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Vienna in New York

As a footnote to your terrific coverage of secessionist Vienna, I wanted to let you know about New York's Neue Gallerie, which features world-class early 20th-century German and Austrian paintings and design. There is also furniture and silverware from the fin-de-siècle period, in particular, from the Viennese Werkstatte movement. It has a Viennese restaurant called Cafe Sabarsky – when you enter you might think you are in Vienna. **JANOS FISHER**

Morocco: haven or hell?

In Saul Zadka's review of Uprooted by Lyn Julius (JR April 2018) he writes, "Throughout the 19th century thousands [of Jews] were murdered by mobs in Casablanca, Rabat, Marrakech and Tetouan," and "entire communities were wiped out by King Idris I and 6,000 Jews were murdered in Fez as early as 1033". This is at odds with what we learned from Raphael Elmaleh, our guide when we were in Morocco on a recent JR tour. Rafi stressed that Jews did not leave Morocco because of persecution, as was the case in many other Arab countries. Can you clarify the situation? **EVE KUGLER**

Janet Levin, JR's CEO and organiser of JR Tours, replies:

There were terrible massacres, particularly in the 11th and 19th centuries – which were happening in European as well as Arab countries. But the kings of Morocco often

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gave protection to their Jewish subjects – Mohammad V refused to surrender them to the Nazis (unlike other occupied North African countries). Jews were killed following the establishment of Israel; in 1967 and from 1959 to 1961, emigration to Israel was banned.

However, persecution varied by region. Jewish communities in the Berber region of the south lived in harmony with their neighbours. The late Hananiyah Elfassie, whom we met on our first JR tour, told us of the night that Mossad, in an undercover operation, had arrived in his village and persuaded all (except him) to leave. In cities, such as Casablanca, Fez, Rabat and Marrakesh, Jewish and Muslim communities lived side by side in friendship. While emigration continued, factors such as poor economic and educational opportunities also played a part. In 2011 King Mohammed VI introduced a new constitution stipulating that the Moroccan national identity had been "nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebraic and Mediterranean tributaries".

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FROM JR'S PRESIDENT

We are now through the busiest part of the Jewish year, with its festivals, holidays and time for family. I hope it has been a happy and healthy period for all our JR readers. But the momentum continues in an autumn packed with activities.

One of those I am supporting and which is particularly exciting is the screening of Carol Isaacs' graphic novel, *Wolf of Baghdad* (p48). Isaacs has produced a beautiful cartoon account of her family's life in Baghdad in the first part of the 20th century, and this will be screened in November at JW3 alongside Sephardi music from her band 3yin.

The music is just as interesting as the visuals: some of the pieces to be performed are songs from the Iraqi Al Kuwaity brothers (Saleh and Daoud), who wrote most of the popular Arab music of the 1920s and 30s. Facing increasing persecution in Iraq, the brothers fled to Israel in the 1950s. While the Ba'ath Party was busy erasing Jewish identity from Iraq's cultural history, in Israel the brothers were given a new outlet via the Arabic-language broadcasts of the Israel Broadcasting Authority (which no longer exists). The dozens of songs they composed in Israel also became hits in Arab countries, and are still played on the radio throughout the Arab world.

Their identity as Jewish artists is slowly being reclaimed, thanks in part to the work of Isaacs and her band members. It is a bittersweet story, but one which is a reminder of the power of culture to transcend stereotypes and cross borders, even at the height of conflict.

I do hope you can get to this special event – and to some of the hundreds of others which JR is highlighting across its features and listing pages (from p54) this autumn,

David Langoor



OUR AIMS

- 1 To show the vitality of contemporary and traditional Jewish culture.
- 2 To celebrate the diversity of Jewish experience in the UK and around the world.
- 3 To nurture understanding between Jewish and other cultures.

FROM THE EDITOR



Mexico has never been far from the headlines this year: whether it was the heartbreaking stories of migrant parents being split from their children as they tried to cross the US-Mexican border, or the continuing toll from drug-related violence. But one name dominated Mexican news more than any other: Amló: the nickname given to Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the left-wing politician who achieved a landslide victory in the country's elections in July. He swept aside a century of politics dominated by the increasingly corrupt PRI party and won on a ticket of renewal that promised to tackle corruption, inequality and the endemic violence.

But not everyone is convinced. Writing in his latest book, *El Pueblo Soy Yo* (I Am the People), the Jewish commentator Enrique Krauze (who has often criticised Mexico's left) predicts that Amló "will corrode democracy from within". However, the Jews I spoke to for our special section on Mexico (from p14) were cautiously optimistic. Relations between the community and the Mexican government have historically been good and most expect that to continue – although some did express fears that attitudes towards Israel might become pricklier.

But as Jo Tuckman points out (p29), López Obrador acted swiftly to squash antisemitism when it reared its head in his MORENA party. That is something that his friend, Jeremy Corbyn, might do well to learn from.

The other notable thing about the Mexican Jewish community is that whilst it is small – around 50,000 people – it has an impressive cultural scene. On p22, Carlos Metta describes how younger Jews are forging new identities based on cultural, rather than religious, affiliation. This is echoed by other voices such as Myriam Moscona (p28), whose novel, partly written in Ladino, was awarded one of Mexico's top literary awards. It is an inspiring end to the year.

Hasta la vista!

Rebecca Taylor

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BEATRIZ SOKOL
Beatriz is a photographer based in Mexico City, but her

projects have taken her all over Latin America, Africa and Europe. She has a particular interest in combining different photographic genres. She took the pictures of the activists, musicians and writers in our Passport section on Mexico (from p14). You can see more of her work at beatrizsokol.com



EMILIO BETECH ROPHIE
When the former UK Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, visited

Mexico City earlier this year he was the first guest on Emilio's new video podcast, *Sesión Abierta*. Based in Mexico City, Emilio is a writer and editor and for ten years was the co-host of *El Aleph*, Mexico's Jewish radio chat show. He writes about the history of Mexico's Jews and the challenges they face on p14.



PETER WATTS
Did Walter Benjamin really have a weed habit? Yes,

according to Peter, who uncovered this gem in the LSD Library, a collection of books and artefacts dedicated to drugs (see p38). Peter has written for the Guardian, the Daily Telegraph and Prospect among other publications. His latest book *Altered States: the Library of Julio Santo Domingo* is out now.



ALAN GRABINSKY
Alan is based in Mexico City and writes about travel, cities, and Jews.

His work has appeared in *Tablet*, *Haaretz* and the *Guardian* among other publications. He works as a copywriter in the humanitarian agency CADENA (see p22). He has contributed widely to our Mexico section with pieces on art (p20), food (p24) and Jewish life outside the capital city (p30).



ELISABETH BLANCHET
When she came across a plaque to Varian Fry in

a Marseille square, Elisabeth decided to find out more. You can read her story on Fry on p10. Elisabeth is a French photographer and filmmaker based in Marseille. Her work has covered gypsy and traveller communities, the history of prefabs and the orphans of Ceausescu's Romania.



A boy blows the shofar at the service in Lorca in October

SHOFAR SOUNDS IN LORCA FOR FIRST TIME IN 500 YEARS

A service has taken place at a synagogue in Lorca, Spain, for the first time since Jews were expelled from the country in 1492. **Rebecca Taylor** reports

The first Jewish service in more than 500 years has taken place in a synagogue in Lorca in the Murcia region of Spain. The service, held on 2 October to celebrate the festival of Simchat Torah was the first to be held there since the Spanish Inquisition of 1492, when Spain expelled its Jewish population.

Around 70 people attended the service, with most coming from the local Costa Blanca community. "The children started the service by blowing a shofar, a sound which has not been heard in Lorca for more than 500 years," says Alan Harris, a British resident of Alicante, who organises services and events for the Jewish community in the region. "Kaddish was said for the Lorcan people who perished there during the Inquisition. We read out the names of 15 people we know who were murdered at that time. We also know that other local Jews received 200 lashes, some were sent to work as galley slaves, some were burned alive or garrotted, and others imprisoned for life." Rabbi Joseph Dweck, the Senior Rabbi of the S&P Sephardi Community in the UK, also sent a message that was read out at the service. The UK's Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis has also supported the initiative.

The remains of the synagogue were uncovered during the construction of a hotel on the site about 15 years ago. Built inside the fortified walls of the town's medieval castle, it is the only known

medieval synagogue in the region and is also the only synagogue of that era in Spain that has not been used as a museum or built over with another religious building. "It is a wonderful site with spectacular views," says Alan.

The synagogue's remains were in an excellent condition when they were found and the building includes a fountain for handwashing and benches that run along the sides of what is thought to have been the main prayer hall. A women's gallery above has also been reconstructed.

At the beginning of the 8th century southern Spain was occupied by Muslim rulers but Jews prospered in Lorca, raising cattle and working as craftsmen and Arabic

translators. Eighteen houses and artefacts, such as menorot, thought to belong to the Jewish community, were also found in good condition nearby.

The only sour note was sounded by Lorca Tourist Board, which has charged

the community 360 euros to use the premises. "The tourist board wants to show the world that there is a synagogue and also to turn the area into a World Heritage Site. They should be delighted with what we are doing. Instead they charge us!" says Alan. As we were going to press, the Lorca Tourist Board responded to say it was looking into the matter. ■

"The tourist board should be delighted with what we are doing, instead of charging us"

www.southerncostablancajewishcommunity.org

CAN GEFILTE FISH HELP SAVE JEWISH HERITAGE?

A Krakow conference has called for a global Jewish heritage network, says **Rebecca Taylor**



The refugee architects of New Zealand, Israeli tourists and a session intriguingly titled Bound by the Wisdom of Gefilte Fish were just some of the topics debated in Krakow, Poland, in September as part of a conference on the future of urban Jewish heritage.

Over 140 participants, including politicians, heritage experts, academics, historians and community leaders from over 30 countries attended the event to talk about cultural heritage projects and share ideas about the preservation of Jewish heritage sites worldwide. European Union Commissioners Tibor Navracsics and Elzbieta Bienkowska also attended the opening session at Krakow's historic Tempel Synagogue.

"As well as attending sessions covering areas as diverse as Jewish heritage tourism, synagogues in Cairo and heritage foods, participants had the opportunity to discuss ways they can support each other," said Michael Mail, the Chief Executive of the Foundation for Jewish Heritage, which organised the conference with the University of Birmingham's Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage.

"We are calling for greater support for Jewish heritage preservation and the creation of an ongoing international network of cities and towns that have Jewish heritage as part of their cultural offer," said Mail.

Addressing the conference, EU Commissioner Navracsics, who is in charge of culture and education, said: "What we must do together is ensure that cultural heritage finds its place in people's lives – and in their hearts." ■

www.foundationforjewishheritage.com



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Jewish socialists at a picnic, London, 1902

ICONIC YIDDISH ARCHIVE TO OPEN LONDON OFFICE

YIVO's new base aims to bolster its UK and Europe ties, reports **Rebecca Taylor**

YIVO, the renowned New York-based archive that has documented Yiddish history and culture for almost 100 years, is to set up a new office in London.

"We want to bring YIVO back to Europe. The new base will be a bridge between the New York office and Europe," said William Pimlott, Director of Operations for YIVO UK.

YIVO was founded in 1925 in Vilna, Poland (now Vilnius, Lithuania) to preserve and promote Jewish culture in Eastern Europe and Russia. Much of the collection was hidden during World War II. In 1940, the office moved to New York.

Since then, it has built up a collection containing more than 23 million original documents, pamphlets, photographs and other artifacts and over 400,000 books relating to the lives of Ashkenazi Jews

throughout the world. Among its little-known treasures is a large volume of material relating to Jewish life in the UK.

One impetus for the move has been the discovery of a large amount of new material from YIVO's original collection in Vilnius that had remained hidden since the war. The London office will provide a base to exhibit these materials.

"YIVO's aim in setting up its London office is to make the many treasures in its archive and library accessible to British people. Its presence in London will enable it to cooperate closely with allied British institutions helping to broaden discussions about Jewish history. It will serve as an important way for British people to learn about Jewish history," said YIVO's CEO Jonathan Brent. ■

See yivo.org

HOT CHOCOLATE

It's time for the doughnut to roll aside, the only sweet treat you need this Chanukah is a kosher chocolate menorah, says **Rebecca Taylor**



The dark arts: Ratzabi at work

The Israeli artist Anat Ratzabi, to whom we spoke to in the April issue of JR about her Holocaust memorial in The Hague, has turned her attention to designing menorot. But these are candelabra with a difference: they are made from kosher Belgian chocolate.

Ratzabi uses wax to create the model for the candlesticks, which are then carved with designs such as floral patterns or even a cityscape of Jerusalem. After the models have been made, a mould is created and casting takes place – using warm chocolate. Then the chocolate is cooled, the cast released from the mould and your menorah is ready to be drooled over. To create a 'bronze' effect the sculpture can be adorned with an edible bronze patina.

"The chocolate doesn't melt when lit because it is solid, high quality dark chocolate that has no milk in it," says Ratzabi, who also creates boxes of chocolates carved with symbols including the Star of David, 'chai' (the Hebrew letter meaning 'life'), Christian crosses and Islamic crescents and stars.

Ratzabi, a Yemeni-Israeli artist who has lived in the Hague in the Netherlands



Eat your words: a chocolate 'chai'

for almost 30 years, also creates 3D reproductions of paintings of the Dutch and French Masters – in chocolate, of course. Her cocoa-based art includes Johannes Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring and Vincent Van Gogh's self-portrait with his bandaged ear. The results have been so impressive that Madame Tussauds of Amsterdam and the Rijksmuseum have asked her to produce chocolate busts of art works.

Ratzabi says: "Using chocolate is innovative and magical." We say, "Why spend hours cleaning wax off your menorah when you can eat it instead?" ■

www.thechocolatesculpture.com



DON'T MISS!

JR HAS A NEW WEBSITE!

We've redesigned our website over the summer and we hope you'll agree it's now easier to read and use. Our designer Becky Redman and the JR team have created our sleek new look, which features easy access for subscribers to previous Passport and Sephardi Renaissance sections and to the whole of our back archive.

You'll also find information about our upcoming tours – Southern Ethiopia and Greece are lined up for spring 2019. And we continue to bring you the latest news and interviews from the arts world with our blogs and JROutLoud podcasts put together by our Arts Editor Judi Herman. Best of all, it's now even easier to renew your JR sub online!

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THE UNSUNG HERO OF MARSEILLE



As the net tightened around Jews and opponents of the Nazi regime in Vichy France, a daring rescue mission swung into operation in Marseille led by an American journalist, Varian Fry. Now Fry's story is being told in an upcoming novel and film. **Elisabeth Blanchet** reports on the legacy of this little-known activist

Varian Fry never saw the Mediterranean tree planted in recognition of his bravery at Israel's Holocaust memorial centre, Yad Vashem, in 1996. Fry was the first American citizen to be honoured by the centre as a Righteous Among the Nations (non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews from Nazi extermination). He died aged 59 in 1967 – just after starting a job as a Latin teacher in a private school. It was an unremarkable ending for a man who was responsible for saving thousands of Jews and other refugees from wartime France, and who is lauded as a 'Héro de la Résistance Française' (hero of the French Resistance) in an inscription on a blue plaque in a small Marseille square.

"When he returned from Marseille to America, Fry was seen as a non-conformist," says Jean-Michel Guiraud, president of the Varian Fry France Association. Sitting in his Marseille living room, it feels as if he could talk for hours about the man he admires. "He suffered from this lack of recognition," he adds.



A retired historian, Guiraud is an expert in Marseille's World War II history. In 1999 he created the Varian Fry France Association after being contacted by Walter Meyerhof, an American professor, whose family was saved by Fry. "Walter felt he had a duty to make the name of Fry known. He had created the Varian Fry Foundation Project in the US and asked me if I'd be interested in creating a sister organisation in Marseille," says Guiraud, who had already been working with schools to make Fry's story known.

Fry was born in 1908 in New York to a wealthy Protestant family. He attended prep schools and majored in classics at Harvard. He read Greek and Latin poetry in his spare time. "But he always had a rebellious streak," says Julie Orringer, an American writer whose latest novel, *The Flight Portfolio*, is based on Fry's experiences in Marseille. "At boarding school because he protested against cruel initiation rituals; at Harvard he had a reputation for throwing wild parties. He set up an avant-garde literary magazine, and was suspended for planting a 'For Sale' sign on the dean's lawn."

Orringer's book also touches on the fact that he was known to have had relationships with other men. "Most of his biographies have downplayed this, the more I learned about his life, the more I felt that his own sense of outsiderhood must have made him sensitive to the plight of others."

Fry is also the subject of an upcoming film, *And Crown Thy Good*, directed by Pierre Sauvage, filmmaker and founder of the Varian Fry Institute at the Chambon Foundation, an organization dedicated to exploring the American experience of the Holocaust. In a paper he gave in 2000, Sauvage describes how Fry became a journalist and on an assignment in Berlin in 1935, he witnessed an incident in a café on Kurfürstendamm that changed his life. "Two Hitler Youth boys approached a man who was drinking a beer and who they thought was Jewish. As the man put out his hand to lift his mug, one of the thugs wielded a dagger and nailed the man's hand to the table," writes Sauvage.

For Fry, hanging around with anti-Nazi intellectuals in New York was not enough. He needed to act, especially after France surrendered to Germany in June 1940. Hitler divided the country into an occupied zone in the north and an unoccupied zone in the south, where a puppet government operated out of the region's capital in Vichy. Jews, artists and writers who opposed the National Socialists fled south, as well as refugees, getting as far as Marseille. There they lined up in their hundreds at the US Consulate to beg for documents that would let them leave. But US policy was to stall.

Fry was alarmed by the news. In June 1940, at an event at New York's Hotel Commodore, he and other activists set up the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC), a body that aimed to secure visas for those in danger in France. The ERC compiled a list of around 200 people considered most at risk. Thanks to the work of the Jewish Labor Committee, the Department of State delivered several hundred emergency visitors' visas for German refugees in France. More were secured by Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the US president.

But the ERC felt that someone was needed on the ground. "What is urgently needed now is a new Scarlet Pimpernel who will go to France and risk his life... I have volunteered to go myself," Fry wrote to Mrs Roosevelt.

FRY IN MARSEILLE

Fry arrived in Marseille on 14 August 1940. He was 32. Along with the list of names – and a dress suit – he carried \$3,000 taped to his leg. His first sight of the city was the view from the top of the Gare Saint-

Clockwise: Varian Fry in his Boulevard Garibaldi office in Marseille, 1941; fellow ERC rescuer Miriam Davenport with Fry in the Rue Grignan office, Marseille, 1940; the plaque at Place Varian Fry, Marseille

Charles' glorious stairs. At the bottom of the stairs was the Hotel Splendide. It was from a room there that Fry set up the Centre Américain de Secours (the American Rescue Centre). Officially this was a charity that helped refugees with food and financial support. But word spread that it was offering help that was far more significant: securing visas. Fry was soon overwhelmed with refugees.

His first aim was to issue American visas for those who needed to flee the country. But once visas were secured there was a more dangerous hurdle: each refugee needed an exit authorisation from the French authorities. Even applying for such a document could put lives in danger, so Fry's team produced fake papers. In order to keep the real nature of his work hidden, he ran his operation from his hotel bathroom, where running water could drown out conversations he suspected the authorities might be tapping, says Guiraud.

Fry also worked with the Spanish and Portuguese authorities to get transit visas so the refugees could cross Spain and leave Lisbon by boat for the USA or Mexico. But Fry was not able to create exit authorisations for everyone. Some had to trek on foot through the Pyrenees to safety in Spain on the other side.

The ERC's list included Jewish and non-Jewish refugees from the Third Reich and opponents of the Vichy regime, among them famed artists Marc Chagall, André Breton and Marcel Duchamp, Nobel laureate physiologist Otto Meyerhof, writers Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Mann, and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss.

When Fry first encountered Chagall in the Provençal town of Gordes, the artist refused to leave France because he couldn't get an exit visa for his daughter, Ida. Fry didn't press him. Then the anti-Jewish laws were adopted in France. Fry tried again: the story goes that Chagall asked him if there were cows in America and he said yes. Soon afterwards, Chagall went to Marseille with his family to begin their journey to the States. Almost immediately he was taken from his hotel after the police

began rounding up Jews. Fry called a police official and warned that if news of the arrest leaked out, the Vichy regime would be gravely embarrassed. He threatened to call *The New York Times* if Chagall wasn't released in half an hour. The police met the deadline. In 1945, Fry wrote, "Marc Chagall is well satisfied with American trees and American cows and finds Connecticut just as good to paint in as Southern France."

Although he had support from other Americans in Marseille, including the American vice consul Hiram Bingham IV, the hotel soon became unsuitable as a base. "There were crowds in the reception and the management was not happy with 'hosting' the CAS within its walls," says Guiraud. Eventually, the CAS set up its HQ at 18 Boulevard Garibaldi. A group of artists and writers (including André Breton and other surrealists) also had a base at the Villa Air Bel, a chateau outside Marseille.

In December 1940, Fry was arrested with some artists and activists. They were held on a prison boat in the port, but were released a few days later. But when his passport expired, the US State Department, who were keen to keep the French onside, refused to issue another for him unless he

returned to the USA. He was finally arrested by the French police in August 1941, was given one hour to pack his things, and was accompanied to the Spanish border.

After his forced return to the States, Fry was put under FBI surveillance. "In Fry's

archived papers at Columbia University, I found grateful letters from his former clients," says Orringer. She adds that Fry, "faced a terrible moral conundrum: were the lives of Europe's prominent artists worth more than those who didn't have demonstrable talent? His solution was to work tirelessly to save as many as he could, and to write about the plight of refugees once he returned to the States."

According to Fry's estimate, assistance was provided to about 4,000 people; 1,000 of them were smuggled from France in various ways. Shortly before his death, the French government awarded Fry the Order of Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur.

He later described his departure from Marseille: "It was grey and rainy as I boarded the train. I looked out of the windows and innumerable images crowded my mind. I thought of the faces of the thousand refugees I had sent out of France, and the faces of a thousand more I had had to leave behind..." ■

"What is urgently needed now is a new Scarlet Pimpernel"



The Flight Portfolio by Julie Orringer will be published by Knopf in spring 2019. For release dates of *And Crown Thy Good: Varian Fry in Marseille* see: varianfry.org. Association Varian Fry France: varianfry-france.fr. Elisabeth Blanchet is a photographer and filmmaker based in Marseille.

WHEN THE NUN MET THE RABBI



For the past 50 years, Jews and Christians have been gathering in Germany to participate in a remarkable study programme. **Deborah Freeman** joins them as they celebrate their jubilee with a week of debate, choral singing – and twilight dancing

Fifty years ago, the young junior doctor Jonathan Magonet had a fortuitous meeting with a German nun. He was visiting Hedwig Dransfeld Haus, a German Catholic educational institute in Bendorf, Germany, which was headed by a nun, Anneliese Debray. On meeting Magonet, Debray lamented, “How can Jews and Germans ever get on together after what happened in the Holocaust?”

The meeting led to a discussion of how, 25 years after the Holocaust, avenues of communication could be opened between post-war German Christians and Jewish people from Europe, Israel and across the world. Debray already ran a Catholic Bible study week and an idea was formulated: by studying texts common to both Jewish and Christian traditions, those from both religions would learn to better understand not just the texts but also each other. In an inspirational move, Debray and Magonet and other progressive rabbis decided to set up a Bible study week (Bibelwoche) for Jews and Christians over the summer. The event was held in Bendorf (later it moved to Osnabrück) and the texts chosen for this

first Bible week were: Genesis, Chapters 1-3; Isaiah, Chapters 42-49, and the Book of Jonah.

Cut to a light summer evening, August 2018. I have come to Haus Ohrbeck, a Catholic education conference centre in Osnabrück, for the 50th annual Jewish-Christian Bible Week. Through the wide windows of the main hall, I see woods and green fields. Rabbi Magonet, now Emeritus Professor of Bible at Leo Baeck College, London, is addressing us. He suggests that during this week we look at questions we don't ask ourselves on a day-to-day basis and ask, according to our own religious tradition: why do we think God created us?

The next morning there I am, in a group of 13 people ready to begin the day's discussion. With me are Lutheran pastors, Catholic and Protestant theologians, other Christians from Germany and the Netherlands and another Jewish participant, Dr Annette Boeckler, Head of Jewish studies at the Zurich Institute for Interreligious Dialogue.

Bert Geerken, a Dutch academic with an interest in theology, is the kind-looking facilitator. “It is important to know a lot

about the Bible,” he tells us with a smile, “but also it is important for us to get to know each other.” We are fulfilling the aspirations of Bible Week's founders. And the texts we have on our tables are the ones that were studied 50 years ago.

But this is not a holiday. Seven days. One hundred and thirty people. Christians, Jews and a Muslim. First thing each morning there is shacharit [Jewish morning prayers] attended by Jews, Christians and, on most mornings, by the Muslim imam Halima Krausen.

After breakfast, participants can attend a psalm reading. The morning I attend, the psalm is read in Hebrew, German, Dutch, English and Yiddish. Then we divide into small groups for text study, analysis



and discussion. Each group focuses on a different way of accessing the text, from an in-depth textual analysis, to contemporary, interpretative or creative approaches. In the afternoons, there are lectures by scholars followed by Q and A sessions. All participants are free to present material in the afternoons and evenings in slots called Speakers Corner and Fringe.

And there are plenty of tea breaks, coffee breaks and very tasty non-meat meals. There is also a choir, made up of participants, that practises daily between study sessions. British composer Rebekka Wedell's haunting composition 'Kol Korei – A Voice Calling – Eine Stimme Ruf' echoes the ethos of the first Bibelwoche in 1968 by drawing on Isaiah 40 and its themes of repentance and the words of Martin Buber: "Alles wirkliche Leben ist Begegnung" (All true life is encounter).

Each afternoon, there is a lecture relating to this year's chosen texts. At the Monday session, Rabbi Dr Deborah Khan Harris, the principal of Leo Baeck College, tells us: "Every generation must discover the text of the Hebrew Bible for themselves, making it relevant for their own lives." Citing 'second-wave' feminism, environmentalism, as well as queer, post-colonial and indigenous readings of the Bible, she gives no quarter to those, like myself, who are neither sociologists nor theologians. But her conclusion: "We must have ears to hear all those whose voices have been marginalised, silenced, ignored," is moving.

On Tuesday, Imam Halima Krausen shares perspectives on the creation story from the Qur'an. Krausen was Imam of the Islamic Centre in Hamburg for 20 years and is a fellow of the Academy of World Religions at Hamburg University. She tells us that there are seven different creation stories in the Muslim holy book. She cites familiar stories and characters, such as those of Adam and Eve and Abraham, in new contexts. Readers may have come across Krausen's lectures at Limmud, and her commitment to interfaith work shines like a light from her session.

On Wednesday, the Swiss Jesuit, Fr Dr Christian Rutishauser, delivers a lecture called The Suffering Servant: an invitation to repent. Rutishauser is a member of the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, and a permanent counsellor to the Pope on this matter. The section of Isaiah we are focusing on is a core topic in Jewish-Christian relations (a Jewish woman I once knew became a Christian after reading Isaiah). Again I feel keenly my limitations in academic theology but warm to the speaker's personality.

Rutishauser says that the retired Pope

Benedict is putting pen to paper these days with views that cherish older, antisemitic doctrines. Afterwards I consult a Catholic theologian, Sister Katarzyna Kowalska, from the Order of the Sisters of Zion. She agrees that this is serious but reassures me later by emailing me her order's mission

statement. "We are called to witness by our life to God's faithful love for the Jewish people. This call implies that our apostolic life is characterised by a threefold commitment: to the Church, to the Jewish people and to a world of justice, peace

and love".

On Thursday there is no lecture but instead a jubilee celebration: representatives from German radio, Osnabrück dignitaries and religious leaders

come to visit. Many of the speakers refer to their fears over the recent rise in antisemitism in Germany and Europe. Later, the choir sings to the audience and we sing back. Rebekka Wedell's piece is interwoven with quotations from Bach's 'Passacaglia for Organ'. She wants the occasion to reflect the importance of German culture to both Christians and Jews – and it does.

And when the speeches celebrating 50 years of this unlikely annual gathering are over, we are invited outside. Jews, Christians, nuns, priests, theologians, and some children troop outside into the grounds of Haus Ohrbeck to be entertained with dinner, cakes and wine. It's a merry scene. You might think that celebrating together is actually the only real function of the world's religions.

Small groups settle themselves at trestle tables that seem to have magically appeared. A klezmer trio begins to play under an old oak tree. It does not stop until the sun sets. And in the gathering dusk, a circle appears of people dancing together. A Reverend Mother of the Carmelites, two rabbis, teachers, a Catholic priest, a Lutheran, an Orthodox Jewish woman, an Israeli teacher, dancing hand in hand.

On Friday, Rabbi Howard Cooper, a psychoanalyst, presents a session called Jonah Unbound. Quoting Philip Roth,

Clockwise: Dr Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz, Imam Halima Krausen and Sr Claire-Louise Marriott; Fr Christian Rutishauser; Rabbi Deborah Khan Harris; Rabbi Howard Cooper; Haus Ohrbeck

Elena Ferrante, Primo Levi and the Bible, Rabbi Cooper allows his rabbinic and psychoanalytic imaginations to mingle. Jonah comes to life in scenes past and present. "The literary potential of the Bible!" I say to myself. But there is a further point to Rabbi Cooper's exposition. From Jonah we must learn to have compassion for the planet – or there will be drought.

On Friday night, Christians are welcome to attend Shabbat services. Jews can attend Lutheran Vespers on Saturday evening, and Catholic mass on Sunday morning – without taking communion.

My overall impression of Bibelwoche is that it is an oasis of brotherhood, sisterhood and hope in our increasingly

sloganised world. One Jewish attendee, with years of experience, acknowledged that there had, on occasions, been difficult moments. How could there not have been? For myself, I felt a little uncertainty about the status of Israel, then and now within the framework of Jewish-Christian relations.

The nearest I got to a conversation about the real Jerusalem, as opposed to the heavenly (textual) one, was an exchange about birds. The swifts that descend annually on Jerusalem fail to distinguish between Jewish, Muslim and Christian rooftops!

But the week's cultural components felt less significant than the opportunity to meet and talk with such a lively collection of people. Christians, whose raison d'être was engaging with Jews and Judaism, rabbis and other Jews for whom the concepts of 'or lagoyim' (a light to the nations) and 'tikkun olam' (repairing the

world) include enthusiastic commitment to outreach and interfaith work. As we might say in Hebrew, "Leshanah haba'ah be'Osnabrück". Next year in Osnabrück. ■

Next year's Jewish-Christian Bible Week runs from 28 July to 4 August, 2019. Bookings are from February 2019. See: <https://haus-ohrbeck.de>. Deborah Freeman is a playwright and short story writer. See deborahfreeman.co.uk

"My group includes Lutheran pastors, Catholic and Protestant theologians and two Jews"



FROM TIJUANA TO CANCUN

MEXICO'S JEWS ARE
FACING THE FUTURE

As Mexico's radical new president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, prepares to take office, **Emilio Betch Rophie** tests the mood of the country's distinctive Jewish community

Have you heard the one about the rabbi and the cannonball? It may sound like the premise for an unlikely joke, but the question refers to an incident during the Mexican Revolution. Isaac Dabbah, a Syrian Jew who immigrated to Mexico from Aleppo and became one of the first Jewish community leaders of the 20th century, tells the story in his memoir. In 1913, during the peak of the armed struggle that transformed Mexican society, there was a bout of fighting on Mexico City's Jesus Maria Street, home to many Jewish residents. One shot hit the apartment of fellow Syrian immigrant Rabbi Shlomo Lobaton. Reportedly, the cannonball got stuck in the building's electric meter and failed to explode. Since Lobaton's flat also served as a makeshift synagogue, housing Mexico's first Torah scroll, the survival of the building and its holy contents was considered a miracle.

Today, Mexico is going through another political revolution as a result of the triumph of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in July's presidential elections. A fiery leftist politician, López Obrador won by a landslide. Once a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which dominated for 71 years, he then positioned himself as an outsider intent on cleansing the system of its endemic corruption and neoliberal economics. The ground is shifting in Mexico.

What this means to the Jewish community remains to be seen. As Mexico City mayor (from 2000 to 2005), López Obrador maintained an amicable relationship with Jewish leaders; now, a handful of notable Jews are members of either his National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) party or his circle of advisors. In July, Claudia Sheinbaum, a MORENA politician, became the first woman mayor of Mexico City (see p29). She is Jewish – although not formally affiliated to the community. However, there are fears that extreme left influences in the party might prevail and impact on the country's traditionally close relationship with Israel.

Yet the Jews of Mexico have reason to feel optimistic. It's 106 years since the foundation of Alianza Monte Sinai, Mexico's first Jewish organisation, set up to unite the country's Jews. Since then, the story has been one of good fortune, warm conviviality and acculturation. It has become almost a cliché to rave about how gefilte fish is eaten 'a la veracruzana', simmered in a spicy tomato sauce; or how Mizrahi Jews dip their kibbeh (wheat meatballs) in guacamole and top them with a tart jalapeño chilli. Mexican Jews have risen to prominence in areas including business, medicine, film production, academia, engineering and journalism. And if you happen to attend Friday night services in a Mexican synagogue, it is not unusual to hear the chazan intone the Kaddish to the melody of a mariachi song.

However, this is also a story of insularity. Mexico's approximately 50,000 Jews tend to live near to each other in a handful of suburban neighbourhoods. Around 90 per cent live in the greater Mexico City area with smaller communities in Guadalajara, Monterrey, Tijuana and Cancun. More than half are Sephardi and Mizrahi and there is a prevalence of Orthodoxy: in Mexico City there are two Conservative congregations alongside four larger Orthodox ones. They socialise within the tribe and marry other Jews. Even conversions are disallowed in the two largest congregations, Maguen David and Monte Sinai, both of which represent the Syrian Jewish population.

Most young Jews attend university while still living at home. Social functions, friends and family are all safely bounded within the community. Mexican non-Jews often describe their Jewish compatriots as 'cerrados', meaning closed.

Still, the community is a global success story. Inter-marriage is paltry. Most families send their children to a Jewish school. And, according to the Comité Central, the federation of Mexico's Jewish communities, around 95 per cent of members are affiliated with an institution involved in Jewish life. Communal organisations are well funded, and around 4,000 Mexican Jews of all ages volunteer

in the ever-increasing list of committees and community ventures. One recurring joke is that when two Mexican Jews meet, just like that, a new comité is born. There are committees for the young, the elderly, the not-so-young-yet-not-so-old; committees that promote business networking, art and theatre. There are film and book clubs, a dance festival, an addiction recovery network, groups for visiting the sick, and study programmes. An international Jewish film festival (see p22) tours to reach audiences that may never have had contact with Judaism. El Aleph, a weekly radio show, covers all aspects of Jewish life and has a large non-Jewish audience.

There are also hundreds of charities. One, CADENA (see p22), provides assistance to victims of emergencies and natural disasters around the world and played a significant part in rescuing people trapped by the Mexican earthquake last September.

Since 1950, Mexican Jews from all backgrounds have found enjoyment in Mexico City's Centro Deportivo Israelita, or 'Depor', as it is dubbed, an impressive sports and recreation club. It operates three separate campuses and in the main campus alone, there is an Olympic-size swimming pool as well as another indoor pool, 13 tennis courts, a football pitch, a softball court, three gymnasiums, restaurants, a bowling alley, a theatre club and much more.

Mexico has also imported programmes from around the Jewish world, such as Britain's Limmud, South Africa's Shabbos Project, and Israel's Taglit-Birthright. Mexican participation in these has often been record-breaking on a global scale. Last January Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks visited the Latin-American country, delivering talks in synagogues, schools and community centres. "The fact that two prominent rabbis like Sacks and the Shabbos Project's Warren Goldstein came to Mexico and expressed their admiration for our community says a lot", says Emilio Penhos Mougrabi, a planner for Sacks' visit.

Sacks' lectures astonished Mexican audiences because the notion that an Orthodox rabbi can be a public intellectual was new to many here – and some Orthodox rabbis called on their followers to stay away from his talks. But Sacks' appearances were sold out and broadcast to thousands on Facebook and YouTube.

Mexican Jews have also experienced little recent antisemitism. This is partly due



to the work of Tribuna Israelita, the Comité Central's public affairs office, which liaises with journalists, engages in interfaith dialogue and supports the Israeli embassy's outreach projects. It represents a

unified voice for Jewish organisations in dealings with the Mexican government.

Yet there are worrying trends that keep community leaders up at night. While Mexican Jews mostly enjoyed prosperity during the latter half of the 20th century, the challenges posed by globalisation since the late 1980s have proved a turning point. Today's families face difficulties to make ends meet; an increasing number depend on welfare from Jewish institutions.

There is also a stifling strain of materialism. Many families feel they must keep up with their neighbours: sending their children to private Jewish schools, and spending money on fashionable vacations, clothes and private healthcare.

Another preoccupation is the alarming levels of violence that have plagued the country since at least 2006, when then-president Felipe Calderon declared an open war on drug-trafficking. Assaults and robberies are a part of everyday life here.

The State of Mexico, home to many Jews, has one of the highest numbers of homicides and extortions in the nation. Will López Obrador stem the violence?

But the future looks bright. In January 2019, the Mexican Jewish Documentation and Investigation Centre

(CDIJUM) will open a new headquarters in an impressive building built on the courtyard of an old synagogue in the Roma district. Open to all for research and cultural activities, the CDIJUM holds over 120,000 documents, photos and rare books from across Mexico. "This is a pioneering project that seeks to reclaim our unity," says Enrique Chmelnik, CDIJUM's executive director. "The first Jewish organisation in Mexico was founded in 1912 with Jews of differing backgrounds. These factions formed their own congregations, but there is now a drift towards more collaboration."

The descendants of those wandering immigrants who crossed the oceans in search of a better future have thrived. Jews such as Rabbi Lobaton found that these new lands had their own dramas, and sometimes the fallout would hit their places of dwelling. But Jews love finding evidence of miracles. In the case of Mexico, a struggling tropical nation bursting with flavour, colour and good humour, they have built their own miracle. ■

"It's common to hear the chazan intone the Kaddish to the melody of a mariachi song"

A hidden history

Ilan Stavans tells **Rebecca Taylor** about a dark but fascinating period of Mexico's past

“In Mexico, the role of the Spanish Inquisition was mostly uncovering heretics, witches, deviants, and subversives. Jews – who were almost non-existent, at least when it came to engaging in religious rituals openly – weren’t the principal target,” says Ilan Stavans, a Mexican writer, TV and radio host and a professor of Latin American studies at Amhurst College, USA. In his 2012 book, *Return to Centro Histórico: A Mexican Jew Looks for his Roots*, he revisits his hometown, Mexico City, to uncover the history of Jewish life in Mexico.

Jews arrived surreptitiously in New Spain, as Mexico was called, from 1492, after they were expelled from Spain. Those caught practising their religion could be accused of ‘Judaising’, a crime punishable by being burnt at the stake in a public auto-da-fé.

“There are few Jewish traces of this period,” says Stavans. “Although several non-Jewish cemeteries in the state of Monterrey (today Arizona and New Mexico) have tombstones that incorporate symbols including lions of Judah, Hebrew letters and menorot, embedded in Catholic imagery.” During Mexico’s War of Independence (from 1810-1821), the term ‘Judaiser’ became a moniker for a freedom fighter against the Spanish Crown. “The colonial time was a fertile ground for spiritual exploration but often the journey was performed in the shadows, in fear of being caught by the authorities. It is a period defined by the crossroads of identity: how to be Jewish in an environment where Catholicism is ferocious,” says Stavans. His next book, *The Seventh Heaven: Travels through Jewish Latin America*, will be published next year.



Diego Rivera's mural *Dream of Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Park*, showing an Inquisition scene, with Mariana de Carvajal being burnt at the stake (far left)

MEXICO

A LATIN AMERICAN SUCCESS STORY

How did a hidden, persecuted group emerge to become one of Mexico’s most confident immigrant communities? By **Janet Levin**

UNDER SPANISH RULE



1519 A few conversos – those forced to convert to Christianity in Spain – arrive in Mexico with Cortés in what is then called Nueva Espagna (New Spain), fleeing the Inquisition.

FROM 1530 more conversos arrive. They integrate into the Mexican elite, some returning to Jewish practice, others joining the clergy.

1571 The Mexican Inquisition is established.

1579 King Philip II of Spain establishes Nuevo Leon, a colony north of Nueva Espagna, to be governed by Luis de Carvajal, a Portuguese/Spanish nobleman born to conversos. To boost the population of the country, conversos and practising Jews are welcomed.

1586 The Mexican Inquisition turns to persecuting Jews.

RETURN TO CENTRO HISTÓRICO

With the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 and the first of Columbus's four voyages, the New World became a safe haven for Spanish Jews and, a decade later, their Portuguese counterparts. This Sephardi community spoke Spanish, Ladino, and other Judaeo-Spanish languages.

Some Sephardim converted to Catholicism but practised Judaism in secret and are known as crypto-Jews. (It is believed that several crew members in Columbus's three ships, as well as a number of soldiers in Hernán Cortés's army, were crypto-Jews.)

The Spanish Inquisition was an ecclesiastical tribunal that began in the Kingdom of Aragon in 1232. By the middle of the 15th century it was largely forgotten. It was, however, revived in 1478 by Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, who declared open war against heretics. The role of the Inquisition was to ensure the orthodoxy of recent converts. Jews were seen as unwelcome, but they were not the Inquisition's prime target. The Holy Office was after New Christians suspected of being practitioners of Mosaic law. From the end of the 15th century, Spanish and Portuguese Jews had their choices narrowed dramatically to three options: conversion, exile or death. The last two included confiscation of property.

The debate at the time focused on the notion of 'limpieza de sangre', purity of blood. The Inquisition was irked by the so-called converts. The word in Spanish is 'conversos'. Scores of Jews had chosen that path, but their embrace of the Christian faith in some cases (impossible to know how many exactly) produced a double identity: publicly they were New Christians, 'cristianos nuevos', but in the privacy of their homes a few kept practising their Jewish faith.

Studies of crypto-Jewish life in colonial Mexico are scant. Of the few, many are biased, as in the case of Alfonso Toro's *The Carvajal Family*, a megavolume published in 1944 and filled with tendentious statements. Toro's subject is an important episode: the sorrowful adventures of Luis

de Carvajal the Younger, known as El Iluminado, who died in an auto-da-fé in Mexico City in 1596. He was the nephew of Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva, a slave trader and 'pacifier' of Indian tribes who served as governor of the northern state of Nuevo León. That prominence put him on the spot as a judaisante, a practitioner of the Mosaic laws. Carvajal the Younger's life story (he reconverted to Judaism after an act of self-circumcision and believed himself to be the Messiah) is also recounted in Arturo Ripstein's movie *El Santo Oficio*, about the Holy Office of the Inquisition.

The best narratives about this chapter in Mexico's past are by Angelina Muniz-Huberman, whose novels such as *La Burladora de Toledo*, about a trickster, and anthologies on the Sephardi past are a lightning rod. Not only Mexicans, but Mexican Jews themselves, have never heard of Carvajal the Younger, myself included—at least until I left the country and made an effort to begin exploring the past.

More familiar is the tale of the 'Indian Jews of Venta Prieta', a community in the state of Hidalgo [see p30] that is said to descend from crypto-Jews who reconverted to Judaism in the middle of the 19th century. But a serious study of its origins (the ethnographer Raphael Patai, in a seldom-discussed essay, argued that they actually descend from Jehovah's Witnesses) remains to be done. In any case, I cannot remember any mention of Carvajal the Younger or Venta Prieta while I was at La Yidishe [Stavan's Yiddish school].

It was as if our teachers had decided that our education would be about present-day Mexico. Instead, the pedagogical approach emphasised the Holocaust. On Yom haShoah, for instance, the entire school gathered in the auditorium to sing Holocaust-related songs. A large picture of Mordecai Anilevitch, a hero in the Warsaw ghetto uprising, hung in the patio of La Yidishe. In other words, our communal icons were Old World partisans. The message was clear. Our heart was in the Old

World. Mexico was a temporary home. My mother emphasises, however, that every 16 September, Mexico's Independence Day, Jews place a flower arrangement at the Ángel [the statue of independence at Pasco de la Reforma, Mexico City].

I want to visit the Plaza de Santo Domingo, where the Antiguo Palacio de la Inquisición, now the Museo de la Medicina, still stands. An ornate stone building, this is where, starting in 1610, autos-da-fé took place in Mexico City and where the Punishment Tribunals of the Holy Office were located.

The air is heavy. Clearly, I'm at a vortex where hatred reigned. Not too long before, I had been studying the work of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, arguably the most accomplished Colonial poet in the Spanish language, who authored, among other works, a memorable philosophical satire on the way women let themselves be manipulated by men. She worked within the confines of the Church. Yet at the end of her life, the inquisitorial religious establishment took away everything she had and forbade her to write again. Her punishment for being adventurous was forced silence. More serious offenders (heretics, witches, paedophiles, transsexuals) suffered far worse: they were burned at the stake.

I had never visited the museum before. Unfortunately, it isn't altogether impressive. It includes a sample of torture instruments, but the overall history of the Inquisition is presented in a rather sketchy fashion. Actually, most of the items are about medicine. The museum might be faulted for omitting a crucial part of the country's past. But it is hardly the sole institution to be guilty of this lapse. Truth is, this chapter in Mexican history remains unknown. ■

This is an edited extract from *Return to Centro Histórico: A Mexican Jew Looks for his Roots* by Ilan Stavans, Rutgers University Press, 2012. *Angelitos*: a graphic novel by Ilan Stavans and Santiago Cohen, Latinographix, 2018.

“The word ‘Judaizer’ became a moniker for a freedom fighter”



1589 The Carvajal family are persecuted. Luis de Carvajal dies in prison. Monterrey still has customs of the original settlers but most descendants have emigrated to New Mexico.



1606 Spain orders the release of conversos from Mexican prisons.
1640 Portuguese conversos arrive and set up new trade links.
1810 Mexican War of Independence begins.



1821 Spain accepts Mexico's independence. A constitutional monarchy is replaced with a republic. The Inquisition is abolished but conversos are slow to practise Judaism openly.

NEW WAVES OF IMMIGRATION

1857 A liberal constitution brings freedom of religion. Jews arrive from Germany and Eastern Europe. Some Native Americans who believe they are descended from crypto-Jews return to Judaism.
1867 Benito Juárez becomes president and enforces the separation of Church and State.

1880s More Jews arrive, many pushed from Russia by the assassination of Tsar Alexander II.
LATE 19TH CENTURY Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jews arrive from what is now Syria and the Ottoman Empire. Poorer Eastern European Jews arrive in small towns Puebla, Chipas and Veracruz before moving to Mexico City. →

The synagogue on Jesus and Mary Street

Jews have made Mexico City their home since the time of the Spanish Inquisition. **Adrian Whittle** takes a tour of the capital city to uncover the Jewish stories behind its colourful streets

When the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes arrived in Mexico in 1519, among his entourage were a number of conversos – Jews forcibly converted to Christianity in Spain in 1492 during the Spanish Inquisition. Conversos emigrated in large numbers to Mexico – known as New Spain – at the time. Despite the presence of the Inquisition in Mexico many attempted to secretly maintain Jewish customs including dietary laws, circumcision and keeping Shabbat.

During a visit to Mexico City, I went on a tour led by Monica Unikel-Fasja. Monica is the author of *Sinagogas de Mexico* (Synagogues of Mexico) and guided me around the city's Centro Historico,

which included the site of the Inquisition headquarters.

The Inquisition, which operated until as late as 1820 in Mexico, encouraged people to identify friends and even relatives suspected

of 'Judaising', that is, of secretly practising Judaism. Suspects were tortured, tried and in some cases publicly burned at the stake. The building that housed the Inquisition headquarters still stands opposite Santo Domingo Plaza, its slanted corner designed to be visible from all directions upon entering the plaza.

Many Mexicans can still trace their descent to conversos. Some have tried with varying degrees of success to be accepted into the country's established Jewish communities. Perhaps the most famous claimant to a Jewish identity through the converso link was renowned artist

Diego Rivera. I had read a quote from Rivera, made in 1935, where he said, "My Jewishness is the dominant element in my life. From this has come my sympathy with the downtrodden masses which motivates all my work".

In 1865 Emperor Maximilian issued an edict of religious tolerance, opening the way for Jewish immigration and open practice of the faith. The first immigrants to arrive in Mexico City were from Syria, Greece and Turkey. Later European Jews arrived, escaping the pogroms and economic misery of the old continent. Many settled in an area around the Calle Jesus Maria (Jesus and Mary Street). Monica tells the story of one Eastern European Jew

who settled in the city and wrote back to tell a relative that he had found work, the climate was good, the Mexicans friendly and there was even a synagogue. Why didn't they come to Mexico too, he asked.

When the relative replied asking the name of the synagogue he wrote back saying it was called "the Jesus and Mary" synagogue. The relative was, reportedly, shocked.

The community that the enthusiastic immigrant wrote of included a Jewish school, kosher eateries, a kosher butcher, bakeries, tailors and even a Jewish midwife.

The first Jewish school was set up in a series of rooms around a tiny courtyard at Calle Republica de Colombia 16 in 1924. Although the courtyard is now surrounded by flats with lines of washing hanging across the landings, it is easy to imagine the school as it would have been back in the



early 1920s, with the children gathering in the small rooms to learn Hebrew.

In Calle Jesus Maria, Monica showed me another courtyard. It was here that children not attending the formal Jewish school could take lessons from a man who became known as 'the teacher', receiving instruction in Hebrew and the Torah. This courtyard was also home to a Jewish bakery. At Calle Jesus Maria 22, there was a grocery run by a woman called Ana, who was famous for her pickles and herrings. Today, a statue of the Virgin Mary stands above the space where the shop once stood.

We also had a quick look at the market, Mercado Abelardo Roderiquez, which was built in 1934, and had many modern features, such as a day care centre. The market complex includes a theatre, Teatro

“Diego Rivera is the most famous claimant to a Jewish identity through the converso link”

A COMMUNITY ON THE RISE

1901-1904 Turkish and Ashkenazi Jews begin holding open religious services

1905 the first Talmud Torah, a religious school for boys, is founded.



1910-1920 The Mexican Revolution and subsequent civil war lead to some Jews leaving.

FROM 1917 When a more anti-clerical constitution is established, immigrants arrive from Russia, eastern Europe and the Middle East. Many community organisations are founded.

1920 Father Rivas, a converso descendant, establishes an organisation for 3,000 Native American Jews, who claim descent from conversos. The Kadosh Bnei Elohim community is established in Venta Prieta.

1923 The Mount Sinai Synagogue is founded in Mexico City.

1930 The Jewish population of Mexico is estimated at 21,000. The first Hebrew-language printing press is brought to Mexico.

1930s A new wave of immigrants arrives fleeing the Nazis, mostly those who already have family or friends in Mexico.



Clockwise: inside Nidje Israel; Nidje Israel; family at Xochimilco, 1940s; at the station, 1920s; off Calle Jesus Mary; Reunion St, 1910s; (centre) Monte Sinai



against Jews, calling for their expulsion or restrictions on their economic activity. However, these sentiments never achieved the mass support seen in Europe. This was partly helped by the efforts of the Jewish community to express its identity as Mexican: the community displayed the Mexican flag in its synagogues and took part in celebrations such as the annual commemoration of the 1910 Revolution, in which the Maccabi sports club participated.

What of the new synagogue? The Nidje Israel synagogue is an impressive building at Calle Justo Sierra 71. However, without the Star of David on the door, it would be impossible to identify it as a place of worship – its Ashkenazi founders were possibly keen to keep it anonymous. The building was designed by the engineers Gerson and Jinich, and construction was completed in 1941.

The synagogue was the focus of the Ashkenazi community in the area for many years but as they moved away to the suburbs of Roma, Condesa and Polanco, attendance dropped and the building fell into disrepair. A minyan was maintained for some years through the efforts of the Herrera family, who were converts to Judaism, but eventually worship stopped here altogether.

Thanks to the efforts of Monica and others in the community, the synagogue has now been restored. The interior is full of light and colour. My gaze was drawn to the ceiling, which is covered with symbols such as the tablets with the ten commandments and menorot. The design is reminiscent of the folk art once found in the wooden synagogues of Lithuania, Romania, Hungary and the Ukraine.

Although it no longer holds services, the synagogue stages cultural events to promote understanding of Jewish heritage. The response has been positive – Chanukah celebrations have attracted many non-Jewish visitors over the years. ■

del Pueblo, where Yiddish plays were once performed.

Jews no longer live in this part of the city although several still maintain businesses here and Monica sometimes sees mezuzot on shop door posts.

There are two synagogues in the area. Today, the Monte Sinai synagogue on Calle Justo Sierra is for the Syrian (mostly Damascus) and Lebanese community. But its original congregation was made up of Jews from a variety of backgrounds – many were from the former Ottoman Empire who arrived in the city in the early years of the 20th century. It was founded in 1923 through the efforts of Salonica-born Isaac Capon and other members of the congregation. Capon financed many charitable activities and is

commemorated with a plaque inside the synagogue. Apparently he died in poverty having given away much of his fortune. The building has undergone renovation and some of its original features have been lost, but its exterior (which is original) is beautiful. There is still a daily minyan at the synagogue. Visitors can enter as part of a tour or prearranged appointment.

During the 1930s and 40s, many in the Centro Historico's Jewish community began to prosper and gain in confidence. As the situation for European Jews deteriorated, Mexico's Jews had the means to build a new synagogue, near to Monte Sinai.

Mexico was not immune to the fascism that was sweeping Europe and antisemitic organisations demonstrated

For Jewish Mexico City tours contact Monica: sinagogajustosierra@gmail.com. See: sinagogajustosierra.com. Adrian Whittle is an arts writer. See: adrianyekkes.blogspot.co.uk.

COURTESY OF THE DOCUMENTATION CENTER; WIKI COMMONS; GETTY

MEXICO

1931 As many as 250 Jewish merchants are expelled from the La Lagunilla Market in Mexico City, one of only a few antisemitic incidents at a time of economic depression.

1937 An quota system restricts immigration from countries such as Poland to 100 people per year but at the same time there is provision for some immigration of refugees.

1942 The Central Committee of the Jewish Communities of Mexico is established.

1940s AND 1950s Jewish community organisations coalesce and grow.

TODAY Out of a total of 128 million Mexicans, 40,000-50,000 are Jewish. About 75% live in Mexico City. Most are descended from late 19th- or early 20th-century immigrants.

SEPTEMBER 2017 Though the Jewish community is against the proposed 'Trump wall', they celebrate a recent visit of Benjamin Netanyahu despite his support for the wall. Only the progressive organisation J-AmLat expresses criticism of his policies.



JULY 2018 Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo is the first Jew and first woman to be elected mayor of Mexico City.

The revolutionary who helped Trotsky, partied with Kahlo and put Mexican art on the map

Anita Brenner was the writer and activist who brought the world's attention to the work of her friends – Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros. **Alan Grabinsky** explores her life and work

In 1916, as war raged in the Mexican city of Aguascalientes, 11-year-old Anita Brenner and her family got into a car and sped towards the station. They had escaped Mexico before, but this time it was for good: Brenner's father had sold all of their belongings to pay for the train ticket.

The family settled in San Antonio, Texas. But Anita grew up feeling out of place. San Antonio was her first encounter with practising Jews, but they were nothing like the kings and queens that she had read about in biblical stories. As a Mexican-born American Jew, she was in a murky area: shunned as a Mexican by the American Jews, and discriminated against as a Jew by many American gentiles.

During her first year at the University of Texas she experienced antisemitism when she tried to find accommodation. Much to her father's disapproval, she decided to return to Mexico – which was in the early aftermath of the Revolution.

When Anita arrived in Mexico City in 1923, she found herself in the midst of a group of intellectuals and artists who have since become myths. In cafes and parties she mixed with artists such as Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and José Clemente Orozco. As a journalist, anthropologist and cultural promoter, Anita highlighted the movement called Mexican Renaissance in the United States, her hybrid identity allowing her to crisscross national boundaries.

Anita's father, Isidore Brenner, was an American-naturalised entrepreneur from Latvia who travelled by bicycle across the US before settling in the Mexican state of Aguascalientes in the late 19th century. Porfirio Diaz, the president of Mexico at the time, promoted foreign investment across the country and turned Aguascalientes into the headquarters of American companies such as the Smelting Company, owned by the Guggenheim brothers.

Isidore first worked as a waiter, but gradually he established his own business, bought land to build a stable and plant fruit trees, and became a prominent public figure. But many indigenous communities resented Diaz's economic policies and suffered under an oppressive landowning scheme that excluded them from the profits. This created an explosive social



situation with anger against the foreign landowners.

When Anita, who was born in 1905, was five years old, her Mexican nanny had pointed to the Halley comet and said it was a bad omen. She was right: that same year, there was a revolution to overthrow Diaz.

With American investors' interests in mind, the US intervened in favour of Diaz, and portrayed Mexico as a chaotic country that was falling apart. The intervention by the US sparked strong anti-American sentiments in Mexico: American flags were burned, consulates and American businesses attacked, and white-skinned foreigners were subject to harassment. Fearing for their lives as American nationals and property owners, the Brenner family fled the country.

When 18-year-old Anita came back, Mexico was healing from the wounds of war and going through an incredibly creative phase. The Revolution, despite the horrible violence, had encouraged an evaluation of Mexico's indigenous roots. There was a profound questioning of the country's Eurocentric narrative that had existed since the Spanish conquest in 1519.

Anita soaked it all up. She was convinced that art had a major role to play in the self-fashioning of this new Mexico. She became friends with American liberal journalists and writers such as John Dos Passos, who were covering the social transformation, as well as forming relationships with like-minded muralists Rivera, Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros.

She became conscious of Mexico's negative portrayal in the American media, and read in the US press about the unfavorable situation for Jews south of the border. But Anita welcomed immigrant Jews into the Gulf of Mexico port of Veracruz and was a fervent defender of her birth country: her first journalism pieces in *The Nation* and for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency explicitly painted a positive picture of Mexico as a haven for Jews.

Anita Brenner by Tina Modotti, 1926; Self-portrait along the border line between Mexico and the United States by Frida Kahlo; Diego Rivera with a xoloitzcuintle dog in the Blue House, Coyoacan



These articles were the beginning of a lifelong mission to promote Mexican culture to an American audience. Anita moved to New York in 1925 and published in English her most famous book, *Idols behind the Altars*, an eclectic view of Mexico's indigenous traditions and contemporary artists. The book, which positioned the work of Rivera and Orozco as a continuation of Mexican popular culture, was an instant hit: she received letters of praise from Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno and British writer Richard Hughes. She was only 24 years old.

Her intellectual prowess never waned. In 1929, under the tutorship of Frank Boaz, she graduated with a PhD in anthropology from Columbia University. She won a Guggenheim fellowship, which she used to travel to Europe and the Mexican state of Guerrero. As a journalist for the *New York Times*, she defended those who had been jailed in the Spanish Civil War.

In 1933 she interviewed Leon Trotsky for *The Nation*; a couple of years later, when he had fled to Norway, she contacted Rivera and told him that getting Trotsky out of Europe was a matter of life or death. Rivera lobbied for Trotsky with Mexican president Lazaro Cardenas, who granted him asylum and Anita helped organise Trotsky's acquittal trial in Mexico. But she grew increasingly concerned about antisemitic attacks in Mexico City: as fascism raged in Europe, she wrote about groups who were organising mass violence against immigrants.

Overall, she wrote more than 400 articles for different publications and published dozens of books, including *The Wind that Swept Mexico*, the first account of the Mexican Revolution in English. She was, above all, a connector. Her parties were legendary, and she also organised the shows of many of her artist friends.

Ten years after she moved back to Mexico, in 1955, she established the magazine *Mexico This Month*, which

quickly turned into a Who's Who of emerging artists, and featured names such as Pedro Friedberg and Mathias Goeritz. In the 1960s, she returned to her family's plot of land in Aguascalientes and started growing fruit

and vegetables. In 1974 she died in a car accident on her way to her ranch.

Her daughter, Susannah Joel Glusker (who died in 2013), said locals often talked to her about sightings of Anita Brenner's ghost, who appears as a floating blonde woman and tells children to plant trees in her honour.

Despite the role that Anita played in building bridges between countries, she remained a stranger in her land. When the Mexican government awarded her the Aztec Eagle, the highest honour given to a foreigner, Brenner declined it because she had been born in Mexico. This life-long conflict is summarized in the line of a poem that she wrote in her 20s: "Daughter of two countries, citizen of none." ■

Anita Brenner: *Mind of her Own* by Susannah Joel Glusker, 1998, University of Texas Press.

“Art had a major role to play in the self-fashioning of this new Mexico”

“We are creating new ways to be Jewish”

Mexico City has a dynamic and creative Jewish community. **Rebecca Taylor** meets some of its cultural movers and shakers



ELIAS FASJA (66)

Musician and founder of Sefarad, a Sephardi performance group

“My show mixes poetry, Ladino readings and flamenco. It talks about the Jewish relationship with Mexico, in particular regarding the expulsion from Spain in 1492. It also touches on the lives of those who spoke Ladino. We perform to mostly non-Jewish audiences. I used to work in the textile industry. These days, I also work for an entertainment licensing company.

My family is from Aleppo – my grandfather came from Turkey to Syria. We eat Syrian food, such as kibbeh (meatballs), but chilli comes with everything! My family lives in the Mexico City suburbs. Our three children went to Jewish schools and keep varying degrees of observance.

It’s easy to be Jewish here but the Mexican population is not familiar with Jewish history. That is why the culture centre at the Nidje Israel synagogue is important (see p18). There is little assimilation and that might be because the community fears racism. Mexicans who have lighter, European looks don’t experience racism, but those who are darker sometimes do, and the community perhaps worries about experiencing this.”



BENJAMIN LANIADO (46)

Director of CADENA humanitarian relief agency

“CADENA is able to operate at incredible speed, mobilising the resources of the Jewish world – through partnerships with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, IsraAID, local communities and humanitarian organisations – to get to disaster zones in record time. We have a team of over 60 people who are trained in Israel and we have worked in Haiti, Turkey, Chile, Guatemala, Ecuador, Belize and Costa Rica. But the Mexican earthquake of September 2017 was a real challenge.

I’ve had the privilege to save a lot of lives. With the earthquake, I controlled the



ISIDORO HAMUI (31)

Director of the Mexican International Jewish Film Festival

“I always had an interest in culture. The Syrian Jewish community, in which I grew up, is interested in religion, Jewish institutions and textiles – but not culture! But I wanted to put on things that were fun for young people. I organised concerts and became involved in the film festival. I brought in a larger team and films that would attract non-Jews – not just our donors. The audience has grown enormously – it is now a major international festival.

I also help my father with his work – he has a factory producing the sweetener stevia. My grandfather came to Mexico from Aleppo about 100 years ago. He started off in New York but saw business opportunities over the border. On my mother’s side, the family came in 1929. They thought the plane was heading for the US but when they arrived they saw palm trees and realised this wasn’t New York!

Mexicans don’t really learn about Judaism but there is a respect – even a love – for Jews here. We are regarded as part of the culture. The cynical, ‘Jewish’ way of talking is similar to the way Mexicans talk. Both make fun of themselves.” *ficjm.org*

teams in the field. We rescued nine people. It was dangerous and stressful. But helping to save people is the most beautiful thing. The world often displays indifference to global crises and I set up CADENA in 2005 to try and change this. Now CADENA is a Mexican institution. I often talk around the world about the work we do in the name of the Jewish people.

My family is originally from Aleppo and Jerusalem and I grew up in a religiously observant household. I go with my family to synagogue every week. The community is my home.” *Cadena.ngo*

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FANNY SARFATI (55)

Actor and theatre producer

“My family is originally from Istanbul. They came to Mexico in the 1920s to a town just outside Mexico City. When I was a few years old my family moved to La Roma, a prosperous Jewish area of Mexico City. My grandmother and mother cooked Turkish dishes, we children loved the bourekas. We continue Turkish traditions, such as keeping ‘lucky eye’ amulets in the house or on a baby’s cot. I belong to an Ashkenazi synagogue and am not Orthodox but celebrate the festivals with family dinners.

Twelve years ago, I performed and directed a play about the life of the former

Israeli prime minister, Golda Meir. We toured with it to 14 countries. I produced another play based on the true story of three women – Jewish, Arab and German – who are caught up in a drama about an organ donor. I also produced a play about ten people in a café in Tel Aviv who are caught up in a bombing. Recently we performed this play in Tlatelolco, a tough neighbourhood outside Mexico City. It was a new experience for the audience to find out about Jewish issues, but they enjoyed it. Theatre is the best way to communicate our concerns as a community.”



MONICA UNIKEL-FASJA (55)

Director of the Justo Sierra Historic Synagogue at Nidje Israel

“My father’s family came from Vinnitsa, now Ukraine, in the 1920s. My mother’s family came from near Vilnius. My mom was religious but when she married she left religion behind. We grew up in a secular family but learnt about Jewish traditions and studied at a Zionist school. While my grandparents were alive we celebrated the festivals but when they died that stopped: Sunday meals were and still are the time for family. When I was a child we sometimes attended an Ashkenazi Orthodox synagogue and I went to Jewish Scouts.

I married an Orthodox man of Aleppo origin, so I have learned to live with tradition. We respect each other’s beliefs but we are quite different. I go to synagogue on the holidays, clean my home for Passover, build a sukkah every year and have separate dishes for milk and meat. But outside my home I’m not kosher.

For the last 24 years I have organised walking tours of Jewish Mexico City. I’m also in charge of the cultural centre based at the beautiful Nidje Israel synagogue. I’m proud of overseeing this space (see p18). It is a place where people can overturn their prejudices. In Mexico, there is some antisemitism but it’s not overt. You can find stereotypes, especially in small towns. We also get the fallout from the decisions made by the Israeli government. But we live without obstacles and have a good relationship with the government and feel optimistic about that continuing with López Obrador.” *sinogogajustosierra.com* ■



CARLOS METTA (27)

Musician and sound designer

“I’m involved with a few bands, including Klezmerman, which is a mix of klezmer and son (Cuban music), mambo, jazz and rock. I also run Freims, a venue and restaurant that features emerging artists and I was the director of Blowie Shyne, a project which aimed to develop young Jewish musicians. Last year I helped organise the first retreat for Latin American Jewish artists called Asylum Arts. Participants were from all areas of film, music, theatre, dance and art. This year I’m setting up PRIMARIO, a retreat to help emerging Jewish artists.

My great-grandparents came to Mexico from Damascus and Aleppo in the early 20th century. I went to a Jewish school and, like most young Jewish Mexicans, I spent a year in Israel. I live in an Orthodox community but I don’t live an Orthodox life. I am part of a generation that is creating a new way to be Jewish. Some of us are involved in international projects, such as Moishe House. We are focusing on how to define ourselves – not by going to synagogue, eating kosher or being afraid of God – but by nurturing a sense of belonging.” *carlosmetta.com*



On the trail of the kosher quesadillas

The history of Mexico City's Jews can be found in the dozens of kosher delis, stalls and restaurants dotted across the capital city. **Alan Grabinsky** follows his taste buds to uncover the story of this distinctive community

La Muertita—the Little Dead Woman—sets up her quesadilla stall every evening on a busy commercial thoroughfare in the hilly neighborhood of Bosques de Reforma on the western outskirts of Mexico City. She and her staff of eight drive 90 minutes across the largest metropolis in the western hemisphere to get here by 5.30pm. Then she sets up her tent, tables, chairs and cooking station to prepare quesadillas (tortillas with fillings such as cheese and beans) with military efficiency.

La Muertita repeats this ritual every evening of the week. Every evening, that is, except Friday. La Muertita's real name is Celia (she won't tell me her surname) and she isn't Jewish, but 90 percent of her customers in this wealthy suburban enclave are, and Friday evening is Shabbat. Like any good businessperson, Celia makes her clients' habits her own.

Since she first started selling quesadillas 58 years ago, La Muertita has followed Mexico City's 50,000-strong Jewish community in its migration across the city, from Polanco, near the city centre, to Tecamachalco just over the city line, into the neighbouring State of Mexico, and finally to the wooded suburbs of Interlomas and Bosques de Reforma. In its drift west, the Jewish community has left behind a constellation of eateries scattered along an eight-mile swath of Mexico City's vast urban landscape, some now serving their third and fourth generations of customers.

The first Jews in Mexico came to the New World aboard the ships of the conquistadors at the time of the Spanish Inquisition. Even in Mexico, far from the Crown, their faith was punishable by death (the Inquisition kept offices in the colony), so they created an underground network of support and prayer.

The best-known crypto-Jew of the time was Luis de Carvajal, who was burned at the stake in Mexico City in 1596 after being outed by a family friend. His journal—the oldest Jewish document in the New World—was returned to Mexico in March 2017, 82 years after its mysterious disappearance. Leonard Milberg, a New York collector of Judaica, recognised it at a New York auction house, bought it, and donated it to the Mexican government.

Thirty years after gaining its independence from Spain in 1810, Mexico underwent important political reforms that brought new protections for religious freedom, but it would take another 50 years for the Jewish community to make itself visible. Mexican Jews spent the early part of the 20th century in downtown tenements. Working as peddlers, clothing vendors, and tailors, they built their lives around La Merced, at the time Mexico City's primary wholesale market and most important immigrant quarter. Those early immigrants came to Mexico primarily from France and the Ottoman Empire. Jews

arriving from the Middle East established the first synagogue in Mexico City, Monte Sinai, in 1918.

From the 1920s to the end of World War II, a steady influx of Jews came to Mexico from countries such as Poland, Ukraine and Germany, largely to escape the rising tide of antisemitism. Most considered Mexico a stopping point on their way to the United States, but many ended up staying when the US capped immigrant quotas. Turkish Jews, fleeing heavy minority taxation by the Turkish government, and Syrian Jews, seeking economic opportunity, followed in the 1950s. Most recently, Mexico City has seen an influx of Latin American Jews escaping economic and political crises in Argentina and Venezuela.

There are schools and synagogues that cater to every variety of Jew, be they Sephardim who trace their lineage to the 16th-century exiles from Spain, Ashkenazim from Eastern Europe, or Jews coming from Aleppo and Damascus—in Jewish Mexico these are two distinct communities despite their shared origins in modern-day Syria.

As the community became wealthier, it moved, like most upwardly mobile Mexicans, to newly established middle-class neighbourhoods such as Roma, Condesa, and later Polanco. The first two, now the centre of the city's growing reputation as the hippest in the hemisphere, used to be typically Jewish. There were Yiddish bookstores and coffee houses where Polish and German women would sit to discuss the news in Europe. Even today there are five active synagogues in the Roma and Condesa, frequented mostly on the high holy days by Jews coming down from their mountain suburbs.

Despite making up a minuscule percentage of Mexico City's 24 million people, Jews have contributed immensely to the city's public life. Two of the most famous chroniclers of Mexican history, Enrique Krauze and Friederich Katz, are Jewish. For three decades the face of the media giant, Televisa, was the journalist Jacobo Zabludovsky, an Eastern European Jew born in La Merced; his brother, Abraham Zabludovsky, designed the Central de Abastos, which replaced the Merced as the city's wholesale market. Pedro Friedeberg designed some of Mexico City's most important contemporary buildings and Boris Viskin helped define Mexican art in the 20th century.

In 1985, a massive earthquake levelled the city centre. Many Jews moved to the outskirts. The city had been growing exponentially for years, and many in the community decided to take their

businesses to the emerging industrial zones at the urban periphery.

Those few who have kept their businesses downtown now commute up to two hours each way to attend to the jewellery, textile, and hardware factories established by their fathers more than half a century ago. If they spend the day there, they have few options for a kosher lunch.

Tucked into a commercial building on one of Mexico City's busiest avenues, Pita Grill looks like a no-frills diner in a suburban mall, its bright green walls dotted with mirrors, its chairs upholstered in black plastic. Save for the word 'Kosher' written in tiny Hebrew lettering below the restaurant's name, the only indication of the place's Jewish ownership is the mezuzah on the front door.

The menu is bizarrely eclectic, offering everything from tacos to sushi to falafel,

and the restaurant has a seal of approval from the Maguen David Community, the strictest kosher regulation in Mexico. One of the specialities is the Chile Jalapeño Tempura, a twist on Mexico's national dish, Chiles en Nogada, which is

“There are tacos of fajitas, tortas and enchiladas, all made without pork or cheese”

made by stuffing poblano chile with some permutation of beef, pork, dried and fresh fruits, then smothering it in walnut cream and garnishing it with pomegranate seeds and parsley.

Rather than using meat, the Chile Jalapeño at Pita-Grill is stuffed with tuna, cream cheese, beets and fish eggs. Although the restaurant is certified kosher, the walnut cream has been replaced by the house specialty—eel sauce. But when I try and call the restaurant later to clarify this, no one answers my calls.

Most customers here prefer less adventurous options. “They come here because we give them their traditional Arab-Jewish food, like kibbeh (meatballs) and kofte,” said Pita Grill manager Joseph Levi, who is of Syrian descent.

A block south, in a building that seems on the verge of collapse, is another kosher restaurant called Shalom. With its red chairs, surly waiters, and walls adorned only with the patterns left by chipped gray paint, it resembles a suburban Italian joint that's seen better days. But the menu is thoroughly Mexican. There are tacos of beef al pastor, Arab sausage (a spicy, beef-based chorizo), and fajitas (grilled meat served on a tortilla), as well as tortas (sandwiches) and enchiladas (tortillas with cheese, meat or vegetable fillings and chilli sauce), all made without pork or cheese. Like similar restaurants in the Centro (the capital's historic district), Shalom serves what's known as 'comida corrida', a fixed-price, three-course menu popular with the Mexican working class. Most of Shalom's →

← customers are businessmen that work in the surrounding warehouses and factories.

When I arrived on a recent afternoon, the cashier, Guillermo Torres, was taking orders for a delivery to Atzacapotzalco in the city's industrial outskirts, an hour's drive from the centre in peak traffic. He admits that his customer base has dwindled over the last few years. When he started working at Shalom eight years ago, there were only four kosher restaurants in the city. Now, he says, there are more than 15, but most are located far from the centre, in the Bosques and Interlomas to the west of the capital. As for Jewish businesses, Guillermo recognises that the best strategy would be to follow them out of town. "The rent here is going up for the warehouses," he says. "Most of the businessmen are moving out."

Mexico City's upmarket neighbourhood of Polanco has changed significantly since the 1950s, when the Jewish community first made it the core of secular and Orthodox life. Then a middle-class area, Polanco has since been taken over by galleries, designer boutiques and high-end restaurants. International culinary darlings Pujol and Quintonil are both here; so is the Museo Soumaya, the giant silver molar that Carlos Slim, the richest man in Latin America, built for his wife's art collection.

Though many Jews have long since left Polanco, there's still a strong Orthodox presence in the district. Bearded men dressed in black suits walk hand in hand with their children on their way back from the many yeshivas (religious schools) in the area. There are kosher stores on every other block, including a kosher supermarket, and five synagogues.

Polanco's most famous avenue is Masaryk, a recently remodelled strip dotted with ad agencies, car dealerships and clothing chains. Among the glittering show windows for Louis Vuitton, Montblanc, and Armani, there remains one important relic of the neighbourhood's past life: Klein's.

In 1962 Edward Klein, an American Jew whose family had settled in Mexico City in the previous decades, decided to quit his family's textile business and establish an old-fashioned diner serving hamburgers, milkshakes, and hot dogs. It didn't take long for the dishes prepared by Edward's gentile wife, Andrea, to make their way onto the menu. Andrea came from Puebla and her specialities included chilaquiles, tacos, chicken consomé, and the celebrated mole of her native city.

On a recent Friday morning, I met



their son, Charles, at the restaurant. "I was born in the kitchen," he said happily, surveying the packed dining room from our table in the back. Young people sat on the yellow plastic chairs out front, smoking. Inside, families sipped at milkshakes, and elegantly dressed older ladies chatted eagerly, sharing the neighbourhood gossip.

In the beginning, Charles told me, 90 percent of Klein's customers were secular Jews, mostly from Eastern European backgrounds, so there was never a need to go fully kosher. Instead, Edward chose to emulate New York delis by serving corned and roast beef sandwiches and bagels and lox alongside his wife's mole and milkshakes. As time passed, the kitchen at Klein's started developing Jewish-

Mexican fusion dishes like the salami torta (savory pie) and salami chilaquiles (tortilla chips), which are among the most popular dishes with the Jewish clientele, who make up around half of all customers at the Polanco location (Klein's also has an outpost in Bosques).

As the menu at Klein's suggests, Mexico City's Jewish community may remain insular, but its eating habits are decidedly cosmopolitan. With origins in 15 countries, the capital city's Jews have developed an idiosyncratic culinary style, with dishes like gefilte fish a la Veracruzana, a spin-off of the popular Mexican fish dish with garlic and tomato sauce. A recent cookbook, written and printed by Fanny Maya, a Syrian-Mexican Jew, lists 303 recipes, some of them uniquely Mexican-Jewish inventions.

Tacos with kosher salami at Klein's; below: Mexico City Jewish teenagers at a youth group in the 70s

Back in the suburbs, Celia tells me how, as a 13-year-old, she originally started selling quesadillas in the city centre. When she first set up her stall, she offered fillings common to quesadillas in Mexico—cheese and chicharron (pork cracklings) alongside huitlacoques (truffles) and squash blossoms. It wasn't long before a local Jewish customer told her that she would be better off focusing on kosher ingredients. Since then, Celia has served four generations of Jewish families. "A client once said I was like a grandmother to his grandchildren," she says.

La Muertita is not certified kosher by the rabbinical authorities but over the last 50 years, Celia has earned the trust of the community, removing meat from her menu (to avoid mixing it with cheese, strictly forbidden by the kashrut laws) and cooking exclusively with kosher ingredients. La Muertita has also branched out into catering events – Jewish and otherwise – ranging from bachelor parties to bat mitzvahs. She has two other locations in Mexico City's Jewish suburbs, run by her granddaughter and daughter-in-law. Four of Celia's six children work in the business. She's done well enough over the years to buy each of them a house.

On a chilly Tuesday night, some 15 customers gather around La Muertita's stall, some standing, others huddled around her cooktop on low plastic stools. As newcomers arrive, customers greet them warmly; many are old acquaintances who have been coming to Celia for 20 years. To the untrained eye, there's no difference between La Muertita's clientele and those patronising nearby stands. They don't wear Orthodox black hats or kippahs; the women wear jeans or trouser suits, like anyone else. There are other ways to make a community. ■

Alan Grabinsky is a writer based in Mexico City.

"Mexico City's Jews have developed an idiosyncratic culinary style"





From Damascus to Mexico City

A new film focuses on Mexico City's Syrian Jewish community. **Julia Wagner** speaks to its director Nejemye Tenenbaum

What do we gain from living in a community? This is the question at the heart of *The Third Place* (El Tercer Espacio), a new documentary by Nejemye Tenenbaum, focusing on the tight-knit Monte Sinai Jewish community in Mexico City.

The *Third Place* blends archive footage and interviews with community members, including rags-to-riches tales and people who struggle to get by. While most of the interviewees express warmth about their community, Tenenbaum teases out the complexities of living in a self-sufficient yet insular society. "Assimilation is pretty low and [the role of] institutions is very high. Perhaps it is one of the most institutionalised Jewish communities in the world," says Tenenbaum. He adds that rabbis are "very influential in the community's political and day-to-day decisions. Families are very tight and large – some have up to 20-30 first cousins. And they respect the elderly."

The film's name alludes to the term 'third place', a phrase coined by American sociologist Ray Oldenburg, who suggested that the 'first place' for societies is home and family; second is the place of work or study; and the third is where people gather, the place that enriches human lives.

Tenenbaum grew up in the Ashkenazi community in Mexico City and attended the Tarbut Hebrew School, the only mixed (Ashkenazi and Sephardi) Jewish school in the capital. He studied filmmaking in Mexico, Los Angeles and New York, before directing projects for Israeli television. He returned to Mexico and has worked on over 100 documentaries. While most of his Jewish-Mexican filmmaker peers, such as cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki and director Michel Franco, do not make films with Jewish themes, Tenenbaum's films

regularly have Jewish content, including a project for the Holocaust Museum in Mexico City.

In *The Third Place*, archive footage shows Syria and Mexico in the early 20th century. Many Jews emigrated from Syria in the 1910s and 20s, often arriving penniless and working as garment traders.

Another wave of immigration came in the late 1940s, as antisemitism increased in Syria and other countries in the region. Businessman Moshe Assa recalls his poor childhood in Damascus, his stint in the Israeli army, and integration into Mexican Jewish life after his arrival in 1958: "I didn't imagine [I would have] one percent of what this blessed country has given me," he says. Today, Monte Sinai is made up of around 2,600 families and 11,500 members.

Meanwhile, 12-year-old Geny Salame is approaching her batmitzvah – a communal event that she will share with friends from the Monte Sinai Hebrew School. Geny defines

"It is one of the most institutionalised Jewish communities in the world"

herself as being the least materialistic girl among her peers – despite describing her goal of having a huge house with servants. Through the stories of Geny and a young man called Samy 'Panés' Atri, who is looking for a job, we see the aspirations and fears, as well as limited horizons, of the younger generation. Their stories highlight a materialism which seems to dominate parts of Monte Sinai. Although, as Moshe Assa explains, there are new pressures on young people: Mexico was a closed market but now it has to compete with the world.

Despite this, *The Third Place* shows that living in a community can still provide an irreplaceable sense of belonging. ■

El Tercer Espacio, dir by Nejemye Tenenbaum, 2017. For screenings see: nejemyetenenbaum.com. Dr Julia Wagner is a writer and lecturer.



MORE MEXICAN JEWISH CINEMA

Subjects such as death, shivahs and suicide get a colourful Latin American twist in the films from Jewish Mexican directors. **Julia Wagner** picks five of the best

LIKE A BRIDE (NOVIA QUE TE VEA) dir. Guita Schyfter, 1994

Costa Rica-born Schyfter directs this adaptation of Rosa Nissan's novel about two Mexican Jewish girls coming of age in Mexico during the 1960s. A rich blend of Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, and Spanish brings their story to life.

A KISS TO THIS LAND (UN BESO A ESTA TIERRA) dir. Daniel Goldberg Lerner, 1995

A powerful and fascinating documentary using oral history and archive footage to tell the stories of Jewish immigrants to Mexico in the early 20th century (pictured above).

MY MEXICAN SHIVAH (MORIRSE ESTÁ EN HEBREO) dir. Alejandro Springall, 2007

In this comedy, the seven days of Moishe Tartakovsky's shivah celebrate his life in Mexico City. The soundtrack boasts mariachi and klezmer music, and Jewish rituals around death are depicted with affection and respect.

NORA'S WILL (CINCO DÍAS SIN NORA), dir. Mariana Chenillo, 2008

An award-winning tragicomedy revolving around the events that unfold after the meticulously planned suicide of a middle-aged woman, Nora, on the eve of Passover. But she has neglected to hide all the traces of her secrets, leading to unintended consequences that threaten to undermine her Seder night plan.

HEAVEN IN AUSCHWITZ (PARAÍSO EN AUSCHWITZ), dir. Aaron Cohen, 2016

A documentary scripted by Mexican Jewish writer Sabina Berman that tells the story of 13 Czech Holocaust survivors. As children in Terezin and later in Auschwitz, they met youth leader Fredy Hirsh, who devoted himself to making the lives of children in these horrific places more bearable.



Ladino for a new generation

Myriam Moscona explains why Ladino is such an important part of her novel *Tela de Sevoya*; below we feature an excerpt from the book

“**M**y family is from Bulgaria and Turkey. I was the first to be born in Mexico but I am the black sheep of the Mexican Jewish community!” laughs the writer Myriam Moscona. Her novel, *Tela de Sevoya* (Onion cloth), was written in Spanish with some Ladino (Judaeo-Spanish) and won Mexico’s prestigious Xavier Villaurrutia Prize in 2012. “My Jewish identity is strong but I’m not very involved in the community,” she says. “My grandparents and parents spoke Ladino but in my generation it was a dying language. I’m trying to capture a living memory of the language.” Moscona returned to Bulgaria to research her novel. “It was one of the most important things I have done in my life,” she says. In this excerpt from *Tela de Sevoya*, the narrator travels to Plovdiv, Bulgaria, and is given the contact for a rabbi who might be able to help her with accommodation:

TELA DE SEVOYA : FROM THE TRAVEL DIARY

The rabbi? What kind of rabbi? Orthodox—one of those rabbis who don’t touch women, who wear a hat and grow their peyot in curls? I’ve never liked the peyot or those men, the majority of whom are fanatics. They’re “penguins” in black-and-white outfits. I don’t want to call him, though I know very well I don’t have many options.

—Buenos dias. Kon ken avlo? Good morning. With whom am I speaking?
—Yo so Rivka, la mujer del rabino Samuel. I am Rivka, Rabbi Samuel’s wife.

(And this Rivka, will she wear a wig like the religious women who only expose their hair to their husbands? Will she walk clumsily with swollen insteps like the majority of religious women, whose hips appear to weigh them down?)

—Merci munchas por avlar kon

mozotras. No kero molestar. Thank you so much for speaking with us. I don’t want to bother you, I say candidly.

—Kuantas noches keresh kedarvos? How many nights would you like to stay?

—Sólo una. Just one.

—Bien. Ama mozos no lo fazemos por tomar parás. Fine. But we won’t do it to take your parás, your money.

My friend Heny—present for all that occurred on this long trip through Bulgaria—is with me. I mention to her that they are willing to receive us, and on top of that, without our paying any money; they don’t even want to hear any mention of parás. It seems unbelievable to me. Perhaps the price of their favour will be to force us to pray before each step we take. To say a blessing when you get up, when you eat, when you drink, when you wash your hands, when you wake up, when you are going to sleep. Perhaps I should explain to them that we are not religious, that we are impure, that we mix dairy and meat, that we go to parties on Saturdays, that we adore our Gentile friends, that we also venerate our brown Virgin of Tepeyac, that we would be willing to march in a gay pride protest, but that we are Jews and we love that status. Rivka gives me directions. An apartment on the boulevard facing the Maritsa River.

When we turn onto their street, we see a series of modest buildings, their paint eroded. We go up to the second floor and knock on the door. It is Friday.

—Seash bienvenidas. May you be welcome—the woman says, extending her hand. ■

Tela de sevoya by Miriam Moscona, trans Antena, Random House Mondadori, 2012.

CHILANGOS ARE SPEAKING YIDDISH AGAIN

Yiddish once played a significant part in Mexican Jewish culture. Today interest in the language is on the rise again, says **Arturo Kerbel**

Mexico City (or Chilangolandia for Yiddish speakers; a Chilango is someone who lives there) has a long Yiddish history. The Mexican Ashkenazi community used Yiddish as the language of instruction in many of its schools (Le Yiddishe) but it was also an intrinsic part of the community’s cultural activities. Consequently, the Mexican Jewish community has one of the biggest concentrations of Yiddish speakers in the world. Jews from all denominations spoke the language, and Hebrew and Yiddish were taught alongside each other.

The Ashkenazi community managed much of their institutional and cultural affairs in Yiddish from the 1920s up to the turn of the 21st century. There was a host of Yiddish literature, such as *Shtot fun Palatzn* (City of Palaces) by Isaac Berliner with drawings by Frida Kahlo’s husband Diego Rivera, and there were a number of Yiddish newspapers, such as *Der Veg* (The Way), *Di Shtime* (The Voice) and the left-wing *Foroys* (Forward).

As the use of Yiddish decreased from the 1950s, the Yiddish schools took on the challenge of conserving it. However, in the last 15 years Yiddish instruction has even disappeared from these schools’ curricula. Today two Yiddish schools remain in Mexico City.

But a renewed interest in the language is growing. The *Yidishe Shtub Mx* (Yiddish House) was set up in 2013 to bring together graduates from Yiddish schools and others with an interest in the language. There have also been seminars by international Yiddish experts, events such as *Idisher Idol* (a Yiddish song contest), and visits from the Warsaw Yiddish Theatre and The Klezmatics. ■

Arturo Kerbel is a trainee psychotherapist at King’s College London and UCL. He grew up in Mexico City and teaches Yiddish.



We carry our culture in our blood: Mexico City's new mayor

Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo could be a crucial link between Mexico's new president and the country's Jews, says Jo Tuckman

Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo leaned forward on the podium as if signalling intimacy. "I would like to comment on something," the woman who was within weeks of being elected Mexico City's mayor told a meeting of Jewish women last June, "because, obviously, you already know both my surnames."

Sheinbaum told the group that her paternal grandparents came to Mexico from Lithuania at the beginning of the last century and her maternal grandparents fled Bulgaria in World War II. She said her Mexican-born parents had raised her without religion, but "obviously we carry our culture in our blood".

It was a rare reference to her Jewish heritage. The 56-year-old, who will be the first woman, and Jew, to become mayor of Mexico City, hardly talks about herself. If she does she prefers to emphasise her identity as a scientist or as a woman. She studied physics before obtaining a doctorate in environmental engineering from Berkeley, and carving a career focused on air pollution and climate change.

As a politician Sheinbaum stresses her academic profile to send the message that she is untainted by the quagmire of corruption that plagues Mexican politics. She reinforces this with an earnest feminism and an austere look that contrasts with the tendency of women in

Mexican politics to favour either hyper-feminised power dressing or bohemian flamboyancy.

While this profile appeals to an influential sector within Mexico City, it would never have won her the July election to govern one of the largest and most complex metropolises in Latin America. That victory was rooted in her long association with Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the leftist who won the country's presidency by a landslide on the same day.

López Obrador has built a large support base over years by tirelessly underlining his commitment to tackling Mexico's deep injustices. His 2018 election campaign promised to "eliminate corruption" and channel the money saved into scholarships for young people vulnerable to getting sucked into crime. López Obrador defines himself as a nationalist and has also promised to defend migrant rights.

Sheinbaum's admiration for López Obrador was clear in an interview she gave in early 2018. "Andrés Manuel is a moral reference point for Mexico," she said. "He is closest to the great pacifists: to Martin Luther King, to Salvador Allende, to Mandela."

Sheinbaum never considered a political

career until López Obrador made her his environment secretary when he was mayor of Mexico City between 2000 and 2005. At the time she was married to a middle-level political leader whom she had met through student politics in the 80s. From then on Sheinbaum's dedication to the projects López Obrador gave her to oversee turned her into one of his most trusted associates.

She was his spokesperson during his first shot at the presidency in 2006 and accompanied him throughout the wilderness years that followed as well as his failed attempt to win the presidency in 2012. She was there again as he built a new political party – the Movement of National Regeneration (MORENA) – that would finally secure him victory this year.

When he assured her the candidacy for the capital's mayor, she ran her campaign largely around the pledge to return the capital to the path that he had traced when he was mayor.

Not that López Obrador always makes it easy for Mexico City progressives like Sheinbaum. His quiet but obvious social conservatism became increasingly difficult to ignore when he formed an alliance for the 2018 election with a tiny political party with roots in evangelical churches and leaders who abhor abortion rights and same-sex marriage.

This led some of López Obrador's inner circle to stage a protest against the alliance. He responded by promising not to roll back rights already established, and affirmed that his movement is inclusive of people from all religions and "free thinkers".

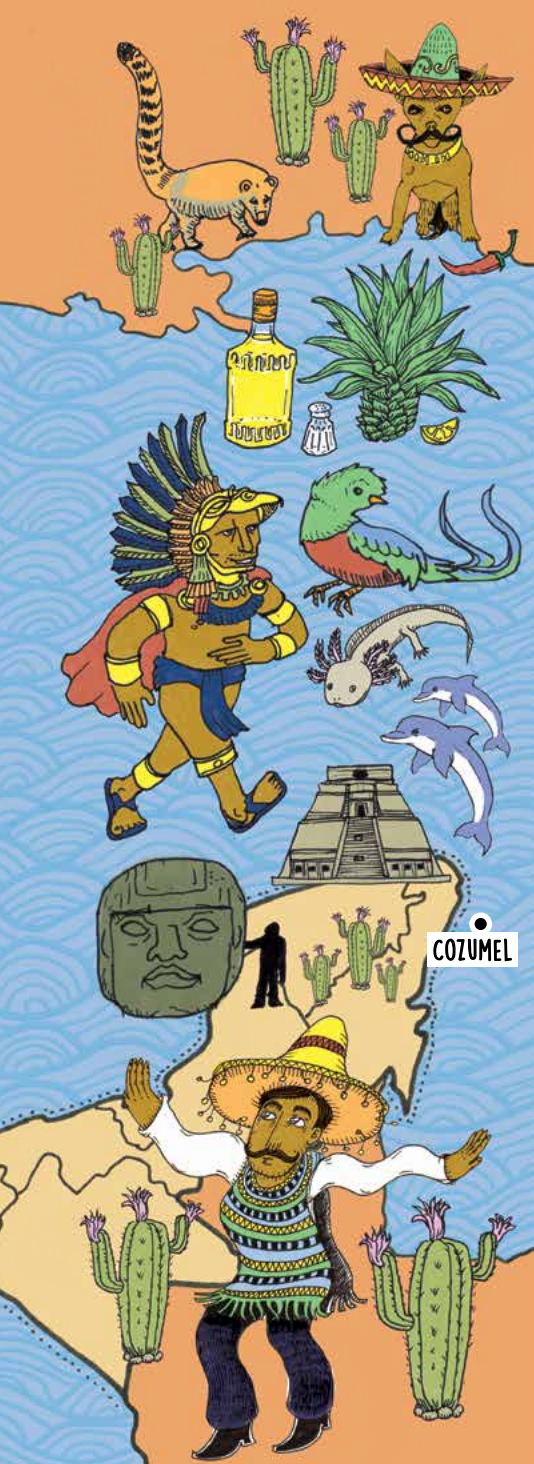
It was typical of the way López Obrador handles conflicts among his followers. If they turn it into a big enough problem, he issues a statement promising things will be okay, draws a line under it, and moves on.

That was how he handled a row within his party in 2012 about antisemitism, masquerading as anti-Zionism, similar to the issues facing the Labour Party in the UK. On that occasion Sheinbaum reportedly insisted he curb the aggressive tweets of his adviser. He did so, and the controversy faded.

Can Mayor Sheinbaum emerge from López Obrador's shadow? That question is particularly relevant given that the position is

almost automatically associated with future presidential ambitions. Is Sheinbaum thinking about the next presidential elections in 2024? "Not for now," she recently told *El Financiero*. "I don't think we should be talking about this now. I am focused on the city." ■

Jo Tuckman is a journalist based in Mexico and author of *Mexico: Democracy Interrupted* (Yale University Press, 2012).



said Charles Soberman, one of the founders of the town's Jewish Cultural and Community Centre, "They don't like that."

MONTERREY

Surrounded by mountains, the sprawling and arid Monterrey is Mexico's most important industrial city and many transnational companies choose to establish their headquarters there thanks to its proximity to the US. The Jewish connection to Monterrey dates back to colonial times. Luis de Carvajal y de la Cueva, the first Spanish governor of Nuevo Leon – the state where Monterrey is located – came from a family of 'new Christians' who had converted to Christianity to escape persecution. Although he was a devout Catholic, his sister and nephew continued to practise Jewish traditions. In 1590 the Mexican Inquisition seized the family. Carvajal was accused of 'Judaising' and on 8 December 1596, he and his family died at the stake in Mexico City.

"Jewish rituals have been mixed with Catholic and indigenous traditions"

Consequently, it wasn't until the end of the 19th century that Jews formally established themselves in Monterrey. The community grew in the 20s and 30s, as Jewish immigrants passed through Mexico to get into the States, stopping – and staying – at Monterrey. They established themselves in the Vista Hermosa neighbourhood and set up a community centre there in the 1940s.

Today there are only 115 Jewish families in Monterrey as many have left – mostly for San Diego or Mexico City – to escape a surge of drug-related violence. The city still has some legacy of Jewish customs in dishes such as cabrito (roast goat meat) and sweet semita pastries, and in the prevalence of Sephardi names, such as Garza.

TIJUANA/SAN DIEGO

Tijuana has recently become a symbol for the evolving tensions between Mexico and the United States. Chaotic and exciting, the city is often the last stop for migrants seeking to cross into the States and the streets are full of a mix of South Americans, Mexicans and even Africans. Although there has been a recent surge in crime, Tijuana has one of Mexico's most interesting cultural scenes, with edgy artists promoting a trans-Latin identity.

The Jewish community in Tijuana is made up of 80 families and was established in the 1930s. Many of them are business owners – one of Mexico's most iconic department stores, Dorian's, is based here – and others are involved in agriculture, recently introducing Israeli irrigation techniques to the local vineyards. Many Mexican Jewish families over the border in San Diego originally came from Tijuana.

VENTA PRIETA

The farming village of Venta Prieta lies in a deserted valley about two hour's drive from Mexico City. It has become something of an urban folk tale – and an uncomfortable presence – for Mexico's Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities.

The village has a synagogue, a mikveh and a Jewish cemetery: around 270 of its inhabitants claim to be descendants of crypto-Jews, those who hid their Judaism over the centuries to escape persecution. Their rituals have been diluted, or mixed with Catholic and indigenous traditions over the years, such as roasting a whole lamb to celebrate Passover, or interweaving the cross and Star of David in decoration. Venta Prieta's Jews are part of a growing phenomenon across the Gulf of Mexico, and in particular in the state of Veracruz,

where people are tracing their roots to a Jewish past.

During his exile in Mexico City in the 1940s, the Czech reporter Erwin Egon Kish wrote about the inhabitants of Venta Prieta, comparing their sense of isolation with his feeling

of loss, having fled from Nazi-occupied Europe. In the 1960s, Samuel Lerer, an American rabbi based in Mexico City, went to the village and converted the community so it could be embraced by the wider Jewish world. But the established Mexican Jewish community remains sceptical, saying that many in Venta Prieta are descended from indigenous Indians who converted to Judaism. The community has converted again through Orthodox rites. But the battle continues for them to be accepted.

COZUMEL

The Orthodox organisation Chabad has 11 houses, known as Chabad for Travelers, that extend from southern Mexico to Colombia. The first Chabad for Travelers was established in 2009 on Cozumel, an ancient Mayan Island off the coast of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. Cozumel has a population of 80,000 and is a scuba-diving magnet as well as a favourite stop on the backpacker circuit for young Israelis.

Jews arrived on Cozumel 35 years ago in search of a natural paradise. Today the community is made up of 150 people, including retired Americans, some Turks and a few Mexicans. It has four kosher restaurants, a mikveh and a Jewish school. One initiative involves the rabbi delivering monthly lectures on redemption in the local jail.

"When people go on vacation, they live in a different state of mind. They want to explore new ideas and traditions. In Chabad everyone comes as a guest and leaves as family," says Rabbi Dudi Caplin, founder and chief rabbi of Chabad for Travelers. > ISIDORO HAMUI HANONO ■

the most prosperous regions in Mexico. In recent years, San Miguel Allende's colonial streets, chic galleries and restaurants have turned the town into a wedding mecca for wealthy Mexico City inhabitants, including many Jews.

The town hosts a small Jewish community, called CHEMSA, made up of 100 members. Historically, the community comprised Canadian or American Jews, but recently there has been an influx of wealthy Mexican Jews who have bought homes in the area.

The services are led by members of the congregation and the community caters to Jews of all denominations, and focuses on cultural and secular events. But this lack of Orthodoxy has created conflict within the Comité Central, the umbrella organisation for the Mexican Jewish community: "We run into tensions with it because of the converts we accept into our community,"



The Museum



From spies to snappy suits: documentaries shine at UKJFF

The UK Jewish Film Festival is back! Amid an impressive line-up of films from all over the world, documentaries feature strongly this year. **Judi Herman** and **Danielle Goldstein** pick their top of the docs

THE MUSEUM (2017)

Director: Ran Tal

Filmed over 18 months, this fly-on-the-wall documentary takes us on a behind-the-scenes tour through Jerusalem's Israel Museum, following everyone from its curators and visitors to the in-house rabbi and the guy who polishes the floor. Israeli director Ran Tal never lingers too long on any one person, so that you might not even find out their job title, but you will discover, for instance, that they sought refuge in Israel after fleeing persecution in Baku, Azerbaijan. Or you'll hear snippets of debates about how it is only the Jews who seem to despise the Roman emperor Hadrian; the merits of overseeing the 20th-century section versus the Judaica department; and how best to dry a merkin on a mannequin.

The Israel Museum has been building its reputation and collections since its founding in 1965. In almost 500,000 objects it represents world culture, from life in Israel to Jewish art and biblical archaeology. Accompanied by a powerful backing track of strings and piano, Tal manages to artfully present a snapshot of the works and people who breathe life into the place. > DANIELLE GOLDSTEIN

“Simons brought Ivy League America to London’s working class”

100 FACES (2018)

Director: Benjamin Till

100 Faces is not so much a film as a sun-hued and affectionate 13-minute ad for being Jewish. In this slick but endearingly quirky offering, the composer and director Benjamin Till explores what it means to be Jewish in the UK today.

Till set out to find 100 British Jewish people who had each been born in a different year between 1918 and 2017. The first shot belongs to a one-year-old in Leeds, the last to a 100-year-old woman who says she doesn't know of “any other way” to be. In between we see Jews who are black, mixed-race, converts, Orthodox, atheists and everything in between – alongside a sprinkling of celebrities. Kindertransportees and Battle of Cable Street veterans rub shoulders with rabbis and hippies. Some of the words are spoken; some are sung, and the piece is threaded together by an original soundtrack from the Israel Camerata orchestra.

So what is being Jewish? It's eating sweets without gelatine; it's making sure people don't see you driving on Shabbat; and “dancing on the coffee table of existence”. There's much humour and warmth here and any moments of sentimentality are balanced by the poignant comments delivered by the older participants: their beautifully shot, intensely lined faces perhaps speak as much as their words. > REBECCA TAYLOR

JOHN SIMONS: A MODERNIST (2018)

Director: Lee Cogswell

In this nostalgic look back at men's fashion in 1960s and 70s London, filmmakers Lee Cogswell and Jason Jules present menswear pioneer John Simons in a warm, sepia-toned light. Lovely old footage of the capital is dropped in alongside black-and-white photos from the time. Talking heads include former customers, critics and style icons, such as the Modfather himself, Paul Weller, and designer Sir Paul Smith. The warmth with which they speak of this young Jewish kid from Dalston, East London, working his way up from a pop-up shop in the foyer of a Hackney garment factory in 1962 to a Marylebone mainstay today, is testament to the vision of Simons. We learn he's not simply a shop owner but a curator, a designer and a pioneer.

Drawing from the tailoring experience of his family – and four very dapper uncles – Simons brought Ivy League America to London's working class. He paved the way for the tailored, classic image of all those Mods and Rude Boys – or “Jack the lads”, as he dubs them – who influenced entire cultural scenes. Jules is keen to stress that Simons “created a language” for men's clothing, such as the infamous Harrington jacket. He named his stock after the character of Rodney Harrington (played by Ryan O'Neal) from 60s TV show Peyton Place and the name has stuck to this day.

> DG



The Waldheim Waltz



John Simons: A Modernist



Unsettling

UNSETTLING (2018)

Director: Iris Zaki

Tekoa is a Jewish settlement of almost 4,000 souls that was established in the mid-1970s close to the Palestinian village of Tuqu', between Hebron and Jerusalem. In 2016 filmmaker Iris Zaki set up her cameras at the settlement's café table for a month, inviting Tekoa's largely youthful inhabitants to engage with her over a drink.

Makeshift structures proclaim Tekoa's hippie vibe; the voiceovers of disgruntled residents proclaim their suspicions of the city leftie preparing to film them. Happily, Zaki's old friend, Metanya, who lives in Tekoa, gives the lie to the idea that all settlers are right-wing. The viewer gets to meet a cross-section of inhabitants, and encounters range from the tense to the revelatory. She's a good listener, admitting straight away that these settlers do not suffer from the self-critical political discomfort of her own Tel Aviv set. But she dubs as apartheid the system that separates them from their Arab neighbours.

This last assertion occurs in her uneasy exchange with a smiling young woman who believes the persecution of European Jews justifies her belief in the nationalism that denies Palestinian rights to coexist. The real eye-opener is the young mother Michal. With a baby on her lap and her hair modestly covered, she reveals that her near-fatal stabbing in a Hebron shop by a 16-year-old Arab boy actually brought her closer to her Arab neighbours. These neighbours came to apologise and pray with her, kneeling on her carpet. She wants the settlers to put all their energy into meeting them, "to soften all these walls". Zaki hopes she has "shown what's under the stereotypes". In a film that moves at its own leisurely pace, she has indeed.

> JUDI HERMAN

THE WALDHEIM WALTZ (2018)

Director: Ruth Beckermann

Ruth Beckermann's documentary about former Austrian president Kurt Waldheim, veers curiously close to our current political climate. The same nonsense Trump now spouts about fake news was also used by Waldheim to defend himself in the 1980s during his crusade to become Austrian president. As evidence mounted against him, proving that he was involved in the deportation of thousands of Greek Jews from Salonika during the Holocaust, amongst other atrocities, his defences flailed. At one point in this prescient film, he is recorded as saying that he was "maybe signed up to the Nazi party by friends or family", but he can't remember.

Using a series of clips shot by the director at the time, as well as archive footage of interviews, news reports and committee meetings, Beckermann forms a clear picture of how a man with questionable ethics miraculously managed to serve first as secretary general for the United Nations (from 1972 to 1981) and then be elected president of Austria for six years. What is, perhaps, most shocking is that Waldheim was elected despite having been exposed as lying about his past. The film reveals the power – and slipperiness – of political rhetoric, but it also suggests that Austria has still not come to terms with its part in World War II. As US Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder states in one clip, the defence against criminality cannot be 'Waldheimers Disease'. "Anybody who had any part in it [the Holocaust] cannot say that they forgot and therefore start over," says Schroeder. No doubt this contemplative, sincere documentary will stand as testament to that. > DG

INSIDE THE MOSSAD (2018)

Director: Duki Dror

Duki Dror's documentary examines what motivates the men and women who work as spies for Israel – and it makes sobering viewing. Unsurprisingly, it's not the glamour (think le Carré not Fleming), though Mossad's silver fox deputy head, Ram Ben Barak, who tops and tails the film with his enigmatic smile and dry tones, makes a compelling poster boy. As you might expect, he gives little away.

Other, older operatives, now retired, relish the opportunity to talk more candidly. One such spy is nonagenarian Rafi Eitan, who led the 1960s operation to capture Adolf Eichmann and bring him to trial in Israel.

When Dror enables his interviewees to explore moral dilemmas, his film really comes into its own. Israel has always been embattled, but boundaries are crossed in the interests of safeguarding the state. A Bedouin shepherd

recruited as a double agent warns his handler about an incursion across the Lebanon-Israel border in which he is forced to take part. His handler fails to save him from the ensuing danger and the agent pays with his life. In another story, a traitor is thrown from a plane.

There are revelatory insider accounts: of the unsuccessful attempt to warn of the Yom Kippur war in 1973; and the successful curbing of Benjamin Netanyahu's ambitions to attack Iran's nuclear facilities. Attempts at visuals, such as the toy soldiers moved on a tabletop map, cannot match the simple power of talking heads. > JH ■

“Mossad's silver fox, Ram Ben Barak, is a compelling poster boy”

The UK Jewish Film Festival runs 8-22 November at venues across the UK. See ukjewishfilm.org and What's Happening from p55.



To Canada with love

Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story follows two immigrants as they arrive in Canada in the early 20th century. **Judi Herman** asks husband-and-wife team **Hannah Moscovitch** and **Christian Barry** why the show has such resonance with contemporary audiences

“It’s the story of them falling in love in Canada and with Canada,” says Canadian writer Hannah Moscovitch. She is talking about her great-grandparents, Chaim and Chaya, who fled pogroms in Romania in 1908 to arrive in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the entry port to Canada. Their tale is the inspiration for *Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story*, a genre-defying show from Halifax-based 2b Theatre Company. *Old Stock* is part theatre, part gig and wholly entertaining, informative and intensely moving. “They have to fall in love despite all the trauma that they carry with them from the old world – and despite loving Romania.”

Hannah has plays (including *East of Berlin* and *This is War*) and opera librettos to her credit, and wrote the show with her husband, the theatre director Christian Barry, and charismatic Canadian singer/songwriter Ben Caplan. Ben’s music for the show is richly varied in style: lovers of klezmer, niggunim (Jewish songs, usually hummed without words, or with repetitive sounds like ‘bim bam’) and even rap won’t be disappointed. “Ben also plays the Wanderer, a sort of MC character in the style of Cabaret. He’s mischievous, raunchy, a hipster rabbi and storyteller who guides you through the story of Chaya and Chaim,” says Hannah.

The show begins with the set, which is designed as a shipping container, splitting open to reveal four multi-talented musicians. The violin player, Mary Fay Coady, also plays Chaya, and Dani Oore, who plays woodwind, is Chaim. The Wanderer leaps out to his vantage point

above, from where he comments on the action and gleefully interacts with the audience.

Christian outlines the thinking behind this striking image. “We wanted the musicians to have an active role in the storytelling. We imagined them as a travelling band of troubadours who come into town to entertain, and we gave it a contemporary twist. The shipping container came out of that. Halifax is a port city, with periodic stowaway stories. The container looks like a railway cart too, which has dark resonances for Jews. That container became our cart, to roll into town and pack up and ship to the next town.”

How did the idea for the show come about? “Photos of Alan Kurdi, the Syrian refugee toddler who was washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015, were circulating around the world,” says Christian.

“He had a Canadian aunt who had been expecting to sponsor him. So Ben and I decided we wanted to make something dealing with the refugee crisis. And not wanting to appropriate a story that was not ours we searched for something that might give us access to that story. Fast forward a year, and Hannah took our baby son Elijah to a museum in Halifax called Pier 21.”

“Pier 21 is a little bit like Ellis Island,” explains Hannah. “Anyone who came into Canada by boat would have come through Halifax and Pier 21, as my great grandparents did in 1908. At Pier 21 we

found their records and the boat they came on and the day they came in; and we know they stood where we were standing when we visited. It doesn’t sound dramatic when you say it, but it was definitely dramatic to have a bureaucrat pulling out all this stuff about your great-grandparents. It had never occurred to me before but this was the moment that they were safe. Before that they were in peril. It was a question of life or death,” she says.

“Hannah had this amazing realisation”, continues Christian, “that had they not taken that risk, that journey across the ocean, Elijah wouldn’t be there with her in the pushchair. She came home and told me

and I said, ‘We’ve got our story!’ This is the refugee story that’s very close to home.”

“The alternative history of my family was death – as with Alan Kurdi,” concludes Hannah. “It was

impossible for me, knowing my family came in through Pier 21 fleeing pogroms, not to see a parallel. So all of that came together to make *Old Stock*.”

In one of the first scenes in the play, Chaya Jankowitch and Chaim Moscovitch meet for the first time in a medical inspection line at Pier 21. It has the authenticity of family history but Hannah puts me right. “There is only so much I know. I have some basic facts and dates so I’ve used everything I have and know, including interviews with elderly family members. After that, all the dialogue is

“Chaya and Chaim meet for the first time in a medical inspection line at Pier 21”



Left: Ben Caplan as the Wanderer and Mary Fay Coady as Chaya; Halifax's Pier 21, circa 1954

fiction and some of the events too. I had no photographs; I didn't know what Chaim and Chana looked like. Because of the atrocities that were happening in Romania at the time, nobody wanted to remember Romania, not the language or history, it all got lost. Over the process of creating *Old Stock*, family members I'd never met sent me photographs."

"Hannah's great-aunt, who knew Chaim and Chana, gave us beautiful anecdotes," says Christian. "The scene when Chaim comes home and Chana asks: 'Hard day at work?' and they have a nice warm kiss evolved from the story of how he would come home exhausted from working in the engine room on Canadian Railway trains, have a cuppa and not say a word. The aunt painted a loving picture of people who'd been through a lot together and didn't need to say much. Chaim didn't talk about the trauma of people fleeing the pogroms of Romania. We had this mixture of historical details from papers we found at Pier 21 and anecdotes from relatives and research to put together the script."

The *Old Stock* of the title refers to a phrase used by the former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper in a 2015 election debate. Responding to a question about health care for refugees, he used the term 'old stock Canadians' to imply that there were some Canadians who had a more legitimate claim to be Canadians than others. "It struck me as a strange choice of words. What did he mean by 'old stock'? Canada is a country of immigrants and refugees, if you're not indigenous; you've got an immigrant or refugee story. This

divisive thing, calling some people 'old stock', as if they had more ownership of the experiment that is Canada, struck me as absurd and hateful. That was at the heart of the question: 'What does it mean to be a Canadian?'" says Christian.

"When we were writing, Trump had not been elected," reflects Hannah, "so we didn't know the show would have a resonance in the States as well. We recently toured to New York and you could feel the tension around these issues in the audience. When our current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was elected in 2015, he accepted 25,000 refugees. Many Canadians were moved to privately sponsor Syrian refugee families as a result of Alan Kurdi's plight – I'm part of a group who are sponsoring a family to live in Canada."

The show moves through Chaim and Chaya's early years in Canada and takes the audience right up to the birth of Hannah's son in 2018. "From these people who made it to Canada, I'm able to tell you about the whole family tree and how many generations they have in Canada. If people cry when they see the show, it's because they understand the significance of that." ■

Old Stock tours Oct: 23-27, Old Market Brighton; 30/31, The Lowry Salford. Nov: 5/6, Oxford Playhouse; 8/9, Cast Doncaster. See oldstocktour.co.uk and *What's Happening* pp60/61. **Judi Herman** is JR's arts editor, blog correspondent and *Outloud* editor. Her blogs and podcasts are at jewishrenaissance.org.uk.

HALIFAX: GATEWAY TO A NEW WORLD

From the 1800s, Jews immigrated to Canada in large numbers. The Nova Scotia capital was their first port of call, says **Judi Herman**

Halifax, the capital of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, was a key point of entry to Canada for Jewish immigrants from when they first arrived in the port city in 1750. Canada's first ever census, in 1871, recorded 1,115 Jews: 409 in Montreal, 157 in Toronto, 131 in Hamilton, and the remaining 418 in small communities along the St Lawrence River. Leonard Cohen's paternal grandfather, Lyon, came to Canada from Lithuania as a toddler in 1869 and went on to become a businessman, philanthropist and co-founder of the *Canadian Jewish Times*, Canada's first Anglo-Jewish periodical. The singer's mother, Masha Cohen, was a Russian rabbi's daughter who settled in Montreal in 1927.

Between 1880 and 1930, the country's Jewish population grew to over 155,000. They came to escape pogroms in Russia in the 1880s, and in the early 20th century they arrived from the Pale of Settlement in Eastern Europe, seeking refuge from antisemitism. Jewish immigrants were attracted to Canada for its promise of development – in particular the Canadian Pacific Railway offered employment and the means to travel across the country for work. In 1914, 18,000 Jewish refugees arrived hoping to find prosperity in this vast land with rich natural resources that were still largely untapped.

Ruth Goldbloom (1923-2012) was another child of immigrants who came through Halifax. She co-founded the city's Pier 21 Museum, which opened in 1990, and she was influenced throughout her life by the experience of her parents and grandparents, who had arrived in Canada from the Pale of Settlement. Pier 21 was the main gateway for around a million immigrants arriving between 1928 and 1971, including about 100,000 refugees and displaced persons after World War II. ■

pier21.ca



Zion in Siberia

Soviet Zion is a new concept album on the unlikely subject of the Russian Jewish settlement of Birobidzhan. **Vivi Lachs** asks **Giles Howe** what inspired him to write about it

In March 1928 the General Executive Committee of the USSR under Joseph Stalin established a territory in the Far East. Known as Birobidzhan, the area served as a settlement for Jewish workers. To encourage people to come and work in this faraway harsh land, Jews were offered private land ownership, which would have been an enticing prospect to those worn down by economic pressures and pogroms and who were drawn by the idea of a Jewish homeland in Russia. During the 1930s, Yiddish advertisements and films showed pioneers building a new Jewish country there and by the middle of the decade there were nearly 18,000 Jews living in the region and establishing a vibrant Yiddish-language culture.

This moment in history provides the background for Giles Howe's musical drama, *Soviet Zion*. The narrative of the piece begins in 1939 and follows the paths of two fictional families coming to live in Birobidzhan shortly before the onset of World War II: the Libermans from the Ukraine and the Levins from California. The Libermans are supporters of Stalin, have faith in the Communist dream, are modest and hard-working. They're

entered into a tough, unexpected daily reality, but they buckle down and work hard on the land. However, this hard work clearly doesn't suit all settlers, because as the Levin family arrives at Birobidzhan railway station, we also see crowds of Jews departing.

The Levins have come from Malibu and their brashness and urban American ways create a strong culture clash. Howe explains how his approach was to take well-defined stereotypes of the old and new worlds, put them together and see how they interacted. As characters rise to the challenges of their new Jewish homeland (including getting used to being farmers and rearing animals) they argue different ideological positions and struggle with issues of identity. The narrative, spanning

almost a decade, illustrates this conflict of ideas and, at the same time, follows the friendships and romantic connections between the characters.

Howe grew up in Basingstoke, in a town he describes as having no Jews. With virtually zero Jewish content in his daily life, his contact with Jewish culture tended to surface only at family bar mitzvahs, *yahrzeits* (the annual anniversary of a loved one's death) and Pesach. As a teenager he became increasingly interested in his Jewish heritage, finding, as he describes, the 'exoticism' appealing from a cultural rather than a theological perspective. This identity search led him to go on a Taglight Birthright trip to Israel in 2007.

On his return Howe came across an article about Birobidzhan, which led him to reconsider his thoughts about Jewish identity and the Jewish state. He realised that both issues were more complex than the ideas on being Jewish he had formulated from his upbringing, or from the Zionist tour he had experienced. "I wanted to explore

"I wanted to look at what ideas of a Jewish homeland mean"



Above: The way to Birobidzhan – a still from one of the previous productions of *Soviet Zion*. Left: Early pioneers of Birobidzhan in the 1930s

how I might reconcile my own heritage and identity," he reveals, "as well as looking at what it means to have a Jewish homeland. I wanted to raise questions." For Howe, writing and researching the subject is a personal journey: "Every time I learn something it feels like it's not new, but it's revealing what's inside me. It's right there at the back of my head like a living memory."

Howe also says that drawing attention to Birobidzhan shows "how this history runs counter to the narrative of Israel as the only homeland" and that Jews had a variety of choices. There is an entertaining scene near the beginning of the play where the couple, Iser and Mirele Liberman, are erecting signposts to different Russian cities and they add extra signs to Jerusalem and New York. Howe emphasises that this is not an anti-Zionist play (it does include some small engagement with the fledgling Israeli state), but it raises questions about identity, about the concept of a Jewish homeland and about the use of propaganda. Plus, as he says, "it seeks to entertain with a thought-provoking story that interests me."

With over 10 years of research and writing, Howe has been hugely ambitious. As an autodidact, he has written most of the music himself for an enormous orchestra that includes – as well as the regular instruments – dulcimer, duduk, contra double bass and gong. This range, he explains, "is not normally heard in musical theatre and the effect is thrilling." Indeed, the music is both gripping and entertaining. Howe has also written all of the lyrics, co-written an accompanying book and been the sole producer on the project. He emphasises that although this has been his baby, he has had an invaluable team helping him work on the piece, in particular Katy Lipson, a co-writer who contributed to the score.

The size of this project has made performing the work particularly difficult, and to date there have only been a concert of 10 of the songs, a workshop concert of the whole show at an early stage and another more complete version that was performed at the Jewish Museum in 2014. Now Howe is excited to be able to release the show as a concept album in autumn 2019. An instrumental version of the music will also be available for use as a backing track by theatre and school groups to allow the work to be performed in any small venue.

Because the piece is set in Soviet Yiddishland, but performed in English, Howe was determined to have significant Yiddish input. Now living in Florida, he is collaborating with a writer from the chasidic Satmar community who has translated the whole libretto into Yiddish. When completed, this will be available both in Yiddish and transliterated into English letters, giving Soviet Zion an authentic historical touch. ■

Visit sovietzion.com to pre-order the album.

A concert marks Kristallnacht 80 years on

As the legacy of Kristallnacht continues to resonate, Gaby Glassman tells **Danielle Goldstein** why it's important to commemorate that devastating night

Wednesday 9 November is a date that reverberates in the minds of Jews and non-Jews across the world. On that night in 1938, thousands of Jewish homes, hospitals, shops and synagogues throughout Germany, Austria and the former Sudetenland were destroyed. Windows were shattered, glass strewn, and many Jews suffered abuse and even fatal attacks at the hands of the Nazis. This devastating night, which will forever be remembered as Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass), prompted the British Government to initiate rescue efforts that saved the lives of 10,000 children in the Kindertransport operation. Those aged 3-17, whose families were under threat, boarded trains to Britain from 1938 until the declaration of war on 1 September 1939.

Now, 80 years on, the Wiener Library is hosting a memorial concert to mark the events. The evening is co-organised by Gaby Glassman, a trustee of the Association of Jewish Refugees who is a psychotherapist specialising in the trans-generational effects of trauma. She explains why it's vital to remember these anniversaries. "We are again confronted with violence, ethnic cleansing and self-interest," Glassman says of current events across the world. "Plus there is inaction by the bodies that were established to prevent such inhumanity. This is the significance of commemorating Kristallnacht and the Kindertransport. The saving of thousands of young lives demonstrates what can be done and what should now be done."

Glassman's mother, who grew up in Stralsund, north-east Germany, tried to escape persecution by fleeing to Holland in 1937. However, after the Germans occupied the Netherlands, she had to live in hiding from 1942 to 1945. She survived the war and Glassman was born five years later.

"I feel very Jewish," she explains. "I grew up Jewish and although the degree of observance may have declined through the generations in my family, my Jewish identity is still very important to me." Yet it's more than heritage that connects Glassman to this memorial concert.

In December 2016 she was contacted by a German cellist named Friederike Fechner. The musician lives in Stralsund and had bought the former home of Glassman's maternal great-grandparents, Julius and



Paul Samuel Blach
(Glassman's great-great-uncle) with his daughter Cornelia, 1930

Selma Blach. When Fechner looked into the history of the house, which dates back to 1680, she discovered the previous owners, the Blachs, were Jewish. Sadly, only one of the couple's six children survived the Holocaust, but Fechner was determined to uncover more about the family and unite the descendants she could find. Thanks to this curiosity and persistence, Glassman is now in touch with family round the world that she had little knowledge of before.

When the Wiener Library proposed a Kristallnacht commemoration concert, it seemed fitting that Fechner should be there to perform. Accompanying her at the event will be pianist Mathias Husmann. Glassman tells me that Husmann's mother was a famous pianist, Adelheid Zur. The radio station she worked for bravely decided to play Mendelssohn, whose music was banned by the Nazis, by broadcasting the pieces under his baptised name, Bartholdy. Zur (who was not Jewish) was more than willing to perform them. "When I heard this I was so touched by the act of defiance," Glassman enthuses.

Mendelssohn is among the composers whose music will be performed at the memorial concert, alongside Ravel and Bloch, plus Max Bruch's *Kol Nidrei*. The evening will be introduced by Dame Esther Rantzen and the pieces interspersed with extracts of the Blach family memoirs that are related to Kristallnacht and the Kindertransport. ■

The memorial concert is on Thu 22 Nov in London. For further details see wienerlibrary.co.uk and *What's Happening*, p56.



Religion really is a class A drug

Can the intensity of religious experience be replicated by taking a pill? **Peter Watts** delves into the archives of the LSD Library (yes, really) to investigate the connection between spirituality and drugs

Several years ago, in a warehouse filled with books about drugs, sex and rock 'n' roll, I opened a cardboard box. Inside was a beautifully illustrated fragile book, printed on brown paper and bound with frayed rope. This was a rare original copy of *From Bindu To Ojas*, a book about the "search for cosmic consciousness" written in 1970 by Ram Dass and later republished as the multimillion-selling *Be Here Now*. It seemed out of place amid all the drug literature but it was there for good reason. Dass, born Richard Alpert, was raised in a Jewish American family but later said he "didn't have one whiff of God until I took psychedelics". This spiritual awakening took place at Harvard, where Alpert and Tim Leary began groundbreaking experiments with psilocybin, a hallucinogen derived from mushrooms. In 1967, Alpert travelled to India, where he gave LSD to every holy man he met. He soon realised it was having no effect – they had, he decided, achieved permanent enlightenment through religion. Duly convinced, Alpert changed his name to Ram Dass – "servant of God" – and permanently swapped acid for God.

Ram Dass was not the only writer exploring this connection between drugs and gods. This was one of many things about drugs that fascinated Julio Mario Santo Domingo, a South American-born businessman who amassed the world's largest private collection dedicated to "altered

states". Santo Domingo's library contained up to 100,000 objects covering every aspect of the drug experience. It was gathered over the years by a man obsessed with drugs and the sheer intellectual, inquisitive thrill of collecting. He named it the Ludlow-Santo Domingo Library in 2005 – or to use its helpful acronym: the LSD Library. LSD was also a reference to his pet dog, Louie Santo Domingo. After Mario Santo Domingo's death in 2009, the collection was placed on long-term loan with Harvard University.

When I visited the LSD Library in 2011, it was located in a warehouse in a Geneva suburb. Inside lay a wealth of eye-popping material, from beautiful first editions by Charles Baudelaire to a hashish cookbook by Alice Toklas, the partner of Gertrude Stein. There were books by Sigmund Freud recording his experiments with cocaine, and material relating to Abbie Hoffman, the activist who believed his instinct for rebellion lay in his Jewish upbringing.

But amid the leaflets, pamphlets, posters, newspapers, letters, photographs, paintings and books were the oddest items: a mummified grapefruit that once belonged to Keith Richards, vintage medicine bottles for opium, cannabis infusions or coca wine, an ornate Chinese

opium bed and a bicycle that once belonged to acid casualty and rock star Syd Barrett. This wasn't a library or even a museum. It was a portal to other dimensions.

The library could

be used to trace many things drug-related: their use and prohibition, self-experimentation and addiction, policing and medication and their effect on art, society and consciousness. It could also be used to explore the bonds between drugs and spirituality. This was something that intrigued Walter Benjamin, who wrote about everything from Baudelaire to Jewish mysticism but who never got round to completing his study of weed.

In a letter to his close friend Gershom Scholem, the first professor of Jewish mysticism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Benjamin promised "a truly exceptional book about hashish" – possibly while giggling and staving off the munchies with the 1920s equivalent of junk food. Only fragments of this opus exist – even a great Jewish German intellectual could be derailed by marijuana. One thing that intrigued Benjamin was whether drugs could replicate the mystical experience that came from religious devotion. His conclusion was that drugs could give "an introductory lesson...[but] a dangerous one, and the religious lesson is stricter".

It was a theme that reasserted itself through the decades. In the library I was captivated by *The Psychedelic Guide to the Preparation of the Eucharist*, which had a trippy green-and-orange cover emblematic of 1968, the year of its publication. Inside were detailed chemical recipes for the manufacture of hallucinogenic drugs, but also the instruction that these drugs were only for those "who wish to use them for religious purposes". Drugs, it was saying, could be sacramental.



Clockwise: Mario Santo Domingo, the founder of the LSD Library; Walter Benjamin; the original copy of *From Bindu to Ojas* by Ram Dass; a collection of opium pipes from the LSD Library



The pamphlet was the work of the Neo-American Church, founded in 1966 by Arthur Kleps. Calling himself Chief Boo Hoo, Kleps argued that acid was the sacrament of his church. When one of his ordained 'ministers' was put on trial in 1968, Kleps said that law should protect the Neo-American Church's use of LSD just as peyote was protected in the Native American Church [a religion that teaches a combination of traditional Native American beliefs and Christianity]. He lost the case, partly because the judge contended that an organisation that had 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat' as its communal hymn could not be serious.

As I explored the library's vaults, I found more examples. There were photographs of South African tribesmen smoking dagga – cannabis – in ritual ceremonies, and LPs containing recordings of Mesoamerican magic mushroom ceremonies. Religion could be detected in all sorts of places, such as the countless copies of Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Inspired by the German Romantics, writers such as De Quincey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge questioned whether the transcendent dream-state induced by opium could be compared with the 'genuine' transcendence that comes from religious worship. Were the mystical experiences recounted by prophets such as Ezekiel or the 17th-century mystic Sabbatai Zevi really so different from the drug-inspired waking dreams of the opium eaters?

Some writers, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, argued that drugs were a "quasi-mechanical substitute" for true transcendence, which could only come from a union with the Divine. Others, such as Fitz Hugh Ludlow, author of *The Hasheesh Eater*, contended that drugs could help people find their own route to genuine transcendence. Ludlow was a pioneering writer of drug literature, a sort of Thomas De Quincey of weed. Santo Domingo had several editions of *The Hasheesh Eater*, including one that once belonged to Mark Twain.

That debate about the authenticity of the drug experience was continued by the Beats, who sometimes claimed their title

derived from "beatific", meaning holy bliss and the library had numerous books by chief Beat Allen Ginsberg – as well as a paper stars-and-stripes top that he wore on demonstrations. Ginsberg received a scholarship to Columbia from the Young Men's Hebrew Association and began to experiment with drugs in his attempt to recreate a quasi-spiritual encounter he had experienced. He infused his poetry with references to drugs and religious mysticism before becoming a Buddhist.

Jack Kerouac was also well represented. One highlight was a drawing he made of a nun clutching a rosary when the author was rediscovering Catholicism following a flirtation with Buddhism.

Later, Kerouac would implausibly claim that *On The Road*, a book saturated in casual drug culture, was actually about two Catholic friends searching for God. Then there was Ira Cohen, the Jewish

American filmmaker who published a hash cookbook in Morocco in the 1960s (Santo Domingo had a copy, of course) and later wrote poems infused with surrealism and spirituality. Fascinated by Eastern mysticism, he made a film about a Hindu pilgrimage. Several of Cohen's extraordinary psychedelic photographic portraits from the 1960s are in the library.

That drift towards Eastern mysticism via the avenue of drug-induced enlightenment was not uncommon. One experiment Richard Alpert and Tim Leary oversaw was the Marsh Chapel Experiment. It was conducted on Good Friday, 1962 by Walter Pahnke, a graduate student at Harvard's Divinity School to discern whether the religious

experience could be replicated through psilocybin. The results appeared conclusive. Most of the participants said they had felt a profound religious experience. Huston Smith, a religious scholar, said it was the "the most pronounced cosmic homecoming I have ever experienced".

For Carl Williams, a rare book dealer who worked at the LSD Library as curator, this experiment "concluded that the mystical experience could be replicated by a pill and that the secrets of the human soul, the meaning of existence, could be found within the psychedelic experience". For some, this could have been a frightening conclusion but Santo Domingo was not unnerved. "Julio believed the drug experience took you to places that truly existed sui generis and drugs could allow you to actually visit these places," says Williams. That included places where you could seek union with God.

Somewhere in the LSD Library were letters between Robert Graves, author of *The White Goddess* and I, Claudius, and John Brough, a Cambridge Professor of Sanskrit. The letters concerned the findings of R Gordon Wasson, a banker and ethnographer, who believed the use of magic mushrooms was instrumental in the creation of primitive religions. One of Wasson's claims was that the fly agaric mushroom was really Soma, the drink that made man immortal according to the Hindu Rigveda. In the letter to Brough, Graves claimed to have been the first person to connect the fly agaric with both Soma and the Ambrosia of Greek legends.

The debate about Soma and mushrooms has never really been settled, but Williams is adamant that Soma – a mysterious, non-addictive, magical elixir – lies behind the foundation of the LSD Library. For a decade, Santo Domingo scoured the world looking for items to add to his collection, as much at home in flea markets as at auction houses. But what was he really looking for? Perhaps it was Soma, the drug that Aldous Huxley said would expand consciousness and free society from "the wine-bibbing past, the whisky-drinking, marijuana-smoking and barbiturate-swallowing present." Soma could create paradise on earth. If the drug existed, perhaps its secret still lies somewhere in the pages of the LSD Library? ■

Altered States: The Library of Julio Santo Domingo by Peter Watts, Anthology, 2018. Peter Watts is the author of *Up In Smoke: The Failed Dreams of Battersea Power Station*.



"Walter Benjamin never got around to completing his study of weed"





A tale of love, kabbalah and ice cream

Ariel Kahn's novel follows Israeli teenager Malka as she travels across Israel trying to make sense of her life and encountering gay bike mechanics, celebrity chefs and plenty of kugel along the way. **Mike Witcombe** talks to the author about his striking debut novel

Food is everywhere in Ariel Kahn's debut novel, *Raising Sparks*. The story takes place in pizza restaurants, bakeries, upscale restaurants and kitchens across modern Israel. Characters celebrate the virtues of hamantaschen, kugel and coffee with cardamom. The most evocative sentences in the book emerge when characters eat: a soup is "so finely balanced in its ingredients, it was like a song"; an oven-warm flatbread tastes "like being hugged".

It is fitting then that I meet Kahn (pictured top right) in *Joie de Vie* – a Finchley café which played such an important role in the writing of the book that it gets a special acknowledgement (their chocolate and pear tart fully justifies the hype). By the time we meet, *Raising Sparks* has made an impressive impact, including a full house for the launch in Islington, a mention in the *New York Times* and a review in the *Irish Times* that described the book as "Marquez in Jaffa".

The novel traces the experiences of Malka, a teenage girl who leaves an ultra-

Orthodox community and travels around Israel. It's a coming-of-age novel with huge reserves of empathy and intelligence, covering everything from the role of kabbalah in Jewish religious identity to internal divisions within Israeli culture. Some chapters track Malka as she drifts from town to town. Others explore the experiences of Moshe, a lovelorn kabbalist, as he tries to find out what has happened to her.

The two protagonists are accompanied by a supporting cast of Russian security guards, stern-faced patriarchs, gay bike mechanics and celebrity chefs. It's a tribute to Kahn's skill that his extensive dramatis personae don't overwhelm the text: all of his characters are given space to reveal their own identities. This is a surprising book; expectations are undermined at every turn. A boorish man turns out to be kind and supportive. An egotistical chef turns out to have a

profound connection to his home.

The novel was originally written as a Creative Writing PhD thesis at Roehampton University, where Kahn still teaches. A key influence on the book was his desire to pay homage to two friends who were killed in a bus bombing in Jerusalem in the 1990s, shortly after they got engaged. Kahn remembers receiving a letter from them telling him about the engagement on the very same day he found out about their deaths. He says the friends were passionate about feminism and Jewish mysticism and he was keen for *Raising Sparks* to be a

way of sharing something of their spirit.

Despite enthusiastic support from supervisors, a publisher wasn't forthcoming immediately. Just as he was about to abandon the novel, Kahn entered *Pulp Idol*, a nationwide competition for new writers, where he had to present his work to a panel of professionals.

“Characters celebrate the virtues of hamantaschen, kugel and coffee with cardamom”

He finished runner-up. One of the panellists was Kevin Duffy from Bluemoose, an independent publisher based in Yorkshire, who offered him a contract shortly afterwards.

“When the novel was picked up for publication, I wrote to the parents of my friends who had been killed, saying that it had been 20 years [since their deaths] but the couple were still fresh in my mind, and the characters in the book were a kind of homage to them,” Kahn says.

The novel follows in the tradition of magical realism, and Kahn says it is a way of creating “a collision, a confrontation, a conversation between a traditional culture and modernity.” He is fascinated by how magical realism has been handled in Jewish literature and talks about Isaac Bashevis Singer’s novel *Satan in Goray* (translated into English in 1955), which offers an interesting perspective on dybbuks and possession through the protagonist Rachele, a lame girl who speaks in tongues. “But it’s a negative portrayal of Rachele’s descent into madness,” he says. “She doesn’t really have her own voice, she’s manipulated by men around her. I thought, ‘wouldn’t it be great to have a woman articulating this vision?’ especially when I started doing critical reading around the kabbalah.”

He is no stranger to religious study. Born in London in 1973, he attended Yeshivat HaMivtar, a yeshiva on the West Bank, to train as a rabbinical student and has also taught kabbalah at the London School of Jewish Studies.

Kahn proudly calls himself a feminist and says that the kabbalah can be interpreted as a feminist discipline because of its emphasis on female power. “One of the images that really spoke to me in kabbalah is this notion that the world is damaged and broken because the female element of the Divine, the Shechinah, is in exile – this is why my main character goes missing...I loved the idea of bringing kabbalistic texts into conversation with modern Israel. What I’d always hoped for this book was that it would resonate with people outside the community – in the same way that I love African and Indian literature, because it gives me a window onto another world.”

It also led to what Kahn identifies as one of the biggest challenges in writing the novel: writing as a teenage girl who experiences an attempted sexual assault. Kahn was careful to represent gender as sensitively as possible and says he is indebted to the advice of the women in his life who helped him write about it, including his former PhD



supervisor, the writer Leone Ross, who had worked as a rape clinic counsellor.

Kahn also aims to depict a new intercultural community in his novel: “One based on a shared understanding of loss, and parallel histories, but also things that we can all agree on – starting with such everyday things as hummus. I want to open up spaces for dialogue and empathy.”

Kahn’s interest in cross-cultural dialogue led him to establish the Arab-Israeli Book Club with the Palestinian novelist Samir El-Youssef in 2009. Based in London, the club ran monthly events where participants read books from across different Israeli and Arab literary cultures, including work by Boualem Sansal and Sara Shilo, and aimed to

show the diversity of the region’s output, and bring new writing to new audiences. “I think any country [such as Israel], which is so extensively covered by the media and which people have a vested response to, is hard to write fiction about,” says Kahn.

Another challenge was writing about a community that is often misrepresented. “I wanted to see people within the ultra-Orthodox community as individuals rather than stereotypes. But it was really about what someone could take from such a community that might usefully critique our experience of modernity. My protagonist doesn’t abandon that community, even as she refashions it in her own individual approach. I’m hoping that’s a model for the discourse that we all have with our own cultures.”

Kahn avoids reductive and sensationalist depictions of the Orthodox, but he is not uncritical. He has reservations about how the community handles people who leave it, such as Malka: “When people do leave, they often have no tools or understanding of the wider world – and both worlds are losers in this

instance. In Israel, the ultra-Orthodox are referred to as ‘charedim’, or ‘the ones who tremble before God’ – but too often I think they’re trembling before the wider world.” The other main character, Moshe, considers the ultra-Orthodox “shaken out of time by the trauma of the past”. Moshe tells the leading rabbi in the community: “You worship the walls and fences you’ve built to keep God out.”

“I definitely feel like I’m part of a growing community of diverse voices that are offering new perspectives on Jewish culture and its relationship to the wider world,” says Kahn. He recommends other writers who are trying to push boundaries, such as his British contemporary Sarah Lightman and Israeli writer and graphic novelist Rutu Modan. And his Arab-Israeli Book Club has recently relaunched as an online magazine, promoting authors from the region who are making waves across political divides.

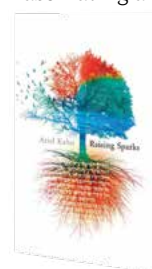
And, of course, there’s the food. “Food is a way back into the culture that Malka’s leaving behind, and into this brave new world that she’s entering.” Kahn even creates a unique dish in the novel, which combines a Jewish food tradition with an Arab counterpart: Jerusalem Kugel Ice

Cream. He hasn’t made it himself: “I’m waiting for a reader to say ‘I tried this and it’s awful!’ or ‘It’s wonderful!’” Reading the dish described so lavishly – “bitter, yet sweet and strangely comforting” – I was half tempted to give it a go myself.

Given that food is so central to the book, does Kahn have a favourite Middle Eastern restaurant he visits in London? He says there are many, but he has been especially thrilled by the success of Yotam Ottolenghi: “What I love about Ottolenghi’s approach is that it talks about the stories behind the food. Food is never just food, and that’s always been my experience.” Kahn’s sister-in-law’s house in Israel was next to that of Ottolenghi’s parents, and he says that the smells that came over from their kitchen wafted their way into his novel.

Kahn calls *Raising Sparks* a “feminist, spiritual road trip”. It’s also a novel with humour, warmth, sharp intelligence and an open heart, and it makes a fascinating and fast-paced read. Just make sure to stock the fridge beforehand. ■

“Kahn established the Arab-Israeli Book Club with the Palestinian novelist Samir El-Youssef”



Raising Sparks by Ariel Kahn, Bluemoose Books, 2018, £8.99. Mike Witcombe is a lecturer in English at Bath Spa University, where he teaches 20th-century literature and theory.



MAUREEN KENDLER, WHO DIED IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR, BEGAN A SERIES ON BRITISH JEWISH WRITING FOR JR IN 2007. WE'LL BE REPUBLISHING THESE INSIGHTFUL PIECES OVER THE COMING YEAR

PEERING ABOVE THE PARAPET

In her first in the series, Kendler discusses the 1950s, as the community juggled emerging confidence with a lingering sense of unease

“I don't think there's any real cultural life in the Jewish community”, commented Alexander Baron gloomily in a Jewish Chronicle interview in 1958. In the late 50s the Holocaust cast long, mostly silent, shadows over British Jews. Many had settled into the suburbs and were struggling to be Jewish at home and British in the streets. External evidence of Jewish life was found only in the Grodzinski signs above the bakers. Jewish babies were named Susan and Stephen, while their Hebrew names memorialised dead relatives from Poland.

The message given to these children was to succeed, yet to be invisible; to work hard and enter the professions, yet not to trouble the power bases of British society; to settle and to blend in, but never to forget or intermarry, and to have antennae out at all times for the terrifying beast of antisemitism.

Jewish writing at this time reflected this tension. Anne Karpf, in her moving memoir *The War After* (Bloomsbury, 1996), recalls the often impossible burden of her life as a 'normal' London child of survivors with a recent past of unbelievable horror. Her English forename with a foreign surname which always had to be 'explained' is a perfect metaphor for the tightrope of her childhood.

“The message given to children was to succeed, yet to be invisible at the same time”



In 1956 the eminent literary critic David Daiches wrote an extraordinary memoir of his Edinburgh Jewish childhood, *Two Worlds*. In the introduction to the 1987 Canongate Classics edition, Daiches stresses that he was 'equally at home' in both his worlds: "That was my good fortune, and I have never ceased to be grateful for it."

The young Daiches was immensely proud of both his traditional Jewish heritage and his Scottish home, loving its piquant combination. He recounts with great affection the colourful characters of the 'trebblers' (to use the Scots-Yiddish idiom) – the itinerant salesmen who frequented the morning trains out of Edinburgh to Dundee with their battered suitcases, off to sell anything they could.

Daiches wonders what their fellow Scottish commuters made of these trebblers at their morning prayers, with phylacteries strapped to their arms and head, followed by a pungent breakfast of black bread and herring.

Reconciling these twin worlds caused the young adult Daiches much anguish. His father, Rabbi Salis Daiches automatically assumed that being an Orthodox Jew and an enthusiastic member of the secular and scholarly world was a combination that would filter effortlessly down to the next generation. But this did not happen for any of his four children: "My father in his innocence took much for granted. He took

Pupils on their first day at the Jews Free School, Camden, London in September 1958. Now known as JFS, it is located in Kenton, north London. It was originally in the East End and was set up for orphaned boys but was destroyed by bombing during World War II. A new school was built in Camden and reopened in 1958

for granted that the deep, unmentioned roots of his own faith would spread automatically down the generations. He, as an Orthodox rabbi and student of Hume and Kant, had finally solved the relation between Judaism and modern secular culture..."

When David attended university, he began to question both his belief in God and the validity of Orthodox Judaism. An even greater challenge was a romantic involvement with a non-Jewish fellow student, whom he eventually married, but he and his father maintained a profound love and connection despite the rift that followed.

In his old-style 'family' novel *The Bankrupts* (Secker and Warburg, 1958), Brian Glanville explores a different sort of generation gap. The word 'Jewish' is conspicuous by its absence in this extract from its opening chapter but Jewish readers sighed with empathy.

"Darling," pleaded Mrs Friedman "all we want is that you should be happy!"

"No, you don't!" shouted Rosemary.

From the coded reference of Mr Friedman standing near "the curtained

“Evidence of Jewish life was found only in the Grodzinski signs above the bakers”

French windows” and his puzzlement at his daughter Rosemary’s preference for young men who “come from that lousy art school and dress like tramps” Glanville charted familiar territory. Mrs Friedman, “fresh from a day which had included nothing more strenuous than a charity committee meeting” confidently assures her husband that Rosemary is still young: “She’ll learn.” Rosemary, furiously weeping in her bedroom, knows better.

But it was in the theatre that two intriguing new Jewish voices emerged at exactly this time. Harold Pinter’s *The Birthday Party* had played to bewildered audiences for one week in 1958 before closing to disastrous reviews. At its centre is the menacing character of Goldberg, powerful, threatening and dominant. Goldberg talks relentlessly, is incapable of listening, and expresses an irritable violence with everything he says. His weirdly encoded, perfectly pitched speech patterns are recognisably Jewish:

“I’d say hello to the little boys, the little girls – I never made distinctions – and then back I’d go, back to my bungalow with the flat roof. ‘Simey,’ my wife used to shout, ‘quick, before it gets cold!’ and there on the table what would I see? The nicest piece of rollmop and pickled cucumber you could wish to find on a plate.”

Goldberg is one of Pinter’s most disturbingly unclassifiable creations, always the feared outsider, not to be trusted.

Arnold Wesker’s *Chicken Soup With Barley*, first staged in 1959, also eschews nostalgia, but his Jewish family, battling to survive in the East End, is more empathetic. The politically active older generation, headed by Sarah, attempts to communicate with the next generation, who seem defeated and unmotivated. Wesker puts fire and passion into the mouth of communist matriarch Sarah, frustrated at her son’s apathy and disillusion:

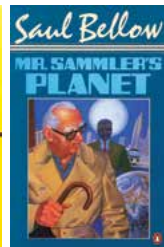
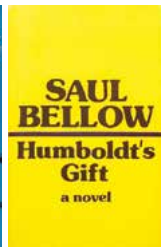
“If you don’t care you die...you want me to move to Hendon and forget who I am?”

As the world edged towards 1960, the transition to the next generation of traditional Judaism, whether that meant Orthodoxy, socialism, or a cohesive family life, was a precarious one.

The challenges to the Jewish community now were to integrate their traumatic previous decade with the turbulence of the coming one. Their place in Britain felt relatively secure and that was reflected in their literary self-expression, which was more public, even experimental.

But Jewish writings in the late 1950s showed a tense, uneasy community, raising its head above the parapet with confused diffidence as well as emerging confidence. ■

How did things change in the 1960s? You can read Maureen Kendler’s second article in the series in January’s JR.



THE LIFE OF SAUL BELLOW: LOVE AND STRIFE, 1965-2005 Zachary Leader

▷ REVIEWED BY David Herman

Love and Strife, the second volume of Zachary Leader’s huge biography of Saul Bellow, begins in 1964. Bellow was almost 50 and at his peak. He had just published his greatest novel, *Herzog*, which sold over 140,000 copies in hardback and spent 42 weeks on the bestseller list. In the next ten years he produced two other masterpieces, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* and *Humboldt’s Gift*, his book of short stories, *Mosby’s Memoirs*, and was awarded the Nobel Prize. He was the greatest American writer of his time.

By the late 1980s things looked very different. Bellow was increasingly regarded as a dinosaur: right-wing, a misogynist, out of touch with new attitudes towards race. “Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus?” he said in 1988, “The Proust of the Papuans? I’d be glad to read them.” He didn’t write another great novel after *The Dean’s December* in 1982, though his short story *Something to Remember Me By* (1990) was a masterpiece. And then began his decline into old age. In 1994 he spent weeks in intensive care following a terrible illness. In the 1990s Philip Roth began the series of novels that established him as the new American laureate, arguably displacing Bellow as the great American novelist of the late 20th century.

Zachary Leader tells this story carefully over more than 750 pages. The research is exhaustive, from the black Chicago underclass in the 1970s to the seminars Bellow taught at the Committee for Social Thought and what Bellow later called “my numerous and preposterous marriages”. He provides powerful portraits of some of Bellow’s closest friends: John Cheever and Delmore Schwartz (*Humboldt in Humboldt’s Gift*), Allan Bloom (*Ravelstein* in Bellow’s novel of the same name) and the old gang from 1930s Chicago. There are also wonderful literary stories such as when Bellow beat off the other judges to ensure that VS Naipaul won the 1971 Booker Prize, his friendships with Roth and Martin Amis and his rivalry with John Updike.

Two other themes stand out. First,

Bellow the writer. We learn of what he read and the writers who influenced him and the writers he knew and valued. Leader is especially good on Bellow’s relations with his agents and publishers, in particular the change from his long-time agent, Harriet Wasserman, to Andrew Wylie.

The second theme is Bellow the Jew, the son of Russian, Yiddish-speaking immigrants. In 1988 he gave a talk entitled ‘A Jewish Writer in America’: “I was among other things a Jew. We were all Jews. We spoke Yiddish, we spoke English, we observed Jewish customs, we accepted Jewish superstitions, we prayed and blessed in Hebrew, our parents spoke in Russian...” This is at the heart of his voice as a writer. The Yiddish rhythms, the Russian love of ideas, the Jewish warmth and nostalgia for the past. Leader does an excellent job of pulling all these threads together.

He also does justice to the mix of high- and low-brow. “Thomas Mann with added jokes,” one friend called him. This is what made him, in Amis’s words, “the supreme American novelist,” – the ability to bring together modernism and modern America.

Above all, Leader treads delicately through the arguments and rows: with ex-wives and sons, editors and agents, other writers and friends. Bellow was a difficult man and not always easy to like. Was there a better novelist in the 30 years between *Augie March* and *Humboldt’s Gift*? Not in English. But how many great writers left as much human wreckage in their wake? Four divorces, three traumatised sons, so many angry friends. “I’ve been a better son to you than you deserve,” one son told him. Bellow, said his friend Ed Shils, has “no sense of obligation to any other human being”. Leader’s greatest achievement is that he leaves the final judgement to the reader.



All the evidence, including the most damning, is there. ■

▷ PUBLISHER Jonathan Cape ▷ PRICE £35

David Herman writes for the Guardian and the New Statesman.



Walk the walk: the story of Kinder Scout

A new book tells the story of the Peak District's highest plateau. **Liz Cashdan** says it's a fitting tribute to the people who fought for the public right to walk this beautiful British countryside

I have three reasons for being grateful that I was asked to review Ed Douglas' new book *Kinder Scout: The People's Mountain*, which traces the history of Britain's first National Trail at Kinder Scout, the 1,970ft gritstone plateau that flanks Derbyshire's Peak District. Firstly, I lived for 20 years (from 1997 to 2017) in Sheffield, walking many weekends as a member of the Clarion Ramblers, who often walked up, over and around Kinder Scout. Secondly, my first walk up Kinder in 1968 was from the Manchester side of the plateau with my brother-in-law, Wulf Rudoe. Wulf was another keen walker of the same generation as Benny Rothman – the man responsible for the 1932 Mass Trespass that made my 1968 walk possible. Thirdly, as a poet, photographer and walker, I am interested in how places belong to walkers, writers and visual artists, and how walkers, writers and visual artists belong to places.

Kinder Scout is a coffee-table book if for no other reason than its weight – don't try reading it in bed or you'll wake up stiffer than after a walk on Kinder. But it's a lovely book both for its photography by John Beatty and its written accounts, personal and political, by Ed Douglas. Born and brought up in the area – Beatty now lives in Sheffield, Douglas in nearby Bamford – they have walked in Derbyshire's Peak District National Park all their lives. This book is a witness to their love of the Peak's central mountain, Kinder Scout.

There are no peaks here but a wild, peaty plateau cut by grykes and groughs (to use the Derbyshire dialect) where you can

get lost all too easily. Once you've climbed the 2,000 feet, if you stick to the stony edge paths, there are miles of flattish walking and brilliant views.

Beatty's photographs capture the Kinder scenery and its people across the seasons and at different times of day. Apart from his own responses to the place, people and wildlife, Douglas gives us the history of the mountain, its farmers, shepherds and visitors, and especially the walkers who fought for the right to roam the Kinder area.

For a long time Kinder was carved up among landowners who wanted to keep the area for grouse-shooting and refused access to the increasing numbers of middle- and working-class walking clubs and individuals from Manchester and Sheffield. Enter Benny Rothman in 1932. Rothman, the son of Romanian immigrants, was a Manchester Jewish working-class Communist in his early 20s, and he was prepared to take on the landowners and police by organising a mass trespass of the Kinder area.

On 24 April 1932, around 500 men and women took to the hills in defiance of the law. The protest was intended to be peaceful but keepers armed with sticks confronted the marchers. After a struggle,

the demonstrators marched on and finally returned in triumph to the town of Hayfield. Three weeks after the trespass, some 10,000 ramblers held a rally at nearby Castleton and the right-to-roam movement was born. In 1951 Britain's first national park was created in the Peak District.

Rothman is not the only person to figure in Douglas' account. We hear of 17th- and

18th-century visitors to Kinder Scout and meet Hannah Mitchell, who was born in 1871, grew up on a farm in the Peak District and ran away to Manchester, where she joined the Independent Labour Party. The 19th-century novelist, Mrs Humphrey Ward, also visited Kinder, but while Mitchell's autobiography, *The Hard Way Up*, supported the labour movement and women's rights, Ward opposed women's suffrage. Her novel, *The History of David Grieve*, idealises a very conservative farming community.

Benny Rothman received a four-month prison sentence for his part in the Mass Trespass. The judge in summing up referred to the fact that three of the defendants were Jewish, although I suspect that Rothman's life and commitment to communism was probably stronger than his commitment to Judaism. Douglas writes:

"Had the Kinder trespass not been organised by working-class communists, and Jewish communists at that, it might not have provoked the same level of tension and prejudice. As a consequence it would not have made the impact it did." Later he concludes: "The notion that the children of immigrants might try to change British culture has great potency, especially now in an age dominated by identity politics and deep-rooted changes to the nation's sense of itself... Many of the most influential access campaigners who worked towards the access legislation that finally passed in 2000 took inspiration from the trespass and from Benny himself." ■

Kinder Scout: The People's Mountain by Ed Douglas and John Beatty, Vertebrate Publishing, 2018, £19.95. **Liz Cashdan** is JR's Poetry Editor. Her latest collection is *Things of Substance: New and Selected Poetry*, Five Leaves, 2013.

REPORTER: A MEMOIR Seymour Hersh

▷ REVIEWED BY Peter Watts

One weekend back in the 1970s, when investigative journalism really mattered, Seymour Hersh was working late at night to file a story for the New York Times. Told by a night editor that he had soared past his allotted word count, a furious Hersh took it to the top. Tracking down a home number, he called his executive editor at 2am, only to be told by the woman who answered the phone that her husband had recently left her. Hersh slammed the phone down, only to dial back a minute later to ask the estranged wife if she could give him a number for the editor's new girlfriend. She did, of course, and the indefatigable Hersh got the space he wanted.

Was this a story about Vietnam, Watergate, CIA

assassinations or domestic spying? It scarcely matters, as Hersh was involved in all of them, breaking story after story from the mid-60s, when he first discovered the US government's propensity to mislead its people. That distrust served him well through the days of LBJ, Nixon, Reagan, Bush Sr and Bush Jr and Clinton, although more recently his focus has been on the death of Osama Bin Laden and Syria's use of chemical weapons. On both, he has taken a pugnaciously controversial stance.

A self-described "punk Jew", Hersh was raised on the South Side of Chicago by immigrants from Lithuania and Poland. "None of us fully understood what compelled our parents to leave their family and birthplace for the long boat ride to America," writes Hersh, and this memoir shows no interest in interrogating that familial past. He later discovers that Lithuanian collaborators murdered the Jewish population of his father's hometown, and while he never draws a parallel with the American massacre of Vietnamese villagers at My Lai, which he uncovered in 1969, it's clearly there. More unsettling is his declaration that in never mentioning this history, his father was a "Holocaust survivor as well as a Holocaust denier".

Hersh doesn't say what made him such a hard-working, resilient, relentless and resourceful reporter, but it lies somewhere in this iron-clad moral certainty and deep aversion to authority. This could also make him something of a pain in the arse, the sort of reporter who will bounce a typewriter around the room because

he isn't happy with a copy-editor. Yet he tells his story with wit and self-awareness, and is particularly generous on how fortunate he was to work during an era when newspaper jobs were plentiful and investigative reporting well funded.

His first break was an attention-grabbing story about America's chemical weapons programme, swiftly followed by the Pulitzer-winning My Lai revelations, when he revealed the horror of American abuses in Vietnam. Hersh explains how he broke My Lai in close detail, and it's a terrific insight into how he operates – a hustling frenzy of intuition, leg work, persuasion and enterprise, plus a determination to get the story in print when nobody would touch it. After that, he's away. There are exposés of corporate malpractice and organised crime, but he's happiest when uncovering the dark secrets

of US intelligence, tackling the crimes of the CIA and Henry Kissinger with zeal. He is at his best when he has a tangible enemy to set himself against, and Kissinger is the perfect foe.

From the 80s, Hersh became increasingly drawn into the conflicts of the Middle East, which inevitably meant writing about Israel. There's the case of Jonathan Pollard, the spy who sold US military secrets to Israel, or a book he wrote exploring American support for the Israel nuclear weapons programme. He's never not busy – at one point, he's writing a screenplay about Panama with Oliver Stone until Stone, bizarrely, decides he's a CIA agent

– but you sense he's not fully motivated again until the War on Terror. That pits him against the neoconservatives, whom he detests just as much as he did Kissinger. An inspired Hersh writes a series of devastating articles about the torture at Abu Ghraib, which are every bit as revelatory as the My Lai scandal.

Which brings us to today. On Syria, in particular, his line has often been indistinguishable from that of the Assad regime. Is he an apologist? Does this tarnish an extraordinary career? In Reporter, a tetchy Hersh defends himself

by pointing to a near-faultless track record in uncovering the lies of Western governments. But the question lingers: precisely who is Hersh's enemy now? ■

▷ PUBLISHER Allen Lane
▷ PRICE £12.76



“Hersh is a hustling frenzy of intuition, leg work and enterprise”

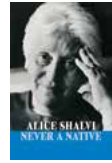


BOOKS IN BRIEF

Rebecca Taylor picks the best new books with a Jewish theme

NEVER A NATIVE

by Alice Shalvi



The activist and feminist Alice Shalvi tells her story in an understated way that lets her achievements speak for themselves.

Born in Germany in 1926 to Orthodox parents, Shalvi grew up in London and studied at Cambridge, before moving to Jerusalem in 1949. One of her greatest accomplishments was the establishment of the Pelech School, which she headed from 1975 to 1990. This progressive religious high school for girls in Jerusalem has become a model for women's Orthodox education across Israel. Shalvi blends her odyssey with a reflection on the challenges that have faced Israel over the last 70 years. ▷ PUBLISHER Halban
▷ PRICE £20

ATTENTION: DISPATCHES FROM THE LAND OF DISTRACTION

by Joshua Cohen



This selection of essays from Joshua Cohen (Book of Numbers) focuses on how we might reclaim the power of attention in an age of

constant distraction. Bernie Sanders, Gustav Mahler, John Zorn and a visit to Jewish Bukhara are among the many subjects that he dissects with alacrity and wit. Cohen draws connections between seemingly disparate things and offers an original approach to a world that often seems daunting in its information overload. ▷ PUBLISHER Fitzcarraldo Editions ▷ PRICE £14.99

AGAINST THE STREAM

by Frederic Raphael



The seventh volume of Frederic Raphael's memoirs is a pacy account of the glittering elite of Hollywood and London in the early 1980s. A parade

of high-profile figures is skewered by Raphael's acerbic commentary. Of Michael Frayn he writes, "His plays are not so much the greatest thing since Kleenex as Kleenex itself: clean, comforting, disposable." Ouch. Susan Sarandon could "imagine no greater honour than to be unwelcome at the Reagan White House". Of Harold Pinter he writes: "There is something of the spy about him; he can account perfectly for every tick of his watch." Waspish and gossipy, yes, but enjoyable nonetheless. ▷ PUBLISHER Carcanet
▷ PRICE £19.99

THE MODERNISTS

OUR SERIES, BASED ON THE BLOG OF ARCHITECTURE AND TRAVEL WRITER **ADRIAN WHITTLE**, LOOKS AT THE JEWISH ARCHITECTS WHO SHAPED MODERN DESIGN

MOSHE GERSTEL

During the 1930s, Haifa was often referred to as the “city of the future”. It underwent significant development in the interwar years when the Hadar HaCarmel neighbourhood was established. Modernism was the dominant architectural style and the market hall of Shuk Talpiot on Sirkin Street was one of the area’s most distinctive buildings.

The shuk was built in response to the Arab revolt in the city in 1937-39, when the Jewish residents of the mainly Arab lower city section fled the area. Jews from across Haifa no longer felt safe to visit the markets there. Plans were made to build a major market in the centre of the Jewish area of Hadar.

The site was challenging. It was located on a steep slope on a rocky ground. Nonetheless a design competition was held and architect Moshe Gerstel, working with engineer C Cohen, submitted the winning entry. His design addressed the difficult issues of the site and required only local materials. Construction began in 1939 and the building was inaugurated in April 1940, when the city’s mayor praised the architect who “with imagination and ingenious creativity gave this city of the future a structure in which she can take pride”.

Gerstel’s design included a rectangular structure at the front of the building and a circular market hall to the rear. The stalls were arranged over three floors underneath a glass roof that flooded the building with natural light. There were also stalls planned for the ground floor and in the basement. Horizontal windows covered the surface of both parts of the building, giving views over the city and the bay (pictured bottom right).

The shuk quickly became a focal point for Haifa’s Jewish residents. The Israeli writer Nissim Levi, who saw the building just after it opened, described it as “... the biggest and fanciest shopping centre in the Middle East... The central structure was roofed with a brilliant glass ceiling and the sunlight that seeped inside glittered on the fresh fruits and vegetables and created a colourful celebration that the eye can never get enough of”. He also recalled the wide range of products available and the songs and slogans made up by the vendors to



attract customers.

Sadly the building has been allowed to deteriorate terribly and when I visited two years ago only the basement remained in use for selling produce. The ground floor had a few low-quality stalls and the upper levels were sealed off. Many of the windows were broken and feral cats roamed about. Netting had been installed to prevent pigeons causing further damage but serious action is required if the building is to survive.

Gerstel was an interesting character. He was born in Galicia in 1886 and studied in Lviv and Vienna before joining the army in World War I. From 1922 to 1935, he lived in Bucharest and designed many buildings there. In 1935, he made aliyah. Settling

in Haifa, Gerstel established a lifelong friendship with Hajj Tahir Karaman, a successful Arab businessman and deputy mayor of the city. Although Karaman was an Arab nationalist, he was not opposed to co-operating with Jews and recommended Gerstel to several other wealthy Arab families, who commissioned him to design their homes. The friendship between Karaman and Gerstel was so strong that when the Gerstel family were in financial difficulties, Karaman not only took them in but also added four rooms to his own home for them. Gerstel also designed a house for his friend in the same street as the shuk and continued designing for the Karamans even when they left Haifa after 1948.

Karaman’s recommendations resulted in commissions for three residential properties on Tchernikovsky Street on Mount Carmel. One of these properties is now divided into two with a Jewish family living in one half and an Arab family in the other, perhaps continuing the architect’s tradition of good intercommunal relations. Another property here, the Agnes Khouri house (pictured top) at No. 29, was built in 1937 and has a spectacular, glazed curved corner. Gerstel’s star began to fade in the 1950s but he remained in Haifa until his death in 1961. ■



adrianyekkes.blogspot.co.uk. For more on 1920s and 30s Haifa architecture see *Haifa City of Steps* by Nili Scarf Gold, Brandeis, 2017.



sephardi

RENAISSANCE

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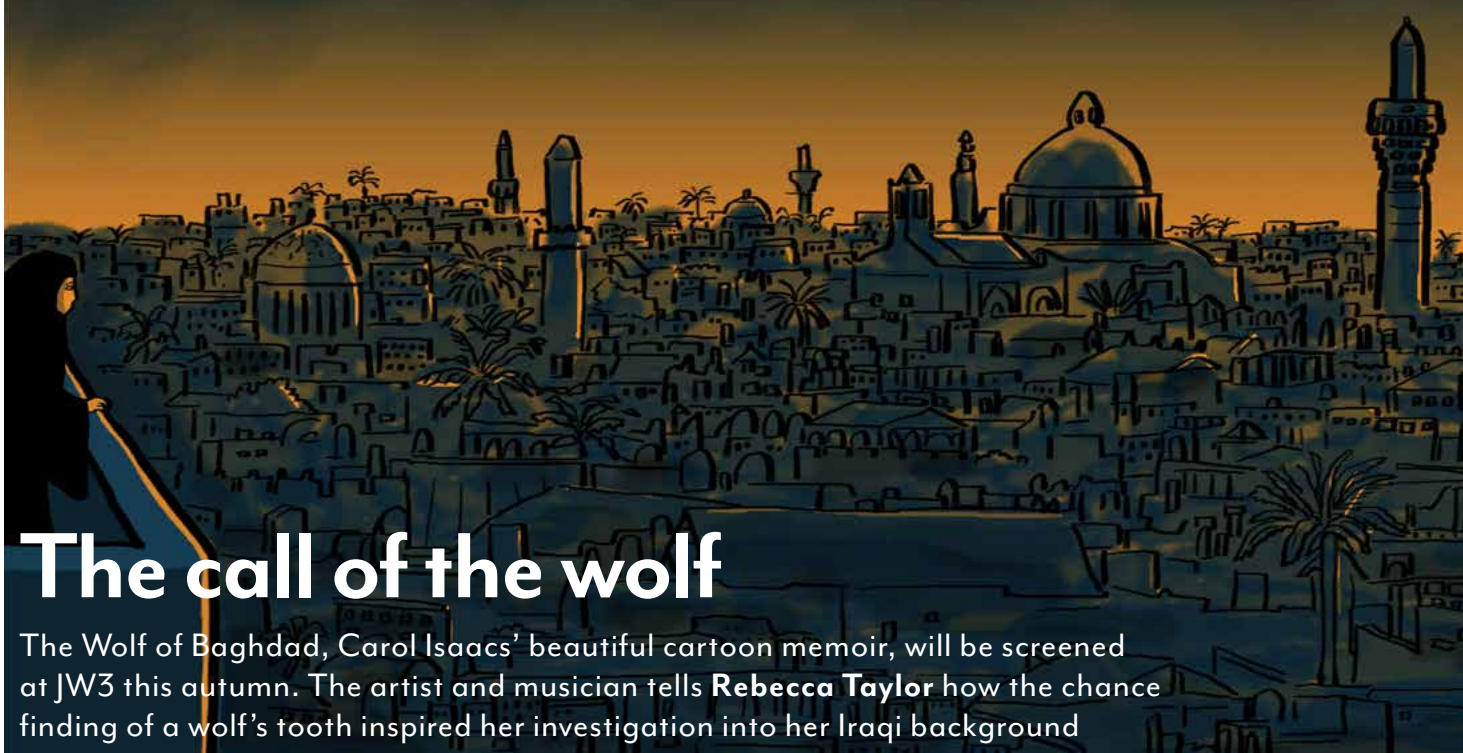
הַמּוֹצֵיאַ לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.
 אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם.

For cake, cookies, or cereal made of wheat, barley, rye, oats or spelt
 (and on rice, according to many opinions):
 בּוֹרֵא מִיְיָ מִיְיָ מִזֹּנוֹת.
 אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם.

For grape wine or grape juice:

בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֵּזֶל.
 אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם.

Prayer power: blessings said at brachot parties that are taking off around the UK



The call of the wolf

The Wolf of Baghdad, Carol Isaacs' beautiful cartoon memoir, will be screened at JW3 this autumn. The artist and musician tells **Rebecca Taylor** how the chance finding of a wolf's tooth inspired her investigation into her Iraqi background

Among Carol Isaacs' beautiful graphics of her family's life in Iraq is an image of a gold clasp holding a single white tooth. "I found this amulet among my mother's belongings after she died," says Isaacs as we chat near her home in London's Chalk Farm. "It's a wolf's tooth. According to Baghdad legend, the wolf is supposed to ward off bad luck." Later Isaacs emails me a reference to this tradition from David Sassoon's 1917 book, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad*: "The belief is current among Baghdadi Jews that the wolf keeps away spirits and demons. In the dark they exclaim their fear of demons: 'Dheeb Hader', ie the wolf is present." Now Isaacs, who produces her artwork under the wonderful pseudonym of The Surreal McCoy, has created her own version of the wolf myth with *The Wolf of Baghdad*, a cartoon memoir of her family's life in Iraq.

REBECCA TAYLOR: What was the catalyst for *The Wolf of Baghdad*?

CAROL ISAACS: I did an illustrated essay for a US/UK online comic site called *The Strumpet*, where I wrote about the Sundays I spent as a child in London when my father's colleagues would visit from Baghdad. On those days our house became 'Little Baghdad'. That led to *The Wolf of Baghdad*.

But I also wanted people to know that being Jewish is not just about speaking

Yiddish and eating bagels. People are very surprised to hear that there were Jews in Afghanistan, Persia, Yemen and all across the Arab world.

RT: When did your family leave Baghdad?

CI: My father left for London in the late 1940s; my mother stayed on to look after my grandfather and came to the UK in the 50s, my grandmothers in the 1960s. I was the first generation born here in the 1960s. It was a gradual leaving – but a leaving behind of everything.

RT: Why did they leave?

CI: It depends on which generation you speak to. My father would have answered, "We got on well with other Iraqis, and things were wonderful." That was in the 1920s. My father had a comfortable life. He was in the import/export business and worked with the British Army during the war, especially transporting goods to Palestine. That helped him to get a British passport and come to Britain.

But the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s affected what was going on in the Middle East. [Hitler's National Socialism was attractive to many Iraqis.] In Iraq they had their own brand

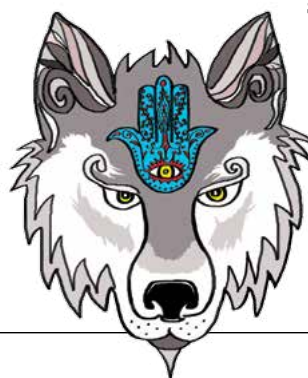
of nationalism, Arab nationalism. That toxic mix led to marginalisation of the minorities. Jews were a sizeable minority. In the 1940s they accounted for a third of the population of Iraq – around 140 to 150,000 people.

In the 1940s things started to change. When I interviewed one of my uncles for the memoir, he said: "We had to hide our Jewishness in public. We couldn't speak our dialect [Judaeo-Arabic] as it would mark us as Jews. We couldn't be seen with anything written in Hebrew in public or at home in case we were accused of spying." It was a gradual decline, which culminated in the Farhoud, as it came to be called, when over 180 Jews were killed in a pogrom in Baghdad on 1 June 1941. It shocked everybody. It seemed to come out of nowhere.

Things were never the same after that. My family was caught up in the Farhoud but my aunt said Muslim neighbours

stood guard at either end of the street to make sure that the mobs didn't attack Jewish homes. There were many acts of kindness from Muslim neighbours.

There were restrictions put on the Jews afterwards, such as a crack down on Jewish businesses and ridiculous things, for



example, my family couldn't use their telephone. But no one else they knew was allowed to use the telephone either, so who on earth would they call?

There were restrictions on business or on having money in banks, and if anyone wanted to leave the country they were stripped of their Iraqi citizenship.

RT: Did you grow up being aware of your Iraqi background?

CI: No, my parents didn't talk about it. I started playing music when I was four years old, but if I think about music in my parents' house, it was classical. In Baghdad they were very Europeanised. They wore European clothes and had European names. I never heard any Arabic music in the house.

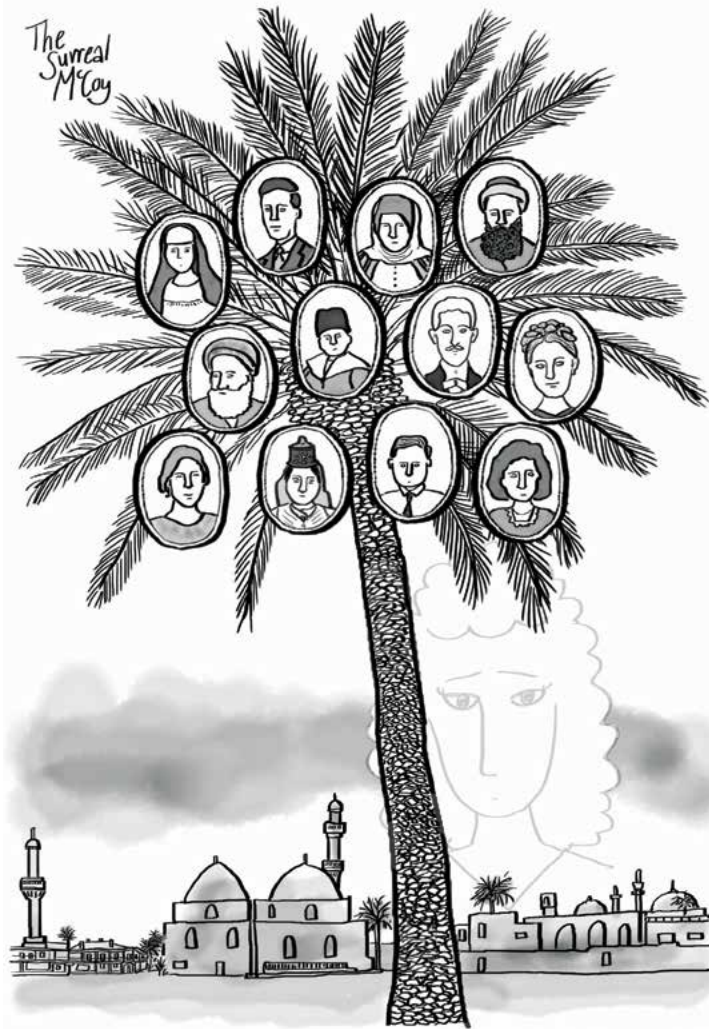
My father would have passed as a British gent. He went to his office in the City in a pinstriped suit, with a rose from the garden in his buttonhole. The only vestiges of Iraq were in the food. My mother was a fantastic cook – she made great bourekas. My father also often had non-Jewish business associates who came to visit from Iraq. Then you really felt you were in Baghdad because they brought presents – sometimes gold – and they talked all night with my family about what was going on back home. On those occasions I felt as if I lived in two worlds.

RT: Do your Iraqi roots influence your own music?

CI: The Wolf of Baghdad will be shown on screen at various events in the autumn and my band, 3yin, will accompany some of the screenings. For this project I play Arabic accordion. I've had to learn how to play music using the Arabic scale, which gives a different feel than a Western one. It's like learning a whole new language. It's very special. It's funny going back to learn this music that I never thought had any relevance to me. Now I see that it has. It's important to preserve it.

I've been working with Daniel Jonas from Los Desterrados and Dr Sara Manasseh and Keith Clouston from Rivers of Babylon. They all specialise in Iraqi Jewish music and they have been mentoring me.

The music that we play to accompany The Wolf of Baghdad performance is Iraqi folk music, music from the Al Kuwaiti



“I have an 18-year-old Muslim fan in Baghdad who helps with my research”

brothers (Saleh and Daoud Kuwaiti) and religious Judaeo-Arabic music. It's what the Jews of Iraq would have listened to. Apart from songs in the synagogue, they had radios and record players. Jews really led the way in Iraqi music. Unlike Muslim musicians, they had no religious constraints in performing. In the 1930s,

The Iraqi National Radio Orchestra was made up almost entirely of Jewish musicians. There's a story that one Yom Kippur they didn't perform on air and Prime Minister Nuri al-Said, who was a fan, asked why they weren't playing. He was told that this was the one day they didn't play because they were Jewish.

RT: Are young Sephardi Jews interested in this culture?

CI: I'm hoping to attract a younger Sephardi audience and will be touring some of the Sephardi synagogues with the cartoon. When I was growing up, I was part of that world. We belonged to the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue in Lauderdale Road, and my family helped set up Wembley Sephardi synagogue.

RT: What response have you had to the cartoon?

CI: Christian and Muslim Iraqis who are

interested in the story and want to know more have contacted me. That gives me great hope.

I have a fan living in Baghdad who is an 18-year-old Muslim student. I think he found me through my blog. He's been so helpful, sending me photos of Baghdad, which I need for my research.

There is interest among Iraqis in this aspect of their history, which has been erased from their history books. We can point the finger at Saddam Hussein. He obliterated Jewish musicians such as the Al Kuwaitis who were active in 1920s and 30s Baghdad. They wrote most of the popular Arab music of the time and their music is still listened to today.

I've been asked to do a presentation of the memoir at the Lakes International Comic Convention in Kendal in Cumbria, so there will be a new audience who probably have not heard much about the lives of Jews or Arabs. Eventually I hope to have the cartoon published as a book, which will make it more accessible.

There are lots of things in it that cross over into other cultures. My mother's amulet had a turquoise stone set in it – I saw a similar one at the Babylonian Museum in Israel. I went on a hike in Jordan last year and spoke to some Bedouin people. They said they had something similar in their culture too and they hung a wolf's tooth around their necks to ward off illness.

The wolf in Western culture is a malign influence – but in the Middle East it's a positive one. It is a strong presence in the memoir: the story begins in London and travels with a mythical wolf to Baghdad.

RT: Would you like to go to Baghdad?

CI: I have mixed feelings about the place. All my life I've known that the Iraq that my family has spoken about with such affection is not there any more. Our houses are gone, the cemeteries are gone. There is one hidden synagogue that is looked after by some Muslim residents. There is nothing left of that former life. That's what the memoir is addressing: on the one hand, why would I want to go back? On the other hand, I have that longing for a place I don't know. It's something that many second-generation immigrants have. ■

Wolf of Baghdad + 3yin Wednesday 21 November and Thursday 22 November at 7.30pm, JW3. See jw3.org.uk; thewolfofbaghdad.wordpress.com. See What's Happening p55.



Faith healing and miracles: a night out at a Hendon prayer party

Every month, hundreds of women from the UK's Sephardi community participate in prayer meetings that are said to result in miracles. **Michelle Huberman** reports on the trend. Photography **Rob Greig**

Israeli-born hairdresser Esti Levy is a woman with a mission. Fifteen years ago, Levy was reading a book that discussed the power of saying 'amen' – the word uttered at the end of a prayer to validate it. She was so overwhelmed by the book's message that she felt she wanted to spread the idea to let others know that a simple word could “empower your soul and connect you directly to God,” she says.

Esti, who is in her 60s and lives in Hendon, decided to gather her female friends together in “a beautiful communal experience to make saying prayers even more powerful”. Her gatherings are called 'brachot' parties from the Hebrew word for blessings recited at specific times during Jewish services. Esti was brought up in a family with roots in Iraq and Turkey. She left Israel for the UK 30 years ago and says ever since she was a girl she has enjoyed organising events and bringing people together.

The parties started in 2003 as small events, but as the women began to pray together, they started to feel that positive things were happening in their lives and the gatherings grew by word of mouth. Today her parties gather between 60 and 200 women and take place at the beginning of each Jewish month (Rosh Chodesh) at the Heichal Leah Sephardi synagogue in

Brent Street, Hendon, London.

On a Sunday in early September, I met up with Esti at one of these parties to see what is generating such excitement among north London's Sephardi communities. The synagogue hall is filled with women and the first 15 minutes are spent with small groups of friends chatting together or welcoming new women to the event.

Most of the women are Sephardi but not all. Some are religious but certainly not all. The ages run from small children with their mothers to those in their 80s and 90s.

Once I start chatting to them, I discover that that many come in order to look for a miracle that money cannot buy: a longed-for child; a husband; or the recovery of a sick relative. The atmosphere is warm and hospitable and there is a spread of tempting food – cakes, crisps, olives and fruit – laid out on lines of tables. But woe betide you if you start nibbling from them – you will quickly be reprimanded and told to wait for the blessings and ceremony to start. While the women chat, a team of volunteers starts arranging the food, meticulously dividing the plates into five groupings on each table.

“I was diagnosed with breast cancer and operated on in 2004,” says Shoshana Bard, who has been attending Esti's parties since they began. “At the parties we all said

prayers for my recovery, and thank God, I made a complete recovery. I was given the all clear in 2010. I believe I am alive today because of the power of those prayers.”

Mira Mitchell has also been coming to the parties since they started. “When I come here, I feel I have 20 minutes of direct contact with God. It is very special because the ceremony brings us all together like one family. It makes my prayers feel stronger,” she says.

Esti can hardly get the words out quick





Clockwise: women at the Golders Green brachot party in September; Rav Doron (in hat) at the ceremony in Golders Green; Esti Levi (standing) with Sima Moreno and her mother; Mira Mitchell, all at Golders Green

enough as she tells me why the parties are so important. “God loves the word amen,” she explains, “and we have had so many miracles [from these parties]. We’ve had childless women come and we bless them, and they then do have children. Those struggling to find partners – they meet someone here who will introduce them to a partner. The power of everyone together saying ‘amen’ out loud is so strong.”

Esti struggles to hush everyone so that the ceremony can begin. Groups of women gather at each of the tables; as Esti points, the women at that table stand, take some food from one of the piles and say a blessing over it before sitting down and eating the food. When all the groups in the room have said the blessing, the process is repeated with the next one.

The food has been divided into groups which, according to the Torah, all have different symbolic meanings, and specific

blessings are said with them. One pile with biscuits and crackers are ‘mezonot’ (foods made from grains), and these symbolise ‘parnasa’ – in Hebrew, financial success. Another pile with grapes is ‘hagefen’ (from the vine), which symbolises success in finding a partner or strengthening a relationship. Another is made up of ‘ha’etz’: fruits that grow on a tree, such as olives, apples and dates. These symbolise children, and the blessings said with them are for those who want to have children or to protect the children already in their lives. ‘Ha’adama’ is fruit that doesn’t grow on trees, such as melon. The blessing said over this group is for someone who is sick or suffering. ‘Shehakol’ are all other foods, and their blessings are for soldiers, Israel and the Jewish community.

There are also ‘besamim’ – spices that are sometimes added to the ceremony to be passed around and inhaled. The spices represent the soul, and prayers are said with them to remember someone who has died, and our final return to the soul.

Each woman must say the blessings with kavanah, the Hebrew word for intention and sincere feeling – the mindset often cited by the Torah as necessary for saying Jewish blessings and prayers.

Once each group has said a blessing it is followed by a loud ‘amen’ from the gathering. Participants believe that it is the forceful repetition of ‘amen’ that is the connecting force between them. The blessings last for about 20 minutes and are followed by a guest speaker – usually a religious leader from the UK or Israel.

During the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur this year Esti held her party in another Sephardi synagogue in Golders Green. Her guest speaker was Rav Doron, an Israeli rabbi from the nearby Doron synagogue. Speaking mostly in Hebrew, he conducted a ceremony known as ‘hatarat nedarim’ (the annulment of vows), which is part of the prayers of atonement in the lead-up to Yom Kippur.

The evening was full of rituals. Those who needed prayers for healing put their names on pieces of paper that were passed round so that others could pray for them, and the event concluded with the party reciting prayers together.

But surely Esti and her friends don’t really believe that blessings can cure illnesses or deliver up babies? “If you have faith and willpower you can get over anything,” she says.

I ask her if she has always had this faith. “I came from a religious family and walked away from it for a while. But I felt my life without that faith was lonely and superficial, so I went back to it. Modern life makes you feel empty. If you watch TV you feel unclear and confused. People are looking for meaning in life and these prayer parties make people feel happy.”

“They are looking for miracles money can’t buy: a child; a husband; or good health”

Whatever cynics might say, brachot parties are also sprouting up in Manchester – and in America. There are also offshoots aimed specifically at children.

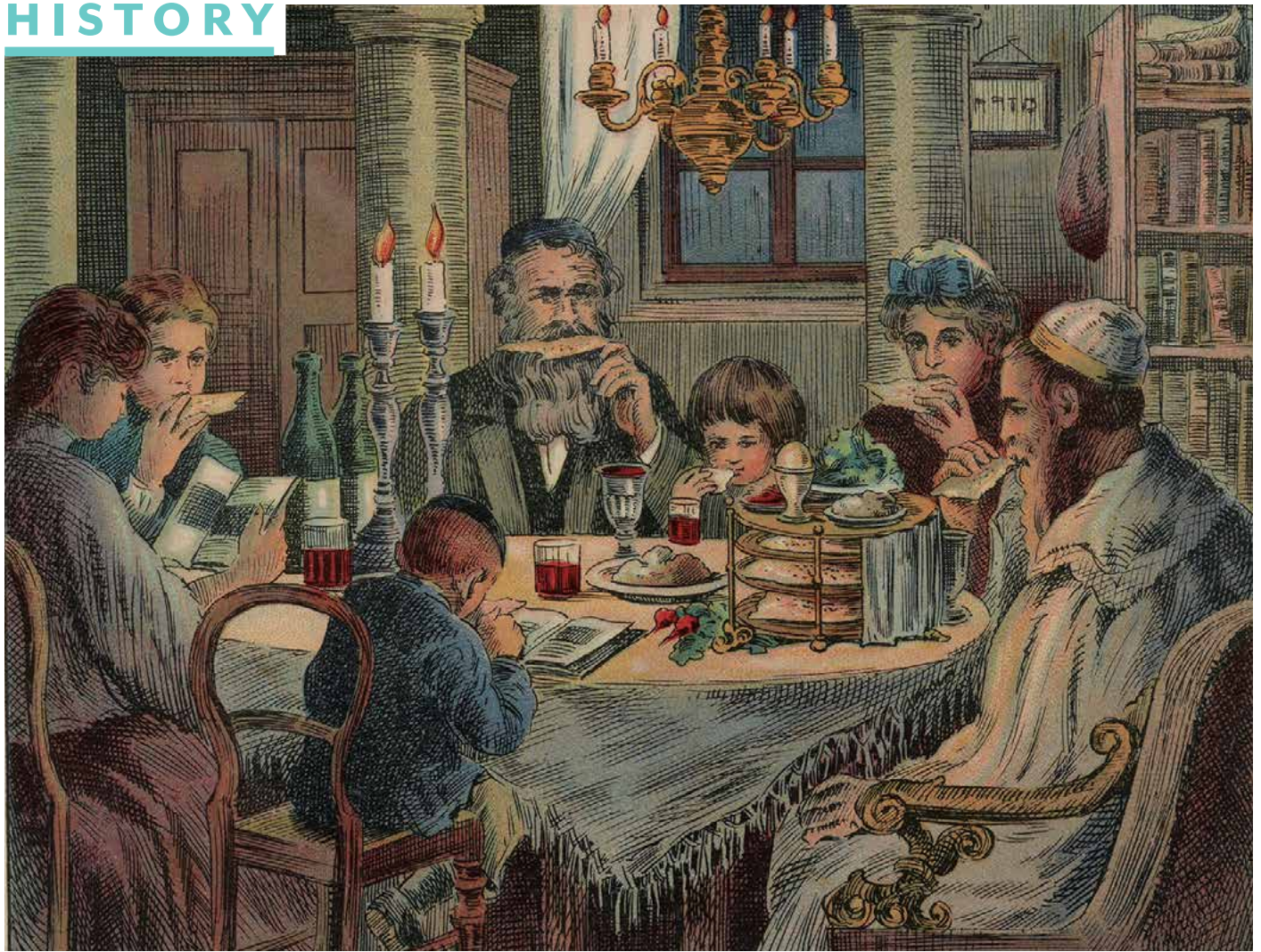
For the last seven years, Hendon resident Aviva Rowe has been running such events in her home. She converts her large dining table into a space for the ceremonial plates of food and each child takes their turn to recite a blessing followed by a chorus of “amen”. Aviva finishes the afternoon with a story from a children’s book, Let’s Say Amen, by Tamara Ansh. “The children love these ceremonies,” says Rowe.

Back at the brachot party in Golders Green, I looked on in amazement at everyone sincere in their prayers. It is clear that with all the gadgetry and gizmos of modern 21st century there is still a lot of room for spirituality. These parties fulfill a need to find answers in an increasingly complex world. Who was going to be bestowed with a miracle next?, I wondered. ■

Contact Esti Levi via text on 07957 628536.

Michelle Huberman is the creative director of Harif, the Association of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa.





Who owns Jewish culture?

The fate of ancient Jewish archives rescued from war-torn Iraq is at a crossroads. **Lyn Julius** reports on the fierce debate over the ownership of Jewish history

“**T**hey stole our lives, they stole our childhood, they stole our memories. Our memories lay in the flooded basement of Saddam’s Intelligence HQ. The government wants to return to an Iraq without Jews what Saddam stole from the Jews of Iraq. Do you want to insult us?”

Writing in the online Arabic news site Elaph in December 2013, David Kheder Bassoon expressed the anger and frustration felt by Iraqi Jews living outside their country at the uncertain future of the Jewish archive – the enormous collection of books, documents and photographs that document Jewish life in Iraq. This autumn marks the deadline for the return of these materials to Baghdad, from where they were rescued by American troops in 2003 and taken to the US.

Under Saddam Hussein, thousands of materials were seized from Jewish homes, schools and synagogues. Much of it was locked away at the headquarters of Iraq’s secret service in Baghdad. In 2003 the archive was discovered in the flooded

basement of the building, containing tens of thousands of items including books, photographs and personal documents that activists say were looted or left behind by Jews forced to flee the country.

The Americans shipped the archive to Washington DC for restoration and hastily signed a diplomatic agreement promising to return the material to the Iraqi government. The US government spent over \$3 million on restoring and digitising the archive, which has been exhibited across the country. The collection includes a Hebrew Bible with commentaries from 1568, a Babylonian Talmud from 1793 and an 1815 version of the Jewish mystical text Zohar – as well as more mundane objects, such as a Baghdad telephone book.

Although tens of thousands of Iraqi documents were shipped to the US, the Iraqi government has only formalised its claim to 2,700 books and 30,000 documents of the water-stained archive, which it claims are the country’s ‘precious cultural heritage’, a last emotional link with its ancient Jewish community, and a

reminder of Iraq’s former diversity.

But over the past five years, the Iraqi Jewish community in exile has been waging a bitter battle to recover the collection and prevent it being sent back to Iraq. They say that to return the archives would be like returning property looted by the Nazis to Germany. Activists argue that the archives should be kept where they are accessible to Iraqi Jews and their descendants, and question whether Iraq would properly take care of the items, were they to be sent back.

A similar fight is simmering for many Jews of Egyptian origin living abroad. Dozens of volumes, containing every detail of the births, marriages and deaths of Jews from Alexandria and Cairo, and dating back to the middle of the 19th century, were once kept in the two main synagogues in each city. But in 2016 government officials arrived at the synagogues and took away the registers, to be stored in the Egyptian National Archives.

The Egyptian government claims that all Torah scrolls and Jewish archives, libraries, communal registers and any

movable property over 100 years old constitutes part of Egypt's heritage.

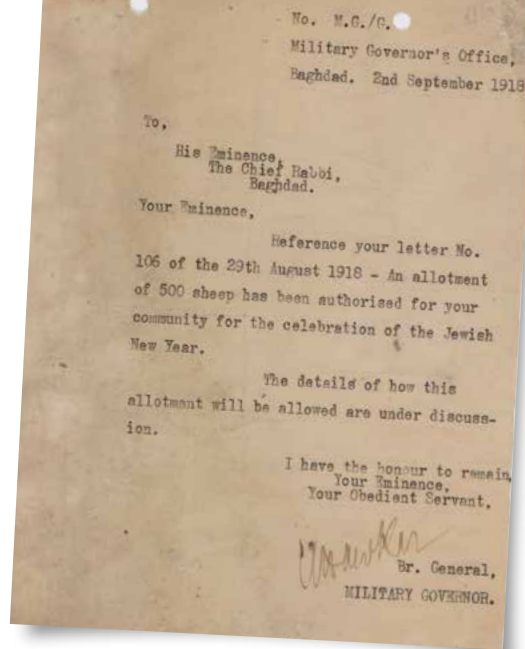
Egyptian Jews living abroad are frustrated that they cannot even obtain photocopies of brit mila (circumcision), marriage and death certificates from these communal records. Such records are often the only formal Jewish identification Egyptian Jews have to prove lineage or identity for burial or marriage. Repeated efforts since 2005 to intercede with the Egyptian authorities have come to nothing. In this case, the Egyptian government has been supported by the tiny remnant of the Jewish community that remains in the country. The community's leader, Magda Haroun, has made it clear in various TV appearances that her intention is to leave the community's assets to the government. Last year Haroun helped revive a former Egyptian Jewish charity, A Drop of Milk, turning it into a heritage NGO with the aim of curating the Jewish archive with the approval of the Ministry of Culture. There are plans to transform the former Heliopolis Synagogue in Cairo into a national Jewish museum, with the hope that the archive's registers will be available for consultation there.

Most Egyptian Jews left the country after 1948, 1956, or 1967. Half the expat community is in Israel, but there are groups in France, Canada, the US, Brazil, Australia and the UK.

But for organisations fighting on behalf of the rights of Jews from Arab countries, the Iraqi and Egyptian cases are symptomatic of a larger problem. Since 2004, the US has been bound by law to impose import restrictions on archaeological and ethnological material that constitutes a country's cultural heritage, and has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to this effect with Egypt, Syria and Libya. An agreement with Algeria is expected. In January 2018 the International Council of Museums released a 'Red List' for Yemen aimed at protecting Hebrew manuscripts and Torah finials from leaving Yemen. All but 50 Jews have fled the country, taking what possessions they could, but ultimately even these artefacts could be returned to Yemen.

"These MOUs claim to be about looting, but their limited evidence of success suggests their real impact is providing a legal vehicle to legitimise foreign confiscations and wrongful ownership claims...The

From the Iraqi archives (clockwise): a Viennese haggadah, circa 1930; a letter to the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad from the British Military Governor, 1918; a Torah casing, 19th-20th century



MOUs are based on a flawed premise. It is the heritage of 850,000 indigenous Jews who fled their homes and property under duress," says Sarah Levin of the California-based Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa (JIMENA).

It is understandable that the international community should wish to prevent the looting and smuggling of ancient artefacts and their sale on the international art market. That is how Islamic State financed much of its conquest of northern Iraq and Syria. Jewish artefacts purported to be from devastated sites, such as the Jobar synagogue near Damascus, have turned up in Turkey. These mostly turn out to be fakes. In Syria, mindful of the interest in Middle Eastern Jewish heritage in the West, both the regime and the rebels have been using Jewish artefacts as a political football in the civil war. Reports have surfaced – usually at times of regime offensives – in which both parties accused each other of stealing cultural heritage from Jewish sites.

But there is a distinction between theft for financial gain and legitimate salvage of scrolls or books, taken by fleeing Jews to be used for prayer. In centuries past, armies had carte blanche to plunder enemy property. The 'Monument Men' were assigned by the Allies to hide away cultural treasures in occupied Europe during World War II to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands. Post-war treaties, such as the Hague Convention of 1954, were introduced to protect states' cultural property from wartime looting. But the days when Britain could ship the Elgin Marbles from Greece, or Napoleon could plunder ancient Egyptian obelisks as

'war booty', are over.

In the aftermath of extensive looting after the invasion of Iraq, some 3,800 archaeological artefacts have been returned to Iraq from the US. Recently eight Sumerian artefacts sold to the British Museum were sent back. But the Iraqi Jewish archive does not belong to some long-extinct civilisation: some of the owners are still alive. International law is based on the assumption of territorial sovereignty. It needs updating to resolve the tug-of-war between minority and national heritage, where the minority has been displaced. Almost no Jews remain in Iraq. If the archive were to return, most Iraqi Jews – now in Israel – would not be able to visit it. Nor could the authorities guarantee its safety.

Four US senators have tabled a bill and three congressmen have written to President Trump "strongly objecting" to the return of the material. As I write, a scholar in the US, who follows these issues but has asked not to be named, has told JR that the State Department has agreed to renew permission for the exhibition of Iraqi Jewish documents to continue for another two years. "There are some (mostly US Jewish groups) who want to keep the

archives in the US. They have no plan on how to do that. US museums might be reluctant to accept them, because they would be permanent custodians. Who owns the archives? Technically, the Iraqi government since it is state cultural property.

The State Department has to figure out how to handle keeping the archives in the US without contravening basic precepts of international law," the source said.

The Jewish community may have to resort to the courts to assert its claims. There has been one legal precedent for this: lawyer Nathan Lewin successfully sued for the restitution of the library belonging to the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe. Seized by the Russians in 1917, it is now in New York.

However, the Jews fighting to stop the return of their property to Iraq, or the release of blockaded property in Arab states, can take comfort from Article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This states that no individual or community should be arbitrarily deprived of their property. As Sarah Levin of JIMENA puts it: "The US should not enter into any agreement and should withdraw from any existing agreement with a foreign state that condones, supports or promotes any Article 17 violation by that state." ■

Lyn Julius is the author of *Uprooted: How 3,000 years of Jewish Civilisation in the Arab world vanished overnight*, Vallentine Mitchell, 2017. See *What's Happening* p54.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Jewish Renaissance quarterly guide to the latest cultural events

HOW TO BE LISTED:

Email all events to listings@jewishrenaissance.org.uk and be sure to include the name of event, date(s), start time, entry fee, address, contact details (for print) and a brief description. Events submission deadline for our next issue is 3 December.

As we publish events for up to three months in advance, details may change, so please check with venues before setting out. Additions to events and amendments will be sent to JR subscribers in our fortnightly newsletter.

BOOKS & POETRY

Tuesday 16 October

Freud's Sculptor: The Life and Works of Oscar Nemon
Aurelia Young launches her new book *Finding Nemon*, a biography about her father, the sculptor Oscar Nemon. In 1931, a Jewish boy from Croatia persuaded a reluctant Sigmund Freud to sit for him in Vienna. This young man was Oscar Nemon and the bust he made of Freud can be seen in the study at the Freud Museum.
8.30pm. £9-£11. *Freud Museum, NW3 5SX. 020 7435 2002. freud.org.uk*

Wednesday 17 October

Jews, Horns and the Devil
Anton Felton launches his new book, *Jews, Horns and the Devil*. In it he explores, via artworks and cartoons, the myth of the antisemitic trope that Jews have horns. He'll be joined by Goldsmiths sociology professor David Hirsh, who'll look at contemporary antisemitism in the UK.
7.30pm. £10. *Central Synagogue, WIW 6NW. 020 7794 4655. spiroark.org*

Tuesday 23 October

Churchill and the Jews
The launch of Andrew Roberts' book, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*. Richard Cohen will be there to speak about it, as he was involved in the research and proofing of the book.
8.30pm. £3. *Edgware United Synagogue, HA8 8YE. myus.theus.org.uk*

Tuesday 30 October

Max Hastings: Vietnam – An Epic Tragedy, 1945-1975
Jewish Book Week hosts an evening with British journalist, foreign correspondent and former editor of the *Evening Standard*, Sir Max Hastings.
7pm. £16.50. *Kings Place, N1 9AG. 020 7520 1490. kingsplace.co.uk*

Wednesday 31 October

Encounters with Albion
Join Anthony Greville in celebrating the launch of his new book. *Encounters with Albion* draws on a wide range of cases to show the ways in which Jewish refugees running from Hitler perceived and depicted their (often somewhat reluctant) British hosts.
6.30-8pm. FREE. *Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk*

Wednesday 7 November

Michael Baum in Conversation
An evening with author Michael Baum about his new novel, *Aaron's Rod*.
7-10pm. £20. *Westminster Synagogue, SW7 1BX. events@westminstersynagogue.org. westminstersynagogue.org*

Tuesday 13 – Sunday 25 November

Art and Art Book Sale
Buy beautiful art books and artwork for reasonable prices. Those available include works by and about Sandra Blow, Horace

Brodzky, Jacob Kramer and Mane-Katz. All funds go towards the Ben Uri Gallery's exhibition and wellbeing programmes.
10am-5.30pm (Mon-Tue), 11am-5pm (Sat & Sun). FREE. *Ben Uri, NW8 0RH. 020 7604 3991. benuri.org.uk*

Thursday 15 November

Austerity Baby
A presentation by Janet Wolff about her recently published book, *Austerity Baby*.
6.30-8pm. FREE. *Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk*

Monday 19 November

Poet in the City: Sam Sax
See Top Picks for info (right).
7pm. £12.50, £9.50 concs. *Kings Place, N1 9AG. 020 7520 1490. kingsplace.co.uk*

Tuesday 11 December

Uprooted
Harif co-founder Lyn Julius discusses her book, *Uprooted: How 3,000 Years of Jewish Civilisation in the Arab World Vanished Overnight*.
Read our review of *Uprooted* in the April 2018 issue of JR.
Phone for times and prices. B'nai B'rith, Edgware Synagogue, HA8 8YE. 020 8958 7508. harif.org

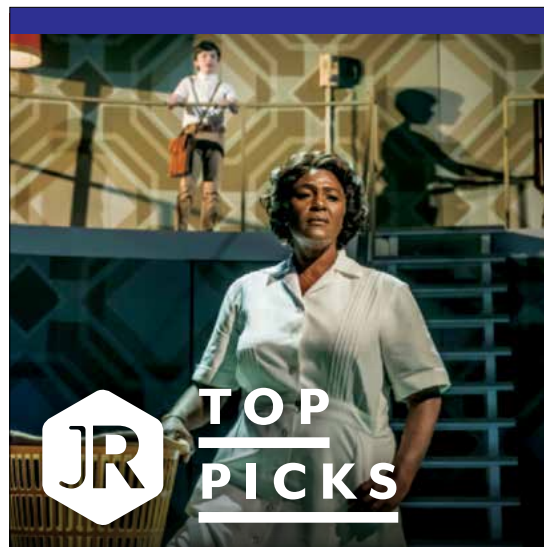
COMEDY

Wednesday 31 October

New Jewish Comedian of the Year: Heat
Watch some of the UK's finest new Jewish comedians compete for laughs. Acts will present their routines in the hope of bagging a place in the final.
7.30pm. £5. *JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

Thursday 29 November – Tuesday 4 December

UK Jewish Comedy Festival
Catch all the latest in Jewish comedy at this annual festival. See stand-up, sit-down, story-led, musical



THEATRE Tuesday 20 November – Saturday 9 February

Caroline, Or Change

An uplifting and moving portrait of the US at a time of momentous social upheaval spurred by the civil rights movement. Caroline Thibodeaux is an African American maid in Louisiana, 1963, working for the Jewish Gellman family. Eight-year-old Noah Gellman visits Caroline in the basement as she washes and irons, but when he begins leaving loose change in his laundry, his stepmother Rose devises a deterrent with negative consequences.
7.30pm (Mon-Sat), 2.30pm (Thu & Sat only). From £20. *Playhouse Theatre, WC2N 5DE. 084 4871 7631. carolineorchange.co.uk*

ART 19 October 2018 – 27 January 2019

Artist Rooms: Anselm Kiefer

Tate takes over the Herbert with this Artist Rooms on German sculptor and painter Anselm Kiefer. As one of Germany's most significant post-war artists, Kiefer explores themes of national identity and collective memory in his work, often addressing the legacy of Germany after World War II.
Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, CV1 5QP. 024 7623 7521. theherbert.org

BOOKS & POETRY Monday 19 November

Poet in the City: Sam Sax

Sam Sax is a queer Jewish poet and educator. In an engaging evening of discussion interspersed with live poetry, Sax brings his diverse and inquisitive body of work to Kings Place to question the complexities of mental health, queer preconceptions and stories of the Jewish diaspora.
7pm. £12.50, £9.50 concs. *Kings Place, N1 9AG. 020 7520 1490. kingsplace.co.uk*

EVENTS LONDON

humour and much more. Featuring a World Tour of Jewish Comedy via three comics in one show (29 Nov) and jokes from a rabbi, imam and priest (2 Dec). *Times and prices vary. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

Tuesday 4 December

New Jewish Comedian of the Year: Final

Simon Brodtkin hosts this finale of the battle of the comics competition to see which newbie will take top spot. *7.30pm. £12. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

FAMILY

Thursday 18 November

Mitzvah Day

Volunteer for a variety of great causes, including making welcome booklets for refugees and baking food for shelters for the homeless. *Times vary. FREE. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

Sunday 2 December

Imahot v'Avot Chanukah

An afternoon of music, craft and soft play for under-8s with one or more parents who identify as LGBTQ+. For ages up to 8. *3-5pm. £5, children free. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

K'mo B'bayit Chanukah

An Israeli-themed get-together to celebrate Chanukah, with music, candles and festivities. For ages 2-6. *3-4.15pm. £5.50 children, £2.50 adults, under-2s free. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

Monday 3 – Thursday 6 December

Chanukah Light Ups

Four days of family-friendly crafts, music, candle-lighting, doughnuts and festivities. *4.30-5.30pm. FREE. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

Sunday 9 December

Chanukah Funukah

A family extravaganza with doughnuts, face painting, crafts, music and a bouncy castle. *2-4.30pm. £7 children, £3 adults, £16 family. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

FILM

Sunday 4 November

Richmond Synagogue Film Club: The Red Tent

A monthly film club in south London. This screening features Paula Weinstein and Roger Young's two-part miniseries, which originally aired in 2014 and tells the story of Dinah, the only daughter of Leah and Jacob. Places must be reserved by emailing ivor.deitsch@btconnect.com. *2.30pm. £5 donation. Richmond Synagogue, TW9 1AP. rjch.org.uk*

Thursday 8 – Thursday 22 November

UK International Jewish Film Festival

The UKIJFF celebrates its 22nd anniversary this year. Over the fortnight they'll be showcasing many world, European and UK premieres of new features, documentaries and shorts. Read our reviews of some of the festival highlights in Film, p32. *Times and prices vary. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. ukjewishfilm.org*

Sunday 2 December

Richmond Synagogue Film Club: Defiance

A monthly film club in south London. This screening features Edward Zwick's 2008 action drama, about Jewish brothers in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe, who escape into the Belarussian forest and join Russian resistance fighters. Places must be reserved by emailing ivor.deitsch@btconnect.com. *2.30pm. £5 donation. Richmond Synagogue, TW9 1AP. rjch.org.uk*



MUSIC BAHLA AND THE JMI YOUTH BIG BAND

Sunday 16 & Monday 17 December

Tzadik label jazz musician Sam Eastmond leads the JMI Youth Big Band, who fuse together music of Jewish origin and cutting edge contemporary jazz sounds. They support Bahla, a London outfit who draw on Jewish music traditions, from liturgical melodies to North African rhythms and Yiddish songs, seamlessly combining intimate chamber group textures and contemporary jazz. *2.30pm. £9, £5 under-12s. Radlett Reform Synagogue, WD7 7AA (16 Dec). 7pm. £9. JW3, NW3 6ET (17 Dec).*

MUSIC

Sunday 4 November & Sunday 2 December

Monthly Klezmer Jam Session

A free monthly jam session led by a name at the forefront of the contemporary klezmer scene, Ilana Cravitz. As well as gigging regularly with her band London Klezmer Quartet, Cravitz performs with Freylekh Klezmer Dance Band, Klezmers Tsvey and Hopkele Klezmer Keilidhs. Join in or just watch; all abilities welcome. *8-10.30pm. FREE. The Harrison, WC1H 8JF. londonklezmerquartet.com*

Saturday 27 October
Shlock Rock

An evening of music: parodies of old rock tunes, as well as new music by Lenny Solomon. *8.15pm. £15, £10 children. Woodford Forest United Synagogue, E18 2QZ. myus.theus.org.uk*

Monday 5 November

The Ronnie Scott's Story
The Ronnie Scott's Quintet comes to JW3 to tell the

story of a young East End Jewish boy rising to success through jazz. Featuring live jazz, narration and archive photos. *8pm. £20. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

Sunday 11 November

Rosamunde Trio

Martino Tirimo (piano), Ben Sayevich (violin) and Daniel Veis (cello) present a programme to mark the Armistice centenary. They'll be playing music that takes listeners back to World War I, balanced with music of hope. Tirimo is joined by Atsuko Kawakami to play Casella's Pages of War, a short but dramatic work dating from 1915. Plus pieces by Shostakovich, Mendelssohn and Boulanger. *6.30pm. £14.50, £9.50 concs. Kings Place, N1 9AG. 020 7520 1490. kingsplace.co.uk*

Sunday 18 November

Brodsky Quartet

Daniel Rowland (violin), Ian Belton (violin), Paul Cassidy (viola) and Jacqueline Thomas (cello) pay tribute to the human courage that's inspired composers through

the ages. Bringing together responses to wars from the last 100 years, they'll perform Crumb's Black Angels, Brubeck's Regret and Schuloff's String Quartet No.1, amongst others. *6.30pm. £39.50 – £19.50. Kings Place, N1 9AG. 020 7520 1490. kingsplace.co.uk*

Wednesday 21 & Thursday 22 November

The Wolf of Baghdad and 3yin

Musician/artist Carol Isaacs – aka The Surreal McCoy – premieres her graphic memoir, *The Wolf of Baghdad*. Images from the book will be projected, while Isaacs performs alongside the band 3yin, a London outfit that plays the music of Jewish communities in the Middle East. After the Thursday performance, the artists and musicians will be speaking about the inspirations behind the innovative new work based on their personal histories and heritage. Read more about the performance in Sephardi Renaissance, p48. *7pm. £15. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk*

Thursday 22 November
Memorial Concert for the 80th Anniversary of the Kindertransport

The Wiener Library presents a special memorial concert to mark 80 years since the devastation of Kristallnacht and the Kindertransport rescue efforts that followed. The evening begins with a drinks reception at 7pm, with special guests including Dame Esther Rantzen DBE. The concert consists of an exclusive performance by two acclaimed German musicians who have come especially for this occasion: cellist Friederike Fochner and composer, conductor and pianist Mathias Husmann. Read more about the concert in Music, p37. *7-9pm. £30. The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, NW8 7HA. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk*

Monday 3 December

Oi Va Voi

Fronted by their new singer Zohara Niddam, these major players in the Jewish music scene play to promote their new album. The septet mix dynamic rhythms and Western melodic sensibility with the folk music of their Jewish and East European heritage.

7-11pm. £15. Islington Assembly Hall, N1 2UD. jmi.org.uk

Wednesday 5 December

Dreams of a Nation

A multimedia musical extravaganza starring Chazzan Jonny Turgel. 7.30pm. £15. Edgware United Synagogue, HA8 8YE. myus.theus.org.uk

Sunday 9 December

Handel's Judas

Maccabaeus

Alyth Choral Society performs the oratorio with a full orchestra and soloists.

7pm. £18, under-16s free. Alyth Synagogue, NW11 7EN. alythchoralsociety.org

Sunday 16 December

Bahla and the JMI Youth Big Band

See Book Now for info, p55. 2.30pm. £9, £5 under-12s. Radlett Reform Synagogue, WD7 7AA. 019 2385 6110. radlettreform.org.uk

Monday 17 December

Bahla and the JMI Youth Big Band

See Book Now for info, p55. The Alyth Youth Singers will be opening the concert with a short programme of Chanukah songs. 7pm. £9. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

TALKS

Tuesday 16 October

The Female Doctors and Nurses of Ravensbruck Concentration Camp

During the Third Reich, a handful of female doctors and nurses worked at Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany. Some of these women assisted in the human experiments

that took place there, administered lethal injections to prisoners and deliberately withheld medication. This talk looks at who these women were and how they ended up working at a concentration camp.

2.30-3.30pm. FREE. Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk

Young World Jewish Relief: Real-Life Stories from Rwanda

Valentine Mukamuyenzi, the director of the Streets Ahead Children's Centre Association, reveals all the work her organisation has been doing with World Jewish Relief in Rwanda.

7-9pm. FREE. Airspace, W1D 2DR. worldjewishrelief.org

Wednesday 17 October

Digging for Victory:

Refugees in the Pioneer Corps in WWII

Helen Fry has researched and published widely on the 10,000 Jewish refugees who fought for Britain during the war. These included 6,000 who started out in the 'alien' Pioneer Corps, many having enlisted from internment. Many went on to see active service in wartime and made an extraordinary contribution to the defeat of National Socialism. Fry expands on their largely forgotten legacy.

6-8.30pm. £5. Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk

Thursday 18 October

Curator's Talk: Shattered – Pogrom, November 1938

The Wiener Library's curators discuss their new exhibition, Shattered, about Kristallnacht. The collection features eyewitness accounts and previously unseen documents from the library's collection to illustrate German and Austrian Jews' desperate attempts to flee – in many cases arriving as refugees in Britain.

6-8.30pm. FREE. Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk

Women of World Jewish Relief

The launch of Women of World Jewish Relief, a bold initiative through which the work of women in the UK will transform the lives of other women and girls around the world.

7-8pm. FREE. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. worldjewishrelief.org

Zionism and Jewish Identity

Jack Omer-Jackaman delivers this talk for the Institute of Jewish Studies. 6.30pm. FREE. Roberts Building, UCL, WC1E 7JE. ucl.ac.uk/ijis

Monday 22 October

Roundtable: 100,000 Lost – Child Victims of the Holocaust in Hungary

Tim Cole, Dan Stone and Gábor Kádár appear on the panel for this discussion about the Hungarian victims of the Holocaust.

6-8pm. FREE. Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk

Monday 29 October

Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Ceremony

An evening to remember the former Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated 23 years ago.

6.30-8pm. FREE. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Thursday 1 November

Medical Globetrotters and Persevering Women from Galicia

Over centuries, Jewish medical practitioners faced contrasting attitudes of their brethren or society at large: from admiration to suspicion. In this talk by Andrew Zalewski, he'll reveal surprising details about these Jewish globetrotters and intellectual rebels brought to light through newly uncovered records.

6.30-8pm. FREE. Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk

Sunday 4 November

David Hillman Stained Glass Windows

Professor David Newman OBE presents this tour and lecture about the stained glass windows created by David Hillman for many of London's synagogues.

4pm. £10. Central Synagogue, W1W 6NW. spiroark.org

Monday 5 November

UK Interfaith Summit

Coinciding with UK Interfaith Week, this summit brings together young people from diverse communities to connect with others. Along with workshops, panel discussions, talks and an exhibition, there will be a festive space for sharing food, music and conversation. The theme of this year's Summit will be Intersectionality, Identity and Race.

3.30-9pm. £5-£9. Amnesty International UK, Human Rights Action Centre, EC2A 3EA. faithbelieforum.org

Tuesday 6 November

Austria is Lost: British and Austrian Diplomats and their Experience of Anschluss

A look at the months of heightening German Nazi antagonism and increasing Austrian isolation prior to Anschluss. Particularly through the eyes of British and Austrian diplomats stationed in Vienna and London respectively.

3-4pm. FREE. Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. wienerlibrary.co.uk

Secret Listeners of Trent Park

Helen Fry delivers this talk for the Herts & Middx branch of the Jewish Historical Society of England.

8pm. £3. Allum Lane Community Centre, Elstree, WD6 3PJ. jhse.org

Wednesday 7 November

A Celebration of Ludwik Zamenhof

Pay tribute to the Polish Jewish linguist and creator of Esperanto.

7.30pm. £15, £12 adv. JW3, NW3 6ET. jw3.org.uk

Thursday 8 November

Looking into the Abyss: Photos of Kristallnacht

While there are hundreds of written reports on the pogrom of November 1938 in Nazi Germany, there are only a few (mainly press) photographs in the archives of the Wiener Library. A closer look reveals that in nearly all the places where synagogues and shops were plundered, photos were taken. Some were made by press photographers, passersby or by the perpetrators – a few others even by Jews. In this talk, Christoph Kreuzmueller will discuss these photographs as historical sources and analyse different scenes, motifs, postures and perspectives revealed in them.

6.30-8pm. FREE. Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk

Sunday 11 November

100 Years Since the End of the Great War

A lecture by Sir Lawrence Freedman, emeritus professor of war studies at King's College London.

8pm. FREE. Highgate United Synagogue, N6 4BJ. 020 8340 7655. myus.theus.org.uk

Global Day of Jewish Living

Discussions on the journeys that matter most to us, from ancient adventures to the modern diaspora; spiritual to physical; and individual to the collective Jewish people.

3-5pm. £15, £12 adv. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Monday 12 November

Crohn's and Colitis in the Jewish Community

Dr Steven Mann talks about how he supports those living with these conditions and innovative new treatments.

7-9pm. Phone for prices. Michael Sobell JCC, NW11 9DQ. 020 8922 2900. jewishcare.org

Food and Alcohol in Iron-Age Israel and Judah: Archaeological Perspectives

A talk by Dr Rebekah Welton for the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society. 6pm. FREE. Institute of Archaeology, WC1H 0PY. 020 8349 5754. aias.org.uk

Kristallnacht: Thoughts for the Future

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and Niklas Frank explore their memories of the past and hopes for the future. Lasker-Wallfisch, one of the founding members of the English Chamber Orchestra, survived Auschwitz as a member of the women's orchestra and Frank's father was governor of Nazi-occupied Poland. 7.30pm. £15, £12 adv. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Tuesday 13 November

Touring Ethiopia

Sybil Sheridan introduces the JR tours she will lead to Ethiopia in February and November 2019. 6pm. FREE. Edgware venue, contact tours@jewishrenaissance.org.uk for address details. jewishrenaissance.org.uk

Thursday 15 November

Back to the Future: 125th Anniversary Event

The Institute of Jewish Studies celebrates its 125th anniversary with an evening of discussion. Featuring the president's address entitled A Plea for Anglo-Jewish History. 6.30pm. FREE. UCL, WC1E 6BT. jhse.org

Sunday 18 November

Who Helped Jewish Refugees Resettle?

A talk by Liran Morav on the essential role played by organisations and governments in the integration of Jews from Arab countries in France and the UK. 7.30pm. £10. Central Synagogue, WIW 6NW. 020 7794 4655. spiroark.org

Wednesday 21 November

Early Post-War Holocaust Knowledge and Jewish Missing Persons

Jan Lambertz delivers a talk about Jewish missing person reports filed in the early years of World War II, revealing how little was understood about the Nazi camps. 3-4pm. FREE. Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. wienerlibrary.co.uk

Nietzsche, Soloveitchik and Contemporary Jewish Philosophy

A presentation by Rabbi Dr Michael Harris. 8-9.30pm. £20, £16 adv. JW3, NW3 6ET. jw3.org.uk

Wednesday 21 &

Thursday 22 November

The Origins of The Wiener Library

Find out about the origins of The Wiener Library, the world's oldest archive of material on the Nazi era and the Holocaust. Featuring a talk and tour. Phone for times and prices. Wiener Library, WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk

Tuesday 27 November

Satire

In the run-up to the UK Jewish Comedy Festival, two speakers discuss the art of satire. Featuring Jewish activist Joseph Finlay and illustrator/journalist Martin Rowson. 8pm. £10. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Tuesday 4 December

80 Years Since the First

Kindertransport Train Rebecca Singer, head of communications and community at World Jewish Relief, talks about the Kindertransport. 8pm. FREE. Highgate United Synagogue, N6 4BJ. myus.theus.org.uk

Discover Your Family History

Hear more about the fascinating archives compiled by the World Jewish Relief organisation,



THEATRE FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Friday 23 November 2018 – Saturday

9 March 2019

The Menier Chocolate Factory presents Andy Nyman as Tevye in its major revival of one of the world's most beloved musicals, *Fiddler on the Roof*. This is a new staging by Trevor Nunn of the classic story of the travails of Tevye the milkman, his wife and five daughters. The renowned soundtrack includes 'Sunrise, Sunset', 'If I Were a Rich Man' and 'Matchmaker, Matchmaker'. 8pm (Tue-Sat), 3.30pm (Sat & Sun). £45-£49.50, £39.50 concs. Menier Chocolate Factory, SE1 1RU. menierchocolatefactory.com

as they reveal the amazing family stories that have been uncovered. 7.30pm. £15, £12 adv. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Tuesday 11 December

The First Crusade: The Role of the Christian Church

A talk by Malcolm Billings for the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society. 6pm. FREE. Institute of Archaeology, WC1H 0PY. 020 8349 5754. aias.org.uk

Thursday 13 December

What Was it Like to Be a Jewish Immigrant Nurse in Britain?

Dr Jane Brooks from the University of Manchester visits UCL to deliver this talk for the Institute of Jewish Studies. 7pm. FREE. UCL, WC1E 6BT. jhse.org

Tuesday 18 December

Holocaust and Lost Cultural and Urban Spaces in Modern Ukraine Iryna Staravoyt, Maria

Osborn and Asia Geffer lead this discussion. 7.30pm. £15, £12 adv. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

THEATRE

Until Saturday

20 October

The Lover / The Collection

To mark the 10th anniversary of Harold Pinter's death, the theatre that bears his name is hosting a season of his one-act plays. *The Lover* features a conventional couple in unconventional circumstances, while *The Collection* delves into the mystery of two London couples linked by desire and a quest for supremacy. Jamie Lloyd directs. Read more about Pinter at the Pinter in the July 2018 issue of JR. 7.30pm, 2.30pm (Sat only & 9 Oct). £15-£65. Harold Pinter Theatre, SW1Y 4DN. 084 5871 7615. pinteratthepinter.com

One for the Road / The New World Order / Mountain Language / Ashes to Ashes One for The Road is about a ruthless government official

and *The New World Order* explores how the abuse of power is legitimised in the name of democracy. The suppression of ideas and threat of non-conformity is explored in *Mountain Language* and *Ashes to Ashes* paints a disturbing portrait of man's obsession with dominance. Read more about Pinter at the Pinter in the July 2018 issue of JR. 7.30pm (Tue, Fri & Sat), 2.30pm (Thu only). £15-£65. Harold Pinter Theatre, SW1Y 4DN. 084 5871 7615. pinteratthepinter.com

Until Saturday

22 December

Company

Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's legendary Broadway musical comedy about life, love and marriage gets a refreshing rework by Elliott & Harper Productions, directed by Marianne Elliott. The lead role of Bobby has been reimaged as Bobbi, a 35-year-old woman whose family and friends can't understand why she's still single. Featuring Sondheim's iconic songs, 'The Ladies Who Lunch', 'Being Alive', and 'Side by Side'. 7.30pm (Mon-Sat), 2.30pm (Thu & Sat only). £79.50-£124.50. Gielgud Theatre, W1D 6AR. delfontmackintosh.co.uk/theatres/gielgud-theatre

Thursday 18 October

The Prince of West End Avenue

The octogenarian residents of a New York City retirement home are rehearsing a kosher production of *Hamlet*, when their leading man drops dead. Otto Korner seizes his chance to play the prince as his hidden past quickly comes to the fore. Adapted from Alan Isler's novel. 7.30pm. £8. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Monday 22 – Wednesday

24 October

Medusa

A 20th-anniversary dance piece from the Jasmin Vardimon Company.

Created on the coast of Barcelona and inspired by its marine life, Medusa examines the gendered historical significance of the myth, the symbolism of Medusa and the philosophical idea of 'reflection'.

7.30pm. £12-£32.

Sadler's Wells, EC1R 4TN.

jasminvardimon.com

Thursday 25 October – Saturday 8 December

Landscape / A Kind of Alaska

Jamie Lloyd directs these two spellbinding evocations of loneliness, isolation and the strange mists of time. In Landscape, a woman is locked in a beautiful memory and her husband demands to be heard, while A Kind of Alaska follows Deborah, who awakes from a 29-year sleep and is suspended between the conscious and unconscious worlds. Cast includes Tamsin Greig. Read more about Pinter at the Pinter in the July 2018 issue of JR.

7.30pm (Mon, Wed & Fri),

2.30pm (Sat only). £15-

£65. Harold Pinter Theatre, SW1Y 4DN. 084 5871

7615. pinteratthepinter.com

Tuesday 30 October – Saturday 24 November

Bury the Dead

The Finborough's GREATWARIOO series

culminates with Irwin Shaw's 1936 expressionist anti-war masterpiece. Bury the Dead follows six dead soldiers, who refuse to lay down and die. The military are at a loss of what to do. The captains and generals attempt to persuade the men to be buried quietly, but quickly discover it's difficult to negotiate with men who have nothing left to lose.

7.30pm (Tue-Sat), 3pm (Sat & Sun only). £18-£20, £16-£18

concs. Finborough Theatre, SW10 9ED. 012 2335 7851.

finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Tuesday 30 October – Sunday 25 November

Sholem Aleichem in the Old Country

South African performer Saul Reichlin's one-man show based on the short stories of Sholem Aleichem, leading Yiddish author and playwright.

8pm (Tue-Sat), 1pm & 5pm

(Sun). £14, £12 concs. The

Lion and Unicorn, NW5 2ED.

lionandunicorntheatre.co.uk

Tuesday 30 October – Saturday 3 November

Same Colour Tears

Salaam Shalom, a media and arts organisation, invite you to leave your preconceptions at the door and open your eyes, ears and heart. Using recorded testimonies from Palestinians, Israeli Jews and

Israeli Arabs, Same Colour Tears explores the challenges of living life on both sides of the conflict and the need for dialogue across borders.

7.30pm. £15, £12 concs, £10

under-30s. The Bunker, SE1

IRU. samecolourtears.com

Thursday 1 November – Saturday 8 December

An Evening of Cabaret

Two Jewish drag shows in one night: Chanukah Lewinsky (7.30pm) and The Chronicles of Electra (9pm). First up, Chanukah Lewinsky travels west from Grodno for an hour of live art and poetry in a certain blue dress...

Then, in a heartwarming tale, Electra Cute struggles to tell her queer friends she's Jewish and her Jewish friends that she's queer.

7.30pm & 9pm. £12, £20 (both shows). JW3, NW3 6ET. 020

7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Moonlight / Night School

Lyndsey Turner and Ed Stambolouian direct these shorts, respectively, for the Pinter at the Pinter season. The brutality of family life and the subjectivity of memory are explored in the emotionally raw but funny Moonlight. In Night School a 1960s East End criminal returns home from prison to find his room has been occupied by a mysterious woman with a secret.

Read more about Pinter at the Pinter in the July 2018 issue of JR.

7.30pm (Tue, Fri & Sat),

2.30pm Thu only). £15-

£65. Harold Pinter Theatre,

SW1Y 4DN. 084 5871 7615.

pinteratthepinter.com

Tuesday 6 November

KinderSang

A newly composed music theatre piece to commemorate the anniversary of the Kindertransport.

7.30pm. £12. JW3, NW3 6ET.

020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Thursday 8 November

Liza Sings Streisand

Liza Pulman, the acclaimed singer returns with her latest

show Liza Sings Streisand.

Weaving together history, humour and harmonies, Pulman celebrates the songs of the great vocalist Barbra Streisand with her six-piece band, the Stardust Ensemble. Featuring much-loved classics, including 'Evergreen', 'The Way We Were' and 'New York State of Mind'.

7.30pm. £22. JW3, NW3 6ET.

020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Tuesday 20 November – Saturday 9 February

Caroline, Or Change

See Top Picks for info, p54.

Read our review of Caroline, Or Change on the JR blog.

7.30pm (Mon-Sat), 2.30pm

(Thu & Sat only). From

£20. Playhouse Theatre,

WC2N 5DE. 084 4871

7631. carolineorchange.co.uk

Friday 23 November

2018 – Saturday

9 March 2019

Fiddler On the Roof

See Book Now for info, p57.

8pm (Tue-Sat), 3.30pm

(Sat & Sun). £45-£49.50,

£39.50 concs. Menier

Chocolate Factory, SE1

IRU. 020 7378 1713.

menierchocolatefactory.com

Thursday 13 December

2018 – Saturday

26 January 2019

The Room / Family Voices /

Victoria Station

Patrick Marber directs Harold Pinter's first play, The Room. An all-too-familiar and frighteningly topical brand of English xenophobia runs through this darkly funny and unexpectedly odd play from 1957. In the humorous Victoria Station and the reflective Family Voices, isolated voices struggle to communicate. Cast includes Jane Horrocks, Emma Naomi and Nicholas Woodeson. Read more about Pinter at the Pinter in the July 2018 issue of JR.

7.30pm, 2.30pm (Sat only);

plus 27 Dec & 4 Jan). £15-

£65. Harold Pinter Theatre,

SW1Y 4DN. 084 5871

7615. pinteratthepinter.com

Thursday 20 December

2018 – Saturday

26 January 2019

Party Time / Celebration

An amusing attack on the narcissistic super-rich. This is paired with Pinter's final play, Celebration, a comedy about the vulgarity and materialism of the nouveau riche. Read more about Pinter at the Pinter in the July 2018 issue of JR.

7.30pm, 2.30pm (Thu only,

plus 27 & 31 Dec). £15-

£65. Harold Pinter Theatre,

SW1Y 4DN. 084 5871

7615. pinteratthepinter.com

WALKS

Tuesday 16 October

Bagels to Brady Street

Explore east of Brick Lane with Blue Badge guide Rachel Kolsky. Learn about the synagogues, maternity home, closed cemetery and Hughes Mansions.

10.30am. £15. JW3, NW3 6ET.

020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Tuesday 23 October

Stepney and Whitechapel

Stephen Burstin leads walkers around east London, discovering a Jewish cemetery, the potato latke pub and a tiny synagogue.

10.30am. £15. JW3, NW3 6ET.

020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Wednesday 14 November

Old Jewish Quarter

Discover the history of the Jewish community with a visit to the magnificent Bevis Marks Synagogue (£4 extra for entry). Plus, see the Jewish soup kitchen and the first Yiddish theatre.

10.15am. £15. JW3, NW3 6ET.

020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Tuesday 20 November

Hackney Downs to the

Lowlife: Literary Hackney

Celebrate the literary heritage of Hackney on this tour with Blue Badge guide Rachel Kolsky. Learn about Jewish writers, including Grace Aguilar, Pinter, Baron and Camberton.

10.30am. £15. JW3, NW3 6ET.

020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

ARE YOU ORGANISING A RAFFLE FOR YOUR SYNAGOGUE OR CHARITY?



JR WILL BE PLEASED TO ADD TO THE PRIZES BY DONATING A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION TO THE MAGAZINE

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JEWISHRENAISSANCE.ORG.UK

EVENTS LONDON

Sunday 25 November

The V&A with a Jewish Twist: Highlights and Sacred Silver

This tour of the Victoria & Albert Museum profiles the building's fascinating history and architecture before focusing on highlights with a Jewish association. Featuring pieces from the Gilbert Collection and Montefiore Endowment, the ceramics of de Waal and Rie, sacred silver and Benney bark. 11am-1pm. £15. Jewish Museum, NW1 7NB. 020 7284 7384. jewishmuseum.org.uk

WORKSHOPS

Monday 8 October – Monday 10 December

Creative Writing with Sylvia Paskin

Poetry, fiction, plays and memoir writing workshop taking place every Monday. Sylvia Paskin is an author, editor and lecturer, who

has edited various works by Jewish authors, poets and Yiddish filmmakers.

7.30-9.30pm. £160 (whole 10 weeks). JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. www.jw3.org.uk

Until Tuesday 11 December

Modern Jewish History

Trudy Gold leads this weekly Tuesday course about the extraordinary changes to the history of the Jewish people over the past 200 years. 10.30am-12.30pm. £20, £160 (whole 10 weeks). JW3, NW3 6ET. jw3.org.uk

Until Wednesday 12 December

Trials: The Great Court Cases of Jewish History
Trudy Gold leads this weekly Wednesday course about the little-known areas of Jewish history. 10.30am-12.30pm. £20, £160 (whole 10 weeks). JW3, NW3 6ET. jw3.org.uk

Until Thursday 13 December

Modern Jewish Literature with Aviva Dautch

Explore the richness of modern Jewish literature by reading Israeli, European and American books and discussing them every Thursday. Featuring Nicole Krauss's Forest Dark, Ruth Giligan's Nine Folds Make a Paper Swan and Moshe Sakal's The Diamond Setter. 10.30am-12.30pm. £20, £160 (whole 10 weeks). JW3, NW3 6ET. jw3.org.uk

Until Tuesday 18 December

The Art of Hebrew Calligraphy

A weekly workshop, running every Tuesday, in the art of Hebrew lettering. Participants will work in ink, pencil, paint and gold leaf. 12.15-2.15pm. £20, £180 (whole 10 weeks). JW3, NW3 6ET. jw3.org.uk

Until Wednesday 19 December

Mixed Voices Choir

A Wednesday choir rehearsal of Jewish and Israeli music. Open to all who can sing in pitch, Jewish or otherwise. Contact to confirm the class is on before attending. 7-9pm. First two classes free, after that £1bc depending on numbers. Wimbledon (address revealed upon contact). alonisarit@gmail.com

Wednesday 24 October, Wednesday 21 November, Wednesday 5 December

Challah for Hunger

Bake challah for the homeless. 6-9pm. FREE. JW3, NW3 6ET. 020 7433 8988. jw3.org.uk

Tuesday 6, Tuesday 13, Tuesday 20 & Tuesday 27 November

A Study Course with Norbert Meyn

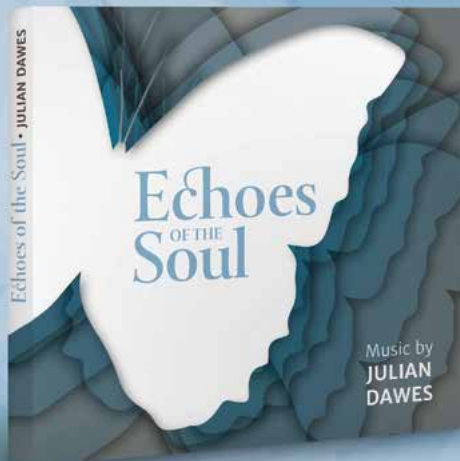
After two successful concerts with Ensemble Émigré at the

Liberal Jewish Synagogue, Norbert Meyn returns with Cathy Heller Jones and fellow musicians for a short study course. Explore the role of Jewish cultural figures in the evolution of classical song (plus piano). They will also discuss how Jewish and other émigré musicians from Nazi Europe helped to make it more popular in Britain. This event is part of B'nai B'rith UK's Heritage Days. 8-9.30pm. £10 per session, £40 whole series. Liberal Jewish Synagogue, NW8 7HA. 020 7286 5181. ljs.org

Saturday 24 November Where is Home?

A cartoon workshop led by The Surreal McCoy (New Yorker, Spectator) and Banx (FT, Private Eye). Read our interview with Carol Isaacs in Sephardi Renaissance, p48. Phone for times. FREE. Charing Cross Library, WC2H 0HF. 020 7641 6200.

WHAT'S HAPPENING



New Music on Jewish themes by **JULIAN DAWES**

Performed by: The Finchley Children's Music Group
The Joseph Ramadan Singers • Camille Maalawy • Cantor Jason Green
Cantor Steven Leas • Mitra Alice Tham • Catherine Hare
Joseph Ramadan • Stephen Dickinson

"Amongst his 20th century English influences are the pastoralism and extended tonality of Herbert Howells, the richness of Walton, the elegant delicacy of Berkeley and the jazzy impetus of Rodney Bennett; wider European influences include the caustic irony of Shostakovich and Kurt Weill and the rhythmic impetus of Prokofiev and Stravinsky. Yet Dawes welds from his influences an individual voice that is distinctive and refreshing, displaying assured craftsmanship and characterful invention." MALCOLM MILLER



"Echoes of the Soul is a treasure trove of music by Julian Dawes, one of the most significant composers working in the field of Jewish art music."

Combinations of mezzo-soprano, tenor and baritone with piano; children's voices with piano; flute with piano and unaccompanied chorus, range from poignant and tragic to joyful and humorous.

This is a gem that deserves a place in the collection of every aficionado of Jewish music."

– Alex Knapp



amazon.co.uk AVAILABLE NOW FROM AMAZON AND ALL DOWNLOADS WORLDWIDE
PURCHASE CD OR DOWNLOAD ON: WWW.STORE.CDBABY.COM/CD/JULIANDAWES

EVENTS NATIONAL

BRISTOL

BOOKS & POETRY

Tuesday 13 November

Belonging and Belongings:

Jewish Poetry in the UK
See highlight box for info (below).

7.30pm. £6, £4 concs. Redland Green Bowling Club, Bristol, BS6 7HE. davarbristol.co.uk

FILM

Wednesday 31 October

Menashe

A Yiddish-language portrayal of Orthodox life in Brooklyn. When sales assistant Menashe's wife dies, he tries to follow the rabbi's decree, obliging him to remarry and get custody of his son. A series of unsuccessful dates leaves him torn between his faith and community, and his love for his child.

8pm. £5.25, £4.25 concs, £3.50 students. Orpheus Cinema, Bristol, BS9 4HN. 011 7962 5852. scottcinemas.co.uk

Wednesday

28 November

A Bag of Marbles

Canadian director Christian Duguay explores the horrors of World War II from the perspective of two young Jewish boys living in Nazi-occupied France. Based on the acclaimed memoirs of the same name by Joseph Joffo.

8pm. £5.25, £4.25 concs, £3.50 students. Orpheus Cinema, Bristol, BS9 4HN. scottcinemas.co.uk

TALKS

Tuesday 11 December

The Bagel: Past, Present and Future

If smoked salmon and cream cheese bring just one thing to mind, then you're part of a fascinating edible history that has brought the roll with a hole from 17th-century Poland to the freezers of the modern Anglo-American home. This talk by Clarissa Hyman will give a cultural overview of this modest circular bread.

7.30pm. £6, £4 concs. Redland Green Bowling Club, Bristol, BS6 7HE. davarbristol.co.uk

THEATRE

Monday 5 – Saturday

10 November

Same Colour Tears

See London listing for info, p58.

7.30pm. £10, £8 concs, £5 under-30s. The Loco Klub, Bristol, BS1 6QH. 011 7941 3857. samecolourtears.com

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

BOOKS & POETRY

Thursday 1 November

Churchill History Lecture

Series: Churchill's sculptor
Aurelia Young launches her new book *Finding Nemon*, a biography about her father, the sculptor Oscar Nemon. Churchill and Nemon spent a lot of time together, during which Churchill made a bust of Nemon. In this illustrated talk Young will describe how her father travelled across Europe to seek refuge in the UK before the outbreak of World War II.

5.30pm. FREE. Churchill College, Cambridge, CB3 0DS. 012 2333 6166. chu.cam.ac.uk

FAMILY

Sunday 4 November

Limmud Cambridge

See Book Now for info, p61. See website for times. £40, £20 children. Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge, CB2 8PE. limmud.org

GREATER MANCHESTER

BOOKS & POETRY

Monday 19 November

M@M Book Club

Menorah Synagogue's monthly book club. This month's title for discussion has yet to be decided – phone for info nearer the time. 2.30pm. FREE. Menorah Synagogue, Manchester, M22 4RZ. 016 1428 7746. menorah.org.uk

Monday 17 December

M@M Book Club

This month's title for discussion has yet to be decided – phone for info nearer the time. 2.30pm. FREE. Menorah Synagogue, Manchester, M22 4RZ. 016 1428 7746. menorah.org.uk

FILM

Tuesday 6 November

Menorah Film Club: Somewhere in Europe

A monthly movie get-together that's open to all (aged 18+). This month they're screening *Somewhere in Europe*, Géza Radányi's 1948 drama about a band of wartime runaways in Hungary, who scour the countryside in search of food and shelter. 7.45pm. £45 membership. Menorah Synagogue, Manchester, M22 4RZ. menorah.org.uk/film-club

Saturday 10 – Thursday 22 November

UK International Jewish Film Festival

See London listing for info, p55, and read our reviews of some of the festival highlights in Film, p32. Times, prices and venues vary. <http://ukjewishfilm.org>

Tuesday 4 December

Menorah Film Club: Noodle

Ayelet Menahemi's comedy about a Chinese flight attendant working in Israel. When she's suddenly deported for overstaying her work visa, she struggles, with no Hebrew language skills, to explain she has a child with her who goes by the nickname Noodle. 7.45pm. £45 membership. Menorah Synagogue, Manchester, M22 4RZ. menorah.org.uk/film-club

MUSIC

Thursday 1 November

Opera Appreciation with Joyce Kennedy

L'Incoronazione di Poppea by Monteverdi. 1.45pm. £5 donation. Menorah Synagogue, Manchester, M22 4RZ. menorah.org.uk

Thursday 6 December

Opera Appreciation with Joyce Kennedy

Cavalleria Rusticana by Mascagni and *Pagliacci* by Leoncavallo. 1.45pm. £5 donation. Menorah Synagogue, Manchester, M22 4RZ. menorah.org.uk

THEATRE

Sunday 21 October

Contagion

A contemporary dance piece that commemorates the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, which killed more people than World War I itself. The striking work of Austrian artist Egon Schiele, who fell victim to the Spanish Flu, forms a visual footnote. 12pm & 2.30pm. FREE. Imperial War Museum North, Manchester, M17 1TZ. 016 1836 4000. iwm.org.uk

Tuesday 30 & Wednesday 31 October

Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story

A dark folktale featuring klezmer performed by Ben Caplan. Old Stock is based on the true story of writer Hannah Moscovitch's great-grandparents, two Jewish Romanian refugees who fled to Canada in 1908. Read more about Old



BOOKS & POETRY BELONGING AND BELONGINGS

Tuesday 13 November

What does it mean to be a Jewish poet? Can a non Jew like Micheal O'Siadhail write about the Holocaust? What part do journals like *Jewish Renaissance* and the *Jewish Quarterly* play in keeping alive the identity of Jewish poets and poetry? How important are Jewish poets like Aviva Dautch, who works with refugees encouraging them to write poetry? JR's poetry editor Liz Cashdan (pictured) tackles these big questions. 7.30pm. £6, £4 concs. Redland Green Bowling Club, Bristol, BS6 7HE. davarbristol.co.uk

Stock in Theatre, pXX and listen to our interview with Hannah Moscovitch on JR OutLoud.

8pm. £15.50-£21.50. The Lowry, Salford, M50 3AZ. 084 3208 6010. oldstocktour.co.uk/tour.html

WALKS

Sunday 21 October

Heritage Walk: Jewish Manchester

In the 19th century Manchester's Jewish community settled in areas close to Victoria Station. Starting at the museum, guides will take walkers around the streets where evidence of these first Jews still exists.

1-3pm. £7. Manchester Jewish Museum, M8 8LW. 084 3208 0500. manchesterjewishmuseum.com

HAMPSHIRE

THEATRE

Friday 9 & Saturday 10 November

SHOW

Israel's Hofesh Shechter Company presents its apprentice company, Shechter II, for dancers aged 18-25. SHOW is a playful performance in three acts that revolves around anarchic artists in a macabre circus of comedy, murder and desire. Read our review of SHOW on the JR blog.

7.30pm. £10-£27. NST City, Southampton, SO17 1TR. 023 8067 1771. hofesh.co.uk

MERSEYSIDE

MUSIC

Sunday 28 October

Songs of Leonard Cohen

Performance by Keith James. 7.30pm. £15. Princes Road Synagogue, Liverpool, L8 1TG. 015 1709 3431. princesroad.org

MIDLANDS

FAMILY

Sunday 23 – Thursday 27 December

Limmud Festival

See Book Now for info, p61. Phone for times and prices. Hilton Birmingham Metropole, B40 1PP. 020 3115 1620. limmud.org

EVENTS NATIONAL

TALKS

Sunday 11 November

Birmingham Jewish Graduates Association

Professor Martin Goodman discusses aspects of Judaism. 3pm. £5, £20 annual m'ship. The Old Post Office Building, Birmingham, B13 8JP.

Sunday 9 December

Birmingham Jewish Graduates Association

Guisepe Nicolosi delivers the AGM and Chanukah lecture about exoplanets and how we know what we know about these alien worlds. 3pm. £5, £20 annual m'ship. The Old Post Office Building, Birmingham, B13 8JP.

NORFOLK

THEATRE

Thursday 18 – Saturday 20 October

Medusa

See London listing for info, p58.

6.30pm (Thu) & 7.30pm

(Fri-Sat). £12, £9 concs.

DanceEast, Ipswich, IP4 1DW. jasminvardimon.com

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

FILM

Monday 11 & Sunday 18 November

UK International Jewish Film Festival

See London listing for info, p55, and read our reviews of some of the festival highlights in Film, p32.

6pm. See website for prices.

Broadway, Nottingham, NG1 3AL. ukjewishfilm.org

OXFORDSHIRE

BOOKS & POETRY

Sunday 21 October

The Jewish Journey

Rebecca Abrams will be speaking at Thame Literary Festival about the remarkable collection of hidden Jewish objects in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, as detailed in her book, The Jewish Journey: 4,000 Years in 22 Objects. Read Abrams' fascinating account of Jewish history as seen through some of these objects in the Jan 2018 issue of JR.

12pm. £7. Spread Eagle Hotel, Thame, OX9 2BW. talfestival.org

MUSIC

Wednesday 7 November

Remembering the Jews of Iraq

A remembrance evening, featuring the Wolf of Baghdad. Iraqi Jewish guests will add their own stories and guests can enjoy some delicious Iraqi Jewish treats.

Contact jane.itzhaki@gmail.com

for details. Oxford Jewish Centre, Oxford, OX1 2JL.

TALKS

Wednesday 17 &

Thursday 18 October

The Bible and the Humanities

Two-day conference engaging biblical and rabbinic texts, as well as related philological, interpretive and religious traditions across arts and humanities.

Phone for times and prices.

Oriel College, Oxford, OX1

4EW. eurojewishstudies.org

SCOTLAND

FILM

Thursday 15, Sunday 18 & Wednesday 21 November

UK International Jewish Film Festival

See London listing for info, p55, and read our reviews of some of the festival highlights in Film, p32.

Times, prices and Glasgow

venues vary. ukjewishfilm.org

SUSSEX

FILM

Wednesday 28 & Thursday 29 November

UK International Jewish Film Festival

See London listing for info, p55, and read our reviews of some of the festival highlights in Film, p32.

8.30pm. See website for prices.

Duke's at Komedia, Brighton,

BNI 1UN. ukjewishfilm.org

MUSIC

Saturday 24 November

Chichester Psalms

The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra performs Leonard Bernstein. 7.30pm. £15-£36. Chichester Cathedral, PO19 1PX. 012 0266 9925. bsolive.com



FAMILY DAY LIMMUD & LIMMUD FESTIVAL

Sunday 4 November &

Sunday 23 – Thursday 27 December

The wonderful Jewish festival returns to Birmingham (23-27 Dec) with an undoubtedly stellar line up of speakers, lecturers and artists. Plus a great programme for children, Jewish food and drink, evening entertainment and competitions. Before that, Limmud lands in Cambridge (4 Nov), where Israeli author Dorit Rabinian, Cambridge classicist Simon Goldhill, noted historian Miri Rubin and many more will appear. Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge & Hilton Birmingham Metropole. See website for times and prices. limmud.org

TALKS

Tuesday 23 October

Jewish Refugees from Fascism in Sussex 1933-1945

A lecture by Jennifer Craig-Norton for the Jewish Historical Society of England. 7.45pm. £4. Ralli Hall, Hove, BN3 3TH. jhse.org

Tuesday 27 November

The Brighton Jewish Community 1910 – 1920

A lecture by Michael Crook, chairman of the Sussex branch of the Jewish Historical Society of England. 7.45pm. £4. Ralli Hall, Hove, BN3 3TH. jhse.org

Tuesday 29 January

Medieval Sephardi Literature

A lecture by Imogen Choi for the Jewish Historical Society of England. 7.45pm. £4. Ralli Hall, Hove, BN3 3TH. jhse.org

Tuesday 26 February

Patriots and Jews

A lecture by Dr Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti (University College

London) about navigating the various challenges of equality and integration in Liberal Italy.

7.45pm. £4. Ralli Hall, Hove, BN3 3TH. 012 7341 9412. jhse.org

Tuesday 26 March
Jews of Hastings and St Leonards

A lecture by Michael Jolles, a council member of the Jewish Historical Society of England. 7.45pm. £4. Ralli Hall, Hove, BN3 3TH. 012 7341 9412. jhse.org

THEATRE

Tuesday 23 – Saturday 27 October

Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story

See Greater Manchester listing for info, p60. 7.30pm. £14-£20, £12-£18 concs. The Old Market, Brighton, BN3 1AS. oldstocktour.co.uk/tour.html

WORKSHOPS

Until Tuesday 18 December

Chutzpah Choir

A weekly Yiddish singing class led by Polina Shepherd

on most Tuesdays. Phone to confirm the class is on before attending.

11am-1pm. Hove (contact for exact venue details). 012 7347 4795. chutzpahchoir@gmail.com

Israeli Dancing

A weekly Israeli dance class that takes place every Tuesday.

7.45-9.45pm. Phone for prices. Ralli Hall, Hove, BN3 3TH. 012 7368 8538.

YORKSHIRE

FILM

Tuesday 13 – Monday 26 November

UK International Jewish Film Festival

See London listing for info, p55, and read our reviews of some of the festival highlights in Film, p32. 7.30pm. Prices and Leeds venues vary. <http://ukjewishfilm.org>

TALKS

Monday 5 November

Notable Leeds Jews

A lecture by Michael Meadowcroft for the Jewish Historical Society of England. 8pm. FREE. United Hebrew Congregation Synagogue, Leeds, LS17 8DW. jhse.org

Sunday 11 November

The Jews of South Africa

A talk by Warren Banks. 3pm. £3 (inc. refreshments). Kingfield Synagogue, Sheffield, S11 8UX. sheffieldsjcc@gmail.com

Sunday 9 December

The Life of Leonard Bernstein

Nigel Simeone presents. 3pm. £3 (inc. refreshments). Kingfield Synagogue, Sheffield, S11 8UX. sheffieldsjcc@gmail.com

THEATRE

Thursday 8 & Friday 9 November

Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story

See Greater Manchester listing for info, p60. 7.30pm. £18.50, £16.50 under-26. Cast, Doncaster, DNI 3BU. 013 0230 3959. oldstocktour.co.uk/tour.html

Ben Uri

A Necessary Fiction

Artwork by ceramicist Basil Olton, which explores the untold history of anti-imperialist black activism in interwar London.

A Necessary Fiction is displayed as part of Black History Month.

Until 4 November

200 Selected Acquisitions Since 2001

A revolving show highlighting the art masters whose careers were cut short owing to forced exile. All have been acquired in the past 17 years by Ben Uri. 4 December – 24 March 2019 NW8 ORH. 020 7604 3991. benuri.org.uk

Etz Chayim Gallery

Marcia Kuperberg

A range of mixed media, delicate watercolours and vivid oil paintings of animals and landscapes.

Until 12 November

Viewing by appointment: caroleannek17@gmail.com. Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue, HA6 3AA. 019 2382 2592. npls.org.uk/etzchayim.htm

Imperial War Museum

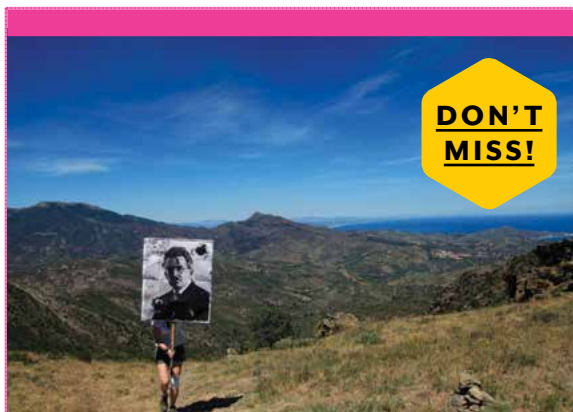
Poppies: Weeping Window

Weeping Window is a cascade comprising several thousand handmade ceramic poppies seen pouring from a high location to the ground below. Wave (showing in Manchester) is a sweeping arch of bright red poppy heads suspended on towering stalks. Both sculptures are by artist Paul Cummins and designer Tom Piper and represent the British or Colonial life lost at the front during World War I.

Until 18 November

Renewal: Life After the First World War

Through a collection of photographs, discover the innovation and resourcefulness that shaped the rebuilding and regeneration of the world



PELTZ GALLERY DAY FOR NIGHT: LANDSCAPES OF WALTER BENJAMIN

Until 27 October

A multimedia exhibition inspired by the landscapes inhabited throughout the life of German Jewish philosopher, cultural critic and essayist Walter Benjamin. Text, photography and film takes visitors on a journey from Benjamin's birthplace in Berlin to Capri and Naples, where he spent the formative years of his life. The exhibition ends in Cataluña, northern Spain, where Benjamin died while fleeing the Nazis in 1940. Birkbeck School of Arts, WCIH OPD. bbk.ac.uk/arts

after World War I. See the resilience and creativity at hand in times of great change.

Until 31 March 2019

I Was There: Room of Voices

In this immersive sound installation, 32 people who fought and lived through World War I share their personal stories of the Armistice that was declared at 11am on 11 November 1918.

Until 31 March 2019

African Soldier

This multi-screen installation by artist John Akomfrah remembers the millions of African men and women who participated in World War I. Projected onto three screens, the artwork combines a powerful sound score, historic footage and newly filmed footage shot by Akomfrah.

Until 31 March 2019

Moments of Silence

An immersive installation exploring the origins, history and future of remembrance rituals. Moments of Silence

combines animation, light projection, sound and space to present different forms of remembrance, from the first ever recorded silence at the 1929 Cenotaph Remembrance Service to present-day silences at Everest Base Camp and HMS Ambush. Until 31 March 2019 SE1 6HZ. 020 7323 4700. iwm.org.uk

Jewish Museum

Maya Attoun: The Charms of Frankenstein

A new installation created by artist Maya Attoun especially for the Jewish Museum London. Based on Attoun's recent project entitled 2018, The Charms of Frankenstein celebrates the bicentennial of Mary Shelley's iconic novel.

Until 4 November

Roman Vishniac Rediscovered

Presented simultaneously at Jewish Museum London and The Photographers' Gallery, Roman Vishniac Rediscovered is the first UK retrospective of Russian-born

American photographer Roman Vishniac (1897–1990). He's best known for having created one of the most widely recognised and reproduced photographic records of Jewish life in Eastern Europe between the two World Wars. Featuring many of his most iconic works, this comprehensive exhibition further introduces recently discovered and lesser-known chapters of his career, from the early 1920s to the late 1970s.

25 October 2018 – 24

February 2019

NW1 7NB. 020 7284 7384.

jewishmuseum.org.uk

Peltz Gallery

Day for Night: Landscapes of Walter Benjamin

See Don't Miss for info (above).

Until 27 October

Birkbeck School of Arts, WCIH OPD. bbk.ac.uk/arts

The Photographers' Gallery

Roman Vishniac Rediscovered

See Jewish Museum London listing for info.

25 October – 24 February

W1F 7LW. 020 7087 9300.

thephotographersgallery.org.uk

Royal Academy of Art

Klimt/Schiele: Drawings from the Albertina Museum, Vienna

Rare and fragile drawings by Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele, offering intimate insights into their artistic relationship and differing creative processes. This extraordinary collaboration with the Albertina Museum in Vienna marks the centenary of both artists' deaths.

4 November 2018 – 3

February 2019

W1J 0BD. royalacademy.org.uk

Tate Britain

Mark Gertler

A selection of works by influential British artist Mark Gertler. Born to Austrian Jewish parents in London's East End, Gertler studied at the Slade School of Art,

before becoming a key figure in London's avant-garde art scene between the wars. Guest curated by Ben Uri's Sarah MacDougall, featuring one of Ben Uri's 11 Gertlers: Rabbi and Rabbitzin.

Until 21 October

SW1P 4RG. 020 7887 8888.

tate.org.uk

Tate Modern

Anni Albers

Beautifully intricate and Modernist textiles woven by German Jewish artist Anni Albers. Born in Berlin in 1899, Albers studied and worked at the Bauhaus (along with her husband Joseph) thanks to a teaching residency at the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina.

Until 27 January 2019

SE1 9TG. tate.org.uk

Trafalgar Square

The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist

A 14-foot-long winged bull sitting atop Trafalgar Square's Fourth Plinth. This recreation of Lamassu, the stone deity that once protected the ancient Assyrian city Nineveh, comes from the mind of Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz. Inspired by his Iraqi heritage, Rakowitz used 10,500 Iraqi date syrup cans to cover the statue.

Until 2020

WC2N 5DN. london.gov.uk

Wiener Library

Shattered: Pogrom, November 1938

Through the eyewitness accounts gathered shortly after Kristallnacht, this exhibition examines responses to the unprecedented, nation-wide campaign of violence. Never before seen documents from the library's collection illustrate German and Austrian Jews' desperate attempts to flee, in many cases as refugees to Britain. Until 15 February 2019 WC1B 5DP. 020 7636 7247. wienerlibrary.co.uk

EXHIBITIONS NATIONAL & EU

GREATER MANCHESTER

Imperial War Museum
North, Manchester

Poppies: Wave

See Poppies: Weeping Window London listing for info, p62.

Until 25 November

Lest We Forget?

A look at commemorating war as a concept, one that spans personal memorials, community tributes and state commemorations. The display includes a photograph of a body selected for The Unknown Warrior – two graves of unidentified British and French soldiers buried at Westminster Abbey and the Arc de Triomphe to remember the unknown dead – and the original Joey puppet from the National Theatre's War Horse.

Until 24 February 2019

M17 1TZ. 016 1836 4000.

iwm.org.uk

MERSEYSIDE

Tate Liverpool

Everybody Razzle Dazzle

To celebrate the centenary of the end of World War I, the Tate Liverpool and Liverpool Biennial commissioned Sir Peter Blake to 'dazzle' a Mersey Ferry in the style of a British warship. The term 'dazzling' came from the abstract and angular shapes used during WWI to camouflage the underside of boats so that enemy submarines couldn't tell which direction they were going in. Blake's dazzle ship, otherwise known as Snowdrop, will be sailing on the Mersey until 2019.

Until 6 April 2019

L3 4BB. 015 1702 7400.

tate.org.uk

MIDLANDS

Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry

Artists Rooms: Anselm Kiefer

See Top Picks for info, p54.
19 October 2018 – 27 January 2019

CV1 5QP. 024 7623 7521.

theherbert.org

SCOTLAND

Glasgow University
Chapel

Hannah Frank 110th

Birthday Exhibition

See Don't Miss for info (below).

Until 6 February 2019

G12 8QQ. hannahfrank.org.uk

EUROPE AUSTRIA

Jewish Museum, Vienna

Teddy Kallek: The Viennese Mayor of Jerusalem

An exhibition about Jerusalem's Austrian mayor, whose life work included trying to enable a peaceful coexistence between Jews and Palestinians, rescuing refugees from the Nazi regime and opening Vienna's Jewish Museum.

Until 25 November

Leonard Bernstein: A New Yorker in Vienna

Leonard Bernstein, who was introduced to music in the synagogue of his childhood in Boston, had a lifelong relationship with Vienna. From 1966 until his death in 1990 he returned on several occasions to work with the Vienna Philharmonic. This exhibition marks the centenary of his birth.

17 October 2018 – 28 April 2019

Kabbalah: The Art of Jewish Mysticism

An exploration of Kabbalah in its widest sense. Its historical developments, including classical Kabbalah, early Jewish mysticism, practical Kabbalah and magic, as well as its modern offshoots in art and popular culture.

31 October 2018 – 3 March 2019

Kurt Klagsbrunn

Kurt Klagsbrunn's (1918–2005) photos provide an insight into a dedicated and integrated Viennese Jewish suburban family who were forced to flee in 1938.

5 December 2018 – 12 May 2019

1010. +43 1535 0431. jmw.at

FRANCE

Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris

Christian Boltanski

The Parisian artist evokes the Shoah in this major work, for which he researched thoroughly all the inhabitants of the Saint-Aignan Hotel in 1939. The piece, which is located in the courtyard, is made up of posters that the weather progressively degrades.

Until 31 December

Tribute to the Donors

A large selection of ancient and contemporary photographs, rare objects, family archives and testimonies of Comtadin and Maghrebian Jews that tell the history of the Jews of France.

Until 13 January 2019

Sigmund Freud: Look and Listen

Some 200 paintings, drawings, engravings and scientific devices that offer a fresh look at the intellectual and scientific journey of the inventor of psychoanalysis. Featuring major works by

Gustave Courbet, Oskar Kokoschka, Mark Rothko and Egon Schiele.

Until 10 February 2019

75003. +33 (1) 5301 8653.

mahj.org

GERMANY

Jewish Museum, Berlin

Welcome to Jerusalem

A major exhibition dedicated to a city that is revered as a holy place by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, but is simultaneously a point in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Topics are presented through historical objects, works by artists past and present, immersive room designs, and multimedia installations.

Until 30 April 2019

10969. +49 30 2599 3300.

jemberlin.de

NETHERLANDS

Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

David Seymour (Chim)

A retrospective on the life and work of one of the greatest photojournalists of the 20th century. Born Dawid Szymin, later called

David Seymour, but known professionally as Chim, the Jewish Polish-American photographer was a pioneer in political photojournalism. A particular highlight is the photographs of the young State of Israel.

19 October 2018 – 20 March 2019

1011 PL. jhm.nl

National Holocaust Museum, Amsterdam

Exodus: Illegal Palestine Travellers, 1945-48

With photographs and poignant stories of Dutch people who wanted to build a new life in Palestine, Exodus tells the story of the hundreds of Dutch-Jewish youths displaced after World War II who made the tumultuous trip to Palestine.

Until 6 January 2019

Tangible Memories from the Jewish Monument

Previously titled Jewish Monument and set up online, this collection of individual profiles of 104,000 (and counting) Holocaust victims gets a physical place in the museum. It includes objects, photographs, documents and other personal items to help paint a picture of the lives that were connected to them. It also features an interactive display of the Jewish children profiled.

Until 31 December 2019

1018 DB. jck.nl/en

SPAIN

Centro Sefarad Israel, Madrid

Journey into Sepharad: An Exhibition of Paintings and Watercolours

London-based artist Bettina Caro presents large-scale paintings of Sephardi synagogues, many of which are no longer in use. Plus a number of works depicting Moroccan Jewish brides wearing their traditional dress, the North African tea ceremony and still-life paintings of items of Judaica.

26 October – 31 December 2018

28013. +34 91 391 10 02.

casasefarad-israel.es



GLASGOW UNIVERSITY CHAPEL HANNAH FRANK 110TH BIRTHDAY

Until 6 February 2019

A showcase of the life and work of celebrated Jewish artist Hannah Frank. The Glasgow native passed away 10 years ago at the age of 100 after a 75-year career. The exhibition takes place at her former university, where she spent her student years, and subsequent time after graduation, illustrating and writing for the Glasgow University Magazine.

G12 8QQ. hannahfrank.org.uk

EXHIBITIONS ISRAEL

HOLON

Design Museum Holon

Sagmeister and Walsh

A selection of works from the studio of designers Stefan Sagmeister and Jessica Walsh. The pair specialise in branding, social strategies, advertising, apps, books and more, so expect a colourful and varied collection.

Until 20 October

Hide & Seek

A radical, playful and almost theatrical exhibition of work by Dutch designer Maarten Baas.

27 November 2018 – 27 April 2019

5845400. +972 73-215-1525. dmh.org.il

JERUSALEM

Bible Lands Museum

Out of the Blue

As Israel celebrates its 70th anniversary year, explore the origins of tekhelet and argaman (blue and purple dyes), from the bold hues of the Mediterranean shores to the national colours of the State of Israel. See culturally significant archaeological items, 2,000-year-old fragments dyed in tekhelet and argaman found in caves in the Judean Desert, and rare prayer shawls and historic flags. Plus, see the only known jar in the world to feature royal inscriptions by Darius I, King of Persia, in four languages and painted entirely in purple.

No end date specified

Jerusalem in Babylon: New light on the Judean Exiles

Learn about the story of the destruction of the First Temple and Jerusalem and the exile of the Judeans to Babylon in this exhibition, which concludes with the echo of Psalm 137: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept when we remembered Zion".

No end date specified

Gods, Heroes and Mortals in Ancient Greece

The most comprehensive exhibition of ancient Greek



ISRAEL MUSEUM ZOYA CHERKASSKY: PRAVDA

Until 3 November

In this first solo exhibition of work by acclaimed Israeli artist Zoya Cherkassky, visitors will see a series of oil on linen paintings and works on paper. Pravda depicts scenes experienced by the millions of Russian immigrants who came to Israel in the early 1990s. With images of arrivals, long queues and foreign food, you can see that Cherkassky uses both humour and sincerity to portray a stark reality.

9171002. +972 2670 8811. imj.org.il

ceramics to be seen in Israel. The display features rare pieces, ranging from the second millennium BCE to the 5th century BCE.

No end date specified
9104601. +972 2561 1066. blmj.org

Israel Museum

Christian Boltanski: Lifetime

Work by Parisian artist Christian Boltanski, created over the past four decades. Born in 1944 to a Jewish father and Catholic mother, Boltanski grew up surrounded by survivors of the war and the memories of those who died. These experiences heavily influence his work, which questions if it's possible to truly remember and how we best commemorate the dead.

Until 31 October

Zoya Cherkassky: Pravda

See Don't Miss for info (above).

Until 3 November

Along Personal Lines: Gifts from the Schulhof Collection

Works by artists who were active in Europe and North

America from post-World War II onwards, collected between 1912 and 2012.

Until 30 November

A Wedding Dress from Baghdad

Made of satin silk and decorated with tinsel embroidery, this unique dress displays traditional motifs including the Tree of Life, birds and khamsa patterns. This type of embroidery is characteristic of dowry items of the brides of Baghdad at the time, whether Jewish, Muslim or Christian. This particular dress was worn for the first time by Rabbi Abraham Baruch Gubbay's grandmother in the late 19th century, before it moved to London with the family, where it was altered to be worn by Mozelle – Rabbi Gubbay's bride – in 1965.

Until 31 December

Freud of the Rings

Freud's own ring is displayed beside other rings that he gifted to his students. There are also a few objects from the psychoanalyst's antiques collection.

Until 1 March 2019

Fashion Statements:

Decoding Israeli Dress

Clothing, sketches, films and photography that illustrate the evolution of fashion in Israel over the past century. Journey from pre-Zionist fashion, through Oriental influences to today's trends.

Until 6 April 2019

Treasures of Yemenite

Silverwork

Rare silver items dated to the 18th and 19th centuries according to the hallmarks of the imams. Almost all bear the names of the craftsmen who made them, including some renowned Jewish families of silversmiths.

Until 1 May 2019

9171002. +972 2670 8811.

imj.org.il

Tower of David – The Museum of the History of Jerusalem

London in Jerusalem:

British Culture on the Streets of the City 1917-1948

Shed light on the society and cultural life of Jerusalem during a relatively short, but influential time in the history of the city: the 30 years of the British Mandate. During this period the process of modernisation, which began at the end of the 19th century, solidified and new initiatives were established to boost the economy and culture of Jerusalem.

No end date specified

A General and A Gentleman: Allenby at the Gates of Jerusalem

On the afternoon of 11 December 1917, General Edmund Allenby walked from the Jaffa Gate to the Tower of David Citadel. This moment signified the beginning of a new era in the history of Jerusalem, the Jewish Yishuv and the Land of Israel. The exhibition explores this post-World War I era with films, photographs, rare objects, posters and personal items.

No end date specified
9114001. +972 2626 5333.

tod.org.il

TEL AVIV

Beit Hatfutsof

Let There Be Laughter: Jewish Humour Around the World

What makes Jews so funny? Find out at this light-hearted look at the origins of Jewish humour and the major contributions by Jews to the rise of a global industry.

See records, books and interactive installations.

No end date specified
61392. +972 3745 7808.

bh.org.il

Eretz Museum

A Toast to Israel!

Israeliana glasses that mark 70 years of the State of Israel. Those on display were produced locally during Israel's early years right up until the mid-70s.

Until 29 December

The Sandal: Anthropology of a Local Style

A look at one of the objects that's become synonymous with Israel – the sandal.

From kibbutz shoemakers to workshops on Tel Aviv's Dizengoff Street, via shoe factories in Hebron, The Sandal explains how a local style was forged and how its forms endure.

No end date specified
69975. +972 (0) 3641 5244. eretzmuseum.org.il

Tel Aviv Museum of Art

Arieh Sharon: Architect of the State

The first retrospective of work by one of Israel's architectural forefathers. Arieh Sharon, a graduate of the Bauhaus School, planned over 600 projects, including kibbutzim, office blocks, hospitals and university campuses.

Until 27 October

Avraham Ofek: Body, Work

A rich and enigmatic collection of work by the late Israeli artist. Featuring his 1986-87 pieces, A Jew Facing Himself.

Until 27 October
61332. +972 (0) 3607 7020. tamuseum.org.il



Never a dull day: the children of Alumot have fun in the Fens

A warm 'shalom' for Israelis in Cambridge

A new centre, Alumot, is offering Hebrew classes and cultural activities for the Israeli community in Cambridgeshire. **Tamar Drukker** meets some of the parents involved to find out more

In 1540, under Henry VIII, the first ever professor of Hebrew was appointed at Cambridge University. For the past five centuries Hebrew has continued to be taught there. But over the past year the city has seen a new type of Hebrew teaching set up by a group called Alumot to cater for the growing number of Israelis in the city.

In 2017, a group of Israelis living in Cambridge met informally to discuss their need to improve their children's Hebrew reading and writing skills. "I have two boys aged five and three and both were born here," says Alumot's director Tamara Novis, who arrived in Cambridge from Kfar Saba, Israel, in 2010. "I was worried that if they didn't speak my language they would miss a big part of my identity. It's not just about the vocabulary, but also how you think about things."

Within weeks a group of over 30 families was formed and, five months later, in September 2017, Alumot was established, operating weekly from a base at Beth Shalom Reform Synagogue. Meaning sheaves of wheat or beams of light in Hebrew, Alumot denotes grouping together. They now have over 40 families involved, with 62 children aged 3-13 who attend five different Hebrew classes.

The children meet every Sunday for two hours of Hebrew instruction and play, while the parents enjoy lectures and workshops offered by members of the community, from a talk on medieval illuminated Bibles to issues in gendered education. One member recently shared his experiences from a research voyage in the Pacific Ocean; another described her research into the memory of mice.

The Hebrew teachers are parents and members of the community. Jewish holidays and other celebrations are also marked – after the birth of Alumot's first baby, the group set up a rota to provide meals for the family. Three more babies have been born since, so the rota has been busy. The synagogue also houses Alumot's Hebrew-language library, which has books, CDs and DVDs, all donated by members.

Alumot offers newcomers a place to feel at home and make new friends. The Arad family relocated to Cambridge from Israel in January when the parents took up jobs in the city's IT industry. The parents wanted their eldest daughter, who would have started school in Israel in September, to learn to read and write in Hebrew.

"Even when we are fully integrated here, she will always be an Israeli," says the mother, Ronit Arad. "We want her, and those around her, to understand what this means. But Alumot is much more than an after-school club, it's a community. The teachers put much thought and energy into planning the meetings, and the parents help in setting up the classes, clearing up and adding content to the lessons. All of this cannot be achieved simply by a Facebook or WhatsApp group."

Other members are long-term residents of the city. "We arrived in Cambridge from Beer Sheva in 2006 for post-doctoral research," says Dr Sharon Morein, a senior lecturer in psychology at Anglia Ruskin University. "One research post led to another and, eventually, to a permanent position. We joined Alumot because we wanted our children to learn Hebrew, but also to have a meaningful link to Israel and its culture. We also enjoy the activities for grownups. I'd like to see the social aspect of the community grow and strengthen the sense of belonging."

Many of the Israelis in Cambridge are not religious and don't feel at home as synagogue members, yet want to lead a Jewish life and pass it on to their children.

"Our main reason for joining Alumot was to extend Hebrew and Israeli secular Jewish education for my two sons," says Adi Naamati, a biologist who works at one of the Cambridge University labs and who moved to the city from Jerusalem three years ago. On a recent holiday to Israel, her seven-year-old, Matan, enjoyed practising his Hebrew reading with his grandmother. For Adi this is what Alumot is all about.

Alumot is only one of many emerging Israeli communities in Europe that are forming alongside, and in cooperation with, local synagogues, reflecting the need for Hebrew cultural centres outside Israel. ■

"Many Israelis don't feel at home in a synagogue, yet want to pass on their culture"



For info see alumot.uk. Note some names have been changed in the article.

MEET THE READER

OUR SERIES IN WHICH WE GET TO KNOW YOU, OUR READERS



Basil Mann

HOUNSLOW, LONDON

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF...

I celebrated my 80th birthday earlier this year. I'm in my second marriage and I have two daughters, a son and four grandchildren. I'm retired, but at the age of 16 I joined the family business – Edward Mann. It was one of the top ladies' hat manufacturers, but the industry declined and I ended up as a bookkeeper. For about 20 years I umpired cricket for the London Schools Cricket Association and, in 2009, umpired for the Maccabi Games in Israel. I am still a member of Marylebone Cricket Club and Surrey County Cricket Club. I'm also very active in the community.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS LIVED IN HOUNSLOW?

I moved to this area 30-odd years ago and in those days Hounslow had a synagogue. Like all shuls, it started in a house and then grew, but unfortunately that's closed now. That's why I joined Ealing Synagogue. Although we're fairly small, we do some very good things. We celebrate Mitzvah Day, where you give up some time, rather than money, to do something charitable; we've had the Israeli ambassador for a Shabbat lunch; and we have a civic service every year with the mayor.

WHERE DID YOU LIVE PREVIOUSLY?

I was born in Palmers Green, north London, and I've gradually moved across the city. My late father was very involved in Palmers Green Synagogue, so I've definitely got the same genes. I also went to Whittingehame College, which was a very successful Jewish boarding school in Brighton. London was very dirty in the '50s and I suffered very badly with asthma, so that was the idea behind me going to school in Brighton.

“I'd ask leaders of the faiths why they don't communicate enough with each other”

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE JEWISH?

I'm very proud. Very, *very* proud. I spend a lot of time with Hounslow Friends of Faith and organise school visits to Ealing Synagogue, because all schools should know about different faiths. My wife and I also spent some time in Uganda where my wife was teaching and I was coaching cricket. There's a small Jewish community in a place called Mbale, which was quite a long way from where we were, but we spent one Shabbat and one Chanukah with them.

HOW DID YOU DISCOVER JR?

To be honest with you I can't remember. It was about three or four years ago and it might have been at a Jewish exhibition or Limmud. I love looking at all the events, but I especially like when you do different countries. I find the Passport section quite interesting.

WHO WOULD BE YOUR PERFECT DINNER PARTY GUEST?

I think the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chief Rabbi and leaders of the other faiths. I'd ask them why they don't communicate enough with each other. In the Westminster Interfaith newsletter I saw that at Ramadan other synagogues did all sorts of things to connect with the Muslim community, so when we come to Ramadan next year I'm going to see if we can do that. We need to do more on that sort of thing. ■
Interview by Danielle Goldstein

Want to share your story? Email danielle@jewishrenaissance.org.uk with your name, age and local area.

HOUNSLOW WITH A LOCAL

Basil Mann reveals the best bits where he lives



GO FOR A WALK

The Thames runs through this area and is really nice where the Boat Race starts – somewhere like Chiswick – and it goes all the way through Richmond. Often my wife and I will get a bus to Richmond and walk along the river. **Gunnelsbury Park**, which is very close to us, is also a lovely place to walk.

GRAB A BITE TO EAT

There are no kosher restaurants, but like most places today there are vegetarian options. There are numerous Indian restaurants, which my wife and I both like. I'd suggest **Watermans** – it's a cinema and restaurant and their speciality is Indian food.

EXPLORE THE CULTURE

Osterley House is a manor house built in 1870 by Sir Thomas Gresham. For us, it's within walking distance, so often if we're both at home on a sunny afternoon we'll walk over there. A bit further along we've got **Syon House**, which belongs to the Duke of Northumberland and has beautiful grounds.

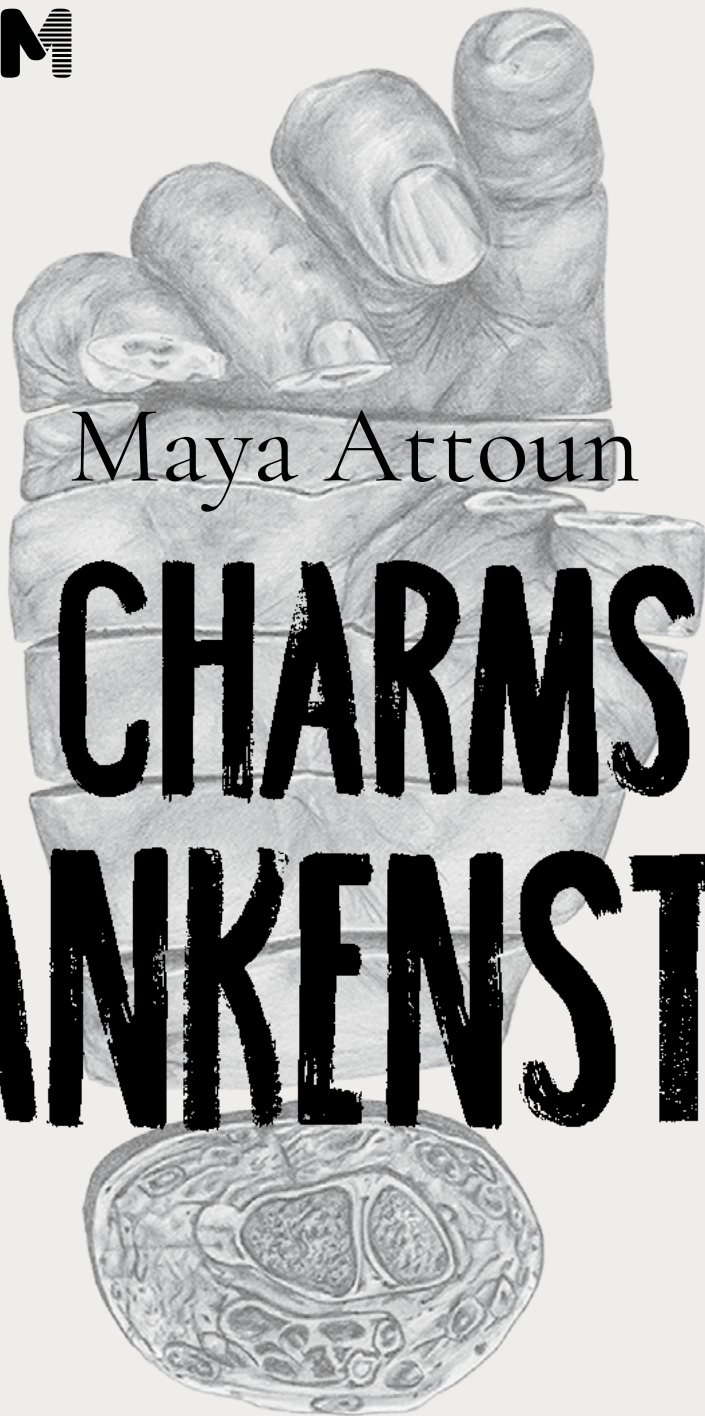
JOIN IN WITH THE COMMUNITY

There is Israeli dancing on a Tuesday night at **Ealing Synagogue** (but open to the whole community). We have a small number of members, but we have all sorts of events and talks. We had a big Jewish concert in June and we do visits outside the area. It's a very close community.

CATCH A PLAY

We've got **Richmond Theatre** nearby, which gets all the main plays. We now have a theatre in Kingston too. We're not out in the sticks at all. Transport is very good here and we're on the edge of Surrey, so it's really quite a nice place to live.





Maya Attoun

THE CHARMS OF FRANKENSTEIN

Free for Friends

Jewish Museum London
Raymond Burton House
129-131 Albert Street
London NW1 7NB

27 September - 4 November 2018

jewishmuseum.org.uk/maya-attoun
#CharmsOfFrankenstein





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