Now in Israel for their gap year are RSY stalwarts: Beth Levy, our own Michael Lewis, Tori Wolkind, Nicole Cohen, Laura Katan, Abi Salomon and Eli Shafritz.

Youth Water Trustees at Summer Campaign Camp, 2013
Sinai Chronicle
The Journal of Sinai Synagogue Leeds

From the Editor

By the time you receive this, the Chanukah edition of the Sinai Chronicle, Chanukah will be upon us. As always, we have a wide range of articles and letters, several, from different perspectives, focused on Israel.

We hope you enjoy the Chronicle and we look forward to your contributions to future editions—by February 1st, please! As always, please either email contributions to chronicle@sinaisynagogue.org.uk or send a letter to us via the synagogue office.

On behalf of the Sinai Chronicle team I wish you a happy Chanukah.

With best wishes,

Val Mogendorff,
Chronicle editor

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All articles and opinions expressed in the Sinai Chronicle are those of the contributors and their publication does not imply their endorsement by Sinai Synagogue and its officers. Sinai Chronicle editors reserve the right to modify any item submitted for publication.

Many, many thanks to all who send in their words and pictures!

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E: NDyson@LawBlacks.com
www.LawBlacks.com

Hanover House
22 Clarendon Road
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS2 9NZ

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Copy deadline for next issue — February 2nd 2014
Time and space to talk about Israel. Restarting in December

10.30-12noon

Israel Café

Join us as we learn from guests, and each other, about the current state of affairs in Israel. We will look at what it means to be a ‘critical friend’ and join in the struggle to ensure the peaceful future of Israel and her neighbours.

1 Dec: catching up, checking in and facilitated conversation
8 Dec: Film showing of THE GATEKEEPERS, 7.30pm
and also in the new year: 12 Jan, 26 Jan, 9 Feb

The Sinai Connexions Chanukah Lunch

You are cordially invited to join us at the

Enjoy a delicious 3 course meal and Special musical entertainment from our own sensational Morton and Jena Shapero

On: Wednesday, December 11th, 12.15 for 12.30
Cost: £9.00

Booking essential by Friday December 6th—please phone the synagogue office, 0113 2665256 or email val@mogendorff.com by Friday December 6th to book your place.

The Sinai Platinum Anniversary Brochure

This will be published towards the end of our anniversary year. There will be space for mazaltovs and reports and photographs of the Jubilee events. We also plan to include your memories of Sinai. What would you like to write about? The early days? Your first visit? Your involvement? Do you have photos or memories on film or video?

Please send your contributions as soon as you can, to the brochure team, via val@mogendorff.com or via the synagogue office—and contribute to making this, the Platinum Anniversary Brochure, something to treasure.

Val Mogendorff and Nick Chapler-Smyth, for the brochure team
From Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers

Chanukah versus Christmas...

Christmas day was always family time growing up; we would congregate at one of the aunt’s or uncle’s for a Turkey lunch, brandy-soaked Christmas pud, and of course the Queen’s Speech. When I was about 7 I began begging for a Christmas tree. That was a step too far for my parents, but my creative mum relented, to allow a Chanukah branch. It was essentially a dead bough from the garden spray painted silver and hung with homemade Magen-Davids! That lasted no more than 2 years before I began to feel the branch was a little silly and allowed for its disposal!

By the time I was a teenager we had taken to spending most of our Christmases in Spain, where Church and family were revered above tinsel and gifts, and the overt commercialisation of Christmas was much less apparent. It was somehow easier to ignore, yet my dad and I enjoyed visiting a tiny local Church for prayers on Christmas morning, visiting as tourists in many senses, and learning about the spirituality of the feast.

It can be a real challenge to compete with the glitz and glamour of Christmas in the UK, and one response has been to make Chanukah as glitzy and present-oriented as possible. There’s nothing wrong with this per se, but there are lots of ways of making Chanukah meaningful. It is, in fact, an ideal opportunity to explore how we can consume less – making 1 day’s resources last for 8 – a crucial message for the modern world, as well as what it means for us as modern Jews to live in relationship to the wider world, not fight to defeat it as the Maccabees were forced to do. Of course we also want to create happy memories and strong identities, and the hypnotic magic of a burning chanukiah should not be wasted. I’m not advocating for a miserable Chanukah with no presents etc. But this year I am challenging myself to make all my Chanukah presents; perhaps rolling some beeswax candles, or jazzing up olive oil with herbs in fancy bottles, or just a big batch of latkes. Gifts that come from the heart and speak to the message of Chanukah.

That said, I have found a fantastic use for Christmas tree decorations. In the January sales I often find myself snapping up baubles shaped like flowers, or with Magen Davids on, I have a sequined camel donated by a friend who visited Abu Dhabi, and they all sit waiting patiently for Sukkot, when they adorn our Sukkah. It turns out I didn’t need a Chanukah branch after all! Just a Sukkah in our back garden!

However you choose to celebrate, Chanukah (and most of the festivals) should be about fun, family, friends and bringing light into the darkness of winter. I personally am not that bothered what people choose to do with Christmas (though these days we tend to just enjoy the empty roads and streets); what concerns me is that Chanukah (and Sukkot, and Pesach and...) are filled with joy and meaning, and that they add something to our lives, and to how we live in the world as Jews.

Tzedakah at Sinai

Having a Winter clear out?

Winter is...sitting in a warm home watching an old film or knitting a cozy blanket? Reading a good book curled up on the couch whilst drinking a cup of hot chocolate? Having a soak in a hot bubble bath or turning up the heating up a notch when the temperature drops? Wrapping up warm and playing in the snow?

Sounds appealing? It’s not so appealing to the poor and homeless people in the former Soviet states like Ukraine where people die every year as a result of the severe weather – literally freezing to death.

This year Sinai will once again be supporting WJR’s Operation Winter Survival.

Your donations of warm clothes and boots will be sent to communities to help provide urgent winter relief and make some impact on the Winter casualty rate.

From Thursday January 2nd until Sunday Feb 2nd we will be collecting warm winter clothing, winter boots and blankets, hats, scarves and gloves. If you are buying new this Winter and have old ones to spare – please put them aside ready for Operation Winter Survival.

Rachelle Sanderson, Board member for Tikkun Olam/Tzedakah
From our Assistant Rabbi

Circumcision of the Heart

Coming out of the High Holy Day season and back into ‘normal life as we know it’ seems like a tall order for my young family. Within the space of four months, my husband and I have gone through the last stages of my pregnancy, an Ordination, a rabbinic appointment, childbirth, young parenthood and an international move from Holland to Leeds.

Any of these individually already marks an existential and potentially transformative experience and we feel blessed to have gone through all of them (although the ‘international move’ is less memorable and enjoyable than the others!) Any of these experiences is worthy of its own commentary and reflection.

Yet out of all these experiences, one of the most complex, challenging and beautiful things to reflect upon was our son’s Jonathan’s Brit Milah (circumcision). Few rituals in our tradition are as ancient, powerful and unsettling. Yet out of all these experiences, one of the most complex, challenging and beautiful things to reflect upon was our son’s Jonathan’s Brit Milah (circumcision). Few rituals in our tradition are as ancient, powerful and unsettling.

For my husband and I, Jonathan’s Brit Milah was particularly remarkable. First of all, he is our firstborn child. As brand new and inexperienced parents, the moment seemed perhaps more poignant. Second of all, we come from a country where the ‘anti-circumcision’ debate is in full swing. And third of all, we were honoured to share and celebrate this milestone with our new community in Leeds.

When we think of circumcision, we tend to dwell on it from the perspective of the child. It is only natural and appropriate to be preoccupied with the baby’s welfare: Will he be OK? Will it hurt? What does it mean to wish our newborn sons a life of ‘mitzvot, good deeds and the wedding canopy?’ In short, what does this rite of ‘marking his flesh’ mean to him, as a person, a man and a Jew?

It is less obvious then to think of what circumcision means to us, the parents. Who is it supposed to change? The child or the parents? Perhaps the real impact and purpose of Brit Milah is to be not only a transformative reality for the child but also to be a transformative experience for the parents. What does it mean for us, those parents who commit to this ancient and perplexing ritual?

In our preparations for the ritual, my husband and I had conversations with Jewish friends who had already gone through it. Many candidly expressed their ambivalence and their discomfort. Why would the Jewish religion, otherwise known to be such a life-affirming, compassionate and family-friendly way of life demand this of us? Is there a ‘safe space’ to express such ambivalence, away from the judgments of the outside world? And better yet: is there a purpose to the discomfort?

One of my favourite maxims is ‘the purpose of religion is to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted’. Religion is supposed to make us uncomfortable. Not to the point of great anxiety but just enough to make us think, reflect and transform. And the rite of circumcision certainly does that.

And so, Brit Milah is more about the parents than the child. It can be seen as a ‘mini-Akeidah’, referring to the story of the Binding of Isaac by his father Abraham in B’reishit. Just like the angel staying Abraham’s hand, the Brit Milah can be seen as a lesson in parental restraint in order to cultivate unconditional love. Circumcision may be a way to channel our aggressive impulses into a vessel of love, holiness and vulnerability. It is a big warning sign, admonishing us not to hurt our children. If anything, circumcising our sons prompts us to metaphorically circumcise our own hearts, in the words of the Torah and the Prophets: to remain humble, to accept our fears and vulnerabilities and to transform them in the crucible of a loving tradition that binds generations together.

As my husband and I stood by our baby boy Jonathan as he underwent the procedure in the expert hands of mohel Dr. Nigel Zoltie, our hearts overflowed with an ‘ahavah rabbah’, a great and unending love, maybe not unlike God’s unending (parental) love for us. I will gladly admit that it was exceedingly difficult to see our child circumcised – and I am not the squeamish sort. I watched and stood ready: to accept my responsibility as a parent, including in making this difficult choice to side with tradition against the judgments of a broader culture. At the same time, I was overcome by the beauty of it. The warmth and well-wishes of a loving community, the wisdom of a tradition that makes the challenges of young parenthood so visceral, the deep spirituality of our child being covenanted to God, Israel and Torah and the real joy therein.

On that day, our hearts were circumcised as my husband and I vowed to remain vulnerable, tender and loving for our child. As parents, we should never harden our hearts (which is quite the opposite of metaphorically circumcising them) to our children but always remain open to growth, change and transformation while being supported by the wisdom of the ancients. As we settle into our new life here – beyond pregnancy, childbirth and new employment, and through the intense and hectic years of young parenthood – this experience will continue to guide us. And God willing, ‘l’dor v’dor’ - for many generations to come.

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz
Sinai is truly buzzing at the moment, with a great deal of activity the result of careful thought and planning.

The most momentous news is that we have completed the contractual formalities with Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz, who will formally start work for Sinai on December 1st. We have planned her induction for Sunday 15th December at 3p.m. and the whole Sinai community is invited. If it is not already in your diary, please put it in now as it promises to be a truly wonderful occasion.

That day also is close to the actual 70th anniversary (according to the Hebrew calendar), so it is a fitting way to commence our anniversary celebrations which Carol Adams has done a great job of co-ordinating. Please look out for the events that are being planned over the next year, and help us to both celebrate what we have achieved and also reflect on what community we want to build over the next 70 years.

With that in mind, the Board held its first awayday recently at Bradford Reform synagogue, to take time to look at our vision and wider strategy. Sarita Robinson, Northern fieldworker for the Movement for Reform Judaism, facilitated the day with great success and it was highly productive all round. As a follow-up to the day, I am putting together a small group to help review our vision and look at how we can implement and prioritise the outcomes of the day.

It may be no surprise that two of the priorities are to increase our membership and renew our building. You will note that David Israel has been doing a great job of ensuring that some short-term priorities are delivered (including maintenance of the ramp and doors, as well as creating a suitable office space for both Rabbi Hugenholtz and Gwynneth Lewis, our Director of Education). The use of space highlights the limitations of our current building: putting together a longer term solution remains a priority for the current board, and David will be reporting on this shortly.

Finally, as I write, Rabbi Morris is taking an extended holiday, which is long overdue. This has created the opportunity for us as a community to take responsibility for running ourselves. It is powerful for us to recognise that, whilst we will shortly have two Rabbis to turn to for guidance and inspiration, we also have immense talent in our midst. We need to ensure that that talent is nurtured and we grow and develop as a community. To an exciting and fulfilling anniversary year.

Wishing you all a Happy Chanukah,

Nick Dyson,
The under Fives are back in full swing!

We welcomed familiar faces and quite a few new ones when ShabbaTots reconvened after the High Holy Days.

Shabbat Noach provided the perfect start to colourful, crafty sessions at both ShabbaTots and Torah Time and with autumn suddenly descending on us we have enjoyed utilising all the fallen leaves!

With a fun packed year ahead of us we can look forward to playing and learning together and hope to see you all there very soon.

Your ideas are always welcome or if you just need some more information please contact me at earlyyears@sinsi synagogue.org.uk or leave a message on 0113 2665256.

Debbie Marcus

A message from Rhiannon

Hello! I’m Rhiannon, the new Assistant Youth Worker, and I’ll be working with Julius throughout the year on all things youth, from EOSY on Saturday afternoons, to Purim Spiel and RSY-run things. I’ve done a lot of work with Finchley Reform Synagogue over the past few years, getting really involved with the youth side: running clubs, day camps and teaching at kochavim, the religion school. As well as FRS, I’ve loved getting involved with RSY and can say without a doubt that my time spent participating in, or leading on, camps and residential, is some of the most fun I’ve ever had.

One of the reasons I decided to go to Leeds University was to be able to get involved with Sinai Synagogue and meet all the great chanichim here - from what I’ve seen already, I’m totally going to love working here and hope that it continues to be as fun as it has so far. Thank you to everyone who’s been so welcoming to me already, and if I’ve not met you yet please come and say hi when you see me around.

Rhiannon Humphreys

Do you need a babysitter....? RELIABLE, CRB checked 18 year-old looking for babysitting work (Partly to help fund Shnat next year). Bethany has worked with Religion school, youth club and Summer camps for five years and has a youth leadership qualification. She’s also practical, caring and fun. References available. Please contact b.castle@hotmail.com.

Join us on November 30th
And on December 14th
Look out soon for the 2014 dates!

TORAH TIME At Sinai
If you are aged 5 or under then this is for you!
Come and join in the Shabbat morning service prepared especially for you and your adult/s Meet in the library ready to start at 11.00a.m.
Hope to see you there!
The High Holyday Appeal

This year Sinai Treasurer Matt Thornfield delivered the High Holy Day Appeal on Rosh Hashanah. For those of you who would like to hear it again, here is part of it below. If you haven’t donated yet, it’s not too late. As Matt says, this year you can also donate online via the Sinai website. So far £8082.56 excluding gift aid has been raised. More is welcome.

This is the second year that I have stood on the bimah to give the annual High Holyday appeal. I don’t expect anyone to particularly remember what I said last year, but I felt that it wasn’t right to just recycle last year’s script – if I am to stand here and ask you to put your hands into your pockets and give generously, then I need to put some effort into that. I have a hope that if I put more effort into giving this appeal, then everyone listening right now in the room might make more of an effort to give.

‘Last year was a fantastic year for the appeal. Despite the “current economic climate” which is normally used as the reason why funds are low, why it’s difficult to give, and so on, we managed to raise just under £10,000. For a community of our size that’s a significant achievement. It’s enough to make a really meaningful difference to each of the charities that we raise money for, and that allows us, as a community, to hold our heads up high. It is one of the ways that we put Sinai on the map, and we should justly take a moment to be proud. But of course we’re not holding an appeal for that reason- we’re raising money with the genuine aim of wanting to help others – those who desperately need our help. So this year, as each person who has given this appeal in times gone by has done, I’m again asking for more. £10,000 is a great sum, but I believe we can do more.

‘So what reason can I give for asking you to be more generous? Well I can give you two reasons. Firstly, we have a really great selection of charities this year. A small group of members, representing all ages and all parts of our community, got together and looked for charities that met the criteria of empowering those they seek to help. They came up with a recommendation that we support the following:

‘To start, there is the UJIA. We have supported this charity for many years, and this year the money is going to the Tzfat medical school in Israel, which is open to students and academics of all backgrounds and promotes Jews and Arabs working together. Next are two local charities – a programme teaching English to local refugees and asylum seekers, and a hardship fund that gives emergency payments to destitute asylum seekers for food and accommodation. We have an international charity that helps provide operations for children with cleft palates in poorer countries (Operation Smile), and finally there’s the Leo Baeck College – the rabbinical training school that our new Assistant Rabbi has recently obtained smicha from, and our Director of Education has recently obtained an MA from.

‘I hope you’ll agree that there is something here for everyone. This great selection of charities ticks so many boxes – we’re covering Leeds, the UK, Israel and the “general international” boxes. We’ve got education, helping the destitute and medicine – all things that genuinely help give opportunity to and improve the lives of those most in need. And we’ve got Judaism in there – both Reform Judaism and promoting harmony between Jews and non-Jews in Israel. And the second reason that I can give you for why you should be more generous this year is that we are making it even easier for you to donate.

‘One of the themes I talked about last year was that we wanted to encourage every single member to give something – this is our community appeal and we all should play a part in it. I’m pleased to say that we did get more people donating than ever before but we’ve not reached 100% yet so this year we thought carefully about how we could make it even easier to give. So for the first time, if you prefer, you can now make your donation online. If you would rather give a cheque, then that’s fine – we’re very happy to take that and please continue to give us money in that way if you wish to. But if you would like to donate by debit card, credit card, or paypal, then we can now take a donation from you through our website. There’s no complicated web addresses to remember – the link to the donations page is in big green letters on the front page of the regular Sinai site, and we will put reminders in the weekly newsletter and Sinai Chronicle too.

‘As members of Sinai I think we can be particularly proud of where our money will go this year, and on that basis, I’m going to ask you again to dig into your pockets, pull out either some cash, a cheque book or a card, and then make your payment. I’ll finish the appeal by pointing out that whether you choose to donate by cheque or online, the whole process should take you a maximum of 3 minutes, and probably much less. So there’s no excuse; it’s so quick and easy to give to our appeal that I would like to urge you to do it immediately after Yom Tov. Don’t wait for Yom Kippur…’

Rachelle Sanderson,
Board member for Tzedakah and Tikun Olam
The Oddest Yom Kippur...

The Oddest Yom Kippur in my Life
For many years, as a member of the Sinai choir, I was used to spending nearly all the hours of the day in the synagogue.

After the demise of the full choir, I joined the ‘leading singing group’ but found that singing was hard work for me, so I attended as much of the day as possible, as a member of the congregation.

However, for the last two years I stayed at home, not feeling up to joining a large congregation, dipping in and out of the prayer book during the day, humming some of the well-known tunes to myself and thinking of the choir members no longer with us, with whom I had spent many hours of Yom Kippur in years gone by.

This year it was a completely new story. During the week between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur I had moved from my house in Roper Avenue into my flat in Donisthorpe Hall. The final touches were completed on Friday morning before Yom Kippur started in the evening.

The question was: would I have the strength to go to a service on Yom Kippur? Donisthorpe has its own Chassidishe synagogue, an orthodox one.

I managed to dress accordingly on Yom Kippur and joined the ladies’ section at Donisthorpe during the morning prayers. To my delight, I found the place in the prayer book they had reached, and hummed some of the well-known tunes I heard to myself. The synagogue was full. Although it was an orthodox service I felt at home, part of K’lal Yisroel.

Next came lunch: I have not fasted for many years, mainly for health reasons. As I came out of the synagogue I met Shirley Killen, a friend, who was coming to visit her father. I mentioned to her that I had thought of attending the service at Sinai in the afternoon. She kindly offered to take me there when I was ready.

So, after a short rest, Shirley and I arrived at Sinai in time for the story of the High Priest’s service in Temple times. Shirley even arranged my return journey with Dolf, as she was returning to her father.

I found Sinai disappointingly empty of members at that particular point. However, I was pleased to be part of my ‘home’ congregation.

So, in one day, I had two very different experiences, each very meaningful.

Ruth Sterne

KIDDUSHIM

Do you want to celebrate a happy occasion or mark an event?
Sinai’s volunteer catering team is are happy to produce a celebratory Kiddush on Shabbat.
At the moment there are two choices - sandwiches or a hot ‘Mediterranean’ Kiddush.
Both are £3.50 a head; half price for children under 13.
Please contact either me (sally.raanan@gmail.com) or the shul office with a date and choice of Kiddush.
We are always happy to have extra help in the kitchen. If you have spare time on Shabbat mornings and would like to join the team, then please let me know.

Sally Brown

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I flew to Leeds on one of those airlines which allow you to only bring along a single bag. Culling my travel gear for the trip got me thinking about the accumulation of unnecessary stuff, not as much in my bag but in my life. Heaps and heaps of superfluous objects and redundant subjects: habits that slow me down, memories that are to me only deadweight, attractions that ruin the little time I have left. What about the customs I see no sense in keeping? Like waving the lulav for the rain when it rains every day and I would rather it did not? What about rituals I see no point in performing? Like the Yom Kippur reenactment of the temple sacrifice I have no wish to see reinstituted? And - most difficult - should I discard my attachment to the people who have for me no further use? Should I leave them behind so that I can travel my life light?

I came to the UK to stay a week with my friend Elsje, a fellow traveller now stationed in Leeds, who had kindly invited me to join her and her community for Yom Kippur and the beginning of Sukkot, and who opened to me her heart and her home as if to one of the seven Ushpizin. Me, also a stranger in these parts (albeit of a different breed), I travelled 12 hours from my city of Bialystok, Poland to stay a while with this friend I had met in Israel some 9 months before and about whom I would lie if I said I really knew her. (There is at times a sense of connectedness that bears trust.)

So I looked forward to my trip to Leeds. Before I had booked the plane, a friend told me the holiday she liked best was not, as is I think most common, Yom Kippur, but Sukkot. Her parents used to take her every autumn to her grandmother’s house in order to build “the hut,” into which, having banded up against the Polish chill, the family would trudge joyfully to eat “so that the children have fun”. Now, at the age of 28, my friend has returned to Judaism. Her parents, supporting her, suggest she return to her grandmother’s Jewish surname. Where there was once enforced leaving of Judaism in Poland, there is now a returning. I thought of all our stories of returning when, on that Erev-Sukkot, the Sinai synagogue Rabbi read: “And the children of Israel removed from Rameses and pitched in Succoth... and they departed from... and pitched in... and they removed from...”

All fellow travellers here. Unlike my Warsaw friend, I have always known my family’s Jewish past; but I have had to see my parents, my husband, and possibly my child hurt in order that I can return to Judaism. So as I "removed from Rameses, and pitched in Succoth", I caused suffering for which I can never repent, nor make better. Every Yom Kippur I ask myself how much of my decision was selfishness, and how much God.

Elsje’s synagogue is a spacious building with a bit of lawn out front and back and a large parking lot. There is talk of pulling the building down and putting up a new structure that would better satisfy the needs of the congregation. I assume the congregation is growing? Mazel tov! In Bialystok, my living room serves as synagogue, meeting room, and study hall. It becomes beautiful then. We pitch in and we depart.

During the Yom Kippur service the fast-reading, jocular rabbi showed off his variously striped tallitot to teach us about the value of differences, of a fluid, open community, and the necessity to accept our many-coloured selves. Does it include us all, from their tallis to our tallit, the Haredi Jew and the maybe-Jew alike? Does it embrace us all, a dozen-Jewish-generations Jew as closely and tenderly as a Jew like me, a mere wrong, since paternal, half-?

As Yom Kippur went on, I looked up at the slowly darkening windows. From the confusion of Vidui and Yom Kippur prayers, will I emerge a more profound human being? Will I enter the Jewish Mean Time a bit
less mean? More generous with my time? Loving to
my goyishe family? Careful not to misjudge these
strangers who surround me? Willing to love my
neighbour who has a crucifix as large as a shovel over
his entrance door? Will I be able and willing this year
to bear gracefully the loneliness that reads from the
book of Kohelet as if it was a children's fairy-tale?

But, first and foremost: musing on our Atonement Day,
let us not hide in our language. We work our words to
deceive ourselves.

I was honoured with pulling the strings that open the
view upon the torah. As I stood there, and the Rabbi
prostrated himself as if in an ancient rite, I thought
about how we have changed since the Temple stood
there and our rabbis sprinkled altar corners with
animal blood. It is amazing indeed how Judaism can
evolve and yet retain the past generations of its people
within its tradition.

Look out of these long narrow synagogue windows: it
is getting dark. Have I survived, again? The book is
now closing; all we can do in wait to see whether the
change has happened within us if not in Divine ac-
counting. Erev Sukkot, we had kiddush in the sukkah
outside the synagogue. The various smiling people
filed in, took up glasses, shook the lulav, held the
etrog. The construction had no roof and no door; it was
all air, all windows. A sukkah like this is beautiful: it
does not close people out. It is also dangerous: it does
not shelter them. (Ours are made of wooden planks;
despite the openings in the roof and a lack of doors,
they resemble houses, and we can hide inside). Inside
this one, we could not hide: neither in our faith nor
from it. Or from those others from whom the security
at the gate would protect us.

We looked at the security exits before leaving the shul
that night. Let us not forget how uncertain the roof over
our heads, how fragile our personal relationships, and
how vulnerable our communal gatherings.

Yet into our sukkot we welcome not only our relatives
and friends, but also strangers: we guests more varie-
gated than your Rabbi's many tallitot. Thank you for
welcoming me too: to your synagogue and your voices
in prayer; to your rambling conversation in the hall
and to your jokes; to laughter-filled night car rides and
numerous coffee cups; to shortbread that is not bread
but a rich biscuit and is called "fantails" (or something
insane like this); to your old-type cell-phone chargers
and delicious homemade dinners. To family histories
now being discovered; to memories of Polish villages;
to memories that hurt and to memories that nourish; to
archival photographs and to the zip-zap of the ipod;
finally, also, to images which subsist on emptiness. I
have packed them all into my travel-light suitcase and
am taking them home.

After the kiddush and the lulav, an apple fell out of its
little twine trapping that held it to the sukkah's flimsy
ceiling. Remove yourselves from Eden, men and
women, now, and pitch some other place. It's time to
fly home. A man looked back at me and waved his
hand good-bye. Someone said, have a safe trip. Off I
go now to Bialystok, a place that, like the once-lovely
Biala Podlaska, I got to talk about outside the syna-
gogue building on Yom Kippur morning and which-
like all those once-Jewish places - is empty of Jews; I
go lugging in my suitcase a few new, nourishing
memories, good experiences and, most importantly, a
tender awareness of the quiet time I got to spend with
so many friendly, open-minded people.

I will miss you. Come see me in my city, or in my
Warsaw synagogue of Beit Warszawa. You are most
cordially invited. Hop on a train to Manchester, board
a one-bag plane to Warsaw, then take a bus ride to
Bialystok. Like it says in the Book of Numbers: remove
and pitch. I will wait. We all will.

Joanna Auron
Sukkah Building Party at Sinai—and Building Update

Life is full of certainties and uncertainties. One of my joys is the certainty of the rhythm of Jewish living: Havdallah follows Shabbat; Yom Kippur follows Rosh Hashannah; Sukkot, of course, follows Yom Kippur and in between we build our Sukkah; and there’s another certainty—Sukkah-building day will always be cold and wet. So it was on September 15th when a small but sturdy group braved the elements to build the Sinai Sukkah.

From the very young to the not quite so very young, we wove and hung and threaded and knotted fruit and foliage into the Sukkah frame which had, as always, been previously erected by Dan and Andy (another certainty for which we are so grateful). While we were working outside, Matt and Richard were in the kitchen, preparing a hearty, sustaining and delicious meal which we ate in the marquee once our work was done.

There are always certain people we can rely on to turn out to perform the mitzvah of Sukkah building and others who will always deliver schach (foliage for the Sukkah) even if they can’t stay to help. Then there are those who, year in and out, used to help but can no longer due to illness or infirmity; and yet others who used to help but have now died and we miss them all. And there’s another certainty, although we remember and sadly miss those friends, we welcome, with pleasure, the next generation; it’s all part and parcel of the rhythm of Sinai life.

Did we have fun? Yes, of course; were there enough of us on the day? More of us would have been better and even more fun; did we have sufficient schach to make our Sukkah kosher? No, sadly, we did not. Can we do better next year? Of course we can (though we’ll find it hard to improve on the food!).

Please join us next year and plan ahead to save your foliage. Also we would be happy to hear your ideas as to how we can be certain to build a really kosher Sukkah for 5775.

Pippa Brook

Building Update

At the time of writing (21 October), the large proportion of the essential building maintenance and repair work has either been started or finished. This work included:

- the levelling, and repointing, of the ramp;
- the replacement of the rotten fire escape doors at the top of the ramp;
- the creation of a new rose bed;
- creating an escape route from the back of our grounds;
- decorative and refurbishment works in both toilets;
- putting a hot water feed above the sinks in the downstairs toilets
...and much more.

In addition, we are creating two new office spaces for the Director of Education and the assistant Rabbi, as well as looking to move the books in the library into the Malcolm Featherman Hall (making them more available) and improving the existing library space as a meeting room.

Garry Abernathy, our builder, has done a sterling job in minimising the disruption to Synagogue life (I am not aware of anyone who has been significantly disadvantaged during the works).

As has been noted before, this work was kept as cost-effective as possible. We have not undertaken any work we felt was not essential for the next few years of the building’s life. This is to allow us to continue using it whilst we decide, as a community, on the best way forward for our ageing and inefficient building.

We have some exciting opportunities ahead of us as we consider the possibilities for using the land and building we own. We have the chance now to create a template for the next seventy years of Sinai, with a building that reflects our proud and Progressive Jewish values.

If anyone else would like to contact me and be part of one of the most exciting projects Sinai has undertaken in a generation, then please email building@sinaisynagogue.org.uk or leave me a message at the office: (0113) 266-5256.

לעתיד (to the future)

David J Israel
Platinum Anniversary Celebrations

The team has been working really hard over the past months to make sure that our 70th anniversary is really a year to remember. I am now able to give some more detailed information on many of the events as follows:

18th January: All arrangements for the Quiz Supper have been finalised. Your Quiz Master will be Robert Bartfield with catering light refreshments provided by Sue. Judith Chapman will be looking to you all to organise tables for this first event of our big year so let’s get things underway with a bang!!!

16th March: Oy! Factor – Julius, our Julius, our Youth Leader and his team are now in the planning stages for this special edition of our annual talent show which he hopes to theme in some way appropriate to the year.

27th April: Afternoon Tea with Sinai Entertainers – This event will run from 3 – 5 p.m. and will include a varied programme provided by our many talented members. The music will be followed by afternoon tea and possibly some form of art exhibition.

1st June: Car Treasure Hunt – Jack Coplin has it all planned and ready. We will meet at Sinai and on our return there will be some tea and cakes to revive us all.

14th June: A normal Shabbat service (perhaps with a few added appropriate readings or prayers) with ministers and small number of congregants from the other local religious groups invited to join us. The service will be followed by a special Kiddush and visitors will be offered the opportunity to meet with our members and find out more about Reform Judaism.

15th June: Civic Service – A special service comprising Mincha and some special prayers, followed by afternoon tea. Amongst our invited guests are politicians, clergy from other religions, Rabbis and Chairs of the other Northern Reform Shuls, leaders of all the local Jewish organisations, past Sinai Rabbis etc.

20th July: Tea Dance – Timing for this will be roughly 3 – 5 p.m. We are very lucky to have some very experienced ballroom dancers in our midst. We hope that they will provide some demonstrations which will give the rest of us some ideas of how to really show off our dancing to its best advantage. During the afternoon a tasty proper afternoon tea will be served by a group of our very skilled catering members so your energy levels shouldn’t flag. This should be a really fun afternoon.

6th September: The format of this event run by a group of our young families has not yet been finalised. More detailed information will be available in future Sinai diaries and Chronicles.

13th December: Platinum Ball – This will be the final event of the year. So let’s go out with a BANG. The caterers, music and hall decorations have already been arranged so please start thinking now who you intend to share a table with and ladies, what you will wear!!!

Not to ignore the learning side of Sinai life. Sometime in October Lorna Mitchell is planning a study session to explore how the Sinai minhag (tradition) has changed over 70 years. More information as it becomes available.

In addition to all the above we will be producing a commemorative brochure with memories and stories (provided by you) about the past 70 years at Sinai. So come on old and new members, let’s have your stories. There will be an opportunity to advertise for your business or offer your personal congratulations. Susan Kristall is taking on this task with the help of Val Mogendorff, Simon Marcus and Nick Chapler-Smyth. Publication will be towards the end of the year so we will be able to include reports of all the events (with the exclusion of the ball) so this really will be something to keep for the future.

In these days when so many synagogues are closing it is no small achievement that we continue to thrive after 70 years. Don’t let this achievement pass without real celebration. The various organising groups want every one of us, whether young or old, to feel invited to their event, so don’t let them down. Let Sinai be the most vibrant place in Leeds throughout 2014.

Carol Adams

Topsy Turvy Tea Party
I’m immensely proud to say that we raised a total of £1800!! This event was always as much about raising awareness of the work Neshama do to support people living with a mental health difficulty, but the fund raising is a bonus! Thank you all for your support.

Becky Teiger
From our Chatan Torah

A big thank you to all of this congregation for your extraordinary kindness in this honour... and to all those who taught me over the years.

There are two problems in explaining this passage; the first being that it is unproblematic. It is as it says – no problem. The second problem is that this passage is problematic.

Superficially, this is a passage about the death of Moshe and the succession to Joshua. There is the key feature, the laying-on of hands by Moshe to Joshua, the indication of legitimate succession (with Elijah and Elisha in the Book of Kings it was to take the form of the mantle passing from one to the other, and with it Prophetic Authority) – but were the qualities of Joshua, boldness of spirit, innate or did they come after he was recognised? The text says the latter – Joshua is transformed only when Authority passes to him. In the same way we might note a transformation took place in Moshe after the encounter at Sinai when he descended and is described as radiant – he wasn’t before. (Something special happened in both cases.)

The sequence of events leading up to this contains a dialogue that is blunt. In Parashat Vayeilekh, Moshe is earlier told he is going to die. In Parashat Vezot Habberuka, he actually dies – but in his prime, so to speak, and peacefully at that. Lehevdil (and this is one of several times I’d like to use this phrase today) what would in other societies be a graveside lament, comes earlier, in Parashat Ha’azinu: ‘Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak…’: lyrical poetry, and the overwhelming tone is one of gratitude for what was earlier, what has now come to pass, and acceptance of the inevitable – hallmarks of many aspects of Judaism, together with a note of warning about bad behaviour – another hallmark, uttered repeatedly for a sinful people. Moshe has in fact composed his own funeral lament. It takes a remarkable person and detachment of mind to do that. If that seems difficult to accept, then remember one young lad not so long ago, in 1940s Poland, his parents already rounded up, and soon the time came for him to be too: he lit two Yahrzeit candles, one for each parent – and then another one for himself. He too knew what was coming, and that was his response, as Simon Wiesenthal records.

Moshe’s final words come much earlier, right at the beginning of the book of Devarim in fact: ‘These are the words which Moses spoke to the children of Israel on the other side of the Jordan’... and so following on from the last words of Bemidbar, Parashat Mas’e – set in ‘the plains of Moab by the Jordan and Jericho’, wording echoed here for a purpose. Time has been suspended in a sense for the whole of Devarim, and only now in its final chapter do we link up with the concluding verses of Bemidbar to come back together to exactly the same location where we were a whole book ago, ‘the plains of Moab’, whence Moses now departs for Mount Nebo. A few days ago at Yom Kippur, time for us was suspended for 25 hours; here too time was suspended. It is altogether a mystic experience with at its heart a deeper mystery, the tomb of Moses – or rather the lack of any known tomb – nobody knows where it is, something worth exploring a little more. It makes for a distinctive feature at a time when in other societies in the region, kings heroes and ancestors had tombs. It would be easy (and a great mistake) to make Moshe a superhero. He is something else - an argumentative figure. It is easy to see where the inspiration came from for disputative figures like Teyve the Milkman. Moshe himself says he is slow of speech and slow of tongue – not hallmarks of a classical combative hero. Earlier, in Parashat Va’Etchanan, Moshe had bargained (like Avraham over the fates of Sodom and Gomorrah, and as later would Jonah over that of Nineveh) with God - asking for more time, to be allowed to enter the Land. But unlike them, he lost the argument – it was his own life, not those of others that he was arguing over. He provoked God to anger. Moshe is human and very mortal. Lehevdil again, in Hollywood (and literature before it) there is a definable sequence – a hero dies in combat, or is smitten by old age: the final words are accompanied by schmaltzy music, there is a lament, and offerings at the graveside.

We do things very differently, the transition is peaceful, there are no pagan offerings. Lehevdil indeed. Because there is no hero, there is neither tomb nor cult – Chukat HaGoy. Heroes are Out. The text makes that quite clear. His tomb lies outside the land, and was not to become a place of veneration, because the wanderings of the Israelites are not yet over. That is why there is nothing in Nebo to compare with the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, or the Tomb of Rachel in Bethlehem, though that did not stop a church and a monastery being built at the supposed site, or our cousins saying his tomb lay between Jericho and Jerusalem, on the route of their pilgrimages. Both (dare I say it) are literally wide of the mark. Yet another tradition (decidedly not ours) puts it in Kashmir.

Though we may and must respect the traditions of others, we should not neglect our own; and according to the Midrash, the Romans tried to find Moshe’s tomb by digging for it with no success because it was not to be found: ‘When they stood above it, it seemed to be below; when they stood below it, it seemed to be above. They divided themselves into two groups, to those who stood above it – it seemed below, to those who stood below it - it seemed above’ (Talmud Bavli Sotah 14a). That lack of tomb as focal point shows that basic streak of egalitarianism and humility in Judaism, and we should never forget the spiritual lesson that we are all the same. Moshe may not get a tomb, but he does get an epitaph: his eye remained undimmed. He died in his prime, despite old age – 120 years. It is a great kindness to be shown the land - and that his sight was preserved meant he saw it. But there is another factor, not to be forgotten – it’s that lehevdil again. Already one of the signs of Israeliite individuality is emerging, the stuff we don’t do, a new identity, a new way of life is being forged – the sholoshim elapse and life goes on. And no teacher of Jewish Studies can ask for any greater memorial than Jewish continuity.

Raphi Isserlin
Sinai Diary

The Chronicle diary information comes mainly from events already noted in Sinai’s office diary. Please refer to the Newsletters & other communications from Sinai for latest updates.

Regular events:

Shabbat services: every Friday at 6.30p.m.; every Saturday at 10.30a.m.
Board meetings: 7.30p.m. Nov 27, Dec 18, Jan 29, Feb 26, March 26.
Book club: First Wednesday of the month 10.30-12.00 in the synagogue library 8 Jan; 5 Feb; 15 March.
ConneXions lunches: 12.30 Weds Dec 11, Jan 8, Feb 12, March 12, April 2.
Chavurah suppers: Fridays Dec 6, Jan 3, Feb 7, March 7, April 4.
Israel Cafe: Sundays 10.30-12 Dec 1; Jan 12, 26; Feb 9; March 7; April 4.
Learning Ladder: TBC
Makpetzah: Nov 16, 23, 30; Dec 7, 14; Jan 11, 18, 25; Feb 1, 8; March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29.
Jewish Studies workshops: Thursdays 4.30-5.30p.m. Nov 14, 21, 28; Dec 5, 12; Jan 16, 23, 30; Feb 6, 13; March 6, 13, 20, 27.
Religion School: 10-12: Nov 16, 23, 30; Dec 7, 14; Jan 11, 18, 25; Feb 1, 8; March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29.
ShabbaTots: Fridays, 10.00a.m.-11.30a.m. every Friday up to and including December 20th. Dates for 2014 TBC.
Shabbat Torah Time: 11a.m. Nov 16, 30 (TBC); Dec 14; Jan 11, 25; Feb 8; March 1, 15.
Study Lunches: Dates TBC.
Walking group: Third Sunday each month 10.00a.m. from Sinai: (dates TBC)
Youth: Easy:1-3p.m. Nov 16, 30; Dec 14; Jan 11, 25; Feb 8; March 1, 29; April 26. Further information is available from Julius, youth@sinaisyndagogue.org.uk.

Other events—Including Festivals

November
17th: Mitzvah Day
27th: Embroidery Group: 10.00-12.00.
See this page)
30th: 3-5p.m.:Chanukah Party & Sponsored Bounce (see back cover)

December
7th: Bar Mitzvah - Avner Bordoley
8th: 7.30p.m. The Gatekeeper - film showing.
18th: 3p.m. Induction service - Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz

January
12th: Intracommunal Football at Leeds Grammar School
18th: Supper quiz (see p13)

March
16th: Oy! Factor
29th: Bat Mitzvah - Ella Cohen

April
24th: AGM
27th: Musical Event

Festival planner 2013-14; 5773-4:
Chanukah: Nov 28th 2013
Tu Bi’Shevat: Jan 16th 2014
Purim: March 16th 2014
Pesach: Seder Night: April 14th 2014
Pesach 7th day: April 21st 2014
Yom Ha-Shoah: April 28th 2014
Yom Ha-Atzma-ut: May 6th 2014
Shavuot: June 4th 2014
Tisha B’Av: Aug 5th 2014
Rosh HaShana: Sept 26th 2014

Messages from Maxine Brown

The Chevra Kadisha

WHAT IS THE Chevra Kadisha?
What do we do?
Why do we do it?
Who participates and why?

The Chevra Kadisha perform Tahara, which is the preparation of your loved ones for their burial.
We are part of the "Chevra," (Friends) firstly, as an essential service to our community; secondly and most importantly, we consider it to be a Mitzvah.

Who takes part? Any member, male or female who is part of the community and over 20 years old will be welcomed.

If you would like to know more, we are hoping to hold a meeting in the New Year together with Rabbi Morris and Rabbi Hugenholtz.

Embroidery Group

We are proceeding with our Project for the Jubilee, also the new curtain for the Ark.
If anybody would like to join us we would be delighted to welcome you. Times and dates of meetings will be in the weekly bulletin. Please phone me on Leeds 2686158 if you’d like further details.

Maxine Brown
Life Cycle Events 1st August 2013 to 4th Nov 2013

Births:
Biehal/Silverman: Mazaltov to great grandparents Rita Biehal and Len and Lili Silverman on the birth of Austin Ernest, first son of Sam Silverman and Anna Lea-Wilson and grandson for Nina Biehal and Max Silverman.

Clayman: Rob and Debbie on the birth of their first son, Adi. We wish mazaltov to them, to Rob’s parents, John and Rochelle Clayman, to Debbie’s parents, Peter and Rita Fischer, and to Great Aunt Carole Clayman.

Herscovitz: Mazaltov to Emma and Warren on the birth in Atlanta of their daughter, Ruby Mia.

Charlton/Herscovitz/Sapherson: Mazaltov on the arrival of Ruby Mia Herscovitz, first grandchild for Ivan and Rita Herscovitz, granddaughter for Jennie Sapherson and Brian Fileman, niece for Scott and Rhonda Meadmore, Jamie and Danielle Charlton and Jared and Rachael Herscovitz, and cousin for Kitty and Zander Meadmore.

Hugenholtz-Middleton: Mazaltov to Esther and Dave on the birth of their first child, Jonathan David Hugenholtz-Middleton.

Engagement:
Mazaltov to Petra Mullen on her engagement to Huw Jones.

Special Anniversary:
Mazaltov to Carole and Dave Jackson on the special occasion of their silver wedding anniversary.

Deaths:
We offer condolences to:
Carson: To Peter, Debbie Samuel and Leah and Lewis Carson on the sad death of Peter’s father, David Carson; to Peter’s mother, Marie and his brother Anthony and their families.

Goldberg: To Jack and family on the sad death of Jack’s wife, Edith. Edith and Jack will be well known to many members as they ran Modern Food Stores on Street Lane, at the top of Roman Avenue, until they retired.

Levi: To Leslie and Marilyn on the sad death of Leslie’s mother, Mrs Tess Levi.

Lewis: Colette, Hylton and Simon on the sad death of Arnold, Colette’s husband and Hylton and Simon’s father.

Neville: To Shirley, Brian and Mark on the sad death Rachel Hershman, Shirley’s mother.

Welcome to new members:
Ruth Ingram
Julian and Jayne Maurice, & Louis and Leo
Mark and Michelle Raw, & Sasha and Bradley

Please do inform us of any life cycle events you would like us to include!

Organising a Children’s Party?
Why not hire Sinai’s Malcolm Featherman Hall?
Special rate: £40 only
Great space
Good parking
Call Sinai Synagogue office now on 0113 266 5256

Faith In Action - EUPJ Biennial Conference 2014 - 24-27 April, Dresden
Registration is now open for this conference. Keynote speakers are Anat Hoffman, Executive Director of the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC) and leader of Women of the Wall; Rabbi Gilad Kariv, Executive Director of the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism (IMPI), and Professor Josef Konvitz, the retired Head of Division of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

With a religious and social programme, workshops and special interest sessions and a conference for our younger generation running concurrently, this is not to be missed!

To register now and take advantage of the early bird discount, contact: Deborah Grabiner, Administrator, European Union for Progressive Judaism, The Sternberg Centre, 80, East End Road, London, N3 2SY
e: administrator@eupj.org; t: 0208 349 5651
w: www.eupj.org; Registered Charity No: 253000

SIMON SCHAMA will be talking about his latest book and television project
THE STORY OF THE JEWS

At Etz Chaim Synagogue; 411 Harrogate Road, Leeds, LS17 7BY
On Thursday December 12th at 7.30pm

To book tickets please call Makor on 0113 2680899 or email helen@makor.co.uk.

Advance booking essential.
Early bird discount: £12.50, or £15 at the door.
Light refreshments included
## Officers of Sinai Synagogue

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rabbi</td>
<td>Ian D Morris</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rabbi@sinaisynagogue.org.uk">rabbi@sinaisynagogue.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Rabbi</td>
<td>Esther Hugenholtz</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rabbihugenholtz@sinaisynagogue.org.uk">rabbihugenholtz@sinaisynagogue.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Education</td>
<td>Gwynneth Lewis</td>
<td><a href="mailto:education@sinaisynagogue.org.uk">education@sinaisynagogue.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Years Co-ordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth worker</td>
<td>Julius Judah</td>
<td><a href="mailto:youth@sinaisynagogue.org.uk">youth@sinaisynagogue.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator/Bookkeeper</td>
<td>Heidi Sizer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@sinaisynagogue.org.uk">info@sinaisynagogue.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Chair</td>
<td>Nick Dyson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ndyson@lawblacks.com">ndyson@lawblacks.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chair</td>
<td>Elsje Prins</td>
<td><a href="mailto:e.prins@ntlworld.com">e.prins@ntlworld.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorary Treasurer</td>
<td>Matt Thornfield</td>
<td><a href="mailto:treasurer@sinaisynagogue.org.uk">treasurer@sinaisynagogue.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorary Secretary</td>
<td>Pippa Brook</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pippabrook@hotmail.com">pippabrook@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Emails – A Quick Reference Guide

- **exec@sinaisynagogue.org.uk** goes to all members of the exec & the Rabbi.
- **board@sinaisynagogue.org.uk** goes to all members of the board; and the Rabbi and the office who send it out to any Board members not on email.
- **membership@sinaisynagogue.org.uk** will put you in touch with the membership group if you have questions (not financial) about membership; welcoming new members; communicating with existing members.
- **Membership treasurer: membership@sinaisynagogue.org.uk**
- **Publicity**: If you want to put a notice on the foyers screen use: 
  - foyerscreen@sinaisynagogue.org.uk
- **For the website use website@sinaisynagogue.org.uk**
- **For notices for the weekly email newsletter and service sheet:** publicity@sinaisynagogue.org.uk
- **and for the Chronicle – chronicle@sinaisynagogue.org.uk**

### Board members

- **Membership Treasurer Team; Elsje Prins**
  - Resources: Ruth Baumberg H: 0113 2936867
  - r.treehill@hotmail.com

- **Resources; Welfare Support Team:**
  - Nick Chapler Smyth H: 01484-860006
  - nws9992000@yahoo.co.uk

- **Community Development; Israel:**
  - Anna Dyson M: 07814 682 613;
  - annadyson@gmail.com

- **Building issues; Fundraising:**
  - Security: David Israel M: 07973 519445
  - davidj52@gmail.com

- **External Organisation; Synagogue Services & Ritual:**
  - Jonathan Lewis M: 07787-504392
  - jonathan_lewis@btinternet.com

- **Visual Identity & Audio-Visual Services:**
  - Simon Marcus 07720 405975.
  - videoexperts@additivemedia.tv

- **Welfare Support:** Val Mogendorff
  - H: 0113-2693332; val@mogendorff.com

- **Tikkun Olam/Tzedakah:**
  - Rachelle Sanderson M: 07828817884;
  - RSanderson@harrogatethighschool.co.uk

- **Education & Youth: Executive**

### STAMPS!

Yes, used postage stamps to raise money for Braille paper for the blind are still being collected.

Please leave your donations in the boxes provided in the cloakrooms.

Thank you,

Hannah Bloom
Sinai, Synagogue Of Sanctuary

BOGO!
In Sept 2013, Sinai’s Synagogue of Sanctuary Working Group, launched its BOGO campaign. A variation on the well known, Buy One Get One Free (BOGOF) marketing incentives, BOGO is a request to Buy One, Give One and refers to items of toiletries. Sinai members are invited to buy an extra shampoo, packet of nappies, soap, toothpaste etc when they do their own shopping and to donate the spare item. Of course BOGOF items are an ideal way to do this, when you get your free item, give it don’t keep it. Donations are distributed to asylum seekers and refugees via PAFRAS – Positive Action For Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

BOGO is the first initiative of the working group and was followed by the Talks team event on 10th October (see report...). While the BOGO campaign continues, other events and initiatives are in the planning stage and the working group will welcome all suggestions and ideas as to how Sinai and the wider Jewish Community can get better involved in the City of Sanctuary movement, making Leeds a more welcoming and friendly place for asylum seekers, refugees, and all who live in and visit the city.

Synagogue of Sanctuary working group

On Thursday, October 10th, a talk was given at Sinai Synagogue by Muhammed S. Nayyer of the Ahmadiyah Community, on The Experience of Seeking Asylum in the UK.

This made for a truly inspirational evening. Muhammed, himself a member of the Talks Team at The Refugee Council, spoke movingly and informatively of his experiences as an Asylum Seeker and Refugee.

In introducing him Sharon Witton, Talks Team Coordinator and a member of Sinai’s Synagogue of Sanctuary working group, first articulated her personal Jewish response both to the current problems with border control, and the frightening impact of the Immigration Bill, which made it increasingly difficult for people to claim asylum and to live in the UK as refugees. By means of introduction she defined the terms Asylum Seeker, Refugee, Economic Migrant and Illegal Migrant, dispelling much misinformation in the hall and reminding us of the legal definitions of each.

Muhammed’s personal testimony was powerful and impactful. The religious persecution of Ahmadi Moslems, as a consequence of professing their faith, has been a reality since the inception of their movement in 1889. Ahmadiya emerged from the Sunni tradition and believe in all the five pillars and articles required of Muslims, but they are considered non-Muslims by mainstream Muslims in Pakistan, the only state to have officially declared them so. As a result of this declaration, Ahmadi are constitutionally prohibited by law from self-identifying and are persecuted in an actively state-inspired hate campaign.

A very successful businessman in his home town, Muhammed, and his family enjoyed a cultured life style including the best schools for his four children, with all the benefits of pleasant leisure pursuits. This changed in 2010 when Muhammad himself became the victim of persecution. Shot and very badly wounded, with his life in danger, he was forced to flee his country and seek refuge here with his family.

Refused twice in his asylum claim, it was only when a judge recognised the persecution of the Ahmadya as a group that he and other Ahmadya after him were able to make a successful asylum claim.

The significant thing in his moving account of which he made us aware of was his desire, from the beginning of his arrival here, for self-determination. Throughout the exhausting and highly stressful period in which he fought for legal status as an Asylum Seeker, he wanted to work. He wanted to earn his own money. He did not want to be dependent on the state: in self-determination lay dignity. From day one, Muhammad worked actively in a voluntary capacity for The Refugee Council. He was not just another Asylum Seeker but Muhammed S. Nayyer from Pakistan who worked for The Refugee Council: a powerful reminder to all of us present of the need of Asylum seekers to be seen and heard as individuals.

This was the first time Muhammed had visited a synagogue and he expressed the hope that it might be the beginning of interfaith dialogue between our two communities, a sentiment endorsed by all present and taken up most particularly by Fabian Hamilton, M.P. whom the meeting was delighted to have amongst them. He was very sympathetic to the plight of asylum seekers fleeing their country of origin, and vocal in his support. The meeting could do no better than be summed up by the words that make up the central tenets of the Ahmadiya:

Love for all: hatred for none.

For further information about the work of Sinai synagogue of sanctuary group or of the City of Sanctuary Movement, please contact sanctuary@sinaisyagogue.org.uk or telephone the synagogue office.

Vanessa Walsh (Rosenthal)
Our Proposed New Logo…

…..tell us what you think!
The Visual Identity Group (Lee Graville, Matt Thornfield, Gillian Kempner and Simon Marcus) has started to look at how Sinai represents itself internally and within the wider community. Our first job was to assess how well our logo is serving us.

Through discussion with Sinai people young and old, male and female and researching documents including Sinai’s vision statement from 2010, the 2012 report, last year’s building consultation, the recent Board away day workshop, the Sinai Chronicle and our new suggestion box in the foyer - the team has built a picture of what the synagogue ideally represents to its members… a welcoming, friendly, egalitarian, traditional yet forward thinking open minded Jewish community is coming through loud and clear.

We took a long hard look at the present logo which was designed by Brian Fileman in 1996. Whilst it has served us well for nearly 20 years, we felt it did not tick all the boxes. Our research identified a number of different positive things we should be saying about Sinai, suggested by our community research. Brian himself is pleased that we were looking to update it.

We have begun to show the proposed logo style around Sinai people and have already taken on board the constructive comments made at the presentation we gave at November’s Chavurah supper… below are the results so far. For those of you viewing in black and white print, the fonts are an Israeli flag blue and the ‘Yud’ flames are a dark orange.

We aim to have a logo along with a ‘multi-meaning strapline’ – with a suggestion of helping open minds through education and healthy discussion; also indicating that we, as a community, are open minded to different people, views and practices. We welcome your constructive ideas regarding the logo and strapline. Please email visualidentity@addicitymedia.tv, put a message in the suggestion box in the foyer for the attention of the Visual Identity Team or write to us via the synagogue office. Though we aren’t planning to design this by committee we do value your opinion and want to help move Sinai forward towards its next 70 years!

Thank you,
Simon, Lee, Gillian, Matt
The Visual Identity Team

November 4th 2013 marked the 25th anniversary of Women of the Wall. Anat Hoffman (pictured) wrote,

‘Today I prayed at the Western Wall alongside nearly 1,000 women and I was engulfed by the voices of women singing together and men supporting us with both their presence and their prayers. We outnumbered our detractors by a large margin, and we were able to finish our services in peace. I also thought about the thousands of our supporters around the world joining us in their own solidarity services, and that made today’s milestone even sweeter.

‘Today was more than just the 25th anniversary of Women of the Wall. We are no longer spectators in shaping policy for the holy site. I am very hopeful that the future of the Western Wall Complex is one where pluralism will be the norm. The place where all Jews turn when they pray will no longer reflect the values of one small minority view. We are working to create an equal place at the Western Wall for all Jewish streams. The strong turnout today at the Kotel and at solidarity rallies emphasizes how ready the Jewish world is for this change.

‘Over the next two weeks, Jewish professionals and lay leaders are converging on Jerusalem for the Jewish Federation of North America’s General Assembly. The theme for the conference is The Global Jewish Shuk: A Marketplace of Dialogue and Debate. I will be speaking on a panel about religious pluralism in Israel, and many of the other sessions will be dealing with IRAC’s core issues.

‘Our success at the Wall, desegregating buses and other public spaces, and fighting racist incitement has changed the direction of the debate in Israel, and we will see that in this year’s General Assembly. Together we are holding Israel to the highest standards. I want to thank all the women (and men) who came out to the Kotel today, and to everyone else supporting us from afar. Our combined efforts are helping pluralism thrive in Israel.

Yours,
Anat Hoffman
Executive Director, IRAC
END OF YEAR 2012/2013 REPORT

This was another busy year that resulted in 1,040 pupils and 156 adults from 22 schools over 31 visits to Sinai. Four schools made multiple visits.
In addition to schools in Leeds, visitors came from:
- Boston Spa; Cundall, near York;
- Gawlthorpe, Ossett; Ilkley
- Knaresborough; Pontefract
- Thorner; Topcliffe, near Thirsk
- Wakefield; Warthill, near York
- Whitby

The longest distance travelled to Sinai was by Years 4, 5 and 6 from Greystoke, a village 5 miles from Penrith in Cumbria, a round trip of 205 miles to Roman Avenue!

Faith schools were represented by:
- Church of England 4
- Catholic 3
- Muslim 10 schools had a high proportion of Muslim pupils

We hosted one school for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and two schools from the independent sector.

I visited Westfield Primary school, Acomb, York to address 51 Year 5 and 6 pupils during the school’s Multi Faith week in March.

My thanks to Gwynneth Lewis, Director of Education, for her support, to Debbie Marcus and Val Mogendorff for their assistance with the little ones, and to Andy Ingleby for his preparation of the shul for visits.

If you’d like to find out about what is involved in joining the team, please contact me via the synagogue office.

Michael Barrie

Simeon Solomon lecture

In October Frank Vigon (pictured) gave a presentation on the life and work of the 19th century Jewish artist Simeon Solomon, “On the margins of extinction”. He described Solomon as a talented and tragic young man who found himself marginalised from society in and in particular from the circle of artists known as the Pre-Raphaelites.

It was a Victorian tragedy of a child prodigy, led astray by the licentious poet Algernon Swinburne and eventually destroyed by his own shortcomings.

To many of us Simeon Solomon was unknown as the artist who painted the very well-known portrait of the young rabbi with the Torah. However, his gift extended beyond that painting to an amazing variety of styles and works.

From the late 1850’s until his fall from grace in 1873, Solomon was one of the most significant of the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Frank demonstrated that in Solomon’s work there were clear indications of his influence of other, better known, artists such as Alma Tedema, Lord Leighton, Beardsley and even Chagall.

Edward Burne Jones, the leading Pre-Raphaelite had said to his wife: “he was the greatest of us all”.

Frank argued that it was one thing to be Jewish and an artist, but to be Jewish and Homosexual was more than hypocritical Victorian society was prepared to accept.

The final purpose of his talk was to raise our awareness of the true importance of one of the most significant of the Pre-Raphaelites and draw our attention not only to the tragedy of his life, but the disintegration of his grave following his death. You will remember from the article in the High Holydays edition of the Sinai Chronicle that Frank has been going round the country giving this talk in order to raise money for the restoration of Solomon’s tombstone which has fallen over completely.

He needs to raise £3,500 for the complete refurbishment of the grave including a sculpted body stone with a relief carving of the painting known as “the sleepers and the one who watcheth”. He has so far collected £2,700 and is prepared to give many more talks.

He will be starting the next phase of his campaign in January, working in conjunction with Professors Elizabeth Prettejohn, Jason Edwards and Dr. Carolyn Comroy to establish a research scholarship for PhD students in the name of Simeon Solomon. Professor Prettejohn, who is the world expert on Pre-Raphaelite Art, has expressed her willingness to come along to Sinai and talk to members about her work.

It is also proposed to establish an annual Simeon Solomon Lecture at York starting in Spring 2014, to which members of Sinai will be more than welcome to come along.

It was a fascinating evening where Frank took us to the highs of Simeon Solomon’s fine works and the lows of his public humiliation and the ultimate tragedy of his death in conditions of abject poverty.

Michael Barrie
Celebrating Chanukah

You will see, elsewhere in this publication, an excellent article by Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers in which she suggests making Chanukah presents more personal by making them yourself: gifts from the heart.

In those happy days when our children were young, the budget was always stretched to the limit. Our offspring were bombarded with the more materialistic messages of the season every time we went shopping, in commercial breaks during their favourite television shows, and even at school where other classmates compared Santa lists. To offset this a little, our tradition was to give presents every one of the eight nights of Chanukah, with the larger presents being reserved for first and last night and smaller gifts for the in-betweens. Even at the Pound shop this number would be quite expensive and there were no Pound shops in those days! Ingenuity was called for.

One year, tidying my daughter’s dolls away I noticed that their clothes, or what remained of them, were looking the worse for wear. I’m no seamstress but did a lot of knitting in those days, and fortunately my favourite magazines sometimes had knitting patterns for dolls and dolls’ clothes so I decided her dolls would get a new wardrobe each at Chanukah. As I knitted steadily through the evenings after she was in bed I couldn’t wait for her reaction.

There were plenty of odd balls of knitting yarn in my knitting box so the only thing I was short of was time; eight outfits took a lot of knitting. The needles flew! For each doll I knitted panties (for some odd reason she always took them off and lost them), dresses, coats, little hats or even hot pants, all stylish and colour co-ordinated. Imagine my astonishment when I discovered that, instead of dressing her dolls in their finery, she had clothed her teddy bears in her new fashion range. Ah, well, as long as she enjoyed it in her own way.

Another year I made a beautiful Victorian doll from old net curtains, a child’s sock and some thick brown knitting yarn for the hair. The whole body consisted of hundreds of circles of fabric of different sizes, strung together on elastic yarn, and took a donkey’s age to make as each circle had to be cut, a running thread placed round the edge to draw it up to double the thickness, and then strung on to the elastic. That was a real labour of love and it gave me enormous pleasure to know I’d done it myself.

Even these days, the gift of a jar of home-made whiskey marmalade or apricot jam goes down a treat. It’s highly satisfying to say to someone, “I made this for you – I hope you like it.”

Margot Malinow

A Message from Miriam Osner

Miriam has been making jams, marmalades and chutneys again. They are for sale with half the money going to tzedakah.

Please message her on Facebook, email her on maoosner@yahoo.co.uk or ring her on 0113 266 0547 for a list of flavours.

Chavurah Supper, Friday 6th December,
following Kaballat Shabbat,
the Friday Night Service Guest speaker: Susie Gordon,
Development Executive,
Leeds Jewish Representative Council,
and introducing Or Nehushtan,
Leeds’ Community Shaliach.

Service starts 6.30, dinner at 7.15.

Book now by phoning the synagogue office or by emailing supper@sinaisynagogue.org.uk

Preparing for YomTov -
cleaning Sinai’s silverware.

In the run-up to Rosh HaShana, Pippa Brook lined up a small team of willing volunteers to conduct the annual clean-up of Sinai’s silverware. Armed with refreshments - of course! - the team donned gloves and set to work.

You’re welcome to join in next year!
One may make a barrier [on Shabbat, to prevent a fire from spreading] of full or empty pots that are not likely to break; and which pots are unlikely to break? Metal pots, or [clay] pots made in Kfar Chananiah or Kfar Shichin.
– Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 120b

Recently the Hebrew-Arabic website Dugrinet sponsored a Friday morning excursion to the excavation of Kfar Shichin. There was a big crowd, because Dr. Motti Aviam, who heads the Israeli delegation to the dig, is both a respected archaeologist and a charismatic teacher, so it is always fun and fascinating to visit a site with him. Moreover, the dig is relatively new and not on any tour itineraries, so there was the attraction of going behind the scenes, to get “inside information.” Motti either has good luck or a good eye; once I was visiting the dig at Yodfat with him—a site where I had spent many hours running educational programs—and he bent over casually and picked up a Roman coin. On our tour of Shichin he mentioned that the previous day he had been showing a group around, and he picked up a fragment of plaster to which were attached three mosaic tiles—the first and only evidence so far that there were mosaic floors at the site.

Shichin was a Jewish village in the Roman and Byzantine periods, mentioned a number of times in the sources as being part of the Zippori metropolitan area. This particular hilltop, about a mile from Zippori, had been noted in archaeological surveys as the probable site of an ancient settlement (lots of potsherds), but no one had been motivated to seek a budget to excavate until a few years ago, when the abovementioned Motti Aviam, visiting the area in late summer when all the vegetation was dried up, noticed that some of the rocks whose edges were above ground seemed to be very large—and showed signs of having been shaped by chisels, not erosion. Large carved rocks in a small Galilean village generally signify a synagogue, for such villages did not have other public buildings, and large rocks were not used for private structures. After two seasons (with many more ahead), indeed, the foundation of a large building, including massive column-bases and parts of an entrance made of non-local stone, have been uncovered.

The Talmud mentions that Shichin was known for the high quality of its pottery. Thus the identification of this hilltop as Shichin is strengthened by the fact that the archaeologists found there a huge scrap heap of manufacturer’s rejects, fragments of pots that were obviously discarded before sale, due to air pockets, cracks, and other defects.

The likelihood of the large stones being the remains of a synagogue—and the likelihood that this pile of rocks represents Talmudic Shichin (Asochis according to Josephus) is exciting. Yet as Motti Aviam pointed out with his characteristic humour, archaeologists (and the rest of us) have to be careful not to get carried away by the temptation to see “likelihoods” as proven historical facts. Finding an explanation attractive doesn’t make it true.

Israel is not the only place where archaeology has taken on nationalistic significance. For a hundred years, we have been digging to prove to ourselves—and especially to the rest of the world—that our claim to a long and glorious history here is based on solid scientific evidence. This can lead to distortions and sloppy research, and we have to be careful to keep science, politics, and religion separate. However, I can testify from my morning at Shichin that that is really hard to do. There is something moving and satisfying about letting my imagination connect text and rocks and shards into a coherent story that places me in a historical continuum that is rooted right here.

Rabbi Marc Rosenstein

Rabbi Marc Rosenstein grew up in Highland Park, Illinois, at North Shore Congregation Israel. His first visit to Israel was as a high school student in the first cohort of the NFTY-EIE program in 1962. He was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1975, and received his PhD from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, in modern Jewish history, while a Jerusalem Fellow. In 1990, he made aliya, moving to Moshav Shorashim, a small community in the central Galilee. He is presently the director of the Israeli Rabbinical Program of HUC-JIR, as well as the director of Makom ba-Galil, a seminar centre that engages in programming to foster pluralism and coexistence.
When I was little, and we still lived in Leeds, my big sister used to play with me, “I dare you to”. She would give me all kinds of funny tasks, knowing that I wouldn’t give up the challenge. Now that I am older, the crazy task that I took upon myself is, "We dare you to make peace, we dare you to educate Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian youth for regional cooperation on cross border water issues." “Is it possible?” you may be asking yourself. “Why bother?” others might ask. So here is the rationale behind it:

If we all lived alone, our interaction with the environment would be determined only by the availability of natural resources and our own needs. The complexity in resource management is rooted in the fact that natural resources are shared among a growing population, made up of a range of societies, cultures, and political entities that are sometimes in a state of conflict. Complexity and tension increase when the natural resources in question, such as water, cross borders. Water is a resource necessary for the survival of all, and despite its sensitivity and great value, this resource is often neglected, polluted, and in short supply. The challenge in managing cross-border water resources is rooted in the tension between viewing them as a source of conflict, or as a basis for cooperation and the promotion of good neighbourly interactions.

Dealing with this challenge is at the foundation of the work of Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME), whose activities are characterized by the mutual dependence of Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian neighbours on a shared resource: a dependence that requires cooperative management. In order to reverse the familiar situation in our region of a “zero sum game” between sides when it comes to protecting water sources and allocating the resource, FoEME works to instil a regional vision, based on the principle of sustainability, meeting the interests of all sides while also considering the needs of nature. In line with the organizational approach, it is necessary to have an in-depth understanding of the reality of water in order to avoid limited perspective of the issue. Each country’s own challenges and needs, as well as those of neighbours, provide a frame of reference for joint thinking around mutually desired solutions for all sides. Hence, environmental activism is inseparable from social activism, both being based on mutual respect and understanding of the other, including the environment and the people who are part of it, through ongoing cross-community dialogue.

Expanding Youth’s Circle of Associations

Throughout the school year, groups of “Water Trustees” from neighbouring Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian communities meet (each group in their own community) and learn about their joint water resources and their ecological situation. Examples of joint water basins are the Lower Jordan River, the Dead Sea, the Alexander River, the Bsor River and many more. Twice a year they meet for joint activities and building a joint environmental vision. The interaction between youth with different lifestyles and attitudes, and the intercultural dialogue, demand a process of trust-building, emphasizing the importance of preparation for meetings between students from different cultures (nations) who have gone through a similar learning process. Joint work during the workshops, such as mud building, youth camps, and intercultural trips (multicultural), leads to a process of joint learning, and creativity takes place through the asking of questions, the change of stereotypes, the search for common ground, and the emphasis on the geographical and environmental connection between the youth.

As Youval, 15 said after the last campaign camp: “I learnt that we can cooperate with different people even when there isn’t a common language and that we can achieve a lot if only we try.”

Amy Lipman-Avizohar

The website (if you have internet access) is: www.foeme.org

Rabbi Laura Janner Klausner, Rabbi to the Movement of Reform Judaism, said in the series ‘18 Rabbis for 18 Days’, a collection of thoughts, ideas, commentaries on Jewish environmental texts:

"The text that I most identify with is Psalm 24:1:
"The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the Eternal…”

"This verse places us just as stewards, just as benefactors, of God’s world. It reminds me that we are temporary inhabitants and that any arrogance about our mastery over the world is misplaced. I believe it is our duty to nurture, value and preserve our bountiful but vulnerable inheritance of the world which belong to God and not to us."
Quicksand, sudden tides and a very windy weather awaited me and my family on the day we went to walk across Morecambe Bay. Fortunately, we were guided by the Queen’s Guide to the Sands, Cedric Robinson. He’s been doing it for a while (say, 50 years) so we were quite sure we’d be fine. However, we didn’t expect him to walk barefoot and in a very steady and fast pace: after all, he’s 80 years old. We dragged after him while our children ran happily in a fantastic biblical scene of many people crossing the sea with water from both sides.

We went on the adventure to raise funds for Windows for Peace UK, a charity which facilitates dialogue sessions between Jews and Muslims in the UK and promotes understanding and conciliation between Israeli Jews and Palestinians through educational and cultural programmes, media and art. We believe that in order to reach a just and lasting peace, and to advance the process of conciliation in the region, it is important to understand and internalize democratic values and human rights, and to deepen mutual knowledge of the other. This approach is very relevant to inter faith dialogue here in the UK.

But for me, Windows is not just a lovely charity – it’s the charity that has brought me to Sinai. Before I arrived in Leeds, Ruti Atzmon, director of Windows in Israel, told me I should contact Yaakov Atik, who’s involved with Windows in Leeds. Yaakov was the first person I was in touch with here, and his warm welcome made me do something I wouldn’t imagine I’d do in a million years - become a member of a synagogue community. It was probably the right decision and I can’t thank him enough.

The walk is over, but fundraising is still going. If you’ve missed it you are more than welcome to sponsor me through my page on the Just Giving website: http://www.justgiving.com/Yael-Arbel. Many thanks for all of you from Sinai who have already sponsored me and supported Windows – it is greatly appreciated.

Yael Arbel

The Jewish contribution to the US civil rights struggle: recalling the 1963 March on Washington

Fifty years ago, in August 1963, an estimated quarter of a million people assembled in front of the Lincoln Memorial in the USA for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. That event united a multitude of races and religions, both men and women, capped by the iconic image of Martin Luther King Jr. visualizing his dream for equality. Those of us lucky to hear the speech delivered again in full on BBC Radio 4 in the anniversary week of that momentous event, recalled by an impressive array of current-day human rights activists, cannot fail to have been moved once again by its power and impact.

We should acknowledge, also, that many American Jews were active participants and leaders in the march. Arnie Aronson was a little-known but crucial organizer; Rabbi Uri Miller recited the opening prayer; and Rabbi Joachim Prinz delivered a stirring speech just before King’s historic words, spelling out as the former Rabbi of Berlin in Nazi Germany why bigotry should never be met with silence. For those with internet access, to hear Rabbi Prinz’s speech, as relevant today in my opinion as in 1963, check out the MP3 link: http://www.joachimprinz.com/images/mow.mp3.

For further information on the historic Jewish contribution to the black struggle for equality and civil rights, see: http://forward.com/articles/182763/the-jews-who-marched-on-washington-with-martin-lut/?p=all#ixzz2df3Ccmku.

Barbara Levy

Cover picture: Dr King with Rabbi Prinz
Letters: An Open Letter To the Sinai Community

All those who are in a position to reprove ... all men, and do not do so, are held accountable for the sins of all men (Shabbat, pp 692-693, Machzor)

We, the undersigned individuals, wish to openly express to the wider Sinai community some important personal feelings we share about what is going on in Israel.

We do not write on behalf of anyone other than ourselves, and we wish to be understood that we write with compassionate intent, and from the perspective of a group who wish to see a safe, secure and thriving Israel; but equally importantly, the Israel promised in the Declaration of Independence - a land which, for the benefit of all its inhabitants, is based on the precepts of freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel and which upholds the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex.

For some time now, a significant number of Sinai members - and some others from the wider Jewish community - have been meeting to discuss in an open, thoughtful and non-judgmental way, our views and responses to the Israel-Palestine situation.

We have watched Israeli and Palestinian films, we have read articles, and we have listened to first-hand accounts of the issues from both Israelis and Palestinians. In April, a small group of Sinai members travelled on both sides of the green line together with some of the Leeds Muslim community, and met extraordinary and inspiring Israelis and Palestinians. However, the excesses of the settlers, the gross misbehaviours of some of the soldiers, the discriminatory application of law and abuse of due process, and the eviction of Bedouins from their land cannot be quietly ignored, and the greatest injustice is that for the most part, the government, at best, turns a blind eye to these activities and at its worst, implicitly supports these actions.

The fact of what is happening at a day-to-day level to ordinary Palestinians both in the occupied territories and within Israel itself is shocking and painful to acknowledge. As one former head of Shin Bet (the Israeli National Security Agency) has openly declared in an Oscar-nominated documentary, The Gatekeepers, Israel “has become cruel”. We are anguished by the moral framework of an Israeli society that permits such cruelty.

We say firmly: enough. We will not remain silent.

As Diaspora Jews, we have a responsibility to voice our concerns.

As Jews and human beings, we have a responsibility to speak out against injustice and discrimination wherever it may occur.

It is irrelevant that other countries commit “worse” human rights abuses.

It is sadly unproductive to point out that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.

It is wrong that Jews openly criticising Israel are condemned for being self-hating Jews, and it is unworthy to demand silence in the wider non-Jewish community for fear of triggering anti-Semitism.

Not least, it is simply no longer possible to use the “security situation” as an excuse for the unremitting daily petty discrimination and abuses of human rights taking place with regard to ordinary Palestinian civilians.

We wish to see the Israel envisaged by the prophets alongside a vibrant, thriving Palestinian society. We sincerely hope that the current dialogue initiatives will result in a significant improvement in the lives of all those who are suffering.

But we cannot remain silent as we wait. Speaking out can be effective, as shown by the recent worldwide diaspora protests against the Prawer Plan proposing the forcible eviction of 30,000-40,000 Bedouin residents (Israeli citizens) from their villages in the Negev into existing townships. Our views are shared by a growing worldwide community concerned to use Jewish resources and Jewish sources to contribute to the changes we wish to see.

We propose to write to the Movement for Reform Judaism to voice our feelings, and to ask what action is being taken by the progressive community here in the UK to express concern to Israeli officials on the matters we have raised. If you wish to add your name to the signatory list, we would welcome hearing from you. And if you are interested in a broader conversation about Israel-Palestine, please look for details of the Israel Café autumn programme, which encourages a respectful honest dialogue and exchange of views on this painful situation.

Paul Appleson
Yaakov Atik
Robert Bartfield
Ruth Bender Atik
Pippa Brook
Pete Carson
Jonny Cohen
Anna Dyson
Lawrence Glyn Davies
Gillian Holding
Jessica Kempner
Richard Kempner
Sammy Kempner
Gayneth Lewis
Jonathan Lewis
Liz Marceniuk
Simon Marcus
Lorna Mitchell
Dolf Mogendorff
Griselda Pollock
Sammy Kempner
Dolf Mogendorff
Griselda Pollock
Sally Raanan
Gemma Saleh

For Israel Café details see p3
Dear Editor,

A great and enduring strength of Judaism is debate. We see the power of this from the debates of Hillel and Shammai, learning Torah by Chavruta, and the responsa which continue today between Rabbis and communities.

Nowhere is this better practiced today in the UK than within Progressive Judaism. We do not, by definition, have doctrine. Nor do we have dogma which dictates our practice and beliefs. We encourage people to bring forward views from across the spectrum.

A fertile ground for debate and discussion is Israel, and our support for the Jewish state. I am proud to describe myself as a Zionist. The creation of the State of Israel as a Jewish state in our historic homeland is something to be celebrated.

Israel’s birth came from a time of competing Empires, and worldwide conflicts with countries seeking to make allies where they could, to protect their own selfish interests. Their actions gave little consideration to the facts on the ground and even less to the possible consequences for the people whose lives were affected by them. What resulted were promises given to two distinct peoples for, effectively, the same land.

Israel has built a state and an economy from nothing whilst absorbing millions of immigrants from backgrounds as diverse as Holocaust survivors, refugees from North Africa and the Middle East, and more recent arrivals from Ethiopia and Russia. It also has to deal with the challenges presented by the growing Charedi population and the 20% Arab minority.

The key challenge now is a viable Palestinian homeland alongside a secure Jewish state. There are very few people who can justify (morally, politically or in any humane way) the continuing occupation of the West Bank. There should also be very few who can justify the continued threat to Israeli lives (Jewish and non-Jewish) caused by the aggression of the Hamas regime in Gaza.

The values of liberty, justice and peace enshrined in its Declaration of Independence do not blind me to Israel’s flaws as a real country in a difficult region. I don’t expect its government to be perfect or to take every decision correctly. I reserve the right to criticise Israel when its policies or actions are ones I disagree with. But I also do so knowing it is from the comfort of my safe and secure home outside Israel.

The Occupation of the West Bank, brought about by Israel successfully repelling a war of aggression by Egypt, Jordan and Syria, aimed at destroying the Jewish State, is not a permanent, desirable or sustainable situation.

It is an urgent priority for Israel to negotiate a lasting peace with the Palestinians, based on two states for the two peoples. Israel has a clear record in making large concessions for peace (eg returning Sinai to Egypt) or for the return of its citizens (eg 1,027 prisoners for the return of Gilad Shalit). At the same time, Israel has also suffered for its actions (eg the withdrawal from Gaza and southern Lebanon, which have led to increased terrorist attacks).

As a Zionist I believe in a negotiated two state solution. How can I deny to the Palestinians the same natural aspiration to statehood that we as Jews hold? Israel’s nature as a Jewish and democratic state is not sustainable without a two state solution. Continued Israeli rule over the Palestinians without their consent is not democratic.

I am very proud of what Israel has: a vibrant multi-party democracy, a free press, an independent judiciary and an effective trade union movement and NGO sector; the strong rule of law, so that individual rights are protected and when the government or military does something wrong the judiciary is able to investigate and punish the culprits; the political and religious rights its Muslim and Christian citizens have; there are on-going efforts by governmental and non-governmental agencies to overcome inequalities between Jews and Arabs in Israeli society; over the last few months, during peace talks, the government has taken large steps to improve the Palestinian economy; and Israel continues to offer help around the world to developing nations and in disaster relief, including caring for wounded victims of the Syrian Civil War.

Reasoned criticism where we believe Israel has acted wrongly is fine. So is promoting a positive vision of the Israel we would like to see in the future. We have a responsibility to balance our praise for Israel’s achievements and values with our critique of what we disagree with. We should seek the whole story and not take at face value the story told by either side. And we should stand up publicly and rebuke those who demonise or delegitimise Israel by making false and pernicious comparisons.

David J Israel
HOW I BECAME A GARDENER AND A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER

Having a ninetieth birthday on August 19th has led me into some introspection, Maxine my wife, mentor, and friend, suggested that I should consider putting “pen to paper” to explain my persistent successes at the local flower show. It all started when at the age of five, visiting my paternal grandmother at 31 Reginald Terrace, she called me into the garden to give me some glad tidings! She said, “You have a new brother and sister!! Come with me and we will find a present for the new born” She bent down and extracted two carrots she had grown in the garden, and instructed me to give them to my brother and sister.

At the age of 14, visiting Woolworths in Briggate, I saw a packet of peas on one of the counters. My mum agreed to buy me them, and on my return home and after reading the instructions I planted them in the garden. To my utter amazement they actually produced pea pods, which I adored.

Soon after war broke out my parents allowed me to dig up a large lawn and plant out all sorts of veg. after reading avidly about the subject of horticulture. I found the results amazing, as did my parents. I then induced my dad to “invest” in a greenhouse. The rest is history. I continued to progress in horticulture and read about pests and diseases, which eventually brought me to contemplate the possibility of medicine, as a career dealing with plants and their problems is surprisingly not dissimilar to dealing with patients and their disorders!

Hospital practice and service with His Majesty caused some interference with my first love, but later I was able to resume my activities, and from then I never looked back.

Retirement brought new possibilities and I studied at Harlow Carr and Askham Bryan College for my City and Guilds, and later a Diploma in Horticulture for the R.H.S, and later still running courses at Harlow Carr. August 2013 showed success at the Shadwell Show gaining 9 first class prizes and four Trophies. Will I rest on my laurels? Maxine doubts it!!

Barry Brown
Choosing and Purchasing the Right Rose

You might not believe it, but there are over 4,000 varieties of roses to choose from in the UK. So before spending money on any new rose, consider the pros and cons of what you expect from your purchase.

Many of the older roses, whether they be Patio, Groundcover, Shrub, Hybrid Tea or Climbers, only flower once a year, between early June and late July. This is due to stock/parentage and no amount of feeding or effort on your part will prolong it. Also a few old fashioned roses will produce a very small second flush in late August, if the weather stays warm and sunny. Many or most older Climbing and Rambling roses suffer the same problem, whilst most modern varieties of all rose types have several flushes throughout the growing season.

Consider also the fact that roses are famous for disease problems (Black Spot, Mildew and Rust), some varieties more than others. These fungal diseases are mainly brought on by plant stress, lack of cleanliness and poor growing conditions, aggravated by high nitrogen plant foods. The availability of helpful fungicides has largely disappeared, due to EEC regulations, although a great deal of work is being undertaken to find new, acceptable, sprays.

Whilst roses are actually one of the most resilient of plants, having given pleasure for decades with minimal maintenance, a little extra care, cleanliness and feeding with a high potash feed can greatly minimise or even eliminate these three fungal diseases, which for so long have plagued the serious rose grower. Cleanliness involves keeping the rose bed free of disease-affected leaves and branches, and spraying both plant and the ground around it in January/February with a fungicide containing copper sulphate, such as Bordeaux mixture.

In concluding, therefore, when setting out to purchase a new rose be sure to read the growers’ catalogues and choose your rose with a good degree of disease-resistance. Look for repeat flowering, and when planting do use the friendly fungi “Rootgrow” which, sprinkled on the root when planting, will greatly assist the rose to become established, even if it is replacing an old rose, and will add to the rose’s strength in fighting off fungal attack. Finally, a reminder that you should be prepared to pay between £7 and £9 for a quality rose (H.T., Climber, Patio, or Miniature), and expect it to give you much more pleasure for 20 years with a moderate amount of care and attention.

Ken Ellis (The Gardener)
**Poetry Pages**

**Discovering the Possible**

I started writing
but what I wrote, my object,
began to write me.

**Document**

In cave of meeting
you’re in a parallel life
in last century.

I forget to wish
you, Dad, happy Father’s Day,
our relationship
troubled since childhood prickles,
heat rash leaving love unsaid.

**Poets**

God save us from them,
non-prosaic, demotic,
lax-punctuating,
flutterbies in their rhyming,
language suppers, inventors.

The impossible
in their hands is made to seem
almost plausible.
It is inconceivable
that they be given the reins.

The serious world
of real power and hard cash
can’t support or be
supported on their whimsy,
can’t eat and drink metaphors.

But what of the net
profit made by Amazon?
Google President
Waclaw Havel, his background,
pre-grandeur of Head of State.

**Worry Beads**

Medical update:
white cells up, appetite not,
physio didn’t show
must chase up. Man can’t live by
Eccles cakes alone, but one
better than none.

Body broke, mind clear,
Dad’s sore, knows the score too well,
real sustenance love.

**Chelsea Physic Garden**

I came here sickened
by a society that
excludes, largely old money
lords it here, only courting
braggart new money.

I outcast descended
from the chosen few
seek my apothecary
find respite in plants-men’s spoils
greenery hushing
the braining modern roar
of London motor traffic.

You can potter, read, listen,
hear, absorb urbane whispers.

Never did I get
so much pleasure just looking,
down at my feet was
a cultivated strawberry,
pale green hop at my shoulder.

Adrian Tellwright

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**If you have access to the Internet and
would like to be kept up to date, look at:**

- The European Union for Progressive Judaism: eupj.org
- The Israel Religious Action Center: irac.org
- Leo Baeck College: lbc.ac.uk
- The Movement for Reform Judaism: reformjudaism.org.uk
- New Israel Fund: nif.org
- Pro Zion: prozion.org.uk
- UJIA: ujia.org
- Yachad: yachad.org.uk
The Dog Wouldn’t Listen

It wouldn’t come
it raced into the park to have some fun.
Dashing into the lake and splashing the boaters
and snapping at the man taking the photos.
Twisting across the grass to the noisy bandstand.
then into the pond chasing his tail
too near the toy boats trying to sail.
All of them drenched and some upside down
then through the park gates and heading for town.
Snarling
    Growling
    Whining
    Rumbling
and on the pavement Rolling and Tumbling.
At heels of postmen, policemen too
all getting dizzy not knowing what to do.
Then into dark passages plenty of drooling
and pinching juicy sausages.
Golly! What a day
when our dog wouldn’t listen it wouldn’t come
it decided instead
on lots of FUN!

On Cycling

Not much traffic on the road that day
except one troubled cyclist debating if he should stay
with glasses blurred by curling mist
and clouded view
his heart hammered
as the hours flew.

Then, sky tumbling, a skylark warbling
as if to say
'Keep at it. Keep the power going.
See the raindrops dancing, dancing in the cold.
Venture, lad, and be bold.'
So I followed the example of the feathered mite.
I whistled and sang and the miles caught fright.
Out came the sun in the late afternoon
my shorts they dried, and not a whit too soon
as I coasted so blissfully
donw
  down
  down
  down
the April hill ...

Harold Hyatt

Four Legs and a Tale

Last year was a good year
for dog shows.
“Crufts” and “Scruffs”
to name but a few
but our dog wasn’t having any ...

Pesach 2014—
A Communal First Seder at Sinai?
Monday, April 14th marks the beginning
of Pesach 5774. If you’d like to attend
a seder at Sinai—and/or if you’d like to
be on the preparation team—contact
Connexions via the shul office or
by emailing
connexions@sinaisynagogue.org.uk
by January 21st 2014 at the latest,
and we’ll see if we can make it happen.
We can’t do it without you!

Val Mogendorff,
for the Sinai Connexions team

Sinai’s Platinum Anniversary

2014 marks Sinai Synagogue’s 70th anniversary.
As you know, to mark this very special year in Sinai’s history,
various events throughout the year are in the process of being
planned. These will be organized and run by various sections of our
community for the enjoyment and participation of the whole
community. In addition, we are hoping to publish a booklet of
members’ stories of themselves, family and friends relating to
the synagogue, over the last 70 years. So, if you have a story
to tell then please contact me by putting pen to paper and writ-
ting to me at nws9992000@yahoo.co.uk.
Interested? Want to know more?
Then watch this space for more information leading up to
and during 2014.

Nick Chapler-Smyth
ShabbaTots
Drop in Playgroup
at Sinai Synagogue
Come along to this friendly Jewish-themed group
on Fridays from 10am 'till 11.30am
4 October to 20 December

Toys and games
Jewish songs
Play, kiddish

For 0 - 4 year olds, £2.00 per family
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Contact us on 0113 2665256

Chanukah Party!
Saturday
30 November
3.00 to 5.00 p.m.

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Copy deadline for next issue - February 2nd 2014