

# CHATHAM MEMORIAL SYNAGOGUE NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2007

Rosh Hashannah 5768

It was August when I thought I would send out an early reminder about the newsletter to our regular contributors, however I mistakenly added some of my friends to the round robin but surprisingly two immediately responded - a lovely New Year greeting was received from my Iranian friend and is reproduced below. An interesting article from Nathan Alfred who is a rabbinic student at the Leo Beck College can be found elsewhere in this publication.

"Dear Jo

I wish you and all the Jewish people all over the world a very peaceful and happy year.....It is a most wonderful dream to see love and the happiness dominate our life.... Ghassan Alani"

I agree L'Shana Tova

Jo Freeman (Hon editor) joeyfied@hotmail.com

## From the Chairman

On Shabbat, the first Saturday in September, I said Kaddish for my father. It wasn't a yahrzeit but today would have been his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday. In fact his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday was the day that war broke out in 1939. At this time of year we remember those who have gone before us and those that have influenced our lives both directly and indirectly. I have already mentioned my father but I should also mention my grandfather from whom I developed my love of shul and also incidentally my love of cricket. I used to go to shul every Shabbat morning with my grandfather as a young boy. My father who was a GP would often arrive later, after morning surgery. After shul, I would go back to my grandparents for a traditional Shabbat meal with Kiddush and Bensching (Grace after Meals).

By the time I arrived in Chatham, although I wasn't such a regular shul-goer in those days, I was very familiar with the liturgy and with all the traditional tunes. This was further reinforced by that great servant of Chatham Memorial Synagogue, Chaim Wayne from whom I also learnt a lot of what I know now.

Other people who influenced our lives and who we should remember at this time of year are the founders of the synagogue; Simon Magnus and his son Lazarus and the others without whom we would not have the beautiful building in which we will meet and pray together over the coming weeks. Also we should not forget the great rabbis and before them the psalmists who developed the wonderful liturgy which we will be using over the High Holydays in continuation of a centuries old tradition. Many of these prayers have very moving and powerful tunes. I am thinking in particular of Oviynu Malkeynu "Our Father, our King, we have sinned before thee" and Unetana Tokeyf "We will celebrate the mighty holiness of this day" which we recite on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Kol Nidre "All vows" and Ya'aleh "May our prayers ascend from eventime" which we recite on the eve of Yom Kippur to name just a few. If you are a member of the synagogue you should have received a CD of "Music and reflections by Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur". I strongly recommend that you listen to the CD before Rosh Hashanah as I found it very uplifting and a good introduction to some of the important prayers.

I look forward to seeing you over the High Holydays and I wish you and your family a happy, healthy and peaceful year.

## INFORMATION

**Friday 21 September, Shul, 7.15pm**

**Saturday 22 September, Shul, 9.30am**

Kol Nidrei Service

Yom Kippur

**Wednesday 26 September, Shul, 7.30**

Evening Service for Sukkot

**Friday 29 September, Shul, 7.30pm**

Friday Evening Service

## THE GUILD

The Guild has now entered a "busy" period, with silver cleaning, Kiddushim after the Rosh Hashanah services, "tea" after Yom Kippur, the Succah to be "built" and decorated, and the Chanukah party almost in sight.

Kiddushim after the monthly Shabbat morning services have been provided, but unfortunately the traditional "dairy breakfast" for Shavuot did not happen, as no service was held.

We have had some quiet months since the last Newsletter. No meetings have been held.

We function with the aid of e.mail and telephone communication.

However a focus group may be beneficial. If you would like to participate in a face to face meeting to exchange ideas for the Guild please contact Marie Halpern

Tel :01634 842405

e.mail:hilary.halpern@btinternet.com

Chag Sameach,

The Synagogue participated in the two annual 'Open Days' The first one was held on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September under the auspices of B'nai Brith as part of the European Day of Jewish Culture.approx 25 visitors were welcomed by our own volunteers.

The Heritage Open Day on Sunday 9 September was advertised more widely. This event saw and increased attendance and the assistance of the community volunteers was invaluable.

### JEWISH KENT ARE DELIGHTED TO INVITE YOU TO A THANET SYNAGOGUE TRAIL SUNDAY 14 OCTOBER 2007

10.45 am – Meet for morning coffee at the Thanet & District Reform Synagogue. 293a Margate Road, Ramsgate, CT12 (near corner of Pysons Road).

On display will be a Sefer Torah Scroll that originates from Kalotvy in the Czech Republic.

12.00 noon - Visit to the Montefiore Synagogue. Honeysuckle Road, Ramsgate, CT11

Grade II listed Regency synagogue by first Anglo-Jewish architect David Mocatta with curious last resting place of Sir Moses Montefiore next door.

1.30 pm - Lunch at the Margate Hebrew Congregation. Albion Road, Cliftonville, Margate, CT9

This famous synagogue is well known to many a past holiday maker when Cliftonville was the place to holiday.

It is anticipated the day will finish at about 3 pm. There will be a modest **Charge of £5 per person**

to cover catering. (£3.75 for children under bar/bat mizvah age). All foods will be dairy; owing to the synagogue locations please do not bring your own lunch.

To assist with catering and for reasons of security all attendees are asked to reserve their place in advance.

For further information contact call Ian on 07989 447453 or email [tdrs@imsbvs.f9.co.uk](mailto:tdrs@imsbvs.f9.co.uk)

Whilst there is plenty of parking available, please be mindful of the local residents and do not to block driveways.

If you have any special needs, eg disabled access or specific dietary requirement let us know in advance.

## **ADVANCE NOTICE CHANUCHA**

**This year it is planned to re- instate the Chanucha play to be performed by the younger members of the community under the direction of Dalia Halpern Matthews**

**during the traditional party on Sunday 9 December 2007**

**Please contact Dalia for further details on 01892 723365**

**e.mail:daliahalpern@hotmail.com**

### **An Appeal to our Community from HILARY HALPERN**

For many years I have had the privilege of being the Appeal Chairman for our Synagogue. It is a difficult task for there are so many worthy charities and people who are in need. However, in my opinion Israel and our Synagogue should once again be in the forefront of this year's Kol Nidrei Appeal.

For many, many years Jews were wanderers at the mercy of hostile forces with no country of their own. Speaking for myself, I am proud to be British, but have the comfort of the Jewish country representing my spiritual needs and also taking care of others by admitting all persecuted Jews. Since the inception of the State, Israel has been surrounded by hostility. Hopefully the time will come when the hostility will go and Israel will be at peace with its neighbours, and not be the centre of world criticism. We desperately need Israel and must try in every way that we can to support it, even though we ourselves are sometimes critical

I have decided that this year we should give to the people of **Sderot** which is a frontline town in the Negev and is under attack. After the Israelis gave back the Gaza Strip, Kassam rockets commenced to rain down on Sderot, terrorizing the inhabitants and killing and injuring some. In a recent attack, which Islamic Jihad called "a gift to the opening of the school year" 12 children suffered from shock and were taken to hospital. I quote from the Jewish Chronicle of the 7 September 2007, "Sderot parents had finally had enough. On Monday evening, they formally decided to cancel the school year until further notice. Several parents told the JC they felt the state had abandoned their children. "What's more important – education or life"? "I'm keeping my children at home," said one Sderot father, who declined to be named. Another parent told the JC that, even before the school year opened, she had decided to send her two girls away.

"I'm even scared standing here with them at the bus stop" said Ludmilla Borochoy. "They simply couldn't learn in Sderot. They couldn't concentrate. And there's no protection for them here. If, G-d forbid, there is a rocket warning, then they have to sit under their desks. What good will that do?" Yossi Swisa, a parents' committee member with a young son, was furious. "I promise you that if nothing changes after 21 days, if we don't see tractors working here, we will shut down the school year and you will see us up in Jerusalem – not in Sderot, he said". The funds which we raise will be used to build bomb shelters. The people of Sderot will know that they are not forgotten in the Diaspora.

I have for many years supported our **Synagogue** and as your Hon. Architect I can say without fear of contradiction that we have one of the most beautiful small Synagogues in the country. We have restored the inside of the Synagogue and it was interesting to note the facial expressions and words of the people who visited our Synagogue on the recent Heritage Days for their joyous reactions on viewing this gorgeous edifice. We have, as you know, spent many hundreds of thousands of pounds with money that I collected from the community, English Heritage, the local authority and so many others. There was urgent work done to replace and restore the deteriorated stonework and actual fabric of the building. If this had not been done, there would have been some collapse by now and the fabric would have been damaged beyond repair. It is now time to start putting the building in perfect condition externally looking at the roof, the stonework and next year the graveyard. There must be a rolling programme of repair and renewal going forward through the years, in order to maintain the integrity of the building for future generations. Any Grants that we may get will be subject to us giving substantial support and we only have sufficient money in the various Synagogue funds to cover emergencies. I am, therefore, once again asking our community and friends to give and also to leave charitable foundations in their Wills to cover the future.

I am fully aware that you have helped us in the past and I look forward to your continued support.

May I take this opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year and well over the Fast.

## **MAZELTOV TO:**

***Saul, Siobhan Alex, Theo & Hugo Halpern on the occasion of Alex's Barmitzva in July***

## **GOOD WISHES TO:**

***Ian Diamond, William Freeman Marie Halpern & Delilah Newstead who have recovered following spells in hospital since the last edition of the Newsletter.  
Laurie Hack who is at present in a nursing home in Ashford.***

## **The synagogue – an answer to Malcom Weisman**

**from David Herling**

“Would it make much difference to you personally if the synagogue simply disappeared? Would you feel that you had lost anything?” This was the question with which the Rev. Malcolm Weisman OBE faced his audience at the Jewish Kent event in June on the value of prayer.

Now this is a question to cause a shudder in a community such as ours. Whatever label we choose to give our community, one thing is beyond debate; we are the custodians of a synagogue of rare architectural and historical significance and, indeed, beauty. In a sense there could only be one answer to Malcolm's question. Nevertheless, I would like to put the obvious, immediate response to one side, and give a slightly different answer.

How central is the synagogue, or how central should it be, to Jewish existence? It matters that we should get the answer to this question right. If we misunderstand what a synagogue is, then we enter it – or stay away from it – for the wrong reasons.

The contenders for the title of Judaism's central institution are formidable. From the first chapters of Genesis onwards, never to be displaced, the family is the crucible of our existence. It represents the promise of a future, which touches us no less deeply than it touched the patriarchs and matriarchs. Later in our history another main player is the Jewish People as a society in which justice and its associate, holiness, either prevail or are flouted.

The community itself is a pillar of Jewish existence. It is most visible (on a good day) in the synagogue, but it is not the synagogue. Its needs, opportunities and activities stretch well beyond the building. It is not a community of prayer, but of peoplehood, and it by no means excludes those who are not of our faith. On that point the Torah is insistent.

Our territory for two thousand years, however, has been the text. For long periods of our history we have been known to others as the People of the Book. Study has traditionally been regarded as the supreme activity in which a Jew can engage, even if few of us any longer fit the age in which study was all. The centre of the average modern Jewish existence is life itself, and particularly the challenge of using it to the full. And yet to respond with all our might to the opportunities we have to better ourselves is by no means untraditional. For a time, and for many, “America” was a convenient designation of that urge. In fact it has always been with us.

Finally, memory is Jewish home ground. Take a look at the liturgy to see how deeply enrooted in us is the refusal to forsake the past. It gives rise to some of the most poignant expressions in the prayerbook. The future is a place in which we mean to see to it that the past is not forgotten.

Where does all this leave the synagogue? Not quite marginalised, but perhaps put into perspective. It is not essential for prayer, charity, memory, study, family life, nor is it the primary stage on which we carry on our strenuous encounter with the goods and ills of life itself. Our main endeavours take place beyond it. Could we live without it? Of course we could.

Then what is it for? The sober answer is that it is an adjunct to a Jewish community which is particularly useful for meeting (hence the old name, *beit haknesset*, house of meeting). Beyond that, it is the place in which, as a community, we publicly affirm our continuing fidelity to God and His covenant with our people, and renew our bonds, not just with each other, but with those who came before, and those who will come after us.

This is quite a limited function, but that is not the point. The point is that unless one comes to the synagogue with some desire to achieve those specific goals, there is a risk that one will leave feeling confused, disappointed and – I'd be a fool to deny it – bored. The synagogue is not going to make a non-religious person feel religious. Even for a religious person it is not an altogether suitable venue for one to one

communion with the Creator. It is not readily going to teach a person who knows no Hebrew to become fluent in that language. It will teach something of Judaism, but there are more effective ways to learn. It may teach something of life, but it has no ambitions to supplant it.

So, good reasons for coming to shul are that you wish to acknowledge yourself as a member of a community, and of a community which stretches through time, bound together by its relationship with God. You may also wish to express your gratitude to God for the things upon which life depends, though they daily go unnoticed. Even if you do not especially want to do those things, you may think you have a duty to help others to do them by at least attending in a supporting capacity. At this point I have to say that if I were being challenged to make a list of the most truly unfashionable values imaginable, I don't think I could do better than to make the following list from the ones I have just mentioned: community, fidelity, gratitude and duty.

But leaving that aside, how does the synagogue serve those values? First, community. Shul works as a place for meeting others provided the others turn up, provided you turn up sufficiently frequently to get to know them, and provided people do in fact make an effort to talk to each other. Naturally, if this can be done in Chatham, it can equally be done anywhere else in the world where there is a synagogue, which to all intents and purposes means anywhere at all. If you know what to do in a synagogue, you have family in every country under the sun, and family which will help you if you need help.

As for community within time, the synagogue stills the self from its endeavours and obsessions, and allows it to recall how it is formed, and what will succeed it. This can be especially so if the prayers do *not* speak directly to one. And which of them do? So often their apparent meaning is a façade; they encode messages sent hundreds if not thousands of years ago which pass most of us by most of the time. (In one of them the writer, fearful of what lay beyond his door, or fearful, perhaps, of what lay beyond his life, has encoded his name and beseeched a blessing upon himself and his household. In another, all the names of the known planets are concealed by one who has marvelled at the majesty of the night sky). But we do not need these keys to unnecessary mysteries. These words, understood or not, were heard by grandfathers and grandmothers. In the future, others whose memory of you has grown faint will hear your voice afresh when they glance down at the book in their lap and wonder whether you found meaning in this. The very speed of the prayers derives from the fervour of past generations which could not bear the praise of God to be interrupted by a moment's halt. The melodies reach us after unimaginable journeys; some were heard in the Temple itself.

Our emotions have a powerful physical effect upon us. At extremes are joyful laughter and the anger of frustration – the first is a tonic, and the second is thoroughly bad for us. A great part of the synagogue's service gives expression to gratefulness, hope and trust. The authors of the prayers believed that it was wise to make such overtures to the Creator. Whether we share their theology or not, or the images in which they expressed it, it feels as if they had it right. As for prayers of intercession, to pray wholeheartedly and with absolute concentration for good, and to listen for as long as it takes when one has finished praying, is a most unusual state of mind in which to linger. Who knows what it can do for us?

But there are those, estranged from the tradition, who would accuse themselves of being hypocritical in seeming to sign up to a set of beliefs which they don't entertain. And as for the rest of us, there can be few who haven't from time to time wondered at the basis of their own piety, and felt it close to crumbling. We all sometimes share a little the heroism of the person who comes to shul not out of any hope of a personal spiritual experience, but to support others who do. Such a person offers up a wordless prayer of their own, compounded of loyalty, dependableness and fellow-feeling, which graces the synagogue and is among its greatest achievements. They also perform a mitzvah, that untranslatable Hebrew word for doing what we have been taught is right.

Could we manage without the synagogue? Yes, although we would be somewhat the poorer. In a world regarded too much of the time as for the plundering, what it has to offer is unfamiliar and rare.

At the beginning of the July Management Meeting, two officers from the Hate Crime Unit gave a small presentation regarding preventing terrorist attacks through heightened awareness. The visit was as a result of the recent attacks in London and Glasgow. Any retaliatory behaviour should be reported to the Unit immediately.

Terry Simms 07980 770496; Simon King on 07772 225956 or Police Station 01634 89185

**CST would encourage everybody in our community to be vigilant and alert due to recent terrorist threats in the UK.**

**There is no specific information that the Jewish community is a target, but Islamist terrorists have attacked Jewish communities around the world several times in recent years.**

**CST continues to work with the community and the Police to make our community safe. This would not be possible without our volunteers.**

**We are proud to thank our 3000 volunteers for their time, professionalism and hard work.**

**Our volunteers are essential to CST's work, especially over the High Holy Days, this is why they do what they do:**



Stephen has been a volunteer for ten years and joined CST in his forties. After raising a family and building a business, he found that he was at a period in his life where he had time on his hands and wanted to spend it doing something physical whilst giving something back to the Jewish community. He saw an advert thanking volunteers for their hard work and wondered what it was all about as he had never heard of CST.

Stephen wants to play his part in protecting his family and community. He finds it fulfilling to be part of "a group of dedicated people who are prepared to give up their valuable time for no remuneration and stand out in all weathers in some unsavoury areas looking after Jewish people."



Julia is 36 and married with three children. She joined CST two years ago as she had seen CST at functions she had attended and liked the idea of being a part of them. She enjoys the training that comes with being a security volunteer as well as the camaraderie on the jobs, and the satisfaction of knowing that she is doing her utmost to protect her friends and family.

"This organisation is not a luxury. We need to be reassured that someone is looking out for us and the future of our Jewish community is protected."

**Please contact CST to find out how you can become a volunteer and help us keep communal events secure or you can participate in your school or synagogue security rota.**

**020 8457 9999**  
**www.thecst.org.uk**

**We wish you a happy, healthy and safe New Year,  
and well over the fast**

## **A student rabbi learning Arabic.**

Nathan Alfred August 2007

Since January I have been learning Arabic. Why? Well, I enjoy learning languages, but my reasons were three-fold: firstly I wanted to understand better Islam, particularly in the light of current debates. Secondly, I am interested in Jewish-Muslim relations, and especially how these two minority communities inter-relate in Europe. And thirdly I wanted to study piyyutim (liturgical poems) from Medieval Spain, whose authors were influenced both linguistically and culturally by the surrounding Islamic civilization.

My teacher has been Mamadou Bocoum, a Senegalese-born Imam, currently completing his PhD in Islamic History at the Muslim College in Ealing. He taught me from the alif-baa (alphabet!), maintaining his patience as I repeatedly failed to pronounce the more difficult guttural letters, until we were tackling the opening passages of the Quran. He himself learnt to recite all 114 chapters at the age of 14, a bit like a Baal Koreh (a master of reading) who knows to chant the whole of the Torah.

The lessons soon blossomed into friendship, as we discovered much in common, including a shared interest in Jewish-Muslim relations. This led to a table-tennis match between Leo Baeck and the Muslim College. Unfortunately in this we were convincingly beaten, but hope to gain revenge next year (perhaps with Rabbi Andrew on board as a distinguished ringer!). And in June Mamadou accompanied me to shul in Lincoln, where after the Shabbat service we held a discussion – indeed a “trialogue” with local Reverend Patrick Morrow – on “Jerusalem”, commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Six Day War.

And it was to Jerusalem I travelled this summer, to take the “elementary” Literary Arabic course at the Hebrew University. A five-week programme, it aimed to cram a year of regular study into six hours a day of intensive teaching. About thirty students began, in the most part American, but with a few Brits and individuals from as far and wide as Australia, Japan, Greece and Switzerland. The lessons were taught in English, but a text-book entirely in Hebrew gave an advantage to those of us who could read Ivrit. The teacher joked that it was, after all, a course at the “Hebrew” University, but promised that an English translation was being made, and would be available the following year.

There is a close correlation between Arabic and Hebrew. Both are Semitic languages, with many similar words (shalom/salaam being the most famous) and clear grammatical parallels. I learnt that I already knew a number of Arabic words from English – not just words beginning with “al” – “the” (such as “al-cohol”, “al-gebra” and “al-cove”), but also things like “safari” – “trip” in Arabic. It was also refreshing to exercise some Talmud skills – making syntactical and constructional comparisons with those I had seen in Aramaic. I am happy to say that I survived the course – more than half dropped out – and my greatest admiration was for those who knew no Hebrew and yet overcame this, somehow managing to navigate the intricacies of the text-book despite this drawback.

During the course I had the odd practical encounter – being asked the time by Israeli Arab children at an East Jerusalem bus-stop led to many smiles and delighted chatter as I attempted to answer in Arabic. Unfortunately the written and spoken languages are very different – and I was learning the former – but I think I was understood! In Israel the street signs are often in three languages – Hebrew, Arabic and English - another chance for some reading practice, this time without vowels.

I am grateful to the Leo Baeck College and the British Friends of Hebrew University for sponsoring my studies, and hope to return to Jerusalem next summer to tackle the second “intermediate” level. In the meantime I look forward to continuing my lessons with Mamadou, and there are plans afoot to make a joint trip for Jewish and Muslim young adults to travel to Cordoba, and learn together about both our cultures from the time of “Golden Age” Spain. And whilst I still have trouble pronouncing some of the letters, this should not stop me reading the Jewish paytans (liturgical poets) both in Hebrew and Arabic – indeed now I might even be able to take a look at some poems in “Judeo-Arabic”, an Arabic dialect written in Hebrew letters...enough to keep me out of mischief for some time to come!

Nathan Alfred  
August 2007

A contribution from Eytan Melamud to make us Smile!

### **Leave Rome**

About a century or two ago, the Pope decided that all the Jews had to leave Rome. Naturally there was a big uproar from the Jewish community. So the Pope made a deal. He would have a religious debate with a member of the Jewish community. If the Jew won, the Jews could stay. If the Pope won, the Jews would leave.

Having no choice, the Jews picked a middle aged man named Moishe to represent them. Moishe asked for one addition to the debate. To make it more interesting, neither side would be allowed to talk. The pope agreed.

The day of the great debate came. Moishe and the Pope sat opposite each other for a full minute before the Pope raised his hand and showed three fingers. Moishe looked back at him and raised one finger. The Pope waved his fingers in a circle around his head. Moishe pointed to the ground where he sat. The Pope pulled out a wafer and a glass of wine. Moishe pulled out an apple. The Pope stood up and said, "I give up. This man is too good. The Jews can stay."

An hour later, the cardinals were all around the Pope asking him what happened. The Pope said: "First I held up three fingers to represent the Trinity. He responded by holding up one finger to remind me that there was still one God common to both our religions. Then I waved my finger around me to show him that God was all around us. He responded by pointing to the ground and showing that god was also right here with us. I pulled out the wine and the wafer to show that god absolves us from our sins. He pulled out an apple to remind me of original sin. He had an answer for everything. What could I do?"

Meanwhile, the Jewish community had crowded around Moishe. "What happened?" they asked.

"Well," said Moishe, "First he said to me that the Jews had three days to get out of here. I told him that not one of us was leaving. Then he told me that this whole city would be cleared of Jews. I let him know that we were staying right here."

"And then?" asked a woman.

"I don't know," said Moishe. "He took out his lunch and I took out mine."

### **A Dialogue while Moses is at the top of Sinai....**

G: And remember Moses, in the laws of keeping Kosher, never cook a calf in its mother's milk. It is cruel.

Moses: Ohhhhhh! So you are saying we should never eat milk and meat together.

G: No, what I'm saying is, never cook a calf in its mother's milk.

Moses: Oh, Lord forgive my ignorance! What you are really saying is we should wait six hours after eating meat to eat milk so the two are not in our stomachs.

G: No, Moses, what I'm saying is, don't cook a calf in its mother's milk!!!

Moses: Oh, Lord! Please don't strike me down for my stupidity! What you mean is we should have a separate set of dishes for milk and a separate set for meat and if we make a mistake we have to bury that dish outside....

G: Ah, do whatever you want....

### **Nothing**

During Shabbat services the Rabbi kneels and puts his forehead to the floor and says, "Before you oh Lord, I am nothing."

The Cantor looks at him, thinks it couldn't hurt, and kneels, puts his forehead to the floor, and says, "Before you oh Lord, I am nothing."

Ben Shapiro in the fifth row is watching this and thinking that it was a pretty good idea, so he goes in the middle of the aisle, kneels and puts his forehead to the floor and says, "Before you oh Lord, I am nothing."

The Rabbi nudges the Cantor. "Look who thinks he's nothing!"

### **Gambling**

A rabbi, a minister, and a priest were playing poker when the police raided the game. Turning to the priest, the lead police officer said, "Father Murphy, were you gambling?"

Turning his eyes to heaven, the priest whispered, "L\*rd, forgive me for what I am about to do." To the police officer, he then said, "No, officer; I was not gambling."

The officer then asked the minister, "Pastor Johnson, were you gambling?"

Again, after an appeal to heaven, the minister replied, "No, officer; I was not gambling."

Turning to the rabbi, the officer again asked, "Rabbi Goldstein, were you gambling?"

Shrugging his shoulders, the rabbi replied, "With whom?"

### **And from Gabriel Lancaster ' THE TWO BEES**

Two bees met in a field. One said to the other, 'How are things going?'

'Really bad,' said the second bee. 'The weather has been cold, wet and damp, and there aren't any flowers, so I can't make honey.'

Keep going until you see all the cars. There's a Bar Mitzvah going on and there are all kinds of fresh flowers and fresh fruit.'

'Thanks for the tip,' said the second bee, and flew away.

A few hours later the two bees ran into each other again. The first bee

asked, 'How'd it go?' 'Great!' said the second bee. 'It was everything you said it would be. There was plenty of fruit and, oh, such huge floral arrangements on every table.'

'Uh, what's that thing on your head?' asked the first bee

'That's my yarmulke,' said the second bee. 'I didn't want them to think I was a **WASP**

## Reminiscences of India.

Having been invited to join the Export Sales Office of my company, Fisher Controls Company, a division of Elliott Bros. (London) Ltd., in Rochester, Kent, on my first day in the new position I was informed that my responsibility would be our engineering sales in the area from the end of the Mediterranean to Japan and New Zealand. This was around 1966/67, and I was overjoyed, as I had always wanted to travel and this could not have been more far flung! My remit covered setting up and replacing our agents, as well as selling all of the company products in the field of process control (control of pipeline fluids in every industry) but I also had specialist knowledge of equipment for automatic control of refuelling for ships, which I had helped to develop, as the project engineer in charge of this, when Fisher was contracted by Shell International to update the performance of this equipment.

My first visit to India came a year or so later, when it became evident that our agents in that country and Pakistan needed some assistance in their endeavours, having only received visits by company directors a few years earlier. My visit to Pakistan, still recovering from partition, was somewhat traumatic but I arrived in Bombay on a Sunday morning, to fall foul of the Indian customs; I had with me a full size demonstration model of our latest control valve, made in aluminium for travel lightness. The customs official decided to confiscate this, on the grounds that I might sell it during my visit. I pointed out that it could not be used for any process, as it was made of aluminium and was for demonstration only but this was not believed. Fortunately, my local colleagues, there to meet me, intervened, passed a little baksheesh and I was allowed to leave it in bond, to be collected by the pilot of my onward flight to Madras, early the next day, to be recovered in Madras, which caused no problem, at all!

So, I was free to enjoy my first conducted tour of Bombay, the fishing boats drawn up on the beaches, the children diving into the harbour at the Gateway to India, opposite my hotel, the brilliant colours of the food vendors' stalls in the streets, the splendid Juhu Beach, one of the best beaches in the world, with camel rides instead of donkeys, where I made the mistake of giving a few coins to the first urchin who came up to us, whereupon every urchin on the enormous beach inundated us for funds! It was decided that I should get to bed fairly early, as I had to be up at four a.m. for my flight to Madras.

It does not look far on the map, barely a third of the length of the sub continent, nevertheless it was a four and a half hour jet flight,, which gave me an inkling of what I was committed to in the next three weeks. Early morning flights, days spent rushing around meeting important clients, sometimes lecturing to their engineers, all around the south of India, with a brief foray to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) Madras, where I was joined by a senior manager of our agents, Messrs. Larsen & Toubro, Tiruchchirappali, Cochin, Bangalore, then back to Bombay and early flights to Delhi, Calcutta and Assam, before returning to Bombay, exhausted, for a week of induction talks to the agent's engineers.

There the manager, Mr Nathan, apologised to me, saying that, as I was making the first working tour of India from my company, he wanted to ensure that I saw as much as possible of their working in a limited time. However, he told me that his people were watching me carefully to see what interested me and he assured me that on future visits he would make certain that I would have time each day to do some sightseeing and photography and then presented me with an exquisitely carved little jade head of the Buddha!

Obviously, I have vivid memories of that and subsequent visits, a few of which follow. The temple to Ganesh, in Madras, covered with carvings of gods and animals; the guest house for the factory at Tiruchchirappali, where the manager insisted on flying in fish and eggs from the coast, despite my assuring him of my liking for the vegetarian food of Kerala, the schoolgirls meeting the early morning flight at Trivandrum, with their twittering conversations and brilliant saris; the three thousand year old temple at Tiruchi, with its reared up statue of Krishna riding a tiger; the centuries old synagogue in Cochin, with its beautiful ceramic, willow pattern floor tiles (a gift from a Chinese Jewish community in Kai Feng) and the bronze plates engraved in Tamil, dated the year 76 C.E. recording the permission given by a local prince to allow a Jewish group of merchants to settle there; the Kathekali temple dancing I was taken to see, in a little village near Cochin; the lesson I received on buying jewellery in Kandy, Ceylon, the centre of the sapphire industry; not forgetting Mamallapuram, about seventy miles south of Madras, where big lumps of granite, protruding from the seashore sand have been carved into temples, gods, animals and where there is the largest bas relief in the world and a temple, lost under the sea by earthquake action hundreds of years ago, then flung on to dry land again about one hundred and fifty years ago, complete but covered with barnacles.

Memories from the north of India include the Kanhari caves, in the hills above Bombay, carved out of the rock some two thousand years ago, with temples and statues extending for some two miles of hillside; the astronomical observatory in Delhi, where each heavenly body has an instrument made of masonry, all extremely accurate; Delhi zoo, where I was invited by a keeper to go into the albino tiger enclosure (I thought) to take photographs, only to be taken into the cage with the tiger! As I had a telephoto lens on my camera, all I could see was the tiger's eyes, glinting in the sun; one click and out – fast!

I also remember my driver, whenever I visited Calcutta, who was a very nice, mild, ex sergeant major, until he got behind the wheel when I saw horns sprouting from his turban!; also the ancient Hindu temple, to which I was taken one Divali, about four thousand feet up in the foothills of the Himalayas, above the valley of the Bramahputra, where I was invited to photograph animal sacrifices and where I saw Mount Everest, in the distance, at dawn during the flight from Calcutta to Gauhati.

So many memories! Yet I had to do some work, as well. One particular job I remember was a very large contract for control equipment for two large fertiliser plants, for which we bid,, only to find that the investment funds were French, so handed the job to our Paris office. One year later we were told that decision day was near and it was thought that our nearest competitors had visited the site and persuaded the Chief Engineer to use them; since the Paris office did not have anyone with good enough technical English, could they borrow me for a visit. I had to fly to Calcutta, then take a train for about half a day into Bengal, stay overnight in a little village inn, then on by local taxi for about two hours. When I met the Chief Engineer the atmosphere was distinctly icy. Just before lunch I was asked if I would speak to some engineers about the latest technology, which sounded like five or six people around a table. After lunch I was taken into a lecture theatre, with some seventy or eighty engineers, hungry for information! I showed slides, talked and answered questions for about two and a half hours. As we walked back to the office the Chief Engineer asked me if I could be in Delhi two days later, to sign the contract! (about £2 million equivalent). Much later I found that our competitors had, indeed, visited about two weeks before my visit but had answered the request to talk to the engineers by saying they would send technical people from England after the contract was signed; because I had the confidence to take up the challenge, we got the job. Always be prepared!

India! A jewel amongst countries. I enjoyed every visit and the people I met. I have always tried to operate my life according to the precept of Raban Gamliel: "Say little, do much and accept all men cheerfully". It has stood me in good stead.

"Uncounted gems in vaulted caves lie treasured,  
Beneath our sunlit seas lie pearls unnumbered,  
Such is the wealth of Hindustan."

- N. Rimsky-Korsakov.  
"Hindu Song", from Opera "Sadko."

Gabriel Lancaster August 2007

### **Finally from the Editor**

My apologies for the late publication of this newsletter but I have been experiencing internet problems

Please remember the Newsletters are for ALL the members of the community and all contributions are welcome just e.mail [joeyfied@hotmail.com](mailto:joeyfied@hotmail.com) with your copy. The next publication will be at Pesach but articles. Letters and announcements can be sent throughout the year.

The members input is vital in all aspects of our small but vibrant community . Your views are valued and your suggestions invaluable.

The Synagogue Management team will be delighted to hear from you.

The synagogue website [www.chathamshul.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.chathamshul.fsnet.co.uk) is regularly updated and will keep you informed of all the current activities