

# MOONLIGHT

The UK's Quarterly Rosh Hodesh e-Magazine

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### EDITORIAL

*The theme of our Pesach edition is 'The Jewish Concept of Freedom'. Purim this year gave us the freedom of a long Sunday to celebrate. Pesach is the time to clear out the chametz, both material and spiritual, and to prepare ourselves anew to examine our own slavery – 'In every generation, each of us must see ourselves as if we truly went out of Egypt' I am overwhelmed by the women who freely offer their own contributions to make this time more meaningful for us.*

*Anna van den Bergh and Chava Lehman have had the freedom to choose very different lives; ICAR is trying to achieve freedom for agunot; Langdon College provides greater freedom for those in the community with special needs; Sarel gives us an opportunity to volunteer to work on an Israeli army base; Esther Bentley and Samantha Witkin contribute two very different studies of our Jewish journey to freedom; Jenny Nemko has taken up my offer of a space for readers' contributions to tell us about Calendar Girls, a reborn Rosh Chodesh group, and the whole enterprise is held up by Denise Phillips, with her generous offering of mouthwatering recipes for Pesach.*

*Wishing you all Pesach  
Kasher v'Same'ach  
Doreen Samuels*

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## **“FREEDOM IS JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE.....”**

“Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose.....” was a song of the 1970s sung by Chris Christopherson. The line has stayed with me over the years.

I remember as I rushed home from work, to see to the family meals, the laundry, the kids’ homework, preparing and school lunches for the next day and shiurim, thinking ‘Wouldn’t be lovely if I had time for myself?’. To be free to do what I want, when I want. That was the dream.

A few short years later, I am an ‘empty nester’ living in the Far East with a live in maid. Suddenly I have no kids at home, no cooking, shopping or cleaning. I still have the shiurim but now I have the adventure playground that is Hong Kong. The concept of total freedom sounds idyllic, but it can be very lonely and empty unless one uses ones time positively.

When the Children of Israel left Egypt, they were physically enslaved but never spiritually or emotionally enslaved. They had their faith in G-d, they knew the value of freedom. They knew who they were, where they were coming from and knew that G-d would lead them to the future.

How different from the experience of African Slavery. The slaves that were captured in Africa lost not only their freedom they lost their past and their future. Unlike we Jews, they had their heritage stolen, they were spiritually and emotionally enslaved even their names were taken from them and they were given the names of their slave masters.

This year celebrates the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in England. It has only been in the last few years that some of those descended from the African slaves have begun to trace their roots. About 15 years ago I listened to a black social historian on a radio programme envying the Jewish people for how they had survived enslavement and how they had recovered and were able to look ahead and build on their past as a functioning, organised community. He believed that the problems that the black community were experiencing were because as slaves they were torn from their homes, families split apart, oral histories lost and the concept of community destroyed. He envied we Jews because, despite suffering similar cataclysmic upheavals in our histories, we had never lost our identities or the concept of caring for one another even in the darkest hours.

The miracle is that, given our enslavement over the centuries, the physical and spiritual threats to our very existence, we Jews have survived at all. We have seen mighty, all powerful nations become dust, those that oppressed us swept away and still we have survived. We have survived with a Torah that has remained a constant in our lives, giving us legal and moral ways to live wherever and whenever that may have been. We have never allowed those that enslaved us to enslave our hearts and our minds. They may have had dominion over our physical being but our spirit has always been free.

In today’s society people demand freedom to live as they wish. Their freedom in most cases is an empty, self absorbed freedom. People demand their right to live as they choose but ignore the responsibility that comes with rights. We see societies and communities breaking down, with alcoholism, drug taking and crime on the rise, and educational standards, employment prospects and morality on the wane. Hopelessness is palpable on the streets of the cities because, “Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose....”

In the next few days as we celebrate the Festival of Freedom, let us learn the lessons of the past to safeguard present and the future. Freedom is not to be taken lightly. To be free means one has responsibilities, not just to one’s self, but to others. That no matter what happens to us, we will only remain free if we maintain our faith in God and never yield to temptation or repression. We are called by God to be a ‘Light unto the nations’; Pesach provides us with powerful lessons to teach. Let us pray that the rest of the world is prepared to listen.

**Anna van den Bergh and her husband Rabbi Martin van den Bergh moved last year from Wembley United Synagogue to Ohel Leah Synagogue in Hong Kong. She was the founding editor of Moonlight and is now a member of the Editorial Board.**

## CHAVA IN WONDERLAND – Adventures of a new Olah.

Six months have whizzed by and each day I learn something new. The first thing I had to learn was that no-one is impressed if you say with great pride “Ani Olah Chadasha!” “Labriut Geveret” says the shop-keeper, as his fingers fly over his cash register, “Labriut Geveret” says the taxi driver, as he winds his way through the heavy traffic with a felafel in one hand.

If no-one is impressed with me, I am too busy being impressed with everyone and everything to mind. Our Aliyah was made easy thanks to a great deal of family help. Without it, I think we would not have settled so quickly. My basic Ivrit sees me through everyday situations; it does not however, equip me to talk to the bank manager.

The bank was one of the first things that impressed me. You speak face to face with the staff without a glass panel to distract you. There are seats everywhere, lovely plants and you are offered a cold drink. We were ushered into a side office in order to meet the Manager. ‘Welcome’ he says, ‘My name is Motty’, as he shows us to two comfortable chairs and runs off to get another chair for our son! There are many forms to fill out and between us, we manage it in a mixture of English and Ivrit. Finally the completed forms which make us members of the bank, whizz through his computer printer: “Don’t think anyone reads them” he said “but - Mah Laasot?”

The expression “Mah Laasot” or roughly “What can you do?” is heard from all sides. The bus is late: “Mah laasot?” says the old lady sitting next to you. There is a long wait for the doctor: “Mah laasot?” You find yourself using the phrase like an expert and truthfully it helps you through many an otherwise frustrating situation. It gives you a sense of freedom as you go through your day, learning to take things in your stride over which you have no control.

Everyone prepares for their Aliyah in a unique way. It is the sort of experience that you would not mind doing twice in order to get it right. (Something like bringing up children!) We thought we were bringing very little with us, but still ended up with 109 boxes. It is so important to read every word that your packers put in front of you. I thought we were paying for unpacking; I thought wrong. Surrounded by 109 boxes, with no room to move around, the delivery men put a piece of paper in my hand and said “Sign here”. “But you haven’t unpacked!” I said. “We only unpack the big pieces and you only have two big pieces and we unpacked those.” Frantic phone calls to the shippers only endorsed what the men said. “Yes,” said the distant voice, “ we only unpack the big pieces.”

Somehow, thanks to family help, we unpacked. There was a mountain of wrapping paper. Tiny fridge boxes wrapped up like the crown jewels. One tablecloth, similarly wrapped. Through sheer exhaustion, we did not unpack as carefully as we should have, with the result that small items like tea-pot lids are missing. Clothing can be packed on hangers and into a container. The shippers did not tell us that this is expensive and should only be used for very good clothes that will spoil if they are folded. One such container was sent half empty. To do the firm justice, they later on shipped out some books at cost to make up for these faults, and for the fact that although we were told the empty boxes would be picked up, they stood outside for two weeks, until friendly students in the house got rid of them for us..

Although there is plenty of poverty here, one does not see this in the Supermarkets. There are many SUPERS (yes many English words have reappeared as the new Ivrit) here and they look no different to Tesco or Asda. “Buy one, get one free” is seen everywhere. The only thing we have not found yet is Nestea. Wonderful fruit and vegetables - a feast for the eyes. As we lived here in 1956, I keep remembering when we had to wait a whole year before we saw the next orange, and an apple was unheard of. It is good to have lived here in those days, then you appreciate the amazing progress that has been made .....if only there was peace!

So if you are considering Aliyah, don’t bring your favourite foodstuffs, it is simply a waste of money. Enjoy the freedom of a supermarket where the Kashrut is assured and you can indulge in a lovely hot barbequed chicken to take home! Mind you, you have to learn the lingo. In our local general store I asked for OATS. “Oats” said Moshe, “what is oats?” He asked all the other shoppers if they knew oats in Ivrit. No-one did. “What is it for” he asked helpfully. “Well,” I said in my best Ivrit, “You eat it with milk for breakfast.” “Oh” he said “why didn’t you say – QVAKERRR!” Similarly, we were having some bookcases fixed and I wanted to ask the man to leave us some spare parts in case we would need to move the shelves. I could not think of the words in Ivrit and so pointed to what I wanted. “Don’t worry,” he said “I will leave you plenty of SPARIM!”

It was and is funny, but it is essential I think, for anyone contemplating Aliyah to learn Ivrit.

Yes, you can get along in English, but only so far. If you want to belong - and after all this is why we come - then it is so important to learn and learn until you are at home in most settings. Reading too is important. All bills and invoices are in Ivrit and it is frustrating (and not always wise) to have to ask someone to read things for you. Those children who learn Ivrit b'Ivrit are really lucky and I wish all the schools would put Ivrit at the top of the Agenda. When I hear our little grandchildren use difficult verbs that I can't even form quickly, I am truly sorry that I did not grow up with Ivrit as a living language. It is perhaps the greatest freedom of all. Our prayers become more meaningful, and, when we read the Sedra each week, suddenly the words and letters take on new meaning, even in the early stages of learning Ivrit.

Purim has just finished and now the talk is all of Pesach. Everywhere! That is the great privilege of living here. As a small child, growing up in the North of England and seeing the Xmas lights and trees, I remember feeling left out. I remember thinking "I would never bring up my children in an atmosphere where they do not belong." My wish was fulfilled and the majority of our children and grandchildren live in this country, and they were all brought up here.

Of course, there are many ways of celebrating Pesach, and even as we sing the familiar songs, we know that the hospitals are being manned, that soldiers will be in position. Hopefully, few will be unmoved by the Chag, for it is in the air we breath, in the atmosphere. There is a tolerance not always spoken about in the press, unfortunately, and an understanding that we all come from different backgrounds and cling to our traditions. While the children ask The Four Questions, the adults will spend quiet days hoping and praying for the answers we all want: peace and the freedom to live together in harmony, within and outside the borders.

Chava Lehman founded Kisharon in 1976 and worked there until her retirement 6 years ago. She and her husband Manny now live in Jerusalem.

## **FROM PESACH TO PURIM: THE LONG WALK TO FREEDOM**

The story of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt is one of the greatest and oldest tales of freedom. By the hand of God, the Israelites were miraculously taken out of bondage to walk through the Red Sea and into the wilderness. The Israelites did not have to raise a weapon or stand face to face in battle against their seemingly invincible enemy. Instead, deliverance came through God's strong and mighty Hand. The Purim story is also a tale of salvation. On Purim we describe the heroic actions of Esther and Mordechai and their successful attempts to rouse the Jews of Persia to instigate their own salvation and crush their enemies.

A brief contrast of the Exodus narrative with the story we recount on Purim, together with a closer look at the Israelites' war with Amalek in the desert, will offer a deeper understanding of the different types of freedom attained by the people in the Pesach and Purim narratives.

For the Israelites, leaving Egypt meant abandoning their shacks and meagre possessions for a promise of a better life. With hindsight this step might seem an obvious one, but the Midrash tells us that many Israelite slaves in fact chose to remain behind in the security of the dismal life they were accustomed to. The Israelites had been slaves for over two hundred years and the longevity of their oppression affected their psyche. Such a mentality was not easy to shift. We see how challenging it was for many of them to keep their faith in God and Moses, and envisage a more promising future. They questioned God's ability to provide them with food and water and to lead them to the safety of a land flowing with milk and honey, despite being witness to unprecedented and wondrous miracles such as the ten plagues, the splitting of the Red Sea and later, the giving of the Torah at Sinai. At any difficult juncture on their journey they slipped into a false nostalgia, believing they had a better life for themselves in Egypt.

However, it was the episode of sending the 12 spies to scout the land of Canaan and their negative report back to the people that convinced God that it would take a new generation of Israelites to cast off their ingrained slave mentality; their willing dependence on God for food and shelter and their fear of facing danger or attack.

Therefore, whilst the Israelites had been liberated from slavery in Egypt and given the Torah, God ultimately recognized that only the next generation born in the desert could truly appreciate what it meant to be free: to think and act consciously as individuals and with faith in God. Reaching this ideal level of freedom would enable the Israelites to fully embrace the covenant they entered with God at Sinai.

If we take a closer look at the story of the Israelites' war with Amalek in the desert (Shemot, 17), which happens just before they arrive at Sinai, it is arguable that the Israelites' response to the war perhaps reaches this ideal level of freedom. By way of background, the Israelites have not long left Egypt and arrive at Rephidim, the fourth stop in their journey. Two incidents occur in Rephidim. The first is the Israelites' arduous complaint of thirst to Moses. Moses, in response, desperately seeks God's counsel and God instructs him to hit the rock so that he may provide the people with water.

Moses' behaviour is quite different in the incident that follows: the war with Amalek. Moses does not call on God for assistance or advice as he did when water was lacking. Instead, Moses decisively acts by instructing Joshua to rally the people for war. Moses then goes up the hill with Aaron and Hur. When his hands are lifted the Israelites are winning, and when they are down, they are losing. In a literal reading of the text, the war with Amalek is a "natural" war. Joshua amasses an army and weakens Amalek through the people's own strength. There does not appear to be any direct intervention or assistance by God. Nor is God expressly mentioned as he is in respect of the wars with Sichon and Og in the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the Israelites' journey. Rashi also adopts the opinion that the war with Amalek is carried out through natural means.

He argues that the imagery of Moses raising his hands is to indicate to the people to serve God in their heart whilst they are fighting the war. As long as they are doing this, they are victorious. Rashbam even points out that Moses' use of his hands were standard war tactics of a general.

Therefore in the Amalek story we see a glimpse of a free-thinking nation which willfully fights for self-determination with the belief that God will respond to their heart-felt cries. This surely reveals to God that the Israelites have the capability of reaching the potential to freely enter the covenant at Sinai. Whilst the decisive and conscious actions depicted in the Amalek narrative are an exception to much of the Israelites' conduct during the rest of their time in the desert, in the Purim story over a thousand years later, we see the Jewish people emulate this model of freedom.

The Purim story also appears to be a war conducted by the Jews against the evil decree of Haman without God's direct involvement. Haman is similarly a descendant of Amalek. The Jewish people of Shushan, led by Esther and Mordochai, take decisive action to stand up for themselves and their values, avert Haman's evil decree to annihilate them and overthrow their enemies.

At the end of the Megilla (Esther, 9: 26-27), we are told that after everything that the Jewish people had experienced and that had befallen them, they undertook and obligated themselves ('keemu ve' kiblu) to observe the festival of Purim. The Talmud comments that this statement relates to the Jews' free acceptance of the covenant of the Torah given at Sinai for the first time. When the Israelites accepted the Torah at Sinai, they did so not out of free choice but out of compulsion. It was as if God was actually holding the mountain over their heads, forcing them to enter the covenant. The Israelites' passive acceptance of the Torah is understandable ('naaseh ve'nishma – 'we will do and we will listen'). They were a nation of slaves at Sinai, dependent on God's daily miracles and at God's mercy. In contrast, the Jews in the Purim story experienced salvation through their own orchestrated means, but were able to recognize God's guiding hand. Thus the very first war with Amalek many years earlier in the desert, just before the Torah was given, is a microcosm of the Jewish people's potential to reach the heights of being a free nation in a willing relationship with God.

Therefore, when we retell the Exodus as our journey into freedom, we do so by acknowledging the miraculous nature of how God liberated us from bondage and provided for us in the desolation and danger of the Wilderness. However, when we recount the story of Purim, we can learn from the model our ancestors established in their free expression of self-determination, coupled with their free will to accept and recognise the hand of God in the natural order of things.

Samantha Witkin lives with her husband and daughter in New York City. Previously a lawyer, Samantha decided to pursue a career in Jewish Education obtaining a Masters in Jewish Studies from UCL and becoming a Bradfield fellow at LSJS. In New York she studied at the Drisha Institute of Jewish Education.



The Association for Art  
in the Community



The International Coalition  
for Agunah Rights

## **CHAINED**

### **A Public Campaign for *Agunot* and Women Unable to Obtain Divorce**

Dear Friend,

Thousands of women, in Israel alone, are refused a divorce unless they give in to their husband's condition to relinquish marital assets and child support. According to Jewish law, even if the wife initiates the proceedings, only the husband can grant a divorce, and it must be done of his own free will. If the husband refuses to do so, the religious courts cannot grant a divorce in his stead.

The CHAINED campaign will highlight the plight of the *Agunah* or "Chained Woman" and will make policy makers understand that a large segment of the public demands change. We turn to you, as an advocate of women's rights, to help support this campaign.

Our CHAINED campaign will open in May 2007, with a "different type of fashion show" entitled *The Shattered Dream*. Top fashion designers and leading schools of textile design have agreed to contribute their talents by designing dresses inspired by women unable to obtain a divorce and will record their cruel reality.

We believe that this event will be the catalyst for our public awareness and advocacy event in the summer of 2007 – The Unveiling of the Largest Embroidered Patchwork Dress Ever Sewn - 18 meters (48 ft.) in height and 50 meters (150 ft.) in diameter - before a massive audience in center Tel Aviv.

ICAR, an international coalition of 25 organizations for *Agunah* Rights, together with *The Association for Art in the Community*, who are experienced in initiating social change, have combined forces to recruit a critical mass of people in Israel and the Diaspora to demand solutions to the *Agunah* issue within the framework of Jewish law.



In order to realize all of our dream and attract maximum public attention to CHAINED, we need your help and support and that of your friends and family. Please join us in breaking the chains tying women to dead marriages by donating to the campaign and by inviting others to join you. The names of all donors will appear in a commemorative book along with photographs documenting the design, embroidery and assembly of the dresses, powerful symbols of the *Agunah's* imprisonment.

Please send your contribution by check to The Association for Art in the Community Meizam Agunot, 48 Rabbi Akiva St., Ganei Hertzlia Mall, Hertzlia 46423, Israel, or by Credit card at [www.icar.org.il](http://www.icar.org.il)

Sincerely yours,

Adi Yekutieli, Director  
The Association for Art in the Community

Robyn Shames, Executive Director  
International Coalition for *Agunah* Rights

## TOUCHING THE PAST: THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT AND THE HOLOCAUST

The festival of Pesach celebrates the Exodus of the Bnei Yisrael from Egypt and the slavery, persecution and attempted destruction beforehand.

How does this early period of Biblical Jewish history compare with the stages leading to the modern Jewish tragedy known as the Holocaust-the Nazi attempt to completely destroy the Jews of Europe and the Soviet Union under the cover of World War 2 (1939-45)?

During the former period, the Hebrew people experienced slavery, alienation, persecution and infanticide (the murder of the first born males who were cast into the river) under Pharaoh - but there was no genocide of men and women.

During the latter period, the Jews experienced first persecution and alienation, then slavery, and finally the mass murder of men, women and children from June 1941 until the liberation of the camps in 1945.

Why is it that Pesach perhaps stands out in the minds and psyche of our children more than any other festival? Could it be the different food, the change over of the dishes, the fact that all of the mums are exhausted from weeks of cleaning? Or could it be the fact that during Seder night, we act out what happened to the Bnei Yisrael, and use visual aids and symbols to help our understanding of the Exodus? We literally "touch the past" by retelling the story of the going out of Egypt.

In Shemot, chapter 1, we learn of the hardships and the conditions for the Bnei Yisrael.

A new King of Egypt has come to power, who did not know Joseph, and who is scared of the vast numbers of Jews who are "more numerous and stronger than us". His fear is irrational, a fear of "the other" rising up and fighting with the enemy against the Egyptians if an invasion occurred. This fear was similar to the anti-Judaism so prevalent in the Middle Ages, but differed from the racially motivated antisemitism of Nazi Germany during the 1930s.

In Chapter 1, Verse 10, the key phrase "Havah nitchacmah lo" - "Come let us outsmart it (the Bnei Yisrael)- in case it becomes too numerous and may wage a war against us, and go up from the land..." reveals Pharaoh's paranoia and fear, and causes him to appoint taskmasters (Sarei Missim - literally officers who taxed the people) over the Jews so that they become enslaved and are forced to build the cities of Pithom and Ramses under hard and bitter conditions.

Now compare this period with the antisemitic propaganda and racial laws used against the Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and the use of the Jews as slave labourers once World War 2 broke out and the subsequent ghettoisation and alienation of the Jews in Poland.

Ramban believes that Pharaoh's goal was not slave labour at this point, but the extermination of the Bnei Yisrael, as he considered them a threat in the case of an invasion. (Shemot 1:10-11). However, Pharaoh needed the consent of his people to murder the Jews so he proceeded in careful incremental steps.

This can be compared with the Intentionalist view of Hitler's motives towards the Jews during the 1930s and his need for public approval of his policies. (Intentionalist historians believe that everything logically followed from Hitler's will and his long term policy was the murder of the Jews.)

However, even after the two Egyptian cities were built under extreme conditions, the Jewish people kept on increasing in number - "Keyn Yirbu", which led to crushing harshness (Verse 13) and consequently Pharaoh's fear changed to disgust and loathing. So the Egyptians embittered their lives... "Vayemareru"...with work in the fields and with mortar and bricks. Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno, an Italian commentator and physician at the time of the Renaissance, believed that it was only after that policy failed to make the Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, a new tactic was used with the midwives Shifra and Puah. ("Veachray chen -and after that..") This policy was the infanticide of the Jewish newborn sons. Sforno's view is more akin to the Functionalist view of Hitler's motives against the Jews, which is that it developed into a genocidal policy only after the first incremental steps failed to destroy the Jews.

As we know, the 'midwife policy' against the firstborn sons also failed as G-d intervened to help the midwives, (possibly Miriam and Yocheved) and the people of Israel grew stronger still. Thus the next stage, which was Pharaoh's commandment to all of the Egyptian people ("Lechol amo") that every Jewish son that was born should be thrown into the river and drowned, but every daughter should be kept alive.

How do visual aids and symbols at the Pesach Seder, which stay in our conscious and unconscious minds from childhood to adulthood, enhance our understanding and bring to life our vision of an enslaved and alienated people struggling to become an independent national identity? The dipping of the vegetables in salt water, the eating of the maror and charoseth, the symbols of the shank bone and burnt egg, are all signs of the hardship and cruelty at the time so that we feel that we ourselves were slaves in Egypt.

Likewise if we actually see in a Holocaust Exhibition like Yad Vashem - the filthy striped prison uniforms of the concentration camp victims, or the yellow star of David with the word "Jude" inscribed in the middle, or a soup bowl and a pair of glasses belonging to a Holocaust victim - we can relate more to this enormous tragedy. These artefacts help us "touch the past" by viewing them as part of the historical narrative, and therefore through them we can learn more about the deeper layers of meaning of this period of Jewish history that was seemingly so incomprehensible and painful.

Finally, what of the struggle to become an independent Jewish nation and the celebration of our freedom from slavery which the Exodus from Egypt and the Seder represents? The leaning to the left, the drinking of the four cups of wine, the Hallel recitation, the familiar songs at the end, are all symbols of this - and the more we can use visual aids and symbols when educating both adults and children, the more in touch we will all be with our rich and meaningful past.

Esther Bentley has an MA in Holocaust Studies from UCL and is a graduate of the Bradfield programme at the LSJS. She has been a freelance educator in Holocaust education for the last seven years at the Imperial War Museum.

## **SAREL VOLUNTEERS FOR ISRAEL - or 'How to Star in the Ultimate Reality Show'**

"We will not lose this war. We did not start it, but it's our duty to protect the Jewish Nation and see to it that the residents of Metulla and Haifa can live in peace. If we don't do it, no one will. We waited 2000 years for our own state, and we won't fold because a group of terrorists think that they can scare us.

**Someone who cannot protect his FREEDOM does not deserve it"**

Golani Company Commander, talking to his troops before entering Southern Lebanon, Aug. 2006

### My Experience with Sarel

Check List:

Pillow, torch (because loos might be some distance away), mosquito repellent, rubber gloves, washing line, padlock, ear plugs, medium weight socks to go under work boots (provided) etc.

Not the usual holiday packing list, but required for my Sar-EI experience in 2006. What is Sar-EI? An organisation which enables volunteers (and even those of a more mature age) to have a small taster of what it is like to work on an Israeli army base, and to give a personal 'hands on' contribution to the continuity of Jewish life, while helping to reduce the military demands on Israeli reservists.

Not everyone's idea of a good holiday? Maybe not, but for me it was an invaluable time, being there, taking part, working a full day, meeting young Israeli soldiers and getting along with a motley crew of other individuals. (Would have made an interesting Jewish reality show). Some of the volunteers had returned year after year, others like myself were novices, wondering what was in store for me.

The locality of the base is not known in advance for security reasons, but I was fortunate to be in what was described as a 5\* one – I may not be so lucky next time.

The heat, the basic conditions, the sleep deprivation (shared accommodation and the inevitable snorer) were minor inconveniences and were counterbalanced by the opportunity to sample life on a base, albeit for a mere blink of an eye, to meet young Israeli soldiers doing their training and to have some laughs and lots of fun. We all wore full uniform, boots, hat etc, and this was a sight to behold. (Private viewing of photos available).

Our work was not earth-shattering, nor did we feel we were "saving Israel", but we worked in I.D.F. warehouses, checking, repacking and cataloguing supplies, carrying out dining room duties, or general maintenance work. However, the feeling of working together as a group was overwhelming. We all got on, despite our various backgrounds and countries of origin.

We did share a common language, although this was a debatable point with our American workmates! We had two charming “Madrichot”, young Israeli women soldiers who did an admirable job in keeping us up to date, up to speed and up in the mornings!

Most of us sandwiched the experience with visits to friends or relatives, or a couple of days in Tel Aviv in one of the Sar-El sponsored hotels. I must admit that “re-entering” the real and normal world was a rude awakening, although one could ask whether Israeli life constitutes ‘normality’ in the true sense, bearing in mind the underlying threat every citizen is living under. I have to say that, despite not speaking a word of Ivrit (shame on me), I had a great feeling of belonging as well as respect for the general way Israelis get on with their lives, at the same time longing for the normality which we all take for granted here.

For those who would like more information, you can look at the [www.sar-el.org](http://www.sar-el.org) website where you can read about its history and its goals, or contact Jennie Goldstone, UK Sarel Coordinator at [sarelvolunteers@btinternet.com](mailto:sarelvolunteers@btinternet.com), who will be delighted to give you more information. Perhaps I’ll see you on the next trip!

Suzanne Freedman, Hove-on-Sea, Sar-El volunteer, 2006.

### **A HIDDEN JEWEL IN OUR COMMUNITY - help us spread the word**

One of the things our community is really bad at is publicising some of the wonderful resources we have to offer.

An example of this is the remarkable story of the growth of Langdon College in Manchester, which provides residential and day accommodation for students aged between 16 and 20 with special learning and physical needs, and Langdon Community which provides post-college accommodation, high quality care, and work opportunities in Manchester and London.

Langdon Foundation is a national registered charity revolutionising the lives of young Jewish adults with learning disabilities. Operating at two specific levels, Langdon College caters for the further education, residential care and social and welfare needs of students, while the Langdon Community provides post-college residential and pastoral care, and enhanced job opportunities.

The first priority of Langdon has always been to ensure that young people with learning difficulties are encouraged to reach their full potential, and our track record points to an undoubted success story in meeting that objective

Langdon supports young Jewish adults with learning difficulties to become full participating members of society. We enable them to become confident, assertive and independent individuals who can:

- Live away from the family home
- Operate within the Jewish community
- Have a minimum of dependence on others
- Have a productive and varied social life
- Have access to full or part-time paid employment

On leaving school (or later), young people join Langdon College, our Manchester based residential specialist college. It provides further education opportunities tailor-made for the young person’s developmental and observational needs. Each student has his or her own individually designed learning plan, based on their specific abilities and assessed learning priorities.

Langdon College provides many students with their first experience of living away from home, being treated as an independent adult and being able to choose their own lifestyle.

Within Langdon young people are taught not to be cared for, but to care for themselves and, equally important, to care about the needs of their fellow students.

On completion of their three years of study, most students move on to Langdon Community.

A network of individually adapted flats and houses in North Manchester and North London provides former Langdon College students with a nurturing Jewish home life and all the support they require to live full independent lives. Our "in-house" employment development worker enables them to locate and access employment opportunities that are appropriate to their particular talents, skills and abilities.

They are encouraged to be as active as possible and plan and initiate their own social lives.

Eighty per cent of Langdon Community residents take part in vocational training or work experience placements. Over the past six years young adults from Langdon Community have gained respected qualifications ranging from catering and hospitality to French polishing, and have accessed jobs in childcare, gardening, administration and retail.

Numerous social workers have commented that the services provided by the Langdon Community are exceptional and provide levels of support that cannot be accessed anywhere else.

Currently Langdon Community supports 30 people in Manchester and 11 people in North London to live in a range of flats and houses. We were also honoured to welcome the Chief Rabbi in November 2006 to open the latest addition to our Supported Living Scheme, Pears House, Edgware.

Because success breeds success, the reputation of Langdon in London is growing, and a further property is due to be opened in August 2007. The new property will provide wheelchair accessible accommodation for young Jewish adults with learning disabilities and will extend the range of services and support offered by the Langdon Foundation in the area.

To date, more than sixty young people have passed through the Langdon College's doors since 1995. In a truly remarkable success story, practically every Langdon leaver has gone on to lead a virtually independent life. Many of them far exceeded the expectations of their parents when they first reluctantly trusted Langdon College with the care of the child, believing they would need their support for ever. While the vast majority have moved on to Langdon Community, others have gone on to live and work in Israel, have apprenticeships with prestigious companies, gained a degree from Salford University and qualifications in social care.

In 2006 the College gained one of the highest OFSTED grades ever achieved by a specialist college for its literacy, numeracy and communication provision, and earlier this year received a remarkable Grade 2 following re-inspection. It has earned the respect and confidence of the Learning and Skills Council, and excellent grades for its standard of welfare and care.

A high priority for Langdon College is the further of enhancement of our ability to provide for young adults with learning disabilities from the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox communities. The aims are to be able to provide learning opportunities and support structures that are adaptable to all levels of Judaic observance. We are very interested in hearing from families from these communities who feel that Langdon College can be of benefit to them. Langdon already has a proven track record of successfully providing for members of the ultra orthodox communities, and this is an area ripe for expansion.

This summer Langdon Community will reach an important milestone, when it will be supporting over 50 young people with learning disabilities to live in their own homes, find employment and have an active social life.

Barry Welck, Chairperson of Langdon Foundation commented, "We are no longer the hidden gem in London and Manchester. The success of our students and residents is helping to raise the profile of the organisation as well as promote our fundraising efforts. Our aspiration both in London and in Manchester is to expand both our College and Community services so that many more disadvantaged young people can enjoy the same opportunities as others take for granted".

The virtually seamless way that students move from College to Community and out into the big wide world says a lot about Langdon. What also speak volumes are the happy faces you will find at any time when entering the doors of any Langdon property. Small enough to be a family, big enough to be a truly remarkable asset within our UK Jewish community, all Langdon desires is to ensure that every young person who could benefit from what we have to offer is able to do so. And the only way to do that is to be sure they and their families know about us

This is where those of you reading Moonlight can help. Please spread the word. You are among the best placed people to let others know about us and ensure no young person with learning difficulties and special needs is deprived of the chance to lead a more productive and promising life. So please help us by spreading our message loud and clear.

Pesach is our festival of freedom. Let us together vow that every young person who needs the freedom to find their full potential knows about Langdon, and can become free to reach their full potential without help

### **How do I find out more?**

Further information can be found at [www.langdon.info](http://www.langdon.info). Alternatively for further information on Langdon College please contact the Principal, Chris Mayho on 0161 740 5900 and for further information about Langdon Community please contact the Chief Executive, Robert Mutch on 0161 773 4070

**Langdon is holding an Open Day in Manchester Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> April, 9.30 am to 4 pm, and Annual Day is on Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> July at King David High School, Manchester, from 1pm.**

**Visitors will be very welcome on both these days. Please call 0161 740 5900 for details.**

Joy Wolfe is vice chairman of Langdon College governors

*This space is for YOU!*

*Do you have any comments about "Moonlight"?*

*Do you have news of events, organisations, charities?*

*Do you know of a website that may be of interest to our members?*

*Would you like to make a contribution, share a poem, a song, a wise or funny story?*

*PLEASE write in, with your full name. Our next edition will be Shavuot 5767 / 2007*

*If you enjoy "Moonlight" and would like to extend your exploration of Jewish Women's issues, try JOFA, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, [www.jofa.org](http://www.jofa.org).*

*For those of us fortunate enough to be within commuting distance of LSJS, the London School of Jewish Studies, there is a treasure house of learning opportunities available. See [www.lsjs.ac.uk](http://www.lsjs.ac.uk)*

### **WELCOME TO THE CALENDAR GIRLS**

Born from the old Rosh Chodesh Group attached to Pinner Synagogue, the seeds are being sown for a new women's group to provide both a social and learning forum. We hope to fill a 'gap in the market' that has been highlighted within our local area.

This group is for everyone – Jewish women of all ages who are members of every kind of synagogue and Jewish women who are not members of a synagogue. Here is the opportunity to have fun, to get out of your own mind-set, to share ideas and make new friends.

We have organised things in such a way as to allow you to dip in and out of meetings as you please, according to your availability and/or interest in the month's topic.

If you don't fancy driving at night, if you haven't passed your driving test, if the car's in for a service or your partner/child has gone off with the car, please let us know. We'll make sure you get a lift because most of all, we want you to be there. You can be sure of a friendly response. Try us out. Come along and meet the Calendar Girls!

Below is a list of future events – put them in your diary now. And please let us have your email/telephone/address so we can keep you up to date.

Send those details now to either: Linda Posner at [lindap@talk21.com](mailto:lindap@talk21.com) or Adrienne Barnes at [barnesadrienne@aol.com](mailto:barnesadrienne@aol.com)

Wednesday April 18<sup>th</sup> – Maisie Holland who works with The Raphael Centre will speak on Bereavement

Wednesday May 16<sup>th</sup> – Challah Making – hands on!

Wednesday June 13<sup>th</sup> - What do men really do in shul? Howard Wolfen reveals all

Wednesday July 18<sup>th</sup> – An evening of Tai Chi

Wednesday August 15<sup>th</sup> – Jewish Story Telling

Jenny Nemko from Pinner Synagogue, reporting on a new women's group

## **PESACH RECIPES**

### **Passover Chicken Lasagne**

I always find that if I can prepare a few ready made meals for Pesach, a little less time is spent in the kitchen, otherwise with a big family and guests as soon as one meal is finished, I am busy preparing the next! This is a delicious combination of red peppers, tomato sauce and minced chicken layered with matzah. Seasoned with plenty of fresh basil, it is a tasty treat. In addition, for those who have nut allergies this is nut free!

Serve it hot with a green salad or cold cut into squares and taken for packed lunch.

It is quicker and easier to use the large square matzah (not egg variety) for the filling. Also for a further short-cut, buy the ready prepared tomato pasta sauce (Kosher for Pesach) if available.

Preparation Time: 25 minutes      Cooking Time: 1 hour 20 minutes      Serves: 6 people      Will freeze

#### Ingredients:

##### Tomato Sauce:

2 tablespoons olive oil  
3 cloves garlic – peeled and chopped  
2 onions – peeled and chopped  
2 400g tins tomatoes  
2 carrots – peeled and finely chopped  
1 teaspoon sugar  
3 tablespoons Kosher For Pesach red wine  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 red peppers – quartered, cored and roughly chopped  
Large bunch of basil  
450g minced chicken  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
6 large square matzahs  
3 eggs lightly beaten

#### Method:

- 1) In a large saucepan heat the olive oil. Add the garlic, carrots, onions and sauté until just golden. Lower the heat and stir in the tomatoes, sugar, wine and season. Add the chicken and stir from time to time.
- 2) Simmer covered for 35 minutes.
- 3) Transfer the mixture to the food processor or mixer and whiz briefly to combine.

- 4) Pre-heat the oven to 200 C/400F/ Gas mark 6.
- 5) Place the peppers on a tray lined with non stick baking parchment paper. Drizzle with some olive oil and salt and pepper. Roast for 15 minutes.
- 6) Run the matzo under water, turning to rinse both sides. Do not soak matzo, just dampen.
- 7) Lightly coat both sides of the matzah with beaten egg.
- 8) Place 1/3 of the meat mixture on the base of a rectangular oven ware dish measuring approximately 23 cm x 23 cm ( 9 inches x 9 inches).
- 9) Sprinkle over a 1/3 of the red peppers, roughly chopped basil and cover with 2 square sheets of egg matzah.
- 10) Repeat the layers twice more.
- 11) Pour over any remaining egg mixture over the top layer of matzah.
- 12) Bake for 40 minutes or until golden at 180 C/ 350 F/ Gas mark 4.

### **Mini Chocolate Almond Meringues**

Pesach time is one of the occasions that everyone makes an effort with the cooking unless, of course, you are lucky enough to be going away. Bought biscuits, although delicious are so expensive; home made satisfies the sweet tooth at a fraction of the price! Also, making Pesach biscuits is a delightful way of encouraging little helpers to get involved in cooking.

This recipe uses 4 egg whites. Use the yolks for Pesach mayonnaise or lemon curd. Spare whites will freeze successfully – one white equals one fluid ounce. Defrost at room temperature and they will whisk up beautifully.

These meringue biscuits are parev and can be stored for about a week in an air tight container, or frozen.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes      Cooking Time: 20 minutes      Makes: 24

#### **Ingredients:**

4 egg whites  
 200g caster sugar  
 Pinch of salt  
 4 tablespoons cocoa powder  
 1 teaspoon almond essence

#### **Method**

- 1) Pre- heat the oven to 150 C/ 300F/ Gas mark 2.
- 2) Line 2 baking trays with non stick baking parchment paper. Lightly whisk the egg whites until foamy. Add a pinch of salt.
- 3) Continue to whisk the egg whites, increasing the speed. Slowly add the sugar, a tablespoon at a time until the mixture is glossy. Add the almond essence.
- 4) Stir in the cocoa powder. Transfer the mixture into a piping bag or use a tablespoon to drop onto the prepared baking tray.
- 5) Bake for 20 minutes until the meringues appear dry and set.

To serve the stylish way: Dust the plate with some cocoa powder and stack them up high.

### **Charoset**

Every year, we refer to our own family's traditional recipe for Charoset but I wonder if you are aware that Charoset actually differs according to our heritage. Having researched world recipes, I have adapted the traditional Ashkenazi one and was given family recipes which originated from Morocco and California. They are all made in the same way; essentially, finely chop and combine so that they look like mortar, but of course, taste completely different. Perhaps this year, ring the changes and connect with a different Jewish community by bringing their traditional recipe to your seder table.

In Song of Songs, the Jewish people are compared to: apples, pomegranates, figs, dates, walnuts and almonds. Whilst over the centuries many recipes have developed in Jewish communities (see below), these are the main ingredients to be used for Charoset. The Talmud also says that the Charoset should be made tangy by using apples - commemorating the apple trees under which the Jewish women secretly gave birth in Egypt. (Based on Song of Songs 8:5) Finally, the Talmud says to make the Charoset thick by adding spices, like ginger and cinnamon. This represents the straw and clay which the Jewish slaves used to construct buildings.

### **Traditional Ashkenazi Charoset (Pictured in a white dish – see page 1)**

#### Ingredients

3 eating apples – peeled and cored, chopped or grated  
1 cup/ 110g walnut pieces  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
5 tablespoons Kiddush wine or other Passover sweet red wine  
Sugar or honey – to taste  
Combine and refrigerate.

### **California Charoset (Pictured in a brown dish – see page 1)**

#### Ingredients

150g pitted dates, chopped  
1 orange - peeled  
1 avocado – peeled and stoned  
2 bananas – peeled  
100g shredded coconut  
juice of 1/2 lemon  
50g pine nuts  
100g raisins  
2 tablespoons matzah meal  
Put all the ingredients into the blender and whiz to desired consistency.  
Cover and refrigerate.

### **Moroccan Charoset (Pictured in a glass dish – see page 1)**

#### Ingredients

25 dates – pitted and chopped  
100g pistachio nuts  
50g whole blanched almonds  
50g raisins  
2 apples- peeled. Cored and diced  
1 pomegranate – juice only  
1 orange – peeled and finely chopped  
1 banana sliced  
100ml sweet red wine  
3 tablespoons cider vinegar- Kosher for Pesach or use white vinegar  
1 teaspoon black pepper  
1 teaspoon each of ground cardamom and cinnamon

#### Method

- 1) Combine fruits and nuts or finely chop or grind in the food processor.
- 2) Add the wine, pomegranate juice and vinegar to make a paste. Blend in spices
- 3) Store in a glass container in the refrigerator until required – up to 1 day.

## LEARN TO COOK - THE STYLISH WAY

My popular Cookery Demonstrations are the ideal, yet informal way of adding to your cookery skills. These comprehensive "hands-on" classes, presented in her trademark simple but stylish manner, will enhance your love of food and add to your cooking repertoire. Pick a theme and see the difference it will make. Choose from:

Wednesday 2 May 2007	Stylish Sephardi Cooking
Thursday 3 May 2007	Stylish Sephardi Cooking
Wednesday 16 May 2007	Quick and Easy Dairy Dinners
Thursday 17 May 2007	Quick and Easy Dairy Dinners
Wednesday 6 June 2007	Pastry Galore
Thursday 7 June 2007	Pastry Galore
Wednesday 27 June 2007	Hot and Cold Salads
Thursday 28 June 2007	Hot and Cold Salads

Venue: 2 The Broadwalk, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2XD

Time: 10.00 am – 1.30 pm

Cost: £55 per class. All materials provided

Booking: Call Denise Phillips on **01923 836 456**

Denise Phillips is a professional chef, who trained with renowned restaurateur Prue Leith before setting up a successful catering business offering distinctive food, at affordable prices but with exceptional style and visual look. Her quest to improve the quality of Jewish cooking led to a number of highly successful 'hands-on' cookery demonstrations all over the country. She has written three books (with another on the way) that have established her as the leading name in modern kosher stylish cooking.