

HAMILIM

THE MAGAZINE OF KINGSBURY SYNAGOGUE

5772

ROSH HASHANAH

2011

A Message from Rabbi Cohen

So how was your year?

We have had a productive year in Shul from a learning perspective, celebrating two Siyumim on the completion of two separate Tractates of Gemara.

On the coldest and snowiest Saturday night of the year we celebrated six years of study having finished Yevamos, the snow kept the guest speaker and half the guests away, but the show went on and an enjoyable evening was had by all. More recently the Shabbos afternoon Shiur finished Tractate Sotah and heard words of inspiration from Rabbi Lawrence Littlestone of Edgware.

So how was your year?

Some people have it easy; everything goes smoothly and no obstacles stand in their way, life seems to be fantastic, what more could we want! Others seem to go from problem to problem, nothing appears to go right and they wonder, what are we doing wrong?

The Ohr Meir offers the following parable. If someone travels carrying an almost valueless commodity, his trip is easy. He can go wherever he wants feeling secure, with no fear of being robbed. However if he is carrying a case of precious stones, he is worried the whole time, who is after me, every step seems a burden.

During this month of Elul and through till Shemini Atzeres we read Psalm 27 twice daily.

In verse 3, King David says, "If war rises up against me, in this I find confidence".

Why should such problems be a source of confidence?

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lutzato in his Mesilat Yesharim – Path of the Just (published in 1740) describes this world as a battlefield. We are meant to draw ourselves close to G-d and the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) tries to draw us away.

The fact that there are obstacles in our paths are a sign that our actions, goals and ambitions are valuable. So valuable that the Yetzer Hara is using all the means at his disposal to stop us.

We all wish and pray for a year of good health and prosperity in order to be able to care for our loved ones and serve G-d to the best of our abilities.

We don't look for problems but if they come our way and we accomplish our goals while staying strong in our Judaism, then King David would say to us, "have confidence, know that what you are accomplishing is beyond the value of precious stones!"

May we all merit a year of peace and prosperity and sweetness, with lives full of true value.

On behalf of Rivky, myself and our children, may I wish you

כתיבה וחתימה טובה לשנה טובה ומתוקה

From The Editor

Over the August Bank Holiday weekend I went to Limmud Fest. It is an annual educational, cultural and social festival and is billed as the UK Jewish community's answer to Glastonbury. I've been going to the Limmud Conference for the last four years and decided to give Fest a try.

As I left it rather late to book, there was no indoor accommodation left and I slept under canvas for the first time in over 24 years (unless you count the time I slept indoors with only the upper part of my body in a children's play tent in Oslo).

Among the people I met was Gary Webber, who had also grown up in Kingsbury and moved away some thirty years ago. We spent some time comparing notes on the people we knew and I was able to update him on what has been going on in Kingsbury since he had moved away.

He seemed to take great delight in introducing me to his wife and children (and to almost everyone to whom we happened to be speaking) as someone who'd grown up in the same community as him.

As usual, I'd like to thank those of you who have contributed to this edition of Hamilim and

May we and all Israel have a peaceful, happy and healthy year.

Jonathan Brody

The Ladies Guild

It has been a busy six months for the Ladies Guild.

On Purim we had over 70 people for refreshments after the evening reading of Megillas Esther, followed by a buffet breakfast, where we also catered for more than 70 people.

To celebrate Yom Yerushalayim, we held another buffet breakfast for about 40 people, with a superb speaker: a journalist who had been captured by Hamas. The talk was riveting.

We also decorated the shul with flowers Shavuot. So far this year, Kingsbury Synagogue Ladies' Guild has held Kiddushim every week up to the end of July. Sadly, however, things have changed. At the moment, Kiddushim have stopped, as we no longer have use of the Louis Domb hall, and the kitchen has been completely gutted. This is due to the school expanding, which is good news for the shul.

Much time was spent packing and storing all the things from the kitchen. Once all work is complete, help will be needed to move and

unpack all the kitchen equipment that has been stored for the time being.

At the moment we are awaiting confirmation from the United Synagogue for the go-ahead of a new hall/kitchen, to be built upstairs in the ladies' foyer.

If this does go ahead, things, unfortunately, will be very different. We will no longer have enough room to seat as many people as before for either breakfast/lunch/malava malka/seuda. Numbers will be limited. Regrettably, it will have to be on a first come basis.

As and when we are up and running again, if any lady, or gentleman, would like to help in any capacity, please feel free to call me on 0208 204 2051, or e-mail sharonlinderman@msn.com.

On behalf of the Ladies' Guild may we take this opportunity to wish Rabbi and Rebbetzen Cohen and family, the Honorary Officers and the Kehilla a Happy New Year and well over the fast.

*Sharon Linderman
Chairlady*

Security

Just a few words on upcoming security measures in shul.

Together with the school, we will be installing a CCTV system which will be using continuous recording onto a hard drive.

We are having anti-blast film installed on all windows. The installation will begin after Succot. It will involve the erection of scaffolding inside the shul.

The scaffolding will be in place for 2 Shabbatot, possibly 3, and during this time the ladies gallery will be closed as access would be very difficult.

Ladies will of course be able to use the downstairs seating area behind the mechitza.

We are sorry for any inconvenience but it is for the safety of all of us.

Harvey Jacobs

Recommended Reading for the High Holy-Days

The Patriarchs

Comparative Religions

How to Organise a Shul Choir

Israel Needs your Support

A Prisoner of Conscience

The Yiddish Theatre

How to Exist Without Capital

A Jewish Mother's Advice to her Daughters

by Abe Raham, I. Sack and J. Cobb

by Jude A. Issem and Chris Tianity

by Hal E. Looyah

by Stan Dup and B Counted

by Hugh Manrites

by Mel O. Drama

by Hugh Joverdraft

by Marian A. Countant and Solly Sitter

*Y. Knott, B.A.
Regular Reader*

Chief Rabbi's Rosh Hashanah Message

"Penitence, prayer and charity avert the evil decree."

We say those words at one of the climaxes of our worship on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. For centuries our ancestors said those words, knowing what each of them means.

Penitence defines our relationship with ourselves. *Prayer* is part of our relationship with God. *Charity* is about our relationship with other people.

We still know what it is to be penitent. We fall short, make mistakes, and seek forgiveness. And we know what it is to be charitable. We remain a generous community, giving out of all proportion to our numbers.

But for many, prayer has become difficult. They find it hard to connect to the synagogue service or to the prayers themselves. Too few people nowadays find prayer meaningful, especially on the High Holy Days when the prayers are long and complicated.

That is why, together with a wonderful team, I've undertaken a new project that I hope will make a difference. We've created a new Rosh Hashana machzor.

Of course, in Judaism, the word "new" is relative. The Hebrew stays the same. But everything else is different: the translation, the introduction, the commentary, and the actual physical appearance of the machzor.

We think this is a first in Anglo-Jewish history. The siddur - familiarly known as "the Singer's" - has always been produced by Chief Rabbis, but not the machzor, "the Routledge".

We felt the time had come for this to change. Prayer has to speak to us if it is to speak to God. We have to be able to understand it if we are to put into it our heart and soul.

In the translation, we've tried to bring out the poetry and power of the prayers. In the

introduction, we explain the meaning and history of Rosh Hashanah.

In the commentary, we've provided not just explanation but also reflection on what these holy days mean for our lives. Eventually we hope to bring out machzorim for the other festivals as well.

Prayer matters. It's our conversation with God. Imagine having a relationship with your spouse, your child or your parent, in which you never speak to them. It can't be done. A relationship without words is almost a contradiction in terms. So it is with God.

When we converse with God - when we pray - we enter into a relationship with the Force that moves the universe, the Voice that spoke to our ancestors, the Power that shaped our history as a people, the Presence that still listens to our hopes and fears, giving us the courage to aspire and the strength to carry on.

Prayer makes a difference. It's our way of giving thanks for the good in our lives and of enlisting God's help as we wrestle with the bad. It's our regular reminder of the world beyond the self, of the ideals and aspirations of our people.

When we pray we speak with the words of our ancestors, joining the great choral symphony of the Jewish people throughout the ages and the continents.

True prayer, said from the heart, has the undiminished power to make us feel that "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for You are with me."

May we, this year, pray from the heart. May our prayers be answered, and may it be for you, your families, and the Jewish people, a good and sweet New Year.

Bebirkat ketivah vechatimah tovah

Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks

A Message from the President of the Board of Deputies

Rosh Hashanah is the time of year when according to tradition the whole world is arraigned before God in judgement. It is an appropriate time therefore for introspection and for reviewing the past year.

Even by recent standards for the Board of Deputies the past year has been an eventful and challenging one. There has been unprecedented activity both in terms of the activities carried out by the Board and in terms of the issues faced by it.

On the positive side we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the establishment of the Board in 1760. The celebrations comprised some interesting and some very moving events with record attendances and interest shown in the work of the Board. It culminated in the Summer Banquet at the Guildhall where our guest was HRH The Prince of Wales.

The fact that Prince Charles attended the dinner accompanied by the Duchess of Cornwall and the fact that his moving address to us was so personal illustrates the regard which he has for the Board and by extension for the community.

Yet though we live in an extremely benign and tolerant society where our religion is protected by law, we face continual challenges in the practice of it. A most obvious example is Shechita which is under constant threat.

This year threats came not merely from this country but also from the European Parliament. The Board played a vital role in countering that threat both as a constituent member of Shechita UK and as a link between them and the European Jewish Congress. In the end the community's efforts were successful but we should not be under any illusions.

The danger to Shechita has not gone away. It will return both because of the misplaced concerns of the animal welfare lobby but also in the form of requests for greater consumer information which could make the economics of Shechita prohibitive.

In numerous other areas the Board has been at the forefront of efforts to protect the community's position, advising communal groups where appropriate and lobbying where necessary. In all these activities the Board shows two of its most important characteristics.

First we are resolutely cross-communal, representing all strands of the community. Even those groups in the community which withhold formal support from the Board and are not represented on it come to us for help and political support when they need it. We never reject them. Secondly the Board achieves its success by cooperating with dedicated groups in the community working on the principle that there is no limit to what one can achieve as long as you do not care who takes the credit.

To list but some of the examples; in countering the institutional antisemitism of the UCU we have worked alongside the JLC, in campaigning against hate speech on campus we have worked alongside UJS and CST, in countering antisemitism generally we have worked with the CST, in educational matters with the synagogal bodies and with the UJIA, on behalf of Israel with BICOM the UJIA and the Zionist Federation, on Brit Milah with the Initiation Society.

One could go on - the list is almost endless.

In all these matters the Board's democratic mandate and cross-communal character gives it a unique authority.

For example when the Advertising Standards Authority ruled that a poster prepared by the Israeli Government Tourist Office showing the Western Wall was misleading they defiantly told the community they would not listen to any complaints.

At the same time they themselves phoned the Board asking for a meeting on the basis that a complaint from ourselves could not be ignored. Government and NGOs know when they deal with us that we speak for the community as a whole and that our voice is persuasive and rational.

The year that has passed has seen many challenges to the community and we must expect that the new year will do likewise. You can rest assured that the Board meet those challenges with all its force and with the backing of the community.

At this sacred time of the year let us hope and pray that in the new year we have the same success that we have enjoyed in the one that has passed. May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.

Vivian Wineman

Why belong to the United Synagogue?

The chances are that if you're reading this, you're a member of the United Synagogue. You are in good company; there are over 25,000 families who belong to one of the 62 local communities that make up the UK's largest Jewish communal organisation.

Despite gloomy predictions about the fate of the Jewish population overall there is every reason to believe that, against that trend, the future holds a growing membership of the US. Why?

At a time when more and more people are not content to take decisions on the basis that "that's what we've always done" any membership organisation has to be able to articulate what it stands for.

In the case of the US I believe that this can be done in a way that resonates strongly with our community: we are an authentic, inclusive and modern community built upon Jewish living, learning and caring.

In a nutshell, we represent thousands of years of authentic tradition, scholarship and practice made available in a modern way to any Jew - no matter what their level of observance.

To be sure, we are not merely talking about the routine of shul services (something which for many is one of the least accessible parts of their Judaism). Rather we are talking about the incredible richness that exists within 21st Century Jewish life as part of a vibrant and varied community.

When we talk about 'living, learning and caring' we are talking about the foundation stones of what it is to be a Jew. For example, our Living and Learning programmes, which are just beginning to be felt by our members, are generating hugely positive feedback.

Take the Tribe Kosher Apprenticeship initiative. This competition, which ran at a number of Jewish primary schools, saw pupils from Year 6 competing to create a new kosher product ideal for the kosher nosh guide.

The project was integrated into a number of different classes as the teams came up with ideas for their products and spent time creating and designing the branding, packaging and promotional materials.

Once the products were ready and presentations prepared, each school had a final where teams pitched their products in front of a panel of judges with backgrounds in Marketing, Kashrut and working with children. Marks were based on

originality, nutritional content, design and marketing of the product, and presentation skills.

The point of this programme was not just about engaging with our kids. It was not just about educating them in kosher cooking. And it was not just about asking them to consider whether food is kosher when they go shopping.

It was also about enthusing them about the Tribe Programmes, encouraging them to participate in the range of activities that follow on from this in our Shuls through their teenage years, their Israel experiences, their campus activities, and eventually participating in community life through Tribe Community Membership and ultimately full membership and participation in the US.

This is just one example of how creatively presenting what we stand for powerfully engages our membership. There is so much more we are doing now and planning for the future – across all ages.

With younger people still in mind we have seen a significant growth in the number of kids registering for our Summer Schemes, our Summer Camps are bulging at the seams, and our first Summer Tour in Israel has been astonishingly successful. This along with the MiniGap programme which we laid on for pre-university students, shows that our presence in Israel is becoming significant.

Outside the confines of youth, this year has seen the development of a growing number of programmes such as The Tishrei and Pesach guides which were widely applauded, the You & US website which has been greatly appreciated and an ever more effective network of US Community Cares activity which represents one of the hidden gems in the Anglo-Jewish community.

With over 1000 volunteers coordinated both centrally and at a local level every US family should feel proud of belonging to a community where the practical application of the Jewish value of caring for each other is so incredibly strong.

As Chief Executive of the organisation I am not surprisingly passionate about what it stands for. My belief is that the hard work that is being put into developing the US by its professionals and volunteers will bring about a proud, strong and numerous membership well into the future.

I and my team look forward to continuing this vital work for British Jewry, ultimately to ensure

that we retain our traditions and values, grow in our Jewish lives, and ensure that our grandchildren remain Jewish.

May I wish you all a wonderful, healthy and peaceful New Year.

Jeremy Jacobs

In the Pesach edition of the Hamilim I wrote about the Bate Israel. Wouldn't it be interesting to see what was going on the other side of the Aden Strait? After all, these two nations' histories are interwoven.

This is what I came up with:

The Temanim

The diverse Jewish population of Israel contains people from more than sixty countries from every continent. Prominent within this pick and mix are the Yemenis, who have had a special place in the social, economic, religious and artistic life of the Jewish State for more than a century.

The Yemenis, largely, are quiet, peaceful, skilled and honest people. They totally melted into the majority Israeli society, but today's young Yemenis are beginning to experience a renaissance of their traditions. Here we are about to see in brief their history, religious practices and traditions.

History

The Yemen's (Al-Jumhuriyah al-Yamaniyah) borders are the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden to the south, the Red Sea to the west, Oman to the northeast and the rest of the country borders Saudi Arabia.

The meaning of the word Yemen is "The Happy Arabia", but for the Yemenis it comes from the word yomn, which means prosper.

There are many theories as to how and when the Jews came to the Yemen. According to one tradition, the earliest settlement of Jews in this region was at the time of King Solomon.

Most people with a passing knowledge of the T'nach have heard of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. The Ethiopians, sitting just across the Gulf of Aden in Africa, always claimed to be her descendents. Their emperor's official title was "Lion of Judah"; the Beta-Israel of Ethiopia also claim to be the descendants of Sheba and her son Melinek.

However, the Yemenis believe that the Queen of Sheba returned from her visit to Solomon to the Yemen with an entourage of educated Jews in order to teach her child, establishing the first Jewish presence in the Arabian Peninsula.

Others think that King Solomon sent Jewish merchant marines to Yemen to prospect for gold and silver for the Temple.

According to the Jews of the Capital, Sana'a, their ancestors settled there 42 years before the destruction of the First Temple. Under the prophet Jeremiah 75,000 Jews, including Kohanim and Leviim, are said to have gone to the Yemen; and when Ezra commanded the Jews to return to the Holy Land, they disobeyed.

Because of this, he pronounced an everlasting ban upon them. According to tradition, as a punishment for this hasty action, Ezra was denied

burial in the Holy Land. Consequently, no Yemeni Jew is named Ezra.

Another school of thought is that the migration of most of the Jews into Yemen took place about the beginning of the second century CE, but there is no mention of this by Josephus Flavius, the Mishnah or the Talmud.

The Jews of the Yemen enjoyed considerable prosperity until the sixth century CE. In the 3rd century a Himyarite Kingdom of southwestern Arabia (a Semitic tribe, speaking their own language) ruled over the Yemen.

At this time there was a Jewish kingdom situated in the Arabian Peninsula. Legend has it that the Himyaritic King Abu Kariba (c 390-420 CE) took his tribe north, from Yemen to Medina to make war against the Jews there, but instead of fighting the Jews, he learned from them.

He returned with two rabbis and he and his entourage became a convert to Judaism. Himayar, became a Jewish kingdom lasting up to six centuries.

Even more dramatic was the conversion of Abu-Kariba's grandson, Zar'a (518-525). Legend ascribes his conversion to his having witnessed a rabbi extinguish fire worshipped by Arab Magi (a tribe from ancient Medina), by reading a passage from the Torah over it. After changing his religion, he assumed the name Yusef Ash'ar, but gained fame in history as Dhu Nuwas.

Early in the sixth century Ethiopia conquered the Yemen and the Himayarite king, Rabiah ibn Mudhar was forced to flee. Yusuf Dhu Nuwas succeeded Rabiah as a king whose kingdom was a vassal state to Ethiopia.

Dhu Nuwas was himself a religious Jew, from the line of converted kings and an ethnically Jewish woman. Upon becoming king, Dhu Nuwas began

a tireless campaign to rid Yemen of Ethiopian rule.

For a time, he was able to loosen Ethiopia's hold on the Country, but he eventually lost to the combined might of Ethiopia and a mixture of disparate Christian Forces.

The turning point was the battle of Najran, in 523 CE. Jewish rule lasted until the Christians from the Axumite Kingdom of Ethiopia (an important trading nation in northeastern Africa achieved prominence by the 1st century CE) took over the Yemen.

From 327 CE, Ethiopia had been a Christian kingdom. Ethiopia sought to establish her power through religion so, after conquering Himayar, Ethiopia transferred power to the loyal Christians. The main synagogue of the capital was turned into a church.

Contemporary inscriptions found in the 1950's at Najran indicate that the city was a source of Ethiopian-Christian agitation against the Himayar kingship, which culminated in an uprising, targeting the Jews.

Dhu Nuwas besieged the city to punish the pro-Ethiopian Christians. In October 523, he took Najran and clearing the pro-Ethiopian Christians and the Christian-clerical authorities from that city.

Ethiopian propaganda painted the punishment of Najran as a Jewish religious, anti-Christian action and called for a "righteous war" (can we call it a Crusade?) against the Yemen - the war to be carried out under the spiritual guidance of an Axumite monk called Pantaleon.

The deciding battle where Dhu Nuwas was defeated took place at Zabid in 525. According one legend Dhu Nuwas rode his horse into the sea and disappeared.

The Ethiopian, Greek Orthodox, and Roman Catholic churches beatified the Axumite Queen Ella Asbeha (S^t Ellasbaan) in acknowledgment of services rendered in the Yemen.

The Prophet Mohammed, the religious and military leader, was born in Mecca around 570 CE. About 610 CE, he had a vision in which he heard the voice of a superior being, later identified as the angel Gabriel saying to him: "*You are the Messenger of G-d.*"

Thus began a lifetime of religious revelations, which (since he was an illiterate person) others collected in a book called the Koran (Qur'an). Mohamed regarded himself as the last prophet of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

He adopted aspects of these older religions' theologies while introducing new doctrines. Modern research has indicated that Mohammed

initially took on himself many aspects of Rabbinic Judaism.

It is known that, until he realised that the Jews would never join him, Mohammed required that his followers keep kosher and the fast of Yom Kippur, circumcise and pray facing Jerusalem, this militant monotheistic religion is called Islam, (surrender to G-d).

At Medina, Mohamed overthrew the ruling Jewish elite, confiscated Jewish property and built a theocratic state. Two Jewish tribes from Medina were exiled and all the members of a third Jewish tribe were murdered (except women and children, who were sold into slavery).

For the long-term treatment of the Jews, a number of inflammatory statements about Jews that Mohammed made appeared in the Koran causing Arab/Islamic anti-Semitism. Mohammed led raids on trading caravans from Mecca. Attempts to resist by the Mecca armies ended in defeat.

At the prompting of Christian converts to Islam; an Islamic army exterminated the Jewish community of Quraiza (a Jewish tribe who lived in northern Arabia during the 7th century, at the oasis of Yathrib better known as Medina).

And so Islam appeared on the map spelling disaster for the Jewish Community in general and of the Jews of Yemen in particular.

Ethiopian rule ended in the 7th century with the Islamic takeover of the Country. Jews became dhimmis (2nd class citizens). As "People of the Book," Jews (and Christians) enjoyed some kind of protection under Islamic law.

The traditional concept of the "dhimma" (writ of protection) extended by the Muslim conquerors to Christians and Jews in their realm, in exchange for their subordination to Islam.

Peoples subjected to Muslim rule usually had a choice between death or conversion, but Jews and Christians, who adhered to the Holy Writ, allowed as dhimmis to practice their faith. This "protection" did not mean that the Jews or for that matter, the Christians were treated well.

On the contrary, an integral aspect of the dhimma was that being an infidel; he had to openly acknowledge the superiority of the true religion, Islam. They had to pay a poll tax, a standard tax for Jews, Christians and other protected peoples of the Muslim world.

The Yemeni Jews had little contact with world Jewry. Over the years their culture took on some similarities with that of the Arabs.

Little is known about this early part of Arab rule in Yemen. We know that the Jewish community was in distress from letters found in the Cairo Genizah.

From the 1200s to the 1500s, the Rasulides, an African tribe, brought a respite to the Jews from the hardships of Islam. In 1547 the Turks took over the region from the Rasulides. The Turks were kindly disposed toward their Jews anywhere in their empire.

This Turkish interlude, allowed the Jews a chance to have contact with the Kabbalists in Safed, which was a major Jewish centre at that time. The Yemeni Jews were also able to have relations with other Jewish communities under Ottoman rule.

The average Jewish population of Yemen for the first 5 centuries CE is said to have been about 3,000. The Jews were scattered throughout the country and conducted commerce extensively and successfully, enabling them to acquire many Jewish books.

When Saladin became sultan in the last quarter of the twelfth century, the Shiites revolted against him and with that, the prosecution of the Yemeni Jews resumed. The number of scholars diminished at this time.

As so often in distressing times in Jewish history, a false prophet arose, proclaiming the union of Judaism and Islam. He professed to be able to prove this from the Bible. In this hour of need the greatest Jewish scholar of Yemen, Jacob ben Nathanael al-Fayyumi, asked for advice from Maimonides, who replied in a letter entitled "*Iggeret Teman*."

This correspondence made such an impression on the Jews of Yemen that they included the name of Maimonides in the Kaddish prayer. The false prophet was condemned to death.

Benjamin of Tudela (from Muslim Spain who travelled through southern France from Italy, Greece and the Middle East on into China, India and Tibet 1169-1171) visited Yemen. He gives some data concerning the Yemeni Jews.

The capital was Teima and they called themselves Rechabites, while at their head stood the Nasi Tanan. They were in constant struggle with their Moslem neighbours, from whom they won many victories.

In 1630, the Zaydis took over Yemen from the Turks. The Zaydis are a group that diverged from

the dominant Shiite Islam in the years following the death of Ali Zayn al-Abidin in 713. Zayd claimed to be the rightful 5th Imam.

Zaydi Shiite Islam is the dominant religion in the Yemen where the Zaydi Imam took the title of Caliph. This local caliphate has continued until modern times. The Caliph had considerable political power until the 1960s.

This change brought about a dark period in Jewish history when in 1679 part of the Jewish community of central Yemen was expelled to Mawza, on the southern shore of the Red Sea. Many of the exiles died there from disease and starvation. About a year later, the surviving Jews, for economic reasons, were taken back to central Yemen.

Since the Jews made up the majority of artisans and craftsmen, they were vital to the economy. They found that most of their houses and religious articles had been destroyed. They were forced to live in quarters outside the cities and they were told that they could not build their homes higher than the smallest Muslim house in the area.

The 18th century brought a brief resurgence of Jewish life in Yemen. Synagogues were rebuilt and some Jews achieved important positions. For example, Rabbi Shalom ben Aharon became responsible for the Royal Mint.

In the 19th century the Jews were once again subject to discrimination. They were forced to give up Jewish customs and Jewish orphans were taken away to be converted to Islam. To save orphan girls, they betrothed as children.

In 1872, the Turks retook Yemen and the lot of the Jews improved, for one thing they had more contact with the wider Jewish world. The Turks also allowed free religious practice.

Jewish emigration to the Holy Land began in 1882. In 1883, Jews were barred from going on Aliyah. However they managed to continue, but only in small numbers, with peaks in 1908, 1911, 1929 and 1943. The number climaxed in 1948 after Israel declared independence. By 1950 almost all of the Yemenite Jews had relocated to Israel.

Attire

As in all Muslim countries, the Yemeni Jews wore distinctive clothing. Jews were forbidden to wear bright colours, except on their wedding day, neither were they allowed to carry daggers nor wearing belts that were fancier than that of the Muslims'.

Wearing belts and daggers were signs of prestige for the Muslims, because of this Yemeni Jewish style were of plain colours accented by a single piece of jewellery.

Jewish women wore dresses that were long and covered their arms to conform to halacha. They also wore a hood that fastened under their chin.

They had different outfits for various occasions. They had clothing for leisure, for special occasions, for going out in public and for their wedding day.

The women for work wore a plain black dress and headgear, but on other occasions they wore dark coloured dresses embroidered with silver around the collar and edges. The headgear they wore was a dark colour to match the dress they were wearing with silver embroidery on the inside.

In Southern Yemen, Jewish women wore net head coverings and dressed in white. Underneath they wore trousers and leggings. The leggings were made of stretchy material that slipped over the ankles that one could see at the bottom of the dress. Jewish women usually had dark colour with stitching in bright colours on the bottom that could be seen from far away.

In public Jewish women had to conform to Muslim customs. As other women, they had to wear black and hide their faces whenever they were in the presence of a man. Out of respect for Muslim standards of modesty, Jewish women had to wear a scarf over the lower half of their faces in public. Whenever they had a man come by, they would cover their faces, crouch down to let the man pass.

For special occasions women were allowed to dress differently. After childbirth they were honoured with special clothing. They wore a bright coloured dress and a long headgear decorated with gold thread and gold ornamentation. This is similar to what a bride would wear. The new mother also displayed fancy jewellery. She wore a big necklace and many rings on her fingers.

For Jewish brides all Muslim dressing restrictions were lifted which resulted in Jewish brides

dressing similarly to Muslim brides. Brides wore a white undergarment with a red dress over it that symbolized fertility.

The bride was laden with a lot of gold jewellery and a very heavy headdress. This triangular headdress was decorated with flowers and ornaments. Her hands were decorated with henna and she held rue branches in her hand to ward off the evil eye.

The clothing Jewish men wore was much simpler. They did not have as many variations in what they wore for special days and they had much less ornamentation.

The basic outfit for Jewish men was a knee-length shirt with a longer dress over it. On the side was a pocket that was embroidered with gold thread. The embroidery was left incomplete as a reminder of the destruction of the Temple. A long coat with one button was worn for going outside and for special occasions. On their heads men wore, for halachic and stylistic reasons, a plain felt cap.

Like their Chassidic brethren, they wore their talit katan over the clothing, but the Yemeni Jews had more variety and colour in it.

The Yemeni Jewish men wore peyot that distinguished them from the Muslims. In 1667, the rulers made the wearing of payot mandatory. The Yemeni Jews still wear their payot proudly to this day.

The most decorative outfit a man ever wore was on his wedding day. The groom wore a white gown, with a coat over it with metal buttons. On his head he wore a silk handkerchief. Around his neck he wore a triangle amulet to ward off the evil eye. Like the bride, he also carried a rue branch in his hands to keep the evil eye away.

Religion

The Yemeni Jewish community consisted of three branches: The Baladi, the Shami and the Maimonideans.

The group Dor Daim (the "*Generation of Knowledge*") emerged as a recognizable force in the early part of the 19th century. They claim a connection with earlier Yemeni groups that followed the teachings of Rambam.

The Dor Daim was formed by individuals who were displeased by the influence of Zohar's Kabbalah, which had been introduced in the 1600s. They claimed that the core beliefs of Judaism were being diminished in favour of the mysticism of the Kabbalah.

They were also unhappy with the influence that the Kabbalists were having on various customs

and rituals (e.g. the text of the prayer-book). The Dor Daim also considered the Kabbalists to be anti-progressive in attitude and felt that they were thereby contributing to a decline in the social and economic status of the Jews of the Yemen.

These issues led, Rabbi Yihyah Qafahh to start the Dor Daim movement. Among its goals was the revival and protection of what was seen as the original form of Judaism as codified by the Sanhedrin in the 1st to the 3rd centuries.

Their goal was to bring Yemeni Jews back to the original Maimonidean method of understanding Judaism that existed in pre 1600s Yemen. For them, it was about being true to the Talmud.

The *Mori*, Rabbi Yihye Salah-Maharitz (18th century) founded the Baladi Community. His

approach was to preserve the original Yemeni tradition while adopting customs and practices that harmonized with this tradition. He also followed Maimonides in his halachic rulings, and edited a prayer book, *Etz Chayim*.

He attempted to break the deadlock between the pre-existing followers of Maimonides and the new followers of Yitzchak Luria (Ari Hakodesh 1534-1572). Before promoters of the Zohar gained influence in Yemen, the Baladi Jews had all been Maimonideans.

Dor Daim are followers of Maimonides, the Rambam who, for the most part, would not accept the Maharitz's compromise, although most do follow the same basic nusach as codified in their siddur the "Tiklal."

They reject the Zohar. (The Zohar, "Radiance" in English, is a book of mysticism. It is a commentary on the Torah, written in Aramaic,

and is the teachings of the 2nd century Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.) In this they are similar to the Western Sephardim who are also known to be strict Maimonideans.

In large areas of Yemen's Shar'ab province the Jews adopted all the practices of the Sephardic kabbalists, retaining very little of ancient Yemeni tradition. In central Yemen the Shami tradition of prayer was followed in spite the strong ties maintained with the Baladi tradition.

In terms of interpreting Shulchan Aruch the Shami Yemeni Jews were strongly influenced by the Syrian Sephardim and follow the decisions of Maimonides.

Unlike the Baladi Jews, they accepted the validity, authenticity and content of the Zohar, and modified the original Yemenite nusach to incorporate changes based on the Kabbalah.

Yemeni Hebrew

The Temani Hebrew language is a descendant of the Biblical Hebrew. Some scholars believe that the Arabic language heavily influenced Yemeni Hebrew pronunciation. Yet, according to other scholars as well as Yemeni Jewish Rabbis such as Rabbi Yosef Qafah, Yemeni Arabic did not influence the Temani Hebrew dialect.

There are two main pronunciations of Yemeni Hebrew, considered by many scholars to be the most accurate form of Biblical Hebrew, out of a total of five that relate to the regions of Yemen.

In the Yemeni dialect, all Hebrew letters have a distinct sound, except for the letters "samech" and "sinn".

The Sana'a Hebrew pronunciation, used by the majority, was indirectly criticised by Saadia Gaon since it contains the Hebrew letters of "jimmel" and "guf", which he rules as incorrect. There are Yemeni scholars, such as Rav Ratzon Arusi, who say that such a viewpoint is a misunderstanding of Saadia Gaon's words.

Synagogue & Service

Yemeni Jews are the only Jewish community that has maintained the tradition of reading the Torah in the synagogue in both Hebrew and Aramaic translation. The rest of us usually have a hired or knowledgeable member of the community, called a Baal Koreh to read from the Torah scroll when congregants are called up.

In the Yemeni tradition every one called up for an aliyah reads his own portion. Children under the age of Bar Mitzvah are often given the sixth aliyah.

The Yemeni Jews practice a special chant when reading from the Torah, a different chant when reading the Haftarah and yet another melody when reading from Tehillim. Likewise there is a special chant for readings from Megilat Echa, yet still a different chant for readings from Mishley and another melody for Kohelet, which is read during Sukkot.

There is a totally different chant taken up when reading from the Zohar. The Book of Esther on Purim also differs in its reading from all the rest.

Only by repetitive hearing of these different melodies, year in and year out, can one become accustomed to their sounds, and automatically associate oneself with the book, which is being read. The mood of the book is characterized by the chant. This tradition finds its source in the Talmud (Tractate Megillah 32.aleph).

In the larger Jewish communities, such as Sana'a and Sad'a, boys were sent to the Ma'lameh at the age of three to begin their religious education. They attended from early dawn to sunset Sunday to Thursday and until lunchtime on Friday.

Like Yemeni Jewish homes, the synagogues had to be lower in height than the lowest mosque in the area. The Jews took an extra precaution not to make their synagogues fancy to avoid provoking jealousy among their Muslim neighbours.

In order to accommodate this, synagogues were built dug into the ground to give them more space without looking large from the outside. People sat on the floor instead of chairs.

The lack of chairs may also have been to provide more space for prostration, another ancient Jewish observance the Jews of Yemen continued to practice until very recent times.

There are still a few Yemeni Jews who prostrate during Tachanun. We, European Jews, prostrate only for certain portions of special prayers during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Prostration was

a common practice among all Jews until some point during the late middle Ages.

In some parts of Yemen, minyanim would often just meet in the homes of worshippers instead of the community having a separate building for a synagogue. Beauty and artwork were saved for the ritual objects in the shul and also in the home.

Oppression & Freedom

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the condition of the Jews of Yemen was miserable. They were under the jurisdiction of the local Imam. Jews were not allowed to wear new or good clothes, or ride a donkey or a mule. They were compelled to make long journeys on foot when required and were prohibited from engaging in monetary transactions.

In 1922, Yemeni government reintroduced an ancient Islamic law requiring that Jewish orphans under age 12 be forcibly converted to Islam.

In 1947, after the United Nations vote to partition Palestine, Muslim rioters, joined by the local police force, engaged in a bloody pogrom in Aden (under British rule!) killing 82 Jews and destroying hundreds of Jewish homes.

Aden's Jewish community was economically ruined, as most of the Jewish stores and businesses were destroyed. Early in 1948, the false accusation of the ritual murder of two girls led to looting.

This increasingly perilous situation led to the emigration of virtually the entire Yemeni Jewish community - almost 50,000 - between June 1949 and September 1950 in "Operation Magic Carpet." A smaller, continuous migration was allowed to go on until 1962, when a civil war put an abrupt halt to any further Jewish exodus.

In 1976, an American diplomat came across a small Jewish community in a remote region of northern Yemen negating the thought that the Yemeni Jewish community entirely resettled in Israel. As a result, the plight of Yemeni Jews went unrecognised by the outside world.

It turned out some people stayed behind during "Operation Magic Carpet", maybe because family members did not want to leave sick or elderly relatives behind. These remaining Jews were forbidden from emigrating or having any contact with relatives abroad.

They were isolated and trapped, scattered throughout the mountainous regions in northern Yemen lacking food, clothing, medical care and religious articles. However, for a short time, Jewish organizations were allowed to travel openly within Yemen, distributing Hebrew books and materials to the Jewish community.

The small community that remains in the northern area of Yemen is treated as second-class citizens. Jews are traditionally restricted to living in one section of a city or village (in other words in ghettos) and are often confined to a limited choice of employment, usually farming or handicrafts. With all these, Jews may, and do, own property.

The discovery of a different Jewish community, the stateless Chabani tribe, in the 1980s in the Yemen activated a new airlift to Israel. They lived in the mountains on the barren disputed border between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

They dress in robes and go barefoot, the women cover their hair, and the men grow their hair long. They are muscular, very strong people, contrasting the thin studious appearance of most Yemeni Jews. They also carry long guns on their backs and defend themselves in the harsh region in which they live.

In Israel

After their aliya the Yemeni community met with, what seemed like insurmountable hardship and discrimination, but in time they managed to blend successfully in to the Israeli melting pot.

A notable act of attempted blotting out their heritage and their strict adherence to our religion was the case of the missing children.

In the years 1948-1954 some Yemeni children were taken from their parents. These children were placed in irreligious kibbutzim and many

were given up for adoption. The adopting parents changed the children's names and I.D. numbers, to make them untraceable.

The natural parents were told that the children had died. When asking for proof of death, the parents were simply ignored. No bodies were ever produced. Some were shown the graves of their children, but when the disbelieving parents tried to exhume the bodies, the graves were found empty.

Notwithstanding this, Temanim had a successful absorption into the mainstream. Their contribution to the Israeli Society is inestimable. Today they are estimated to number around 200,000 in Israel, of whom about half live in and around Tel Aviv. They are well represented in the professions.

Their music and dance are the most ancient and authentic. Many Israeli folk songs are based on Yemeni religious poetry and music. Much of the "Israeli" craftwork is of Yemeni origin. Their craftsmanship is highly regarded. The Bezalel Institute in Jerusalem is partly dedicated to the study of Yemeni arts and crafts.

Leslie Rübner

Children in War Memorial Project

I feel sure that quite a few Kingsbury Synagogue members, like me, were evacuated during World War Two, or arrived in the UK via the Kindertransport. Therefore it will come as no surprise that over the years I have spoken on this topic to many schools and social groups.

Now my interest has broadened to encompass war children wherever they may be. Today there are at least 30 wars going on world-wide inevitably involving children.

Some play a passive role, innocent victims caught up in warfare, others might be child soldiers or worse, suicide bombers. We hear about conflict on a daily basis in the media, whether press, radio or TV.

Last year I joined a group of people who formed a charity with the express purpose of raising a memorial to Children in War, to portray the courage shown in the face of adversity by boys and girls throughout the ages.

The memorial will be designed and created by Maurice Blik, an internationally renowned

sculptor who as a child survived incarceration in Bergen Belsen.

It is envisaged that the memorial will be on a scale worthy of such a grave and important subject, a work of art that is both timely and timeless – to be sited at the heart of a busy metropolitan area, such as the City of London to maximise public awareness and reach the widest possible audience.

Primary endorsement has been granted by the Research Centre for War Child Studies at the University of Reading, headed by Dr Martin Parsons, Visiting Professor of War Child Studies University of Lodz.

I realise this is no easy task in these times of economic constraint, but nothing ventured, nothing gained. Meantime visit our blog, look at a possible memorial design and everyone is more than welcome to post a comment <http://childreninwarmemorial.wordpress.com>

Irene Gladiusz

Neot Kedumim

As I left Kingsbury 20 years ago I will refresh your memories. I was Joanna Stone (now Joanna Maissel) and I am Silvia and Harold Stone's daughter previously from 14 Wyndale Avenue.

I was generally seen sitting at the back of Shul with my little gaggle of friends – Suzy, Aviva, Aviva and Natalie (a late apology to all those that we disturbed).

I have amazing memories of living in Kingsbury and attending Kingsbury shul and nowadays we all agree that it was a very special place in which to grow up.

I made Aliyah (like all the others mentioned above) in 1991 and now live in Modiin with my husband Jonny and three children – Carmi, Noam and Yasmin.

Until a year ago I was working with new olim, but unfortunately government budget cuts put an

end to that and I found myself heading in a whole new direction.

I guess I was always a nature lover. Walking home from shul through "the fields" (Fryent Way open space) on Shabbat morning was always a big treat. And my mum and dad will testify that I was never happier than when scrambling on rocks off the beaten track in some beautiful English countryside (that does feel very far away sitting sweltering at my computer in Modiin)

With time on my hands I started to follow a new path. I created my own vegetable garden watered with recycled water, abandoned using disposable tableware and before I knew it I had a new job teaching Israeli school children about recycling, composting and separating organic waste.

One year ago if anyone had asked me whether I would ever consider teaching, my answer was always "Not if you paid me a million dollars!",

and I was perfectly serious. Well I am living proof that if you are passionate enough about something you can teach it – even to Israeli schoolchildren.

I also embarked on a course to become a tour guide at Neot Kedumim - a biblical nature reserve. Through rain, wind and sun, mud and carpets of flowers, I spent about 50 hours learning the magic of the reserve.

Neot Kedumim was founded by Noga Hareuveni, a man whose vision of creating a nature reserve inspired by the plants and nature in the Tanach on 650 acres of barren hillside earned him the greatest accolade – the Israel Prize.

It literally means "Ancient Oasis" and visitors come from all over the world to learn and be inspired by the ancient and ecological farming practices and huge botanical range of biblical flora.

Our course took place in spring, which is an easy time to fall in love with anywhere in nature, but by June I was working as a guide and still managing to help groups to see the beauty, richness, and variety of species even without the lush green of spring.

As a guide, I myself enjoy the changing seasons at Neot Kedumim, which ensures that the guiding is always different while presenting new challenges.

A group that comes in May will be grinding freshly grown wheat into flour and tasting the traditional ancient popcorn – the seared wheat tossed in salt and date syrup called Kali - that Boaz may have offered to Ruth in the fields.

At Succot a group will see the giant Etrogim weighing down the branches. (Did you know that Neot Kedumim grows some of the biggest etrogim in the world?).

There is also the renowned Succah exhibition with 30 different types of Succahs on display (let's all have a quick reminisce about Kingsbury male congregants rolling down Fryent Way at the end of the Succah crawl.)

While there you can pick some fragrant Hadas (Myrtle), in which, if you hold it up to the sun, you can see the tiny white dots which contain the essential oil that gives it its strong smell and keeps it green even after being picked.

A group that comes at Chanukah will be picking olives and crushing them for olive oil.

Guiding multi-generational Jewish families is incredibly rewarding as whole families get something out of their experiences there. The children can act out the story of Rebecca at the well - really drawing water from the well, the men can show their strength pushing the giant

olive press and everyone pulls together when it comes to herding the sheep.

The Jewish New Year is almost upon us and for now we will push aside the classic image of the apple and honey and focus on one of the most beautiful symbols in our heritage – the most popular "first fruit" eaten on second night of Rosh Hashanah – the pomegranate.

With its lush red bell shaped outside and its pearly ruby like seeds inside, it has inspired thousands of Jewish and Israeli artists. If you come to Neot Kedumim now you will see it ripening on hundreds of trees across the reserve.

Unlike the apple, which has no mention in the Torah, the Torah and stories of our sages are laden with references to the pomegranate, the most obvious one being read recently in Parshat Ekev which lists the seven species – including the pomegranate.

Why these seven species listed as opposed to other species? Because, as described in the second paragraph of the Shema (Devarim 11), they all provided our forefathers with staple foods and were dependent on the rain falling at the "right time" so they would blossom between Pesach and Shavuot.

It was Hashem's message to us that we depended on one G-d for the rain and sun and winds all to work together to give us our basic foods and that we were not to be tempted to believe that different gods had different roles, as our Canaanite neighbours did.

Folklore tells us that the pomegranate has 613 seeds to represent the mitzvot (challenge young children to count them). In the Gemarah someone who is "full as a pomegranate" is filled with good deeds.

In Shemot (Exodus) 39:25 the High Priest wore a robe where: "they made pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen around the hem of the robe". We still call the silver decorations on top of the Sefer Torah "Rimonim" as they used to be shaped like pomegranates.

At this time of year the pomegranates are ripening on the trees, as are the figs and grapes on the vines. This offers groups a great opportunity to have a little outdoor feast. There are also less obvious pickings like tasting a fennel flower to get a waft of aniseed or a mustard seed which causes a sharp explosion in the mouth.

The humble hyssop herb grows out of every rock. If I don't offer a group a mix of dried hyssop, Neot Kedumim pressed olive oil and some fresh pitta to dip into it, then I have been of disservice to them. Even glazed adolescents perk up and try

this delectable ancient feast. Taste is something an ipod can't provide, yet!!

Other fruits in season are the small sweet buckthorn bush berries, like redcurrants with large pips and the Egyptian fig which cover the Sycamore (from the ficus sycomorus) or Shikma tree and are very similar to the fig but smaller and much more abundant. You will also rarely find a Neot Kedumim guide not chewing on a freshly picked carob while meandering through the reserve.

The emblem of Neot Kedumim is the Caper flower. However at this time of year I feel that the

pomegranate epitomizes the reserve. A striking fruit representing all the beauty that nature provides on the outside and when you open it the sweet nuggets fall out of it just waiting to be tasted.

To me this is just like the myriad of stories, fables and parables in Neot Kedumim which are waiting to be told.

I would like to wish you all a Shanah Tovah - healthy, happy and peaceful.

Joanna Maissel

שנה טובה

New Year Greetings From...

Rabbi and Mrs Cohen and family

Mignonette and Stanley Aarons wish everyone Shana Tova

Best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year from Rayner and Michael Barnett and family

Kesiva Vechasima Tovah from Wayne and Ruth; Rabbi Yoni and Elisheva with Nechama, Shimi and Tobi; Dov and Tehilla with Gavriel, Chaya and Shmuel; Sami and Doron Birnbaum and Ben and Abigail Kurzer

Shana Tova from Pat and Stanley Brody and family here and in Israel

Wishing everyone Shana Tova – Tony, Della and Vivienne Brown

Best wishes to all the community from Peter Fenton and family

Sandra and Barry Freedman together with families here and in Israel wish all friends a happy New Year

Shana Tova from Thea Gertner and family

Best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year from the Goodman family here and in Israel

Shana Tova from Margaret Ingram and grandchildren Rachel, Lydia, Harry, Elena, Kate, Liora and Joel

Best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year – Cynthia Green and family

Gerald Green and family send their good wishes for a happy and healthy New Year

Harvey and Cynthia Jacobs together with the whole family wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year

A happy New Year in peace – Jeane King, grandchildren and great-grandchildren

New Year wishes and greetings from Jonathan and Mary-Ann Landaw, Jacob, Raphy, Asher and Rochelle, Yitzi and Rachel, Rachel and Naomi

Reuven, Jeanne and Joseph Lavi and Gabriella, David, Tehillah and Shimon Berrebi wish all the community a Shana Tova

Henry and Sylvia Malnick, Chana and Avi Friedwald and Ruth, Avi and Dina Malka Klein wish everyone a peaceful, healthy and happy New Year

Julian and Rosalind Mann, Stefanie, Daniel and Shirelle, Michael, Chana and Tuvia and Rabbi Benjamin Mann

Doreen and Marcus Mann, with their family, wish their friends in Kingsbury a healthy, happy and peaceful New Year and well over the fast

Greta and Lawrence Myers together with Sharon, Roi, Tehilla and Sara Blumberg, Deborah, Binyamin, Betzalel and Elisheva Radomsky wish

all their friends and all the community everything they wish themselves for a happy and healthy New Year

Roz, Stephen, Tami and Abigail Phillips, Daniel, Samantha and Shemaya Phillips, and Rochel, Chagai, Refael Yosef, Moriah, Uriel Moshe and Channa Cohen wish everyone a Kativa Vechatima Tova

Shana Tova from the Shamash family

Ricky and Sonia Shaw and our families here and in Israel wish all friends in Kingsbury a Happy and Healthy New Year

Best wishes for a healthy and happy New Year and well over the Fast from Silvia and Harold Stone and families here and in Israel

