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The Rabbi speaks...

Get to know your New Siddur

I recently had a discussion with my GCSE class on the following question:

“How would you define the purpose of prayer?”

Go on – have a go yourself. Do you really know why we pray? For those of you that attend Synagogue, do you know what you are doing there?

My class came up with some great answers. We talk to God through prayer. We can ask our needs of the Almighty. We can thank God. We can praise Him. All these answers made me think of one idea critical to our religion. If we believe in God, the God that brought us out of Egypt and gave us the Torah, then we will want to pray and communicate to him. In Judaism, God is not distant. Yes, He may not answer each prayer the way we desire; but He will listen never the less. We must not confuse saying no, to lack of listening.

So prayer is an essential part of human life. If you do not pray, whether in Synagogue or at home then your expression of belief is surely limited. It is not enough to react to scattered incidents that happen to you and say – wow that must be the work of God. That is passive belief. Active belief involves taking on the commitment to talk to God – to pray.

We now have a new opportunity to connect to Jewish prayer – the new edition of the Authorised Daily prayer book, which we will soon be putting out in our Synagogue. Thanks go to Philip Wg for organising the fundraising for it and to all those generous members who gave donations.

We will be running educational events up to Pesach, including a Shabbat of Inauguration, sermons on the Siddur and guest lecturers to talk to us on the Siddur and about prayer. Come along and try out this new Siddur. Read the new translation of the Chief Rabbi, the new commentary of the Chief Rabbi. Get to know your new Siddur.

View from the Box

As I sit inside the box, I want to encourage thought about our Jewish community. First, let's look back. Before Yaakov left to settle in Egypt with Joseph and his other sons, he sent Yehudah ahead to make arrangements. The question is: which arrangements? After all, with Joseph being the second most important person in Egypt, all Yaakov's needs would be catered for. The answer is that his physical needs would indeed be satisfied but he sent Yehudah ahead to establish a yeshiva, a place of learning. The Gemara in Ketubot tells us that we may not move from a place which has a yeshiva to a place which does not have one.

So what about places of learning in Kingston, where is our Yeshivah? Surely this is not a concept that belongs here?

The answer is: of course it does!

Our Rabbi runs a fantastic Adult Education Programme on Tuesday evenings and a monthly Lunch and Learn. Hebrew conversation classes have been available. Our own Cheder has for many years provided a Jewish education for our children and now spans the age range from 3 to 14 years old. There are numerous talks, discussions and performances for us all to attend. We are always open to new ideas so please let us know what you think.

The most important resource that we have is the Synagogue itself and we are privileged to have very frequent services. These services are a wonderful opportunity to grow in our Judaism.

So if you haven't been to shul for a while come along and try out our Shabbat morning services. The Rabbi and those of us who help to run the Shul on your behalf will be delighted to meet you.

13.12.2006 - Our Child with Special Needs

When our dear Netanel was born we were told that he had an 'abnormality'. I pushed the nervous paediatric registrar – 'Come on, be straight, what is the problem'. The reply we received was one that we never would have expected. No problems had been revealed in pregnancy ultrasounds, and the birth had gone to plan. But Netanel showed signs of Downs Syndrome – and three agonising days later, the diagnosis was confirmed.

We were left with our dear son, and many questions. Why had this happened to him, to us, at all? It just seemed so cruel that a little child would have to live through so many challenges, with no choice in the matter. 18 months on, we still ask the questions – but we also have a beautiful, bouncy, functioning child who has needs just as any other child does. He has given us so much pleasure, and we continue to remark how we often forget that he even has a disability. We are able to look past it and see our son. We thank God for Netanel, and would not change him for anything.

Netanel has opened up our eyes to the realities of the world. We were brought up in families where we were unaware of disabilities and birth problems. Birth was meant to be according to the textbook. But that is not the world we live in. We are living in a world where greater technical and scientific knowledge, means that we can diagnose more congenital and childhood problems and so help a greater number of children live a better quality of life. We are witnessing more cases of ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive disorder) and Autistic spectrum. Some criticise this modern tendency to diagnose – in fact it may be the key to the improved health of many children. As an example of how far things have come, the open-heart surgery that Netanel underwent a year ago had a 30% chance of success 30 years ago. Then parents were offered a choice not to operate. A child

with Downs Syndrome and a heart defect such as Netanel had would live until his 20's. Now these operations have a 97% rate of success – and even higher in a specialist hospital such as the Royal Brompton Hospital.

What is Downs Syndrome?

Downs Syndrome was once called Mongoloidism. However in the early 1800's, a gentleman called John Langdon Down investigated this phenomenon and gave his life to the care of those who had what came to be known after him as Down's Syndrome. He built a large house for such children in Teddington, which was called Normansfield. Today it houses the offices of the Downs Syndrome Association (<http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk>), which fundraises and raises awareness around relevant issues.

Downs Syndrome is a medical condition that has its root in our chromosomes, which contain DNA, the genetic material that makes us who we are. Each of us has 23 pairs of chromosomes, including a pair that defines which gender we are. After a female egg is fertilised, cell division occurs and one cell with 23 pairs of chromosomes divides into two cells, each with the same genetic material. But there are a number of errors that can occur in this cell division. One such error is that the 21st chromosome ends up with a third copy. This happens at every single stage of cell division, so that the resulting foetus has cells with a third copy of chromosome 21. This is called Trisomy 21, or Downs Syndrome. With other chromosome errors, many times a miscarriage will result. However as chromosome 21 is rather small, many resulting foetuses survive pregnancy. Downs Syndrome is actually one of the most common chromosomal deficiencies.

What is the result?

As a result of the extra genetic material (we always joke that Netanel has something that we all do not have), a number of potential health problems can occur.

- 40% of children will have heart defects such as holes in the heart.
- Many will have lower immunity to infections
- Muscle tone will be generally lower which means that physiotherapy and speech therapy will be needed.
- A number of children have sleep related disorders
- 80% of children develop a hearing impairment of some sort and many will require sight aids from a young age.

Children will generally have a learning disability, however this expresses itself in varying degrees.

Where we are lucky

We always say that one providential element of Netanel's birth in 2005 was that in this generation, early intervention has developed incredibly. Netanel from 6 months old already saw a speech therapist, physio, and play therapist. He now also has hydrotherapy and other specialist groups. It is a lot for Elisheva, as for every mother of a special needs child. But we do feel that is helping us cope with Netanel's needs and we can see him develop quicker. Today, for example, we are being taught to communicate with our son through a special sign language called Makaton, which enables children to communicate even if their speech is delayed. I have even been considering Jewish signs, which could be part of this sign language. There is actually a Cbeebies TV programme on Sundays at 9am based on Makaton sign language.

What is important to realise however, is that children with Downs Syndrome go on to manage most of the achievements of their peers. They can study, learn, be involved in sport, become actors and actresses and be involved in many more such pursuits.

We read in the book of Psalms:

“How abundant are your works, God, you made them all in wisdom”

There are many children who have special health needs, who need society's help and care. But we are all made in God's wisdom, whatever our needs are.

Rabbi David and Elisheva

Riverside Club

A senior citizen from Kingston
Thought: 'It's Tuesday – I'll put all my rings on,
Go down to the club,
Get fabulous grub,
And know there'll be no indigestion'.
She met many old pals and new friends,
Talked politics and discussed new trends,
She laughed, danced and sang,
(How the rafters rang,)
And said, 'Here's how my perfect day ends'.

Anonymous

Cheder Report

The new academic year at Cheder has begun successfully and the term has flown by. It hardly seems like yesterday we were celebrating Rosh Hashana and now it is Chanukah!

Yet more new faces have joined us and we give a warm welcome to all new students and parents. Kitty's class continues to grow and it is lovely to see these children running around the Cheder as if they have always been there. As for the teaching staff, Olivia S has taken on the new challenge of teaching 7-8 year olds and Graham H has begun to work as our Reading Facilitator. We are making a special push this year to improve the reading of all children and Graham will be providing one-to-one sessions with many students. Amy D continues to do sterling work assisting Kitty with the nursery class and our thanks go, as always, to our other teachers, Mrs F, Mrs Moore and Mrs Kramer. The Rabbi's GSCE class continues to achieve brilliant results and we are hoping to introduce conversational Hebrew as part of the curriculum later in the academic year.

Many of you will have seen the flyers for the new parent and toddler sessions at the Cheder run by Elisheva and Helena R and these take place on the first Sunday of each month. Please contact Helena if you are interested in joining or know of any families with young children that we can contact.

Our Shabbaton programme continues apace. We held a Friday evening Shabbaton at the Rabbi's house and there will be a Shabbat lunchtime event at the synagogue on 13th January 2007 for children in Kitty's class and Mrs F's class (and their parents!) On 27th January 2007 there will be a social event for all parents with children at the Cheder and any parents that are thinking of joining. This will be from 8pm at the home of Daryl-Anne and Dan E

Finally, we held our traditional Cheder Chanukah bowling party where, as well as candle lighting and singing, the adults and children competed as to who could cause the greatest damage with a bowling ball. Needless to say the children won and the adults consoled themselves with chocolate doughnuts and coffee. We managed to save a few doughnuts for the children who left with party bags filled to bursting point. Hopefully the pictures give a flavour of the fun time had by all.

Kingston Wizo

A busy autumn programme began with the Annual General Meeting at the home of Esther and Peter B with guest speaker, Lorraine Warren, chairman of WIZOUk. She spoke about WIZO's work in the aftermath of the Lebanon war and its role in rebuilding shattered lives in the North of Israel..

At a joint meeting with the Israel Awareness Committee , Dr Arye Nussbacher spoke most eloquently about Israel's military operations in Lebanon, and the dangers posed by Iran. A fuller report is in this issue.

Stanley Moss, who has spent most of his working life in Africa was our guest speaker at a luncheon in December, at the home of Ronald and Mindi Ison.

He described most graphically the conditions he met in the 1950s when employed by the Colonial Service, and told us of unusual experiences while working with the British Council in Malawi, Botswana and Uganda. He was involved, together with a Lubavitch Rabbi, in consecrating a Jewish cemetery so that a local university lecturer could be buried, and spent time with Catholic priests in an isolated seminary.

Forthcoming events:

Wednesday 21st February 10.00am

Outing to Dulwich Picture Gallery to see the exhibition "Canaletto in London".

Preceded by talk on Canaletto by Dr Helen Setright at Nightingale House and sandwich lunch there. Travel by private car, leaving Surbiton at 10.00 am .

Donation £17.50, to include lunch, talk and tour. When booking, please tell Jackie if you are willing to drive or would prefer to be a passenger. 020 8399 0926

Kingston Trip to China

Not many Western tourists visit Kaifeng in Henan Province, China & those that do (including ourselves) marvel at the Imperial Way of the Song Emperors, the Dragon Pavilion Park & the Grand Xiangguo Monastery with its amazing statues.

But the reason for our visit to this former ancient capital city was to find out if any traces remained of the Jewish community (of Persian origin) which thrived here for 800 years until the second half of the nineteenth century. First on our agenda was a visit to old Mrs Wang (or Mrs Zhao – depending which family name she was using) who, according to our schedule, claimed Jewish descent.

Only rather disappointingly, this lady's tenuous connection to Judaism was that her late husband's father had been Jewish. Bizarrely, one of her granddaughters is currently studying in Gush Etzion. Her home contained an interesting exhibition of old photographs showing members of the Jewish community, who all looked very Chinese, and of the synagogue, destroyed over a hundred years ago in a flood. It was sobering visiting such a poor area; Mrs Wang's bedsit had stone floors & paint peeling off the walls. This had been the Jewish quarter & the road was called "Torah Street" in Chinese.

Next we visited the Jewish Studies Department of Henan University & met the impressive lady Director and some of the eleven Chinese post-graduate students.

Our final stop should have been a viewing of Jewish artifacts in the provincial museum. These included ancient tablets relating the story of the Kaifeng Jews, and relics from the last synagogue. We were told a great many highly inventive buba-meisers about why we couldn't go there, but Colin insisted & upon arrival, we ascertained that the place was closed that day. So I can't tell you anything about these exhibits. But we enjoyed our trip to Kaifeng despite the lack of much discernible Jewish heritage. It was such a contrast to busy Beijing & the glitz of Shanghai with its armies of bicycles, mopeds, motorized bicycles & three-wheelers all vying for space on the crowded roads and about as far from "Kaifeng" in Hendon as one can imagine!

A Roots Journey to China

As a child I was aware that my Father had lived in China. It seemed very exotic and far away and out of reach for a visit. Sadly Father died before we were adults so our knowledge of his life there was confined to letters he had written to his family during his stay. He had answered an advertisement seeking a headmaster for a Jewish school in Tianjin and armed only with a degree in Mathematics and Chemistry plus a teaching diploma and almost no money, in his early twenties, he made the long journey across land (apart from the Channel) by train to China in late 1929 to start a two year contract.

Tianjin (or Tientsin as it was then known) was a city that was then on the coast which served as the port for Peking (now Beijing). After the Emperor of China was sent out from the Imperial City in 1927 he went to live in Tianjin as it was a very elegant city, very European in style. The British, French and Americans gained concessions in Tianjin (i.e. land) after the Opium Wars of 1860 and built many stylish buildings in the areas they occupied. It was in the British concession area that the Russian Jews, first fleeing from pogroms and later from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, came to live. It was here that they built a shul and a school, where my Father taught. From research before we arrived in Tianjin, we knew that all the Jews from this flourishing community in the 1920s and 1930s had left before 1950. The shule had for many years been used as a restaurant and the school had been demolished.

However, when we arrived, we did find the shul, albeit in a dilapidated condition and the street, called Racecourse Road, where Father had lived. There was no mistaking the road as in modern Chinese fashion, statues of huge horses in full gallop marked the start of the road. We even found houses of a similar style to the one Father had lived in and gained access to have our pictures taken on the top terrace in a similar position to the one we have of Father. We also found a most interesting museum dedicated to the different international communities which lived in the Concession areas and included many photographs of Jews working in the fur trade as well as in their communal roles and celebrating the Independence of the State of Israel in 1948 outside the Shul. It was good to walk in the footsteps of Father and appreciate the lovely avenues built long ago in Tianjin.

We then drove over to Beijing, a two hour journey by road to meet other members of the group, out of which nine were members of our community. We had all come to China for different reasons but the main one was that we would see a Jewish element in our travels. In fact we saw nothing in Beijing from the earlier time Jews had lived there, but saw a very vibrant Chabad, housed in a beautiful area, with a school and a most amazing mikva built in a very decorative and gaudy Chinese fashion. We were well fed and had Friday night and Shabbat services. Apparently since China has become a fiercely capitalist nation many Jews, especially from Israel, are working and increasingly bringing over their families and living in China. Chabad has therefore seen the niche market and feed and educate not only those living there but also the very many visitors who pass through. We were even better fed by Chabad in Shanghai.

After visiting Xian and Guilin, very interesting and beautiful areas, but with no Jewish connection, we arrived in Shanghai. A vibrant brilliantly illuminated city, with a huge river running through it. This city, like Tianjin, had long established connections with Jews. We had a most interesting talk on the last evening by an Israeli photo-journalist, on the history of

Shanghai Jews. China has no history of anti-semitism being a Budist country, so therefore Jews could live there in religious peace. Iraqi entrepreneurs in the mid 19th century had come to China via India to make their money in trade. One of the biggest families to do this were the Kadoori family and we visited their magnificent house, now used as a children's activity centre. Again there was a wave of immigrants from Russia before and after the Revolution and the last immigration of Jews was in the 1930s from Hitler's Germany. Shanghai was a very special place in the world for refugees as it had an open door policy. No passports, ID, or any kind of papers were required to settle there. All you needed was courage to make your own way in life. The wealthy Jews already settled, helped the newcomers. Shuls were built, as were community centres and schools and the fabric of Jewish life continued. This came to an end in the late 1940s when Communism took over. As Israel gained its independence at the same time it was an opportune moment for many of the Jews of China to emmigrate there, though many also moved to the United States and Australia.

We saw insides and outsides of shuls and hospitals, but they were to me fairly uninspiring. To me the history of Jewish life in China is the legacy of letters and photographs from my Father and also the informative talk we were given at the end of our holiday. We have also discovered some wonderful books about the Jews who lived in China, which now we have been and seen the country will be all the more meaningful.

Elise

Dachau Concentration Camp

I find it particularly ironic that, having only recently visited Dachau Concentration Camp - a short train ride from Munich - Iran is holding a conference denying the Holocaust. Munich was the headquarters of the Brown Shirts - the fascist organisation headed by Hitler. Indeed, in 1924, Hitler was 'imprisoned' for ten months in Munich for his political activities, during which time, he wrote Mein Kampf. In fact, he was only nominally in captivity as his rich, powerful and influential friends were able to provide him with all the fredom and luxuries he required during this period. On his release, he was able to pursue his political ambitions without hindrance.

Dachau is a small town and the Concentration Camp, which was opened in March 1933, is very close by. It is impossible to believe that the residents there were totally oblivious to the atrocities that were taking place a short distance away.

Dachau was the model for other Concentration Camps which spread out into many other parts of Europe over the next twelve years. it was also the training centre for the SS, where recruits were indoctrinated into a system which encouraged the torture, humiliation and killing of prisoners.

The buildings have been preserved and the Museum relates the horrific story of the human suffering in written and spoken words with graphic images on film which we have all seen many times in various Holocaust Museums.

However, to actually be in the buildings where these atrocities were committed is a very harrowing experience and one leaves with a feeling of utter desolation and despair.

And yet, the Holocaust deniers still persist,

FRANCES L

Ostrava News

The KS & DS Ostrava Scroll project organised a ceremony on Sunday 12th November 2006 to rededicate the Czech Torah scroll saved from the Nazis and which is on permanent loan to the synagogue from the Czech Scrolls Memorial Trust.

The service, encapsulated within Mincha including a Torah reading was conducted by Rabbi Mason. The ceremony took place in the presence of the Worshipful, the Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, Cllr Mary Reid, His Excellency the Czech Ambassador, Mr Jan Winkler, Holocaust survivors born in or near Ostrava and their families as well as a wide range of visitors connected with Ostrava and the Czech Scrolls Memorial Trust, together with local religious leaders including Rabbi Philip Ginsbury, representing the Chief Rabbi.

More than 150 people attended the rededication, which recalled the combination of tragedy and amazing circumstances surrounding Czech Torah scrolls that survived the war.

Following addresses by Rabbis Ginsbury and Mason, the Czech Ambassador spoke to the congregation recalling the greatness of the pre-war Czech Jewish community and expressing support for the Kingston scroll again being used in divine service.

Six memorial candles to commemorate the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust were kindled by survivors and the Chairman of the Trust .

Youth representatives from the cheder, AJ6 and JLGB took part, illuminating aspects of the history of Ostrava Jewry, followed by the memorial prayer El Maleh Rachamim chanted by David Pr and Kaddish recited by survivor Mr Bertie Go.

Presentations to the Mayor and Ambassador were made by the synagogue Chairman, Dr David L. Responding, the Mayor paid tribute to the Kingston community for having arranged such a unique, important and meaningful experience. A moving rendering of 'Hatikva' on the flute by Chloe Vn concluded the service.

In March 1939, German troops invaded Czechoslovakia which had an 80,000-strong Jewish community. By the end of June 1939, almost all the synagogues in Bohemia and Moravia had been destroyed. Incredibly, many Torah scrolls and other artifacts were saved and hidden. They eventually reached the Jewish Museum in Prague, where they were examined and catalogued by archivists who were shipped to the death camps once their work was done.

Between 1963 and 1964, following the examination of 1,564 Torah scrolls that belonged to the Prague Jewish Museum, the Communist authorities agreed to their sale to British philanthropist Ralph Yablon. He arranged for their transportation to the Westminster Synagogue.. The scrolls would otherwise have gradually rotted.

Approximately 10,000 Jews lived in the Ostrava area before the war.

In October 1939, Adolf Eichmann pioneered the mass deportation of Jews from Ostrava to eastern Poland. Very few survived the war.

In 1942, the remainder of Ostrava's Jewish community, was deported to the Terezin concentration camp and then on to Nazi death camps such as Auschwitz and Treblinka.

The rededication captivated a broad cross-section of the wider community and was widely reported in the press. Importantly, it provided a platform for the youth of the community to participate in an educational journey into European Jewish history.

Kingston University Jewish Society

This year was the first for many years that a Jewish Society has been formed in Kingston University. It is run by Sammy Kahl, a jovial German Jew who has put a lot of effort into getting together his Jewish friends for Friday night meals. So far, two Friday night meals have taken place, one of which was in Shul for 13 students. What was wonderful was the international flavour of the evening. There were Jewish students from Brussels, Munich, Dusseldorf, Geneva and one or two from London as well. I was there to get to know the students and give some educational input. They so much appreciated having a Shabbat dinner in the Synagogue.

I will be working with Sammy and the Jewish Society in the near future to have more such Friday nights and to solidify the group's relationship with our Synagogue.

Would you like to sponsor a student Friday night meal? Be in touch with me if you are interested.

Rabbi David

Presidential Visit

At the beginning of December over Shabbat, we were proud to welcome to our community the President of the US; not the inimitable Dubya himself, of course, but Dr Simon Hochhauser, the President of our own US, the United Synagogue.

Simon has been President of the US since July 2005, having previously been Vice President. He has also served as President of the London Board for Shechita. He is a long-standing member of South Hampstead Synagogue. He has a Ph.D in Mathematical Physics awarded by Imperial College and performed post-doctoral research at the Weizmann Institute of Science. He has also attended Gateshead Yeshiva. In addition to his active role in communal activities, he is a leading entrepreneur in the broadband telecommunications sector.

Simon joined us for Mincha and Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday evening, followed by dinner with Rabbi Mason and his family and the Honorary Officers, at which he conversed frankly and humorously about matters both religious and secular. On Shabbat morning, Simon not only led Shacharit but also sang the Haphtorah, both of which he performed most tunefully and euphoniously. The service was followed by a communal lunch, attended by about 60 people, including a number of young members of the UJIA Leadership Course who were also visiting our community for Shabbat.

Simon gave a brief talk after lunch and also answered a few questions from members of the community and visitors. One of his objectives is to give greater autonomy to individual synagogues and to devolve more control although, as an affiliated synagogue, this is unlikely to affect us greatly as we already enjoy greater independence than full member synagogues. He also discussed the actions of the London Beth Din and, whilst emphasising that the dayanim are outstanding in their learning and the halachic rigour of their decisions, suggested that they have on occasion involved themselves in matters on which it would have been better if they remained silent.

A searching question was posed about the fact that the rabbis of some US synagogues are unwilling to send their children to US schools because they are seeking a more orthodox education. He saw no difficulty in this, nor in some rabbis adopting a greater degree of stringency of religious observance than the normal standards espoused by the US. Some in our community may disagree with this viewpoint.

He commented enthusiastically about the role of TRIBE, the Young US organisation, which has been very successful in attracting and involving young people. However, it remains the case that the Tribe Community Membership Scheme open to single young people aged 21 to 29 does not permit participants to become members of affiliated synagogues such as ours.

During his visit, Simon also made some interesting comments about L IMMUD. He sees great value in L IMMUD and he himself is going to be a speaker at this year's event. Perhaps rather speculatively, he suggested that the time might not be too far away when the Chief Rabbi himself might attend; his son-in law is, of course, already a leading figure in the organisation!

The Honorary Officers hope that this very successful visit by the President has assisted in raising the profile of our community within the US and will lead to further constructive dialogue.

Perry G

Shul Services

The Board has asked me to lead a review of our Shabbat services to see what we can do to make them more attractive and encourage more members, especially young members to come more often.

At this stage I am seeking ideas from as many people as possible for the review team to consider.

I'd welcome your thoughts on:

What would encourage you personally to come more often to shul

What ideas you have for encouraging more people to come more often

Specifically ideas for encouraging more children, youngsters and young adults to come more often

Nothing is out of bounds for your ideas even if you think that they will not be accepted whether for reasons of practicality or religious reasons. Obviously at the end of the day the Rabbi will have to agree to what we propose but even ideas that you know are not halachically acceptable should not be ruled out because they may generate other creative ideas which may be acceptable.

Please email me your thoughts and suggestions as soon as possible to the synagogue

Colin G

Fish Curry

Ingredients:

3 lbs. fish fillets (sea bass, red snapper, cod, sole, halibut) cut into 2 inch pieces
¼ cup (American) olive oil
2 medium onions, chopped
3 cloves garlic
2 teaspoons fresh ginger
1 teaspoon turmeric
2 chillies, chopped and deseeded
2 lbs. peeled and chopped tomatoes
½ cup water
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon ground coriander
2 teaspoons mustard
3 cardamom pods
2 cloves
1 teaspoon salt
Black pepper

Method:

Wash and pat dry the fish. Heat the oil in a pan and fry the onions until soft and translucent. Add garlic, ginger, turmeric and chillies and fry for about a minute.

Add tomatoes and water and simmer for about 15 mins. Add cumin, coriander, mustard, cardamom, cloves, salt and pepper and simmer for another 5 mins. Add the fish, cover and simmer, turning the fish once and cook for 10 mins. This will serve 6-8 people.

Serve with rice.

Limmud Conference 2006

Limmud conference in Nottingham attracted 2,500 eager participants feasting on nearly 1000 sessions ranging from the frivolous to the deeply Talmudic. Nathan Lopez Cardoza, formerly from Amsterdam, but living in Jerusalem for the last thirty years, is surely one of the most deeply and sincerely Orthodox, yet modern Rabbis, whose sessions are inspirational. Starting with a story: 'A famous Rabbi was asked about fasting and answered that he never fasted. What do you do on Yom Kippur? He was asked – I don't *have time* to eat – was the answer. What do you do on Tishabov? - I don't *want* to eat - was the answer.' Rabbi Cardoza instilled in the audience that we must think deeply about the things we do and why we do them, and question everything.

Deborah Lipstadt, also drawing in huge crowds, said how honoured she was to be invited to Limmud and how it was the envy of every other country. Talking of different strands of Judaism, she said there was no problem of disunity in America because there was no Chief Rabbinate!

Of course I can only reiterate what I have said before – where are the Orthodox representatives? It is such a missed opportunity. With people there from all backgrounds and all ages, surely it makes sense to give them the opportunity to join us. Maybe Limmudfest in the Summer will see more representation.

Simone H

Dr Aryeh Nusbacher

Last Sunday 29th October a fair number of guests of Kingston's WIZO and its Israel Awareness Committee were addressed on "Israel's Recent Operations in the Lebanon" by a Senior Lecturer in War Studies at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Dr Aryeh Nusbacher, the well known New York born Israeli, has served in the Canadian Army and studied at both Toronto and Oxford.

His main thesis is that, war being chaos, there has never been any short, medium or long term strategic planning in any of Israel's many wars, most of which have been wars of survival. The summer skirmish into the South of Lebanon might conceivably be described as an exception. There was never any question of the Hezbollah being a threat to Israel's existence. They are of course merely the instrument of Iran. The purpose was really to halt and diminish the build up of rockets. Dr Nusbacher also expressed the view that the inevitable post mortem might, by aiming criticism at Peretz, Labour's Defence Minister, aid Olmert and weaken Labour. £237.50 was raised from the 33 persons attending.

Letter from Israel

Mordechai Berkovitch.

As 2006 draws to a close, more than three thousand immigrants arrived in Israel organised by the Nefesh B' Nefesh organisation. On Wednesday 6th September, Sally and I boarded a special bus under the auspices of Nefesh B'Nefesh; we travelled to the airport to join many hundreds of families, friends and supporters, to greet the arrival of 280 immigrants from North America and it was quite an experience. On arrival at Gate No.3, there was a festive atmosphere - with flowers, balloons and music and an abundance of refreshments. As we had security clearance, we were allowed on the tarmac to greet the El Al airline as it was landing, amidst the singing, and waving of banners; it was electrifying and exciting to witness first hand such a unique occasion.

During the summer months, such an experience was repeated several times as families arrived from Canada, North America, England and France, but who are these immigrants? The vast majority are young professional families. It is of interest, that the Medical Centre that Sally and I belong to, was founded by a doctor from Canada, there are six family doctors, plus specialists in every field - all of whom are immigrants from Australia, Canada, South Africa and America.

The question that often goes through my mind is why do so many highly qualified people, leave lucrative practices and positions in the West to begin a new life in the Middle East?

From a religious perspective, Israel is at least the partial fulfillment of billions of prayers uttered over thousands of years. We beseeched the Almighty to return us to Zion, and so he did. He gave us another chance to build a Jewish homeland in the land of the prophets, on authentic Jewish soil, to control our own destiny and carve out a nation in the Jewish image.

And we haven't done so badly. We make our share of mistakes, but we still have a thriving democracy, a dynamic economy and a courageous and devoted army whose morale remains sky-high despite the severity of the Lebanon war. Not to mention a 1,000 percent growth rate since the founding of the state. For an observant Jew, Israel can be a paradise, with the proliferation of learning opportunities; the kosher restaurants and hotels; the low cost of Jewish education and the ease with which Jewish holidays are observed. Even for the non-observant, Israel is definitely where it's happening on the global Jewish scene. The arrow of Jewish history points here. BBC and CNN portray Israelis with a gun in their hands - it is sad, but true that Israel must be vigilant about security and it is necessary for many to bear

arms every day against those whose aim is to destroy the state, yet, it is also true that Israelis do other things with their other hand, things that add value to life around the world.

They conduct research into diseases and create medicines. They create art, film, literature and music. They invent technologies that make the world safer, they raise families that love and celebrate life, that embraces all colours and creeds; yes, everyday, Israelis use one hand for defense and the other hand to make the world a better place; maybe, that is why, so many leave the comfort of the West, to face the exciting challenges of the Middle East.

An Israeli Chassener

This was going to be a wedding with a difference as bride Libi from ultra religious background was marrying Yotam from non-religious left-wing kibbutz.

The venue, open air, al fresco, on lawn of Kibbutz Mishmar Hasharon near Haifa.

It was a pleasure not to be subjected to the usual English prenuptial ordeal endured by guests. No need to search for the soup stained bow tie, to get harnessed into a 'shrunken' dinner suit and no 'Where is my other cuff-link, Darling?'

The rabbi, sans beard, in casual attire and guitar conducted the service on a heaving stage cum chupah occupied by parents, nine siblings and their families with the conspicuous absence of black-coated clerics. The scene had all the finesse and decorum of an Arsenal visit to Stamford Bridge for a FA. Cup-tie.

To the amusement of the guests, there was a brief hiatus to drag a sniffing cocker spaniel off the groom, his master, perhaps that is normal here but would have been a great scene in a film comedy.

The Sheva Brachot followed, this was interrupted by a long welcoming speech in English by one of the bride's brothers much to the annoyance of his mother who eventually told him to 'Belt up!'

Not much pre-sudah photography or dancing, just a token symbolic twirl before the rush for the grub. We were all starving it seems.

The food was cordon-bleu category; it would have met the approval of a critical Gordon Ramsey in a foul mood and well worth the long journey to Israel.

Entertainment followed in the form of musical presentations by each family paraphrasing a popular Israeli song with accordion accompaniment and lyrics to fit the occasion. The finale being a film with more fun at the expense of Libi and Yotam, they were being lampooned mercilessly much to the amusement of the guests.

Guests, now well fed and entertained were ready for some serious action. No slow fox trot or minuet tonight however. Not even a traditional Hassidic Crocodile Crawl by the menfolk, separated from the line-dancing sheitels by a herbaceous mechitzah. No, this was more like a wild Massai Warrior Stomp plugged into the national grid.

By this time, the frummers from the bride's side had retreated to the periphery of the action for safety to protect themselves physically and religiously from the over exposed young female celebrants.

This wedding, one month after the end of Lebanese War 2 was an ideal opportunity for a therapeutic release of pent-up emotion and the younger generation grabbed the opportunity with a vengeance.

By 11.30 pm the noise and action coming to a crescendo, the Surbiton & District OAPs having survived the shrill celebration, enjoyed the fab. feast and amusing entertainment, realized it was time for beddy-byes. Lets face it, the Gay Gordon followed by Auld Lang Syne was hardly going to happen tonight, it was not on the agenda.

Time to wish L&Y Mazal Tov without interrupting their song and stomp routine and thanking them for the invitation to their Israeli Chassener.

How different! How refreshing!

Adam Science Foundation Leadership Programme Shabbat in Kingston Synagogue

On a cold, rainy Friday afternoon in December, the 2006 Adam Science Foundation Leadership Programme (ASFLP) arrived in Kingston. For most of us, this was our first trip south of the river.

Where is Kingston? How far from North London is it? How long will it take to get there? - these were all questions that Nicky Goldman, our programme director, faced when she broke the news of our Shabbat away.

This was the first Shabbat we would spend together at the beginning of our ASFLP journey and none of us had any idea what was in store...

ASFLP is a programme, designed for people in their twenties run by the Adam Science Foundation and the UJIA, to learn more about Jewish communal life and leadership. The aim is to inspire the next generation of communal leaders and arm them with the knowledge they need to progress.

The phrase 'a home from home' springs to mind when recalling our visit to Kingston Shul. From the moment we arrived in shul on Friday evening, we were welcomed with open arms by Rabbi Mason and all the congregants.

We were fortunate to be sharing our visit with the President of the United Synagogue, Dr Simon Hochhauser. This enhanced our experience and gave us the opportunity, as aspiring future communal leaders, to quiz Dr Hochhauser and to challenge our views on the United Synagogue. This certainly made us realise that this will be an exciting and eventful journey (and that's not just the M25!) and there is an awful lot to be learnt.

On Friday night, we shared dinner with several prominent members of the community. They told us what it is like to live in South London and be part of a thriving Jewish community. We shared experiences of our own communities and were wowed by just what can be achieved by a handful of very dedicated members.

The vast number of activities that Kingston Shul runs is truly overwhelming. It would put a lot of other communities to shame. Their website, fundraising evenings, support for Israel, recent fame in the Jerusalem Post, Holocaust education, thriving Cheder and wonderful warmth and hospitality really is astonishing.

After we had welcomed Shabbat and eaten the delicious food, prepared for us by the community (special thanks to Sheila, the food really was fantastic), we made our way for more amazing food (yes more!) and oneg Shabbat at Hazel, Colin & Samuel G's house. The subject of our discussion was community life (yes there was a theme running through this weekend) and the group debated what was needed for a viable community and what it would take for us to want to be a part of this.

The hospitality continued throughout Shabbat as we taught the community some new zemirot over Shabbat lunch, discussed how we could challenge change in the community and

conclude our special Shabbat experience with a beautiful havdalah ceremony to start us on our journey.

The group all agreed that Kingston was a community they'd proudly be an active member of and despite its geographical distance from Jewish life north of the river, it could be compared to Avraham's tent. It has entrances pointing in all directions, and wherever we came from, we were welcomed with open arms. It is clear that size doesn't matter and when it comes to communities, Kingston is a fine example of what one should be.

We would all like to thank Rabbi Mason and the Community for allowing us to share Shabbat together and for welcoming us so warmly.

ASFLP Group 2006

Bernard Kops' 80th Birthday Party

I had never been to the London Jewish Cultural Centre before, but the party to celebrate Bernard Kops' birthday made an excuse to visit. Discussing his life with author Michael Kustow, interspersed with reading his poems and joking with the audience, Bernard certainly belies his 80 years. He started off by telling us he was a lobus, always getting up to a bit of mischief, but writing poetry had been a good lesson and his poems evolved from happenings around him. He always started work at 5.30 in the morning, much to his wife's disgust.

Warren Mitchell, a long time friend, paid tribute to his writing, and although I was filled with curiosity to see Bernard open the present he gave him, and insisted he open 'so he could see the look on his face' it was not to be! Beigels, buns and wine fuelled the hungry audience and the afternoon was a great success.

His latest book *Bernard Kops: A Celebration* is definitely worth a read.

One of the invited guests who did not come, due to pressure of work, was Miriam Margolyes. As Sunday is her only day off from her taxing role in the hit musical *Wicked – the untold story of the Witches of Oz*, she felt she needed a well earned rest. Although not a great musical fan myself, the audience gave this show a standing ovation and the music is so pulsating the tunes go round in your head long after the curtain comes down. Miriam plays Madame Morrible with such gusto and energy she is an absolute gem. The run has now been extended to June, so phone the Apollo Victoria Theatre for tickets on 0870 4000751.