of Independence in 1948, an agreement between Israel and Jordan was signed at the UN in New York under which it was forbidden for either country to bring any heavy weaponry into Jerusalem. Yom Ha'atzmaut parades commemorating Israel's independence typically took place in Tel Aviv and Haifa. Frequently these parades also included Israel parading its military strength. No such parades were permitted in Jerusalem. Whilst the Israeli government had ambitions to reunite Jerusalem under Israeli rule, in the absence of it having any weapons there, this was not likely to materialise since Israel could neither launch an offensive or defend itself against the Jordanian army or the many terrorist attacks that were taking place there.

Consequently, the IDF needed to come up with a solution to this problem. But how could they bring weapons and tanks into Jerusalem without the Jordanians realising? Tanks are rather large vehicles and can be spotted from far. Jerusalem is up in the hills. You cannot sneak into Jerusalem on the ground without being seen.

About nine months before the Six-Day War commenced and having served at the camp at the Beit Lid junction for about two months or so, suddenly my unit received an unusual command.... "Next time you return from home leave, please bring some civilian clothes with you." No reason was given. Amusingly we reckoned we were going to be rewarded in some way for all our hard work! How wrong we were! When we returned to camp from our leave, we saw that a large trailer had arrived. Having been told to put on our civvies we watched as a M1 Sherman tank was driven onto the trailer. Then a crane lifted a box marked "Westinghouse General Electric Transformers" and deposited it over the tank. This trailer was then sent on its way, and we were told to go with it - some of us next to the driver in the trailer, some of us in civilian cars, but all with a police escort to the front and rear. Our destination was a secret, but as darkness fell, we arrived at Camp Schneller in Jerusalem.

Over the next eight months or so, at night, approximately once a month, we repeated the same operation, smuggling one tank covered with a Westinghouse box into Jerusalem with each journey. Camp Schneller was very near the Mandelbaum Gate, not far from Mea Shearim. It was the job of my team of mechanics and technicians to spend a week every month in Camp Schneller servicing and testing the armaments. The tanks, which were kept in huts, were loaded with fuel and ammunition, always ready for action. To mitigate the prospect of detection, their engines were started one at a time and only during the day. All in all, we smuggled 8 tanks into Jerusalem and 15 tanks outside Jerusalem.

To meet our task of repairing, servicing, and readying the tanks for battle, my team needed parts and weaponry. The IDF had 120 soldiers guarding Mount Scopus - a gateway to Jerusalem. Twice a month, the Jordanians opened the Mandelbaum Gate and a new shift of sixty IDF guards were allowed to travel up to Mount Scopus on buses to relieve half the previous guard. From early 1967 these buses were built with double walls and floors and the gap between them was used to transport cannon parts, shells and other equipment. Fortunately, the Jordanians never discovered the equipment and weaponry. Once the equipment reached Mount Scopus, it was quickly



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dismantled and re-assembled in Camp Schneller. These were the tanks that were ultimately used to liberate Jerusalem during the Six-Day War.

In the spring of 1967 President Nasser started rattling his sabre against Israel, telling other Arab leaders that he intended to wage war against the State that had yet to celebrate its twentieth anniversary. Israel started calling up its reserve soldiers and I was sent back to the camp at the Beit Lid junction. By this stage Israel had acquired more tanks. We started preparing the tanks for battle. We had about fifty-five tanks in our camp which we drove out of the huts and into the nearby forest. Three weeks before the War started, we were primed, and our tanks were battle-ready.

Listening to the radio, on 5th June 1967 we heard that the Egyptians had declared war on us. However, by that time, the Israeli Air Force had already carried out some pre-emptive strikes destroying the runways and/or air forces of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq severely limiting their ability to mount air attacks on Israel. This ensured that the IAF retained mastery of the skies.

Soon afterwards, my unit received an order to move the tanks towards Qalqilya on the Israeli Jordanian border. Qalqilya lay on the narrowest axis between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. Consequently, Israel deemed it to be of critical importance as any successful attack on it by the Jordanians could have caused a separation of Israel's northern and southern regions. This in turn could leave some IDF units very vulnerable and unsupported.

Accompanying the tanks to Qalqilya, I was transported in a half-track troop carrier - the front of the vehicle had two wheels and the rear chains like those of a tank. During the journey I remember seeing some elderly kibbutzniks using any weapons they could lay their hands on, even hunting guns, to protect our borders and their kibbutzim. It made me feel really proud and it also inspired me to give everything I could to fight for Israel's future.

As we approached Qalqilya, we came heavy fire from the Jordanians who were firing bullets and mortars directly at us. We fired back of course and used our tanks to the best of their ability. The battle lasted for several hours until darkness fell upon us.

During this battle, there were times when some of the tanks got stuck. I found myself running from tank to tank, constantly under fire and carrying heavy tools to carry out the necessary repairs. Another recollection was of one of our tanks grinding to a halt with a mechanical fault. I spent the night with the tank team, taking turns to guard it, as we were in an open field and could easily have been a prime target.

Thankfully we successfully took out most of the enemy positions in range. We won the Battle of Qalqilya. This battle boosted our morale, and we made our way to our next calling in Nablus (Schen) in high spirits.

Simultaneously our enemies had their own ideas and they tried to increase their efforts to attack Israel. Famously the Israeli Secret Service recorded a telephone call by Egyptian President Nasser



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to King Hussein of Jordan saying, "I'm already in Tel Aviv and you're still sitting in Amman. If you want the other part of Jerusalem, you'd better join me in the War." The Israeli Government took this call very seriously and decided that attack was the best form of defence in this case. They decided to bring our paratroopers from the Mitla Pass in Sinai – who had successfully recaptured the Sinai desert, back up to Jerusalem to try to take the Old City. They were flown to Lod and, from there, transported to Jerusalem.

At the same time, the tanks came out of hiding at Camp Schneller. Consequently, I was relocated to Jerusalem to ready the tanks. Together with the paratroopers, the tank unit set about liberating Jerusalem. We faced a fierce battle against the Jordanian army which was entrenched at Ammunition Hill. There were many casualties. 'My tanks', and I, joined in the battle which lasted for half a day, and eventually the Old City was re-taken and liberated. I'm proud to say that, although the tanks spent the entire battle on chains, not one chain broke down in this battle – something very unusual for tanks of this vintage!



Jordanian Trenches at Ammunition Hill, 1967



Israel's Tank on public display at Ammunition Hill

With barely any time to take in what we had achieved, my unit was immediately ordered to head to Jericho. As we were traveling down the bare mountains (today known as Maale Adumim) we encountered remnants of the Jordanian army who had been hiding in the valleys, planning to attack our forces in Jerusalem. I say remnants because it looked like the Jordanians had deserted their positions when they were met by the Israeli Air Force flying French Fouga Magister training planes that had been converted into fighters. These planes were armed with special rockets that could literally shear in half heavy armour. I expect the Jordanians took note of the damage done to some of their brethren and left fearing for their lives. I remember seeing abandoned British Centurion tanks, American tanks, half-tracks, and Howitzer guns.

We journeyed on to the junction which today takes you either to Ein Gedi or Jericho. Unfortunately, having been over-exposed to the sun and feeling exhausted, I got sunstroke, became dehydrated, and spent three days in a Field Hospital in Jericho recovering. That was the end of my contribution to the war effort !



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Last but not least, I would like to end with a recommendation. If you have not already visited, or even if you have and want a reminder, a visit to Givat Hatachmoshet (Ammunition Hill), just beyond Ma'alot Dafna in Jerusalem is well worthwhile. There you will see the tank I serviced. You can also see a film showing its arrival in Jerusalem and the miracle of the Battle of Jerusalem in 1967. Most importantly, at the Ammunition Hill National Memorial Site is the Golden Wall on which are engraved the names of the 182 brave soldiers who lost their lives liberating Jerusalem and whose legacy is the Jerusalem we love visiting and cherish. Having free access to Jerusalem is a privilege and if history has taught us anything, not something we should take for granted ! I guarantee that anyone who says some Tehilim at this location in honour of my fellow soldiers will feel extremely moved and gain a great deal of chizuk from their efforts!



The Golden Wall



My first visit to Jerusalem

by John Wolffe

In the summer of 1963, I finished my pre-clinical course at dental school and had before me the only long vacation of my undergraduate years. I decided to use the time to visit Israel as I had never been there before. A cousin in Tel Aviv offered the use of their flat as they were away for the summer and I made plans to travel with two friends, another dental student, and a medical student. We travelled by train and boat, sleeping on the deck of the ship as this was the cheapest way to get to Israel.

Once in Israel we made plans to tour the country from our base in Tel Aviv. One of my friends had a cousin who was a young Rabbi. He arranged for us to spend Shabbat in Jerusalem. He offered to be our guide and arranged for us to stay at Bet Hillel.

We arrived on Friday afternoon and went to Kabblat Shabbat in Bet Hillel. The President of Israel, Zalman Shazar, had a tradition of joining the students on Friday night. We were introduced to him and he wished us Shabbat Shalom.

The following morning after shul our guide took us on a walking tour of Jerusalem. He knew all the best spots and we were able to see across no-man's land to the old city which was under Jordanian control. From one high point we could see the golden dome and from another we could wave to the Jordanian soldiers who waved back. We walked past the Mandelbaum Gate (see below) and watched the United Nations vehicles crossing between the Israeli and Jordanian sides.

On our way through the town a car pulled up alongside us and the driver asked our rabbinical guide "Eifo Rehov X". His reply has stuck in my memory – "B'Shabbat Uni Lo Yodeah".

In the four weeks we spent in Israel we toured the country from Metula to Eilat but the weekend in Jerusalem was undoubtedly the high spot.

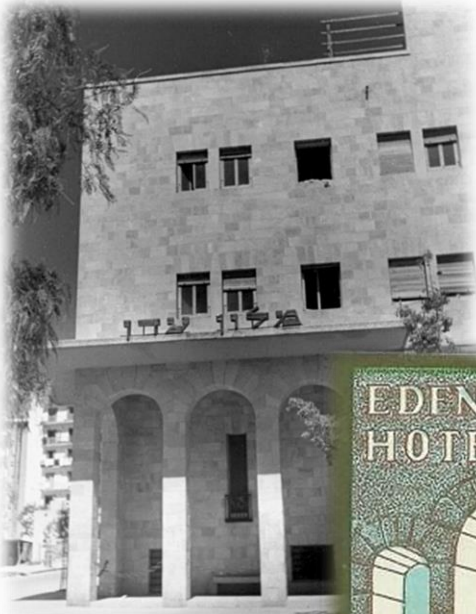


Mandelbaum Gate Boundary

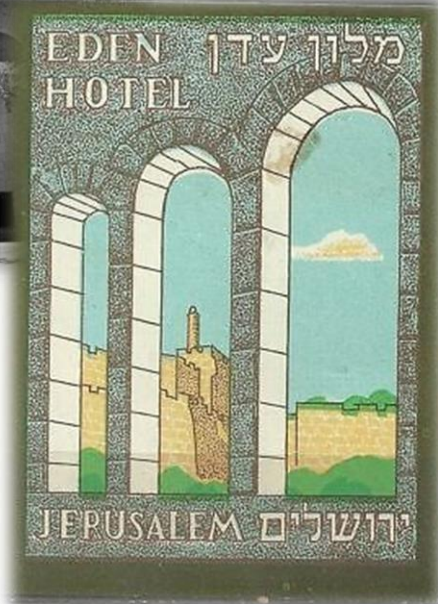


Recollections of Israel 60 years ago

by Linda Wolffe



*Eden Hotel -
opened in the
1920's*



I was in Israel on holiday with my parents in the late 1950s or early 1960s and we were staying at the Eden Hotel in Jerusalem – a beautiful modernist hotel built as part of a chain for the growing band of Zionist tourists.

It was considered to be the second-best hotel in Jerusalem after the King David and was very centrally situated – I believe near the junction of Rechov Yafo and King George. There were lots of interesting people staying there at the same time - it must have been some sort of conference. I remember Ian Mikardo and his wife. He was a prominent Labour MP at the time and a great Zionist, who had a wonderful reputation for fighting for the underdog. He always had a large cigar clamped between his teeth. The hotel's bar was full until the early hours while he regaled all us guests with his wonderful stories, which became more elaborate as the alcohol flowed into his glass.

One night a theatre trip was organised for all the tourist group in the hotel. I can't remember where the theatre was – it might even have been in Tel Aviv. We were told that it was a production of a musical play based on a Sholem Aleichem story, and it was called *Tevye der Michlige*. It was in Yiddish; fortunately, I have a fairly good understanding of Yiddish and the story and music are so entertaining that it wasn't difficult to follow.

And so, I went to my first performance of *Fiddler on the Roof*. The lead role was taken by a well-known actor called Shmuel Rodensky, who was fabulous and had us all alternatively in stitches of laughter and tears of emotion. Although I have seen the English version of the play and the film many times, and know all the music backwards, nothing ever compares to that wonderful evening. I believe that the English version of *Fiddler* developed after American producers heard about the Yiddish version which was taking audiences by storm in Israel. I am sure that the fact that the production was in Yiddish made the production more evocative of the setting than the English version can convey.



Revolutionising Medicine: The Contributions of Israeli-Developed Drugs

By Chaya Langerman

Israel is a small country with a population of just over 9 million people, but it has made a huge impact on the world of medicine. Despite its size, Israel has become a hub of innovation and a leader in the field of pharmaceutical research and development. Israeli scientists have been responsible for developing many groundbreaking drugs, including Copaxone, Azilect, Rivastigmine, Doxil, and Nexobrid. These drugs have helped to treat a wide range of medical conditions and have improved the quality of life for millions of people around the world.

Copaxone is a drug developed by the Israeli scientists at the Weizmann institute and later pharmaceutical company Teva, and it is used to treat multiple sclerosis (MS). MS is a debilitating neurological disease that affects the central nervous system and can lead to a wide range of symptoms, including muscle weakness, numbness, and trouble with coordination and balance. Copaxone works by reducing the number of inflammatory attacks that occur in the central nervous system, which can slow down the progression of the disease. The drug has been on the market for over two decades and has become one of the most widely prescribed treatments for MS.

Azilect is a drug used to treat Parkinson's disease, a neurodegenerative disorder that affects movement and coordination. The drug works by increasing the levels of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that is important for normal movement and coordination, in the brain. Azilect was discovered by Prof Moussa B. H. Youdim (Technion) and developed by the Israeli pharmaceutical company Teva and has become a widely used treatment for Parkinson's disease. The drug has been shown to improve symptoms, slow down the progression of the disease, and improve quality of life for people with Parkinson's disease.

Rivastigmine is a drug used to treat Alzheimer's disease, a progressive brain disorder that affects memory, thinking, and behaviour. The drug works by increasing the levels of acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter that is important for memory and learning, in the brain. Rivastigmine was discovered by Prof Marta Weinstock-Rosin (Hebrew University) and later sold to Novartis. Rivastigmine has become a widely used treatment for Alzheimer's disease. The drug has been shown to improve memory and cognitive function in people with Alzheimer's disease.

Doxil, also known as Janssen's Doxil, was developed initially in Israel. It is a chemotherapy drug used to treat ovarian cancer, multiple myeloma, and Kaposi's sarcoma. The drug works by blocking the replication of cancer cells and is delivered directly to the site of the tumour, which helps to reduce the side effects of chemotherapy. Unlike other chemotherapy drugs that are delivered intravenously, Doxil is delivered in a liposomal form, which helps to protect the drug from being degraded by the body's defences. This allows a higher concentration of the drug to reach the cancer cells and increases its effectiveness.

Nexobrid is a unique drug used to treat severe burn injuries. Unlike other burn treatments that remove the burned tissue, Nexobrid works by dissolving the eschar, or dead tissue, that covers the burn wound. This allows the body's own healing process to take over, reducing the risk of infection and accelerating the healing process. Nexobrid was developed by the Israeli biotechnology company MediWound (Yavne) and has been approved for use in the European Union, Israel, and other countries. The drug has been shown to be safe and effective in treating severe burn injuries and has the potential to revolutionise the way burn injuries are treated.

These drugs are a testament to the innovative spirit and technical expertise of Israeli scientists and researchers, and they demonstrate the important role that Israel is playing in advancing the field of medicine.

Note: The writer is employed by MSD Ltd UK as head of pipeline and access. Content represents personal perspective and should not be considered as a medical advice.



Israel Today

Letter from Ra'anana - Joy Kay

Since our inception, Joy and Mel Kay were at the heart of Magen Avot's growth and development. Last year they made Aliyah, and this is Joy's letter from Ra'anana.

"We are home! Actually, it's our third home in twelve months, but finally, we've come to land in Ra'anana. The last year flew by in a flurry of packers, packing up, unpacking, packing crates-you get the picture! having sold our flat in Netanya much more quickly than we'd anticipated, we begged our purchasers for a long completion date, as we had nowhere to go. In fact, at that point, we weren't even sure which city we were going to live in! But we soon settled on Ra'anana, and having looked at properties for quite a few weeks, we finally bought exactly what we hadn't planned to- an old, unmodernised flat in an elderly building, at the other end of Ra'anana to where we thought we'd end up. But the flat "spoke" to us, as it has large rooms, high ceilings(we're pretty tall people!)and lots of big windows. The icing on the cake was the huge roof, which we access from our lounge, and which we've now landscaped into a lovely garden.

We moved out of our old flat in June and into a rented flat for 5 months whilst our new home was "shputzed" or renovated. Happily, and amazingly, this work was remarkably stress-free, as we were so fortunate in finding an excellent builder and project manager, but it did take till November until we could finally move in. What a pleasure, though, not having to need to explain why we really did want 2 sinks etc!

We've now moved into what hopefully will be our "forever" home, and it's wonderful! The area is green and leafy and seems to be host to scores of parakeets. We are well serviced with shops just across the road, and with the main high street – Ahuza – just a 5-minute walk away, so we rarely have to use our car. And there are so many shuls close by- we really are spoilt for choice.

We are slowly building connections, making new friends, and reconnecting with old ones. On our first Shabbat here, we were invited in to eat dinner with our Temani Israeli neighbours, who'd also asked in the other neighbours from the same floor. They were from America and from France. It was a very moving and powerful experience, singing Shalom Aleichem and Eshet Chayil with complete strangers from the 4 corners of the planet, and connecting through our common rituals and practices. People have been incredibly friendly, helpful, and hospitable, and we're now starting to repay such kindnesses with some English cooking and single malts!

We are both keeping busy in our own, and at the moment, separate ways. Melvin is still working, and commutes to London every month. I go to ulpan twice a week, and (largely) enjoy the 2 five-hour sessions. The students in my class are all "of a certain age" and so, as well as being new olim, we all have something in common, despite coming from many different countries. Whilst there are some English speakers in the class, we do try and communicate with one another in Hebrew, often with interesting results! I also volunteer in the English bookshop in Ra'anana and am helping high school students prepare for their final year English exams. And of course, the family are just down the road in Modi'in, and it's lovely having them only half an hour away.

Life here, does, of course, have its problems and stresses. The cost of living is very high, and the pound is pitiful at the moment; everyone moans about the exorbitant cost of the weekly shop, filling up the car etc. And there are, of course, the daily incidences of violence around Israel, which are unpredictable and relentless. The politicians continue to squabble and bicker, and the driving is unspeakably bad, but we love this place, with all its quirks and difficulties.

To be amongst our own, to practice and live our Judaism, is the most enormous and gratifying pleasure and privilege, and - we are home.



The Inspiring Journey of Levana Goldberg:

A Lifetime of Dedication to Shaare Zedek Medical Centre

By Chaya Langerman

My dear mother, Levana Goldberg, has an amazing history with the Shaare Zedek Medical Centre located in Jerusalem. At the age of 90, she currently lives with my sister in Nofei Prat near Jerusalem. However, her roots in Israel can be traced back to when she was just three years old, moving from Aleppo to live in close proximity to the old Shaare Zedek building on Jaffa Street. My mother's journey at Shaare Zedek began at the tender age of 15, when she sought to contribute to her family's financial situation by taking up work. She started out in the dining room, serving the nurses and medical staff, and later went on to work in the Pharmacy, dispensing medicines.

It was during this time that she caught the attention of Professor Wallach, the Director of the hospital. Impressed by my mother's ambition and drive, Professor Wallach took it upon himself to arrange for a financial loan for Levana to study and become a nurse. He believed in her potential and wanted to provide her with the necessary resources to fulfil her dream. This was no small feat, as he was known to be dedicated to his patients, especially those in the contagious disease department where he saw many cases of diphtheria. Nevertheless, Professor Wallach remained committed to his cause and saw to it that Levana received the loan she needed.

Levana worked at Shaare Zedek for her entire career before retiring, often taking on night shifts or working on Shabbat, which paid a higher salary. As a single mother raising seven children on her own after my father passed away at a young age, my mother had to balance her demanding role as a nurse with the needs of her family. Despite the challenges, she truly loved her work and was known for her dedication to her patients. Throughout her time at the hospital, my mother worked in various departments, including Gynaecology, ENT, Pediatrics, and more. She was mentored by Schwester Zalma, the head nurse, who was known for her kind and compassionate nature and her unwavering commitment to her work. Levana remembers working night shifts as challenging, but necessary in order to provide for her children while still being present in their lives. Levana's hard work and dedication did not go unnoticed. She was highly respected by her patients and colleagues, who were in awe of her commitment to the hospital and her patients.

Even today, she is still recognised in the streets of Jerusalem for her contributions to Shaare Zedek and is remembered as a nurse who truly cared for her patients. My mother has always believed that "to be a nurse, you have to love and care for people", and she has not stopped caring, even at the age of 90. In celebration of her 90th birthday, her family chose to make a donation to nursing scholarships, as a fitting tribute to Levana's lifelong dedication to the Shaare Zedek Medical Centre. Her story serves as an inspiration to all who wish to make a difference in the lives of others, and her legacy will live on through the lives of the countless people she has touched through her work.



My mother, Levana Goldberg on the left



Israel 2050

by Barak Seener

The State of Israel, born out of the ashes of the Holocaust was originally conceived to be a security guarantee for the Jewish people. As Israel advances towards economic and security primacy in the region, coupled with shifting demographics affecting its internal character, its *raison d'être* will evolve alongside its changing ideals with strategic consequences (i). As the State of Israel becomes a rising technological, energy and economic tiger of the Middle East, the Jewish people stand at a crossroads with two radically different, yet traditional ethical paths to traverse (ii). One is biblical and the other steeped in exile. Both have enormous geopolitical implications.

Ethical Context

The 'Biblical model' adopted by the Haredi and religious Zionist movement stresses the exclusive and treasured metaphysical nature of the Jewish people yearning to attain ever-greater levels of sanctity. The Jew's chosen spiritual status has a symbiotic relationship with the holy land (iii) that too possesses a soul, and thus ceding territory is akin to spiritual amputation. Yearning for a third Temple is coupled with the aspiration that 'G-D pours out thy wrath on the nations of the world that knows him not (iv)'. The Talmudic maxim of 'Who is mighty' is externalised as the religious right harken back to the first Mitzva the Jewish people were mandated upon entering the land of Israel – genocide against the seven nations that inhabited the land (v). This was reminiscent of Shimon and Levi committing genocide on the city of Shchem for the rape of their sister, Dina. This ideology is by no means marginal and characterises the outlook of a growing demography with representatives in Israel's government. The general rule is that when religion becomes the State it becomes weaponised seeking to transform its internal character and external environment (vi).

The 'Exile model' adopted by a broad spectrum of Jewish society ranging from modern-Orthodox to secular is inclusive to the point of universalism. This was epitomised in Israel's Declaration of Independence, 'This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign state.'

Discomfort with the notion of 'Chosenness' is coupled with conflating Torah with liberalism and accompanied by a longing that 'G-d pour out thy love on the nations of the world that knows him not.' 'Who is mighty' becomes internalised to 'conquering one's desires and inclination' much like moderate interpretations of Jihad. The 'Exile model' was vehemently repudiated by Nietzsche who in his Genealogy of Morals decried 'that priestly nation of which eventually realized that the one method of affecting satisfaction on its enemies and parents was by means of a radical transvaluation of values, which was at the same time of the cleverest revenge'. Similarly, In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche describes the Jews' 'slave rebellion in morality.' The weak slave mentality that Judaism epitomised, convinced the strong that compassion and mercy were ideals. The Jews, a people "born for slavery, the chosen people among peoples, inverted values, thanks to which life on earth for two millennia has possessed a new and dangerous appeal. Their prophets fused 'rich,' 'godless,' 'evil,' 'violent,' and 'sensuous' into a unity. In this inversion of values (to which belongs the use of the word for "poor" as a synonym for "holy" and "friend") lies the significance of the Jewish people: with them begins the slave rebellion in morality.' Thus, Judeo-Christian teachings of "Love thy neighbour" and "Turn the other cheek," created a revolution of the mind by displacing the morality of the strong dominating the poor and weak. This was echoed by Rabbi Meir Kahane who repeatedly decried the 'exile mentality' that had distorted Biblical values to the point of exalting weakness, extolling suffering and eschewing vengeance.

These competing *weltanschauungs* spills over to their respective reading of potential strategic benefits or pitfalls in the short-medium term.



Israel 2050

by Barak Seener

Geopolitical Context

Israel's vying models will take place within a broader regional context of whether the Arab States will manage to diversify their economies to create markets for trade and inward investment more rapidly than the West's ability to onshore supply chains and develop shale oil and gas along with broader alternative energies in the bid to achieve energy independence (vii). Offsetting decline may lead to greater Arab demands for concession vis a vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Alternatively, in a new regional landscape, Arab States may focus solely on their strategic and economic interests in the same manner Iran and Saudi Arabia embrace Chinese investments. China in turn, welcomes Iranian and Saudi energy exports, and in the process overlook the plight of their Uyghur brethren. Will the US increase its involvement in the region, or will it allow China to outpace its engagement in the Middle East through its Belt Road Initiative and purchase of cheaper oil to sustain its own growing economy? How will both Israel's Biblical and Exile models navigate relations with the US and China amidst a new cold war that is likely to be multi-generational?

It is not only the Middle East that forms a context for Israel. In the long-term, Israel as a rising militaristic and economic power will increasingly form a framework for the region to operate within. The morals and behaviour of states reflects their capacity. Robert Kagan in his best-selling book 'Paradise and Power' advanced that the US pursues a policy of military interventionism and engagement around the globe as its military expenditure is far greater than any of its allies or strategic competitors. Europe in contrast passionately extols the virtues of diplomacy and economic ties as it lacks the capacity to assert itself military due to its reduced percentage of GDP that it allocated towards defence expenditure. Israel's economic and military growth is likely to be accompanied by a dramatic change in its operational theatre. Currently, Israel boasts of relatively low civilian casualties due to its precision strikes against Hamas targets. This involves the IDF offering prior warning to terrorists of its intended strikes, which in turn leads to terrorists taking human shields to increase the prospects of higher civilian casualties. In contrast to Israel that unintentionally encourages asymmetric warfare, the US, and allied forces, in a bid to eliminate Jihadists such as the Taliban, Al Qaeda, ISIS in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Iraq and Libya have incurred the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians. Organisations such as New America or the Bureau of Investigative Journalists estimate civilian deaths constituting up to 15% of deaths – all in the name of 'collateral damage'. As Israel's military expenditure and capabilities increase, it is likely to adopt tactics of its Western counterparts in combat that is a far cry from its current liberal sensibilities.

Israel, a Rising Tiger

The Abraham Accords was not only a result of a mutually shared threat of Iran but is also due to Israel's increased military preponderance accompanying its economic and technological prowess. Israel is one of the 10 most powerful, politically influential, and militarily strong countries in the world with its defence firms such as Elbit Systems becoming among the world's top arms manufacturers last year. Its military growth is underpinned by its economic development. The Economist ranked Israel as the fourth most successful economy among the developed countries for 2022. In 2023, the IMF estimated Israel's GDP at \$564 billion and its GDP per capita at \$58,270, a figure comparable to other highly developed and rich countries. Israel has achieved energy independence with its gas fields holding billions of cubic metres of natural gas and has for the first time become an energy exporter now shipping crude oil to Europe. In the long-term, Israel is likely to leverage its military ascendancy, economic strength, and relative richness in natural gas to strengthen its geostrategic relations with Europe as well as regional neighbours. All the while, Israel will advance its own version of the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny that is accompanied by accelerated building of settlements as part of its security interests in a strategic and unprecedented manner.



Israel 2050

by Barak Seener

The 'Exile model' with its keen cosmopolitan awareness is desperate to sustain the current trend of growth across various industries. In doing so it exercises caution from the risk of overreaching and undermining its economic, diplomatic and security objectives by identifying the Jew as part of wider humanity and in turn, the Jewish State as part of the broader family of nations.

Yet the temptation to overreach may grow during a period of growing clout. All the while Israel is grappling with strategic questions such as how to establish relations with its neighbours as its conflict with the Palestinians remains; how to attract inwards investment while challenging its existing checks on the Supreme Court which in turn affects its democratic status; how shifting demographics impacts upon its very character as a Jewish and democratic state; and how the very definition of 'Jewish' is likely to be challenged by this changing demographic.

A recent case for tempering revolutionary compulsions was S&P's warning that overhauling Israel's judiciary could jeopardise the country's sovereign credit rating and deter investment in the country. Bankers cite the billions of dollars of outflow of capital to Europe and US. Tech companies and economists are anxiety ridden by the prospect of overhauling Israel's independent judiciary which undermines its standing as a stable hub for investments.

Rather than being content to sustain Israel's growth across all sectors, the Biblical model is impatient to leverage them to achieve its strategic objectives and fulfil its spiritual aspirations. The Biblical model may either seek to maintain tradition while embracing modernity such as Japan and the UAE which will lend itself to continued growth, or reject modernity like the Taliban, Erdogan, and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. The Biblical model may lead Israel to overextend and undermine its own prosperity and the prospect of regional ties. This will hardly dismay Israel's religious right as those hearkening back with nostalgia to Biblical Israel see no value of a start-up nation attracting inwards investment. While being a human accomplishment, technological innovation is not a Jewish ideal and as such is a subversion of its mission statement of being a 'nation of priests'.

Ironically, rather than contribute to religious tensions over the temple mount, the Biblical model claims that asserting religious identity complements Israel's economic and military strength and may ameliorate tensions as Muslim nations downplay constructed narratives and focus more on strategic interests. As the Palestinians are considered a side-show with no impact on geopolitics or international financial markets, Netanyahu has been successful forging strategic ties with the Arab world while not making any concessions to the Palestinians. This sentiment was echoed by US Democratic Senator Kirsten Gillibrand who in Jan 2023, commented that expanding the Abraham Accords need not be contingent on Israel limiting settlement expansion in the West Bank. This sentiment is likely to grow as Israel accrues greater military and economic strength. Similarly, in the aftermath of the UAE Foreign Minister's warning that Israel risked upending ties with the UAE and more broadly undermining the Abraham Accords if it included far-right wing lawmakers in the government, the UAE's ambassador to Israel was photographed embracing Itamar Ben Gvir at a reception hosted by the Emirati embassy. Correspondingly, on the heels of the Hashemite Kingdom's outcry over Ben Gvir's visit to the Temple Mount, Prime Minister Netanyahu met with Jordan's King Abdulla to discuss regional issues, especially strategic, security and economic cooperation between Israel and Jordan. This may be underpinned by a shared ethos between Israel and Muslim States. As Israel emphasises its monotheistic features it could contribute to a Judeo-Islamic ethos that underpins future regional ties. In turn, as Israel does not appear as an alien colonial outpost in the region, it may contribute to a reduction of radical Islamism and the shedding of Palestinian consciousness across the Islamic world. Rabbis doing diplomacy may have greater cache than traditional diplomats.



Israel 2050

by Barak Seener

The Law of Unintended Consequences

Yet history is not linear and deterministic that increased diplomatic and economic ties inevitably leads to peace and security. As such history is not without ironies as increased regional interconnectedness may lead to future conflict. The fact that implosion is often as devastating as explosion confounds the proponents of the Exile Model. The late 19th century saw the second wave of globalization leading Norman Angell in 1911 to advance the notion, in his book, *The Great Illusion*, that interconnected economies cannot go to war. Three years later, with the outbreak of the Great War, it was evident that the book's title reflected his own delusion as identity can trump rationalism and political interests can be advanced at the expense of economic ones. Prior to World War I, the German and Russia economies were interwoven. In 1913, Germany's largest trading partner was Russia, which accounted for more than 13 percent of its total trade. Britain and the United States together also accounted for about 12 percent of Germany's total trade; Austria-Hungary, 9 percent; and France, about 7 percent. This did not stop Germany's economic and political interests from diverging, resulting in a devastating World War. Just as it has happened in the West, it can occur in the Middle East. Indeed, prosperity may actually contribute to conflict. China's accession to the World Trade Organisation in 2001 made it more financially interconnected with the West contributing to its hegemonic designs of challenging the liberal international order. Israel should take heed as the Abraham Accords does not necessarily herald Shimon Peres's panacea of a 'New Middle East.'

'A Nation Like All Others'

In the long-term, increased economic power and regional interconnectedness is likely to contribute to Israel's increased nationalist assertiveness (viii). In its bid to be a normal nation like any other, Israel will shed its defensive and tactical posture and will be forced to confront the lessons that all other nation-states have undergone when achieving a degree of economic or military primacy. All have identified strategic objectives and sought to export and even impose its ethos via territorial expansion. This has applied equally in the cases of 'the sun never setting on the British empire', or Theodore Roosevelt's Monroe Doctrine warning European powers not to interfere in the Western hemisphere in the form of further colonization, military intervention combined with Manifest Destiny leading to the US's expansion on the American continent. The exporting of ethos has taken place economically via US-led globalisation that stressed interconnectedness, or Chinese predatory mercantilism; ideologically and religiously as Islamic States have aimed to export their brand of Islamism, or Western States culturally wielding soft-power. In the case of almost every country in the 19th and 20th centuries, states undergoing economic growth increasingly embrace militarism, as they acquire a wider range of strategic interests to protect. Just as the United States controls the Western hemisphere, China is attempting to become a regional hegemon and the dominant naval power in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In Israel's case, being that the Jewish people are an outlier will its rising power lead to increased identity or rejection of identity (ix)? In turn, will it heighten the risk of conflict or mitigate risk?

The fusion of Israel's right and left-wing is already underway as while counter-intuitive, settlement building has often increased under left-wing governments rather than right-wing governments. To that end, in the long-term, both Israel's Biblical or Exile models are likely to merge as it would be difficult for either of them to resist the nationalistic impulse for Israel to territorially expand or assert itself vis a vis its religious sites. Just as US constitutional law is a prism from which international law is interpreted, similarly, Israel is also likely to relegate international law to Biblical law or Israeli law that will increasingly embody religious values and principles. Statecraft is essentially Nietzschean as strength and legitimacy will be deemed as synonymous as has been the case with all states achieving various degrees of primacy.



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Such considerations were alien to the Zionist founding fathers who were fixated on phase 1 of nationhood – normalcy, security and self-determination. They were thus naive regarding what normalcy entails vis a vis the amoral or immoral strategic impulses states have for achieving security. Ben-Gurion should have been careful what he wished for when he bemoaned, 'For the last fifteen hundred years, we have been excluded from world history, which is made up of the histories of nations.' These histories, however, were not made up of peaceful nationhood in isolation and abstraction from one another, but rather collided with bloody conflict. Similarly, Jabotinsky was equally ahistorical and unaware of the consequences of normalcy which he interpreted merely as 'A nation, which lives a normal national life on its land.' The fixation on the plight of the Jews made Zionist goal of self-determination overlook the law of unintended consequences. It was envisaged that self-determination would transform the meek and oppressed Jew into the blonde and muscular new Jew working the earth. In Herzl's words this would be, 'a wondrous breed of Jews which will spring up from the earth.' Similarly, Max Nordau in his speech at the Second Zionist Congress held in Basel on August 28, 1898 exhorted the need for the "new Jew" that would embody 'Muskeljudentum' muscular Judaism and reject the "old Jew" of the Shtetl, with the mental and physical strength to achieve the goals of Zionism. Did they not consider that this new species would not merely be an agrarian creature, but apply himself to amoral/immoral statecraft (x)?

Yet it appears that the Zionist founding fathers were blithely oblivious to the region's complexities in which a Jewish State would take root and the potential challenges that would confront the 'new muscular Jew'.

The merging of Israel's Exile and Biblical models will lead to evolving ethics in a changed regional neighbourhood and transformed geopolitical landscape which is unprecedented in modern history for the Jewish State to contend with. As the Jewish psyche and value system undergoes an upheaval, so will that of the regional landscape and court of international opinion. Will there be a schism between the State of Israel and its Jewish diaspora that is assimilating at an exponential rate? Can this lead to the creation of two oppositional forms of Judaism? Or will Zionism 2.0 develop tools aligned with its new status to deepen its engagement and coordination with its diaspora?

Barak M. Seener is the Founder of Strategic Intelligenta and hosts the GeoGodfather podcast that focuses on geopolitics.

WITH BARAK M. SEENER & LEAH TEDROW
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Israel 2050

by Barak Seener

Footnotes

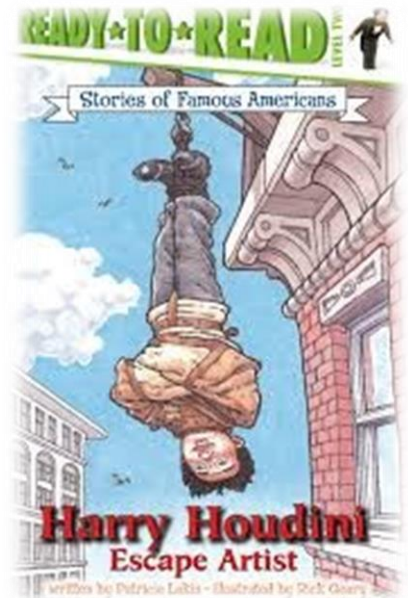
- i. In order to identify potential future trends lateral thinking is required as history is not binding for the future. Just as David Hume noted in the realm of ethics that the empirical not be associated with the normative, this can also be applied to history and future projections as Israel's history and ethos is not necessarily binding and is unlikely to be akin to its future. As a result, at this stage of the historical juncture confronting Israel, it is necessary to pose questions that would have been deemed inconceivable in the past.
- ii. Man has the natural tendency to create G-D in his image as one's psyche is a product of one's social and cultural milieu. In a bid to transcend one's subjectivity and objectively determine G-Ds will, the Torah introduced to man that was created in G-Ds image the fundamental principle of 'Bitul' – annulling the ego by subjugating one's will to the Divine will to transcend one's environment. This is encapsulated in Pirkei Avot 2:4 *הוא היה אומר, עשה רצונו כרצוני, כדי שיעשה רצוני כרצונו; בטל רצוני מפני רצונו, כדי שיבטל רצון אחרים מפני רצוני* *He would say make His (G-Ds) will like your will, so that He will make your will like His will. Nullify your will before His will, so that He will nullify the will of others before your will.'* Similarly, Mishna Berachot 5:1 describes how the early Chasidim spent an hour before prayer achieving this state *מקום למקום כדי שיכוונו את ליבם למקום* *A person should not stand up to pray unless he is in a serious mind-frame. The original pious ones used to wait one hour and then pray, in order to direct their hearts towards the Hashem.* Rashi defines *ראש כבוד* as *הכנעה* – subjugation. The *ברטנורא* adds the word *מורה* – awe that citing the verse in Tehillim Perek 2 *ביראה את ה' עבדו את ה' ביראה* – *serve G-D with awe.* The *מעדני יום טוב* commentary on the *ראש* interprets the Mishna as *הקל כולו ברוממות הקל* *They will purify their thoughts from the pleasures of this world and have intent towards the exaltation of G-D'. Cultivating awe of the Divine entail's subjugation - the diminution of self.* The aim of 'Bitul' is to transform the subject into the object by transcending one's environment and becoming a conduit for divine flow in the world to the point that one's identity is an expression of G-D will. In this state, one is not reactive, but proactive. The Tefillin Shel Rosh is placed on the prefrontal cortex- the location of identity and ego with the aim of annulment. The result is achieving a heightened level of creativity that is referred to as 'Flow State'. This ethos is alien to the rationalism-based individualism advanced by the Enlightenment, the individualism advanced by classical liberalism that underpins the free market's invisible hand or community orientated Marxism. Both Capitalism and Marxism alike are marked by a central idea of unconscious forces in which man is a socially conditioned creature with no hope of detaching from his environment and independently making rational and conscious decisions with one's own free will. The postmodernist's refutation of the notion of objectivity also makes the concept of annulment of ego moribund.
- iii. This is reflected in the second paragraph of the Shema.
- iv. Passover Haggadah
- v. The book of Joshua is replete with genocide due to the divine imperative to ethnically cleanse the land of Israel from the seven nations already inhabiting the land.
- vi. Today Christianity emphasises benevolence and 'turning the other cheek' as it did during its inception due to it wielding no political power. As soon as it was co-opted by Emperor Constantine in his holy Roman Empire, it became a tool for repression as it was throughout the Middle Ages by epitomising the verse 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword' (Matthew 10:34). The Islamic world has experienced the same dynamic whether it be the Sunni Saudi Kingdom or the Shiite Iranian revolutionary regime. In an attempt to sidestep this phenomenon, Herzl enunciated in his book, *The Jewish State*, *'In the Jewish State we shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks. Army and priesthood shall receive honours high as their valuable functions deserve. But they must not interfere in the administration of the State which confers distinction upon them else they will conjure up difficulties without and within.'* Herzl's vision was antithetical to the Biblical Model as in *'Concepts in Halacha as Elaborated Upon by the Agadah and Kabbalah,'* Rav Soloveitchik expounds upon the relationship between religious law and politics and asserts, *'In Judaism there cannot be talk of separating Church and State. The entire background of the Halacha is the State. There is, therefore, nothing to separate. It is not as if there would be a metaphysical structure, on the one hand and a concrete one, on the other which are not commensurate. The Halacha is all-inclusive; life itself....The Halacha is replete with a total understanding of concrete life. It integrates and identifies itself with a variety of phenomena; biological, social, political, psychological.'*
- vii. This is especially in light of the recent Russia-Ukraine crisis coupled with Saudi Arabia's unwillingness to lower oil prices.
- viii. This is on the assumption that Israel does not go down a trajectory as mentioned in the following footnote.
- ix. Tanach is replete with the trend amongst Jews – increased affluence is accompanied by a rejection of one's identity and impulse to assimilate as epitomised by the verse, 'And Yeshurun became fat and kicked'. This Jewish phenomena is the opposite to the dynamic seen around the international community in that increased socio-economic status is often accompanied by a hardening of identity whether it be China's increased GDP that spill over to its hegemonic aspirations, the 9/11 attackers or the 7/7 attackers in the UK that respectively came from upper middle-class backgrounds.
- x. Being products of colonial empires, they may have been unphased by coercion and repression that are 'normal' features of statecraft.



Houdini - The Rabbi's Son by Simon Bentley

On Pesach we commemorate Yetziat Mitzrayim, "Going out of Egypt". Mitzrayim, the Hebrew word for "Egypt," means "boundaries" and "constrictions"

Harry Houdini defied all boundaries and constrictions. He was an audacious escape artist who accepted all challenges. He freed himself from handcuffs and legcuffs, underwater straits, boxes, crates, jail cells, straitjackets and milk cans. His jaw-clenching escapes dazzled and terrified audiences and secured Houdini's prominence as a living legend, for American presidents, for Hollywood stars, for fiction writers, and for masses of spectators who crowded his outdoor and theatre performances.





Houdini - The Rabbi's Son

by Simon Bentley

He was lauded by the Jewish community, which was thrilled that one of its own, an immigrant from Budapest and a Rabbi's son, had penetrated the mainstream despite antisemitism and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Houdini, born Erik Weisz in Hungary in 1874, lived for only fifty-two years, but his significance as a Jew who made it into the mainstream, as a popular phenomenon who attracted huge crowds, and as a muse for artists working today, is extraordinary.

Erik (Houdini) was one of the most famous men of his time, a product of the vast waves of immigration that transformed nations around the world. His father, Mayer Samuel Weiss, emigrated from Budapest to the United States in 1876. The family joined Mayer in 1878 once he was appointed Rabbi of a small congregation in Appleton, Wisconsin, a position he did not hold for long. They relocated to Milwaukee and then to New York, but Mayer was consistently unable to find a congregation, or any other stable job. Despite his modest efforts to become more American, he never learned to speak English, and he remained, like many first-generation immigrants, a foreigner in his new land, until his death in 1892.

Erik and his siblings early became the principal earners of the family, also a characteristic pattern for immigrant families. Unlike their father, but like other children of immigrants, they sought to assimilate to American culture. Erik did more than that. He lived much of his life as a symbol of what many immigrants dreamed of becoming.



Houdini was a bridge between the Old World and the New for many immigrants. He became an entertainer. A choice of work that Jews and other immigrants found more open to them than many more hierarchical business organisations. Houdini stood out not because of his choice of profession but because of his spectacular success at it. His magic acts and most of all his celebrated escapes became an integral part of American popular culture. But he also retained a deliberate level of exoticism that set him apart not just from mainstream Americans but from most other immigrants as well and help spread his fame far beyond the United States.

Despite his constant touring, Houdini became a settled and devoted New Yorker. For his fellow citizens he performed some of his most spectacular magic and escapes.

Among many other miracles, he vanished a two-ton elephant from the stage of New York's Hippodrome.

An estimated hundred thousand people watched him escape from a straitjacket while dangling upside down by his ankles outside the Palace Theatre.



Houdini - The Rabbi's Son

by Simon Bentley

In 1916 he was nailed into a packing case, shackled, and dumped into New York Harbour. After a minute, his head bobbed out of the water, smiling, to cheers from the crowd in Battery Park. Reversing the effect, in 1926 he was soldered into a galvanised iron casket and lowered into the swimming pool of the Shelton Hotel on Lexington Avenue. He remained submerged for an hour and thirty-one minutes without any source of air.

Names given to Houdini were related to his status as an agent of escape: Handcuff King, Prison Breaker, Death Defy-er, and World-Famous Self- Liberator.



To be both Jewish and a magician was far from unusual. Houdini explained that Jews had been performing magic since biblical times. As an example, he offered the transformation of Aaron's staff into a serpent.

Houdini's Jewish piety was undogmatic but respectful. During his teenage years in New York, he became a pupil of Talmud Torah in a neighbourhood congregation. Houdini annually observed the day of his Father's death by reciting Kaddish. "I have said Kaddish in 25 different parts of the world" "No matter where I may happen to be in my professional capacity or under what circumstances, I manage somehow to keep that observance"



Antisemitism always roused Houdini's indignation. "I never was ashamed to acknowledge that I was a Jew, and never will be", he wrote to a friend in 1902.

At the peak of his fame, Houdini was known throughout much of the world, and many of the people who marvelled at his escape acts were not even aware that he was a Jew. Nevertheless, American Jews took a special interest in Houdini. He symbolised the emergence of Jews into the larger world, and he helped them imagine their own rise to prominence in the United States and the world.



Houdini - The Rabbi's Son

by Simon Bentley

For people who felt imprisoned by poverty, prejudice, alienation, and tradition, Houdini was not just an entertainer. He was a symbol of escape from the figurative shackles that immigrants sought to shed. Industrial workers who felt chained to the assembly line could see Houdini as a symbol of escape from their drudgery.

For Jews who felt frail and vulnerable in the New World, fearful of antisemitism and failure, Houdini, with his prodigious strength and his extraordinary talent, could be a symbol of physical power, challenging the stereotype of Jews as small and weak.

To the millions of people around the world who marvelled at his extraordinary escapes, and to immigrants above all, Houdini was not just an entertainer. Perhaps unknowingly, he was a symbol of hope. He called himself a "self-liberator" which to many people meant something more than merely escaping from handcuffs, chains, and safes. He had liberated himself from the poverty and isolation of his father's world and had embraced American ideas of social mobility and personal freedom. He was, one biography has claimed, "America's first superhero". He was in some ways, the precursor of the sensational comic-book superheroes of the 1930s and beyond (conceived and written mostly by Jews) Superman, Batman, the Green Lantern, and others, who represented the same kind of extraordinary strength and almost magical skills that Houdini had exhibited.



Harry Houdini - No boundaries



Visit to IWM Holocaust Galleries

18 September 2022

by Esther Bentley

On a sunny autumnal morning, 18 September 2022, the day before Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's State funeral, armed with packed lunches, Magen Avot and Yad Vashem UK organised a trip to Imperial War Museum's ground breaking new Second World War and Holocaust Galleries. The surrounding Royal Parks were covered with breathtakingly beautiful floral wreaths and numerous Paddington Bears, the talk was of the late Queen and her incredible contribution to the UK and her relentless devotion to duty.



It was initially difficult to switch onto the very different subject of the tragedy of the genocide of 6 million Jewish souls nearly 80 years ago, and the Holocaust Galleries we were about to visit.

The new Galleries had opened the previous year, having been delayed by the pandemic, and is curated in a very different way to the previous Holocaust Exhibition at IWM, London. It is a much lighter, brighter curatorial experience, notwithstanding the tragic narrative, the aim being to enlighten visitors about the development of the Holocaust, as it appeared to those who witnessed it.

The curators, particularly James Bulgin, the Head of Content for the new Galleries, wanted the lessons of the Holocaust to be highlighted, and not experienced in a darkened space- like other Holocaust museums; a novel concept-and one that takes some getting used to. Once we entered the Galleries, the previous few days of National mourning were briefly forgotten, and we were transported back to vibrant pre-war Jewish Europe and a glimpse into the lives of those diverse Jewish families who lived there.



The Galleries include cherished items the victims used, and in some cases hid, to ensure their horrific experiences were meaningfully remembered. By telling the story of the Holocaust through original objects from the time and primary source witness testimony, the Galleries highlight the devastating human cost of the genocide, and help visitors understand and relate to one of the darkest periods in our Jewish history. Through these Galleries the Holocaust became relevant to us now-at a time of rising antisemitism, race hatred and Holocaust denial-and at a time of emotional National mourning.



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by Esther Bentley

As a Holocaust educator at the IWM for over 20 years I have often been asked the question "How was the Holocaust humanly possible?" it was an unprecedented genocide, and the human tragedy of the loss of 6 million Jewish men, women and children was unfathomable.

Through the Galleries we experience the diversity, beauty and relative normality of Jewish cultural and religious life before the War, the cumulative steps taken towards the persecution and the destruction of the Jews of Europe under the cover of World War 2, the role of the perpetrators, bystanders and collaborators, and the different responses of the victims.

The deaths of millions of Jewish victims of the Holocaust, the non-Jewish victims, like the Roma and Sinti people, the disabled and the gay communities, were all premeditated, and carried out not just by the Nazi SS machine under Hitler, Goering, Himmler and Heydrich, but also by collaborators and ordinary people, like the Einsatzgruppen, drafted in to support the Nazis.



By the end of the war the Nazis and their collaborators had murdered two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population. In some parts of Europe, this represented the complete annihilation of entire families, communities and households.

My maternal grandfather lost both his parents, and all four siblings in the Grodno area near Bialystok (now Belarus) -now known as the 'Holocaust by bullets'. Similarly, my paternal grandfather and grandmother lost their entire families from Rowne (Now Ukraine), including parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins by horrific shootings rather than industrialised deportations to camps.

My grandparents never talked openly to us about their losses, but they lived in the shadow of an unspoken incalculable tragedy. The next generations of our family have all had to confront the aftermath of this destruction in different ways, internalising the loss and trying to make sense of it.



*Transport, 1974,
Roman Halter,
Holocaust survivor*



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18 September 2022

by Esther Bentley

I do believe that those from Magen Avot who visited these ground-breaking unique galleries benefited from this special trip. Hopefully when and if we repeat it there will be more people who will join us in order to gain a new very different understanding of such a devastating period in our history, which wiped out vibrant Jewish communities, some who flourished and others who had been persecuted, but who had all been living in Europe for over 2000 years. Pesach is of course our festival of freedom from slavery; The Holocaust Galleries serve as a powerful reminder that as recently as 78 years ago the Jewish people suffered horrendous persecution and destruction but managed somehow to rebuild their shattered lives and create families and enduring legacies. Yom HaShoah falls just after Pesach, and this year we mark 80 years since the heroic and tragic Warsaw ghetto uprising. The history of the Shoah (Holocaust) is not just about the victims, bystanders, and perpetrators, but also highlights the role of the brave resisters, and their attempts, against insurmountable odds, to survive and tell the world about the horrors of the Holocaust. Yizkor: Never forget.



A True Survivor - Lily Ebert MBE, BEM born 1923

We are living in turbulent times and the lessons of the Holocaust are so relevant today:

Remember, Yizkor, Never Forget.



As a Jewish Doctor:

How much should I care about climate change?

by Professor Laurence Lovat

I am sitting in Dubai overlooking the Persian Gulf in the February warmth, marvelling at the Palm Jumeirah, a stunning land reclamation project that has increased the length of Dubai's shoreline by hundreds of miles. You could call me a hypocrite for writing this article. And you are right. But I also think that we need to wake up to what we are doing and talk about how we should respond.

If you think Israel is a miracle, just look at the United Arab Emirates. It is less than 4 times the size of Israel, but it is one of the world's busiest international transport hubs. Dubai was the second most visited place in the world last year after Paris. (London was no 7 on the list). According to Wikipedia, it has the sixth highest per capita income in the world (UK is 26 and Israel is 29). It also has UK style pedestrian crossings, Waitrose, and Marks & Spencer. More than 90% of the population are immigrants and not one of them is given citizenship. They come from all over including India, Pakistan, and the Philippines. The car is king with ten-lane highways routine. Our taxi driver told us that he earns far more here, at around £6,000 per year, than he would in Pakistan. He makes enough to send money home to his parents, wife and one year old daughter who he has not yet met. He lives in a shared room with 7 other taxi drivers. If he loses his job, he will be deported. But construction is booming. Fifty storey skyscrapers are going up everywhere and the workers are all in voluntary bondage from other countries. And yet... in a hundred years' time, this city of Towers of Babel (with a common language of English) may all be washed away. The USA National Ocean Service reported last year that failing to curb future emissions could see sea levels rise by 3.5m in the lifetimes of my grandchildren. That is enough to spell the end of New York, Bangkok, Shanghai, Miami, Mumbai, and Manila not to mention Dubai (and Tel Aviv). The image that forms in my mind is of bonded Israelite servants building the pyramids amidst the rising waters.

But actually, the reasons I am concerned are more personal. As a doctor, I work with many staff. Over the last 20 years the single largest group has been Filipino nurses. The NHS has run recruitment drives and it is the most popular country in the world for these gentle, kind and highly professional staff to come to. There are tens of thousands of them in the UK as I write. Unfortunately, I had the opportunity to get know one of them last year whilst I was in hospital for over a month with complications following minor surgery. (Indeed, as part of my on-going recuperation, I decided to come to Dubai for a break in the winter sun.) Whilst in hospital, Melba, a Filipino nurse helped looked after me. Melba earns a median UK national wage and lives in a single room in a shared flat some distance from the hospital. She works overtime to send money home to her family. Her parents live in Manila. The little money she has sent allowed them to build a house and buy a car. Things are cheap in Philippines.

But things are not good there. Melba's family used to live on Smokey Mountain, a slum on a landfill site with 2 million metric tons of (western) waste which was closed 30 years ago. A landslide 20 years ago following a tropical storm killed hundreds. These storms are becoming more frequent, and landslides are increasing in the deforested mountainsides. In 2013, a cousin of hers, working in the mangrove forests which protect the coasts was caught in the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan. Another member of her family died last year from Dengue fever, a disease we never see in the UK, but which has increased in East Asia 30-fold in the last 50 years. Indeed, malaria, cholera and typhoid are also surging in the country, all fuelled by climate change.

I had never thought about the Philippines much. But I have seen the nurses in my hospital, a group characterised by their gentle kindness and strong communal bonds become deeply worried when relatives at home are caught in crisis after crisis on the 7640 islands that make up their sprawling country in the Pacific Ocean. Ten percent of the world's population lives in low-elevation coastal areas including much of the Philippines. Indeed, Manila is one of the most vulnerable cities in the world to sea level rise driven by climate change. At current rates, more than 5 million people in that country will be under water in 30 years' time. In 2021, a paper in the top medical journal, the Lancet, explored anxiety about climate change amongst the youth of the world. They took a random sample of 10,000 young people aged 16-25 in 10 countries. In the



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Philippines, 94% were worried about climate change and that impacted on daily function in three quarters. In the UK, the number was barely a quarter.

It is not hard to see why. Our incomes are 4 times higher, and we use 4 times as much energy per person. Our lives are easier and more pleasant. But we are not free of risks either. As temperatures rise, the risks of premature death during summer heatwaves rise (who can forget 40-degree temperatures last summer?). Weird diseases will become more common like tick-borne encephalitis. Worsening air quality leads to more asthma attacks and overheating leads to more cardiac stress.

I discuss the issue with friends and a number of themes emerge.

- (a) 'The science is of poor quality'. I ask myself whether my musings are Malthusian mutterings of a middle-aged malcontent, but I remind myself that I am a serious scientist and I rely on scientific evidence. Fifty years ago, the quality argument could be made. But no longer. The scientific consensus is being rapidly bolstered by hard evidence. I would be happy to review the literature with anyone who wants to do so.
- (b) 'Global warming has happened before'. This is indeed true. During the dinosaur era carbon dioxide levels were 10 times higher than they are now. But CO₂ levels rose gradually which gave life time to adapt. We are spewing out carbon at such a rate now, that global heating is happening at least 10 times faster than it has done previously. And by the way, carbon levels in the atmosphere are already higher than they have ever been since the dinosaurs became extinct. According to recent joint research from the University of Washington and Stanford University, the last time such rapid heating happened was 251 million years ago at the end of the Permian period when global warming left animals unable to breathe. It resulted in the world's greatest mass-extinction. Almost all life was wiped out.
- (c) And then we reach the latest counter argument. 'We can't do anything about it', or in another form 'Go and tell the Chinese'. But this is precisely what Judaism is about. As the late, lamented Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, famously said: "from its inception, Judaism was a living protest against hierarchical societies that give some, but not all, dignity, power and freedom. Instead, it insisted that if any individual is sacred, then every individual is, because each of us is in the image of God."

The rich are powerful and whether we like it or not, we are the rich. Two thirds of the new wealth created in the year before the pandemic was taken by the richest 1%. And the uncomfortable truth? That is us. If you own your own home or even a decent sized apartment, you are now amongst the wealthiest 1% in the entire world.

So what should I, the hypocrite do? Well, I have to accept that geo-engineering (for example carbon capture and storage, reflecting heat back into space etc) is not going to solve anything in a reasonable time scale. The world's energy consumption (and CO₂ emission) is ballooning, with more emissions in the last 30 years than in the rest of human history. The science suggests that within another 10 years we will breach the 1.50C threshold set at the COP21 meeting in Paris. This is important because it appears that soon after reaching that level, a number of irreversible changes will start happening. If you want to learn more, come and talk to me. We have some time left. I can no longer claim that the problem is someone else's. There is a classic Midrash which describes God leading Adam around the Garden of Eden. He said: "Look at My works! How beautiful and praiseworthy they are. Everything that I have created, I created for you. Take care not to damage and destroy My world, for if you destroy it, there is no one to repair it after you." (Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13). So, I need to modify my own consumption, as hard as it will be. That means less plane journeys (the biggest single addition each person makes to their own CO₂ emissions, although rather strangely, governments do not include airline travel in their statistics of carbon consumption). Instead of flying to Dubai, I could take the train to Spain (new services are coming online). The weather in February is not quite as good, but it might yet



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beat cold, wet London. I can turn off lights, computers and everything else that leaks electricity. And I must dramatically reduce energy consumption at home. I am looking into cavity wall insulating my 90-year-old house. We are already vegetarian, so we can't do much more there (but you can!). I asked my financial advisor about ethical investments but was told that "their sustainable credentials are open for discussion as the products are often 'greenwashed'". We must all demand more transparency when investing.

I can also put pressure on others who are in a position to make bigger changes than me. If only a quarter of the population pushes for it, political change will happen fast. And one of the things I learned in Dubai is just how much the world emulates the UK.

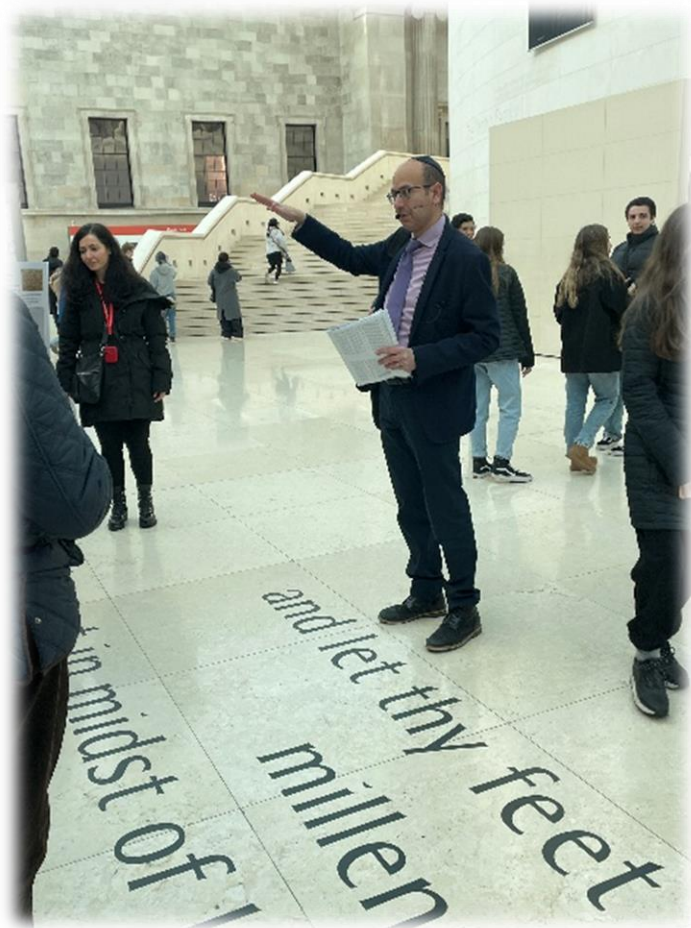
So, as a Jewish doctor, should I care? To me, the answer is obvious and so are, at least some of, the next steps. As Rabbi Sacks wrote in A Letter in a Scroll, about the midrash describing Avraham Avinu coming across the 'palace in flames' and asking who had made it. Rabbi Sacks points out that Avraham realised that the palace had an owner, but '...that by acting in response to the call of God, collectively ... (it is we who) ... change the world. The flames of injustice... are not inevitable.... Judaism is the revolutionary moment at which humanity refuses to accept the world as it is'. Let us hypocrites step up to the challenge with which we are faced. Chag Sameach!



Bonded Israelite servants building the pyramids amidst the rising waters. Created by Dall-E, a new AI system that can create realistic images and art from a description in natural language.



The Lost Ten Tribes Tour of the British Museum



As ever erudite and enthusiastic, Dr Zarum explored how in 722 BCE the Neo- Assyrian empire conquered the northern Kingdom of Israel in Samaria and deported the Ten Tribes- the two Tribes in the southern Kingdom of Judea survived by throwing their lot in with the Assyrians' persuading them (by bribery) to attack the Northern Kingdom with whom they had long been at odds and leaving them in peace.

Dr Zarum noted that the lost tribes had been reported in a wide number of far flung destinations over the years – such as: Yemen in 1850 (Tribes of Dan and Asher), North East India (Menasseh), Burma (1814), South America in 1644 (Reuben and Joseph), the Islands of the Caribbean in 1561 where American Indians were said to have been descendants of the Ten Tribes and even England 1649 where somewhat improbably the Saxons were said to be "Sac's sons) ie sons of Isaac and "British" implied "Brit" ie circumcision covenant. [Reference to the Afghani Taliban possibly being descendants from the Lost Tribes can be found in a previous Edition of HaMagen]

What brought the tour to light was the revelation that the Obelisks and steles in the museum provided incontrovertible historical evidence of the existence and inter relationship between the Israelites and neighbouring rulers and their armies.

The Kurkh Monolith (Turkey) an ancient cuneiform stela written in Arkkadian provided an account of the reign of Neo Assyrian King Shalmaneser 111 (859-824 bCE). In it he describes the battle of Qarqar against an army of 11 Kings including King Ahab- the oldest corroborating evidence of a biblical character (see Book 1 of Kings)

The black obelisk of Shalmaneser 111 from Nimrud (N. Iraq)- seen above with the white obelisk- depicts the biblical figure Jehu (842-814 BCE) (appointed king by Elisha and tasked to destroy King Jeroham, Jezebel and Ahab's 70 sons).





The Lost Ten Tribes Tour of the British Museum

Zarum then traced the end of the Northern Kingdom via Kings Tiglath- Pileser 111, his son Shalmaneser IV and finally Sargon 11 who captured the Southern Kingdom of Samaria and deported over 27000 into captivity. The use of these prisoners of war as army conscripts or forced labourers in a foreign land undermined any thought of revolt or insurrection.

The might of the Assyrians was undoubted. Isaiah says they were tireless, disciplined, well-armed and unstoppable.



*Powerful bowmen
behind a protective shield*



*They even seem to have managed
to cross deep rivers-possibly by use
of primitive flotation devices or
breathing apparatus*



Massive Assyrian bull city emblem

The answer to the question "Where are the Ten tribes" may never be known but Zarum concludes that the miracle of the founding of Israel in 1948 has seen the ingathering of exiles from across the globe in vast numbers from Yemen (in 1950), Ethiopia (1984 and 1991) and the Russia 1989-2006.

If the ten Tribes were indeed lost their successors are alive and well and living in or returning to Israel.



Moshe Kruskal's Miraculous Escape from Belsen to Palestine

In June 1944, at the height of the World War II, a group of 222 Jews possessing British citizenship and owning land in Palestine were given permission to leave the horror of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in exchange for the same number of Nazi-affiliated Christian Templers from Palestine's German colonies.

This is the astonishing -and largely untold -story of one family who were part of that extraordinary prisoner swap. To understand how this came about we need to go back to the start of the 20th Century. The German Templers of Palestine.

Jerusalem's so called "German Colony" district was populated by a Protestant sect called the Templers. The German Templers were part of the 'Christian Zionism' movement whereby the European powers sought to establish their presence in the Holy Land after 1840. Following their charismatic leader, Christian Hoffman, these adherents of the German Lutheran church, primarily in Wurtemberg, established settlements in Jerusalem, Haifa, Galilee and what is now the Sarona section of Tel Aviv, in an attempt to bring salvation to the Jewish and Muslim denizens of the region. He also believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent, and that according to Biblical prophecy it would take place in Jerusalem, where God's people were to gather as a symbol of the rebuilding of the temple.

By the early 1930s, a number of the Templers in Palestine joined the Nazi Party, and made no secret of their allegiance, and even ventured to march through the streets of Emek Refaim in Jerusalem, occasionally in Nazi uniform, bearing aloft the flag of the Third Reich



Templers in Wilhelma Palestine



Photo taken on the Coronation Day of King George VI in 1937. The Fast Hotel, on lower Jaffa Road, was owned by a Templer family. Notice both Nazi Flags and the Union Jack.

It was at this point that the Templers switched from religious Messianism to political Messianism although less than 20 percent of the Templers were members of the Nazi Party in 1938. Some of them returned to Europe to fight in the German Army, and in 1942, a young Jew, Noah Klieger, was summoned to Gestapo headquarters in Brussels, and was stunned when he was addressed in Hebrew by the German officer there, Joachim Erdman. He was told later that Erdman had grown up in a Templer village in Samaria.

After the outbreak of the Second World War the British authorities in Palestine interned the Templers in camps, deported approximately 600 Templers to Australia, but some were about to be returned to Germany in exchange for Jews who had been in concentration camps. This unprecedented move brought those thus saved to British-controlled Palestine.



Moshe Kruskal's Miraculous Escape from Belsen to Palestine

The Kruskal Family

The family originated from Prussia. In 1899, Leo and Erna Kruskal moved to the legendary Frankfurt-am-Main community founded by Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, and Herbert (Moshe's father) was born a year later. But despite being German born and bred, and never having visited England, when World War I broke out, the 14-year-old was considered an enemy alien. "My father had to report to the police every day before school during the war," says Rabbi Aryeh Kruskal, Herbert's son, and a long-time resident of Israel. "When he arrived, the teacher would say, half joking, 'Here comes the dirty Englishman.' " In 1919 Herbert Kruskal- Moshe's father - went to Palestine where he stayed for several years and where he met the saintly figure of the Yerushalmi tzaddik, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. Before returning to Germany in 1924 the Rav persuaded him to buy a plot of land in the barren hills near Jerusalem "to maintain your connection to Erez Yisrael". He did so. The Kruskals invested in a plot — the site of today's Hyatt Hotel — at the foot of the barren Har Hatzofim — and fenced it in. Given his upbringing, Herbert Kruskal would probably have been aware of Jerusalem's German Colony populated by a Protestant sect called the Templers. But oblivious to the central role these ethnic Germans would later play in his life, the affluent visitor had other sights in mind. So, in his mid-twenties, Herbert Kruskal sailed back again to Germany for business, marriage — and then, escape. After he returned to Germany, Herbert Kruskal married Edda (Leah) Gradenwitz. His wife was a granddaughter of Rabbi Asher Marx of Darmstadt, and unusually then for a woman even in highly educated Germany: She was a doctor. "My father, who was ten years older than my mother, met her on a train," says their youngest son, Mr. Jitzchak Kruskal. "She was devotedly caring for her elderly father, and he was very impressed." That medical skill and kindness would save many lives in the years ahead.

Memories of Darkness

"My earliest memories are of a nice life growing up as a child in Scheveningen, a seaside town in Holland," says Rachel Posner, nee Kruskal, the oldest of Herbert and Edda Kruskal's five children, "and I remember every day standing at appel in Bergen-Belsen." Born in 1937, Rachel was too young to remember the flight from Frankfurt on Kristallnacht the following year, when her father had left behind a home, car, and prosperous business. With a wine-import business based in Holland, Herbert Kruskal considered himself a Dutchman, as he wrote in an account of the Bergen-Belsen years immediately after the war. That made the Netherlands a natural place of refuge for the family who'd left so much behind in Germany, unaware that the Nazis wouldn't respect Dutch neutrality.

Joined by Leo Kruskal, Herbert's elderly father, they came to live in Scheveningen, a seaside town that is a district of The Hague, which was home to a vibrant Jewish community. Herbert immediately created a local chapter of Agudas Yisrael and was able to dispatch parcels of flour through the German Red Cross to contacts in the ghettos of Eastern Europe.

Herbert Kruskal's own meticulous account of those years begins in mid-1942. Under German occupation since May 1940, life in Holland became more and more precarious as Jews were sent to labour camps and for resettlement in "the East." In September 1942, Herbert Kruskal was taken from his job at a fur plant, manufacturing caps for the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front, and sent to Westerbork, a labour camp for Dutch Jews.

"We were having our supper, the children had already been put to bed, and the bell rang," he writes. "Two Dutch plain-clothes officers were admitted, who asked for father, explaining that all foreign Jews were to be transported to Germany via Westerbork and that we too should get ready to come along."



Moshe Kruskal's Miraculous Escape from Belsen to Palestine

He managed to negotiate a reprieve for his father, wife Edda, and the children, but it turned out to be temporary, as they all joined him shortly after. "Our minds whirled like a merry-go-round, we hardly even realized the seriousness of our position," he writes. "I was informed that having landed here at the camp, my status as a war worker would not protect me against deportation any longer."

Herbert Kruskal's diary is intentionally strictly factual, omitting much of the suffering that they endured. "The facts speak for themselves," he writes. "When telling about people being dumped into cattle cars, do I have to go into detail to describe how they looked wistfully through the holes and cracks, like sheep for the slaughter?"

But in Westerbork, he describes an active Jewish life and attempts at continued education for the children. "There was a boy who was bar mitzvah in the camp," says Rabbi Aryeh Kruskal, "and my mother came to him and said, 'You should know that this is the most important day in your life, so I'm giving you my bread in order that you remember it.'"

There in Westerbork, the Kruskals fought to save fellow Jews from being sent to Auschwitz. Knowing that deportation to the East was a death sentence, they used German "orderliness" to buy time for as many inmates as possible. "My mother used to inject people with something that simulated a fever," recalls Rabbi Aryeh Kruskal, "and then the German authorities would delay their deportation because they would only send healthy prisoners and whole families to the death camps."

Into the Camps

The time in Westerbork was spent in unceasing attempts to leverage their British passports to leave the nightmare behind — efforts that proved futile. Incredibly, they were unaware that in December 1942, they'd been awarded forged Paraguayan visas courtesy of the "Lados Group," a group of Polish diplomats and Jewish activists working in Bern, Switzerland, to rescue Jews.

But those flailing escape attempts proved useless; instead, they were about to be moved deeper into the Nazi empire of suffering, because in April 1943, they were told that they would be sent to Bergen-Belsen. Not much was known of their new destination, Herbert Kruskal wrote, but they were with "hearts full of vague dread." Bergen-Belsen wasn't a death camp with gas chambers; it was for the "privileged" holders of foreign passports, although at least 50,000 people died there, from torture, disease, and malnutrition.

Pesach was approaching and the difference between the camps was immediately obvious. Herbert still had the dark-flour matzos that they'd baked on the sly in Westerbork, but the rabbis in Bergen-Belsen pushed the inmates to eat whatever bread they could find on Pesach, and even composed a special prayer to be said when eating it.

Moshe Kruskal, the family's oldest son, was only four years old in Bergen-Belsen. His first, traumatized memory is of a screaming that he can't place.

But even with hope sinking, the Kruskals held onto their faith. Wanting her daughters to experience Shabbos even in the terrible place they now inhabited, Edda Kruskal would take threads from her camp uniform and light candles every Shabbos, screened by a row of women.

That emunah radiated to others as well. Blessed with an excellent memory, the doctor said the Haggadah on Seder night for all the women in her bunk.



Moshe Kruskal's Miraculous Escape from Belsen to Palestine

"Standing outside shul in London years ago, a visitor heard the name Kruskal mentioned," says Mr. Moshe Kruskal. "He asked, 'Is that Kruskal who was in Bergen-Belsen? I lost both parents, and I used to stand next to your parents each Shabbos when they sang zemiros. I still sing those tunes.' "

It was 1944, the Allies were still far from dismantling Hitler's empire and things looked blacker than ever. But like the intense dark before the dawn, the family's suffering heralded a miraculous blaze of light. Two-hundred-and-twenty-two people, including the Kruskals, were about to walk free from Bergen-Belsen at the height of the Holocaust.

The Exchange

Back in Palestine, from the time that the British Mandate took control of Palestine in 1917, the Templer Germans fell under suspicion as fifth columnists. Adolf Eichmann claimed, falsely, to have been born in the Templer settlement of Sarona, and with Hitler's rise to power, many young Templer colonists became Nazis, with swastikas fluttering on Emek Refaim Street. When war broke out, British Mandate authorities had enough of the treason under their noses and arrested the remaining Templers. From a population of 2,000, they had dwindled to 222 people, and — life for life — they were about to provide the key to rescue for a tiny group of tortured Jews.

"At the lunch roll call on April 26, 1944, it was ordered that bearers of both British citizenship and Palestine papers were to step forward. "We were about 1,200 people," wrote Herbert Kruskal. "The camp commandant with his staff and two civilians are standing there, calling up the names. Altogether about 300 names are being called, and we try to find some system in their procedure. Finally, my name reaches my ear like the sweetest music."

The British citizenship that Herbert Kruskal's father had purchased decades before to avoid becoming German, at about the same time that the German Templers started to colonize Palestine, had come full circle. Family Kruskal would be saved as the two groups were exchanged. At the roll call the next morning, the "British Palestinians" were told to form a special group and prepare to leave the labour camp. In the new barracks, they were free from all work.

"We are resurrected," Herbert Kruskal wrote. "Eating, sleeping, and leisure time. We study Hebrew, Bible, Talmud, and English. The first Sabbath gives us a foretaste of incredible liberty. Yet only three meters apart from us, behind the barbed wire fence, we see them tormented, hustling in exhaustion, weary unto death." But then, on the verge of freedom, something dreadful happened: The Kruskals were told that their names would be taken off the list.

"Herr Kruskal," a Red Cross official said to him, "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but your family is about to be taken off the list because you don't have Palestinian citizenship. The British High Commissioner insists that only people with Palestinian, as well as British, citizenship join the list." Herbert Kruskal turned white and almost fainted, as the doors to freedom closed in front of his eyes.

And then suddenly he remembered Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. "At those critical moments, I suddenly remembered Rav Sonnenfeld's advice to buy land. I saw it as a Heavenly sign and said to the Red Cross official: 'If we're being struck off the list for lack of Palestinian citizenship, I can prove that we have it, because I lived there for a few years in the 1920s, and even have documentation, currently in London, that we bought land there.' "



Moshe Kruskal's Miraculous Escape from Belsen to Palestine

"Despite the fact that the war was still raging," says Rabbi Kruskal, "the official was able to get hold of the deeds from Lloyds of London through my father's cousin Leo Elton, who lived in London and had connections with the British Home Office. They sent the documentation of the land sale using diplomatic post, and my parents' names were reinstated." And the good news wasn't over. According to his diary, Herbert Kruskal asked a German official about his father, who had been sent to Vittel, France. "I hardly had a chance to pronounce my name, when he turned to me and said, 'I am happy to tell you that you are going to meet your father in Vienna tomorrow night. He is included in this exchange group.' We were overwhelmed with happiness."

Ferried to Freedom

The thought that the very same railway lines that were rushing millions to their deaths in cattle cars at the height of the Holocaust provided a comfortable escape for a handful of Jewish families is hard to comprehend. Yet on June 29, 1944, that's exactly what happened. Seated in first and second-class carriages, they steamed across Germany. Traveling through the bombed-out Balkans, they passed Budapest, Belgrade, and Sofia. But everywhere were reminders of the Jewish tragedy they were leaving behind: As they passed through Yugoslavia, they met cattle cars laden with Jewish deportees.

"On the journey away from Bergen-Belsen, my mother's medical skills saved lives," says Mr. Yitzchak Kruskal. "There was one passenger who became ill, and when the train reached a station, she jumped off to find medication, at risk of being left behind by the train." After a ten-day journey, they crossed from Lebanon into Palestine. As the miraculous train arrived in Haifa, remembers Moshe Kruskal, who was then almost five, the crowds were cheering. "Even at that age," he says, "I felt so important."

If Jews are destined to wander, some wander more than others, and Herbert Kruskal's time back in Israel didn't last more than a few years. After building themselves up from penniless refugees and settling in Jerusalem, where Dr. Edda Kruskal resumed her medical career in the Bikur Cholim Hospital, the War of Independence brought fresh trauma.

Herbert Kruskal was shot in the back in the fighting, and his wife — busy dealing with casualties in the hospital — had had enough. Rav Sonnenfeld was no longer alive, and instead, Herbert — a true lover of Eretz Yisrael — went to Bnei Brak to consult with the Chazon Ish about leaving the country after all they'd gone through. The family sadly packed, and Bikur Cholim Hospital also said goodbye, begging Dr. Kruskal in a letter "not to forget the poor of Jerusalem."

As holders of British passports, they set out to England, a country that was totally unfamiliar, but where Dr. Edda Kruskal's parents had moved after the war. Son Moshe too settled in Temple Fortune but, 30 years later, Herbert returned to live out his final years in Motza, a picturesque village in the entrance to Jerusalem, below what's now Har Nof.

Postscript

Moshe made Aliya to Israel a few years ago and lives there with his wife Chani in Bayit Vagan Jerusalem. Some of their children and grandchildren live in Israel. One son Rofoel became CEO of Tikva a charity running a Jewish orphanage in Odessa. When the Russians invaded Ukraine in February 2022 he commandeered some coaches and led a group of 400 orphans to safety in Moldova before finding more permanent refuge for them in Romania. But that's for another story.



Pesach Recipes

Roasted Celeriac with Olive Pistachio Gremolata (Serves 4-5)

INGREDIENTS

Roasted Celeriac

- 2 Celery root bulbs
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

Roasted Butternut Squash

- 600g butternut squash, peeled and cubed
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ tsp sea salt

Olive and Pistachio Gremolata

- ½ cup freshly chopped parsley
- ¼ cup raw or roasted pistachios, chopped
- 2 tbsp sundried tomatoes in oil, diced small
- 10 green olives, sliced
- 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil or more to taste
- 2 teaspoons za'atar or sumac (optional)

METHOD

Roasted Celery Root

1. Pre-heat oven to 200°C - Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper
2. Peel the celeriac roots and cut in round slices (at least 8)
3. Spread one tbsp of olive oil on the parchment making sure it covers the whole surface of the paper
4. Place the celeriac rounds on the parchment paper and brush the remaining olive oil on top of each piece. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
5. Bake for 30 minutes or until celeriac is tender but slightly firm

Roasted Butternut Squash

1. Heat oven to 200°C. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Cut the peeled butternut squash into 1" cubes.
3. Place butternut squash on the baking sheet. Drizzle the olive oil and salt. Toss well so all the pieces are well coated.
4. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until the butternut squash is tender.

Olive and Pistachio Gremolata

Place all the ingredients in a medium bowl and toss well. Taste and adjust seasoning to your liking

To assemble the Celery root recipe

On a large platter, place the roasted celery root at the bottom, top with roasted butternut squash, and top with pistachio and olive gremolata. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Matza Pudding

INGREDIENTS

- 4 matza, broken into small pieces
- 1 cup of raisins
- 1 large apple, peeled and grated
- 75g caster sugar
- 1½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon apricot jam
- Juice and grated rind of half a lemon
- 3 eggs, whisked
- 3 tablespoons of fine matza meal
- 50g melted margarine
- 1-2 tablespoons granulated sugar

METHOD

- Pre-heat the oven to 170° C.
- Grease a tin or baking dish (approximately 20x20cm)
- Pour cold water over the broken matza in a mixing bowl and leave for 10 minutes.
- After 10 minutes, drain all the water and beat the matza with a fork until it is smooth.
- Whisk the eggs and then add them to the drained matza.
- Add all the other ingredients EXCEPT FOR the margarine and granulated sugar.
- Mix the mixture well.
- Melt the margarine and stir half of it (25g) into the mixture.
- Put the mixture into a baking dish and drizzle the remaining margarine over the top, then sprinkle the granulated sugar all over it.
- Bake for 50-55 minutes.
- Once it has cooled down, cut into squares.

Braised Fennel with Apricots and Figs (serves 4-6 as side dish)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium fennel bulbs
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup orange juice
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 10 dried apricots
- 8 dried figs, cut in half
- ¼ cup shelled pistachios, roughly chopped (optional)

METHOD

- Cut each fennel bulb in half, lengthwise, and slice each half into 3 pieces (lengthwise). Sprinkle both sides with salt and pepper.
- In a large deep-frying pan for which you have a lid, heat olive oil. Arrange fennel pieces (you can crowd the pan because fennel will shrink). Cook over medium heat, 5 minutes per side. Add orange juice, wine, apricots, and figs, and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer covered for 45 minutes or until tender
- Garnish with pistachios (if using).



Pesach Greetings

With All Best Wishes.
Chag Sameach.
Sho'ina and David Kass.

Such a lovely family
community. Wishing
everyone a Happy Pesach.
Anonymous.

Happy to support this
great magazine and wish
the whole kehillah a Chag
Semayach!
The Strom Family.

May Magen Avot
continue to punch above
its weight with its services
and events!
Love the Kay's!

Linda & John Wolffe send
warmest greetings to all
the Magen Avot
community.
Chag Kosher Sameach.

May the community go
from strength to strength.
The Taylors.

With much love to the
whole community from
the Maurer clan - Esther
and Julian, Raffi and
Laurie, Natan, Libby and
Maayan.

Chag Sameach to all our
Magen Avot friends
Joan and Julian Pollard



Peace of Mind
Metiv | The Israel Psychotrauma Center

Peace of Mind is a unique programme that has been developed by the Israel Centre for the Treatment of Psychotrauma. It provides a bridge and pathway back to civilian life for young men and women who have served for 3 or more years in high-risk combat units in the Israel Defence Forces.

Peace of Mind is not a PTSD programme. Participants are 'regular', healthy, functional guys, some of whom carry a tremendous burden. Generally, when combat soldiers come out of the army, they have to re-adapt to civilian life without being offered any support. Some have suffered psychological trauma, have lost friends on the battlefields, or may question split-second decisions they had to make in combat. If left unprocessed, these experiences can deeply affect them, their families, and their ability to function.

Without singling out individuals, the Peace of Mind programme treats the entire unit of soldiers through workshops and therapy over a 9-month period. This innovative programme provides the time and space for participants to process their combat experiences in a supportive environment, enabling them to emerge from the programme healthier emotionally and mentally.

A central component of the programme includes a 7-day overseas trip with intensive six-hour daily workshops with Peace of Mind therapists, allowing them time to process traumatic events away from distraction and the painful places where they happened.

Magen Avot is delighted to be hosting a whole unit of male IDF veterans in October/November this year (dates to be confirmed). Participants will be hosted by families in the community throughout their stay.

Their programme is very full-on: throughout the week, they will have breakfast with their host family, then leave home at 08:30 each morning. Therapy sessions will take place until 3.00pm, followed by afternoon and evening outings, activities, and dinner, with participants returning to their hosts around 10.00 pm.

The intention of this visit is to help the participants unload the burden and live healthier, happier, and more fulfilling lives. It is a chance for us to thank them for their service by opening our doors and hearts and by welcoming them into our community.

This will very much be a community project with opportunities for everyone to get involved.

We are looking for volunteers to:-

- Host 2 soldiers for the week of their stay (they always stay in pairs)
- Join our Peace of Mind committee to plan and co-ordinate the week's events
- Help out during the week at a lunch time by serving and clearing away lunch
- Accompany the group on an afternoon activity
- Accompany the group on an evening activity
- Collect at the end of an evening activity and drop them back to their host family
- Buy a ticket for the communal lunch which will take place on the Shabbat during their stay

If you are able to get involved in any of the above ways, or have any questions, we would really love to hear from you.

Patti Adler (pattischustermann@yahoo.com) and Toni Zekaria (tonized1@aol.com)

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Laurie Rosenberg, our Project Manager, will be delighted to talk to groups of young people, families, and communities, helping everyone to become engaged in this project. Please contact laurie.rosenberg@yadvashem.org.uk

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the **Magen Avot** Community

פסח בשך ושמה

Founded in **1995**, the Tzohar Rabbinical Organisation provides a network of services for all Israeli Jews aimed at creating a more unified Israeli society. Particularly in atimes of social division, Tzohar strives to highlight the importance of our common traditions and history as the avenue to overcome those differences.

Over **220,000** people join our holiday programming focused on strengthening our connection to our cherished traditions and practices.

Tzohar has facilitated over **155,000** Jewish weddings, ensuring respectful and meaningful halachic marriage for all Israeli couples.

Our Shorashim (Roots) programme has forensically proven the Jewish identities of over **135,000** immigrants, enabling them to be fully embraced as halachic Jews.

Tzohar's Center for Jewish Ethics serves to advance the place of ethical practice in Jewish society and serves as a practical resource for addressing ethical dilemmas in modern life.

Tzohar Kashrut certifies over **330** establishments, providing transparent, high halachic standards with integrity for over 10 million people who eat under our kashrut label annually.



Tzohar has brought light into the lives of hundreds of thousands of Israeli Jews and does what we have to do in this particular day and age when so many Jews feel that the religious world is looking down on them. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

To find out about these and many other Tzohar initiatives, follow us on Facebook, visit www.tzohar.org.il or contact : adam@tzohar.org.il



R E S P E C T Z O H A R E L E V A N C E