

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF LIVERPOOL

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THERE have been Jews in Liverpool since 1755,¹ and their existence was referred to in the diary, for that year, of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church; few details are available but it is thought that they were Sephardim (of Spanish and Portuguese origin) who subsequently moved to Dublin² or to the West Indies. Benas dates the origins of the present community to 1780 when a house, with adjacent ground for a cemetery, was purchased for a synagogue. The first sermon to be delivered in English in a synagogue took place in Liverpool in 1806.³ In 1839 the first provincial representative to the Board of Deputies of British Jews was elected by the Seel Street Synagogue and in 1841 the first Hebrew day school (now the King David Primary School) outside London was founded in order to teach English to the Jewish immigrants from Europe. Lipman⁴ records that by 1850 Liverpool had the largest provincial Jewish community — some 2,500. In 1896 a Zionist society was formed there, a year before the First Zionist Congress in Basle.

The pogroms of the 1880s in Russia and the Tsarist May Laws of 1882 led to a massive Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe and Liverpool became the major transmigration centre for those who wished to settle in North America. Between 27 April and 12 July 1882, a total of 6,274 adults and children left Liverpool in steamships for Canada and North America⁵ while some others remained behind and settled in the city. About five decades later, in the late 1930s, refugees mainly from Nazi Germany arrived, but they were forced to leave at the outbreak of the Second World War, when Liverpool became a restricted area and they were officially designated 'enemy aliens', since they were German nationals.

Some distinguished Jews were natives of Liverpool or spent their formative years in the city. Others were prominent in civic activities, became leaders of their professional bodies, or held important university positions.⁶ As the city's Jews prospered they moved out of their terraced houses without gardens, in the centre of the city, to settle into the suburbs,

in detached and semi-detached homes with gardens. The inevitable result was that the Jewish community became more dispersed, living in an eight-square mile area, some of which is park land. The present older generation, whose children have left home, have moved into privately-owned or rented flats while others live in subsidized housing, and so they have come nearer to the present centre of the Jewish community.

Demography

In the last 30 years, the size of Liverpool Jewry has declined drastically from more than 7,500 in 1965 to a little over 3,000 today.⁷ These are approximate figures since the British Census does not ask for religious affiliation. The best that can be done is to use membership lists of as many Jewish organizations and synagogues as possible. Even then there are difficulties nowadays since addresses are omitted and the Data Protection Act has imposed further restrictions.

In 1993, together with the late Dr Myer Goldman (who died in 1994), using the updated communal list compiled from the membership lists, I undertook a census of the Merseyside Jewish Community (Liverpool, Crosby, the Wirral, and Chester). We approached 1,400 households by post to reply to a basic questionnaire asking for the dates of birth and marital status of members of the household together with information about their children who had left home. There was a 60 per cent response. Unfortunately, lack of financial resources meant that non-respondents could not be contacted but a group of senior members of the community studied the list of these cases, identifying many of those who were living alone and estimating their approximate age group.

I also used, as an additional source, the records of burials of Orthodox Jews in Liverpool which I have gathered since 1966. In 1966 there had been 104 burials while in 1993 these were 48. In the quinquennium 1991-95 the average annual number of Orthodox burials was 61. In the period 1989-93, 82 per cent of deaths were of Jews aged 70 or older, compared to 54 per cent in the years 1966-70. This, together with the estimates from the census, has led to the assumption that about half the members of the community are aged 60 or over 60; many of them are widowed or unmarried.

I then estimated the average household size with additional data about the number of Liverpool Jewish children attending the King David schools (these we know to account for about 90 per cent of all Jewish children of school age) and the number of children who attend the Merseyside Amalgamated Talmud Torah (MATT), and I reached the conclusion that the average household size was two persons. It must be stressed here that all those whom we identified as Jews do not necessarily participate actively in communal activities; only 65 per cent of those mailed were members of synagogues (a figure comparable with British

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Jewry as a whole).⁸ It cannot be asserted that they are all halakhically Jewish, some being children of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. Neither can it be claimed that we have identified every Jew in Liverpool; some Jews in England, as elsewhere, remain outside the Jewish community and it is only when they die and a Jewish burial is requested for them that their Jewish identity becomes known.

Most provincial Jewish communities in the United Kingdom have declined in number as a result of low birth rates and of migration to London or other cities and abroad; in Liverpool there is the added factor of discontent with the civic authorities and an economic recession which has badly affected the city. In 1991, Liverpool's unemployment rate was 21.6 per cent compared with 10.6 per cent in 1971. Because municipal taxes are very high in Liverpool, and are based on the area of residence and the size of the house, many of those employed in professional or managerial occupations now live in the dormitory suburbs of North Merseyside or the Wirral. (However, observant Jews continue to live in the city itself because of the proximity of the synagogues.) The *general* population of Liverpool has consequently fallen from 610,000 in 1971 to 474,000 in 1991.⁹

The King David schools have provided education since 1966 to 90 per cent or more of Jewish children from the age of five to eighteen, and a kindergarten has recently been established. The effect of this has been that after leaving school, members of the younger generation seek social activities in other communities where they can meet new faces. Moreover, since the 1960s it has become fashionable for students to enrol at universities and colleges away from home.¹⁰ Once having left home, many choose not to return — remaining where they studied; others have moved to London or Manchester — where there are larger Jewish communities — or they emigrated to Israel. A very important additional factor for this state of affairs is the lack of employment opportunities in many sectors of Liverpool's economy.

Communal Structure

The King David Foundation has a kindergarten, a primary school, and a secondary school which is placed in the top five State comprehensive secondary schools in the country. The Jewish Youth and Community Centre is in the same complex. Elsewhere there is the Jewish Welfare Council, which is associated with — but is not part of — the Jewish Housing Association¹¹ and the Stapely residential and nursing home for the elderly. There are four major, and one small, Orthodox synagogues and there is also a Progressive congregation, MATT, which was referred to above and which was established in 1975, caters for pre-*bar mitzva* and *bath mitzva* children, the majority of whom attend secular schools, while for the older children there is the *Yeshiva* (Talmudical College) for 22 boys

and a *Midrasha* (girls' college) with 13 pupils. Liverpool Jewry is one of the few provincial communities with a *kasher* restaurant, and accommodation for out-of-town students is available in two Hillel Houses.

Liverpool, in common with other provincial Jewish communities in Great Britain, has a Representative Council which was established in 1944. It was originally a consultative body but it has accepted responsibility for a variety of activities which were never envisaged by the Council's founding fathers. All the Jewish organizations of Liverpool, as well as those in the adjacent areas of the Wirral, Chester, and Crosby are represented on the Council which provided the stimulus, in 1947, for the foundation of a home for the aged (opened two years later). The Council also established the Adult Jewish Education Committee in 1966 and the Liverpool Jewish Resource Centre (whose activities include the provision of talks to non-Jewish groups, some of whom are taken round synagogues, and the supply of material to schools for the National Education Curriculum). It revitalized the Council of Orthodox Synagogue Wardens and it acquired land in 1969 for a communal cemetery when the one owned by the now defunct Burial Society became full.¹²

The Jewish Representative Council is the recognized official voice of Liverpool Jewry and it has direct lines of communication with the civic authorities and the local press, radio, and television. For more than three decades, the Council has organized the celebrations marking Israel's Independence Day and, latterly, Jerusalem Day as well as the commemoration of Holocaust Day and Israel's Memorial Day. In 1987 the Israel Subcommittee was formed to replace the Liverpool Zionist Central Council so that the Jewish Representative Council is now responsible for co-ordinating all Zionist activity in Liverpool with the exception of fundraising. In 1988, that Council embarked on a campaign to attract business and professional Jews to settle in Liverpool; a video was produced and circulated widely in the country, but this 'Come to Liverpool' campaign was not successful because, amongst other factors, Liverpool has the highest municipal tax in Britain; for example in the financial year 1995-96 Band D, which covers most middle-class houses, was £1,006 in the city compared with a national annual average of £647. In July 1996, a major container shipping company moved out of Liverpool because of a prolonged strike by dockers and in the same month a large international accountancy firm closed its Liverpool branch.

There have been initiatives by the Representative Council to attract Jews in the age cohort 18 to 40 years who had no involvement in community activities. In 1990 a young graduate of Brandeis University was appointed on a two-year contract to provide stimulus for those Jews by organizing social activities. Following his departure, there was no one to replace him until 1995 when a community development worker was appointed for an initial three-year period. Not only has he continued the work of his predecessor but he has widened his horizons to encompass

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similar groups elsewhere in the north of England and arrange interfunctions. He involves himself with the Jewish students from their arrival in the city and tries to persuade those from other areas to settle in Liverpool after graduation, identifying job opportunities for them as well as for local non-graduates.

The Council meets quarterly in plenary session and its executive committee meets monthly between these sessions. Honorary officers are elected annually and there is a consecutive three-year limit for the office of President of the Council. Representation on the Council is proportional to the size of the organization, with a maximum of four individuals appointed, falling into two groups. One of the groups consists of the senior officers of an organization while the second group consists of those who have been representatives for many years and who remain in their position because it is found embarrassing to replace them. The members of that second group have no authority to take decisions on behalf of their association, nor are the senior officers of the major institutions necessarily elected to the executive committee of the Representative Council. In an attempt to remedy matters, co-options to the executive committee were increased in 1967 to include the presidents, or chairmen, of some of the major organizations not already represented on it. Like the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Council represents organizations rather than individuals, and while it can be justifiably argued that the work of the Council is principally concerned with the interests of those who do identify with communal activities, it is not unknown for representatives to put the parochial interests of their organizations before those of the community as a whole.

Younger Liverpool Jews have complained that the Council members tend to belong to the older age group and do not always sympathize with their problems. After prolonged deliberation the Council's constitution was amended in 1994 to extend membership of the Council to individual members of the community on payment of an annual fee of £12.50 and the size of the executive committee was halved from 20 members to 10. Up to 1996, only 12 people have taken advantage of this opportunity to join the Council and participate in its activities. This change in the style of membership could, in the long term, alter the composition of the Council, making it more a community council than a representative one.

The failure to attract individual members to the Council is symptomatic of a malaise which is prevalent across the whole spectrum of Liverpool Jewry. Fifty years ago accusations of oligarchy were levelled at many bodies and so reluctant were some office-bearers to relinquish office that most organizations introduced a time limit to holding office. That was when one leader could, and did, hold office simultaneously in many communal organizations — Zionist, welfare, synagogal, and educational. But the pendulum has swung and today only one of the two positions of vice-presidents of the Council has been filled and neither the

present treasurer nor the honorary secretary wishes to accept this post and progress to the presidency. A number of communal organizations have co-chairpersons, indicative of the reluctance, or inability, of one person to accept sole responsibility in the post. There is also a general unwillingness to attend meetings — which is the case apparently also in non-Jewish organizations. The emphasis on performance and production, both in the professions and in commerce and industry, allows little time for voluntary work during the day and leads to stress and fatigue in the evenings. With two breadwinners in many young households, domestic responsibilities are shared by both partners, again affecting participation in communal activities. This is only part of the problem: a recently-formed forum for ‘young retirees’ — meeting monthly for lunch and a talk — has failed to achieve the expected support from those with more time at their disposal. Almost in parallel with the difficulty in recruiting unpaid volunteers has been the rise in the number of trained professional workers. Consequently the community will require more financial resources to pay for their services.

Nearly all communal activities take place in Harold House, the Youth and Community Centre which is the focal point of Liverpool Jewry. It was originally sited down-town in what was then the city’s Jewish district. The Centre is named after Harold Cohen — the founder of Lewis’s Stores — who, with members of his family, was a benefactor of that Centre and of many other Jewish and non-Jewish institutions. As Liverpool University expanded it acquired the site. The proceeds of the sale enabled a new building to be erected in a complex which already contained the Childwall Synagogue and the two King David schools. Originally Harold House was only a youth centre but it has now expanded to provide facilities for most of the adult and all the youth activities during the day and in the evening. This is despite the existence of three synagogue halls which are now used for the diminishing number of *simḥot* — mainly weddings and *bar mitzvah* receptions — and very large public meetings. The Harold House building also houses the Zionist offices, the King David kindergarten, a Jewish bookshop, a resource centre, a *kasher* restaurant and, just recently, a health and fitness club. The many activities provided include sports groups, a pottery class, and clubs for senior citizens and for mothers and toddlers. The director of the Centre, the Israeli *shaliah*, and the community development worker all have their offices in Harold House.

The administrative centre of the community is in the offices of the Welfare Council. Since the last century the management of the then Liverpool Hebrews’ Educational Institution and Endowed Schools, now the King David Foundation, has been undertaken in the offices of the Welfare Council as has the clerical work for the Representative Council. Recently part of the financial work of the Youth and Community Centre has been transferred there.

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Religious Trends

In 1945 there were ten Orthodox and one Liberal synagogue in Liverpool; most had paid clergy while some employed a minister, an assistant minister and a *hazan*, as well as a full-time beadle. There was then a Communal Rabbi but since the retirement of Rabbi Plitnick in 1971, this office has remained unfilled. Many of the synagogue officials performed other functions such as secretarial duties, teaching Hebrew and religious studies, *shehita*, and circumcision. In 1996, none of the four main Orthodox synagogues has more than one full-time officiant. A major change during the past half-century has been a substantial increase in the salaries of synagogue personnel, although only one rabbi has any formal teaching responsibilities.

In 1960 a committee was appointed by the Representative Council to enquire into the price of *kasher* meat when there were two wholesale and 15 *kasher* retail butchers and poulterers in Liverpool. Today there is only one retail *kasher* butcher. At that time there was a flourishing Shehita Board, animals being slaughtered for food not only for Merseyside but also for London and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The profits of the Board were used to assist religious and educational bodies in the area. The Board no longer exists. This situation reflects not only the drop in the size of the community and the introduction of frozen and packaged *kasher* meat, but also a lower level of religious observance in the depleted Jewish population.

The religious affiliation of Liverpool Jews is to the *Minhag Anglia* so well described by Chief Rabbi Sacks.¹³ Liverpool has not had a Sephardi congregation since the short-lived one in the eighteenth century but it did have a small Hassidic congregation until 1985. A Lubavitch rabbi settled in the city in 1994 and he organizes activities mainly centred round his house. The only Progressive Synagogue, established in 1928, caters for a small active minority within the community. The pattern of Jewish belief, as well as identity, in Liverpool has been documented and analysed by Nikolas Kokosalakis.¹⁴ The proximity of Manchester, with its strong Orthodox element, has led a not insignificant number of more religious families to move there, commuting daily to work in Liverpool via the two direct motorways.

The four large Orthodox synagogues are now merely buildings in which religious services are held. Only two have regular weekday *minyanim*, and they frequently have difficulty in recruiting ten men morning and evening. Apart from a weekly *shiur*, which attracts only a small number, there are no regular cultural or social synagogal activities. Indeed, on a normal *shabbat* the totality of worshippers could be accommodated in any one of the four Orthodox synagogues. Even during the *Yomim Noraim* (the High Holy Days) there is room for all the members, and their children, to be comfortably seated in the main body of the synagogues and at least two have vacant seats at that time — a far

cry from the overflow services or additional seats which were common in the years immediately following the Second World War. Whereas some do go away, usually to Israel, for Passover or for *Succoth* this is rarely the case for *Rosh Hashana*, *Yom Kippur*, or *Shavuot*. Each synagogue has a minister, at least one part-time clerical officer, and a caretaker. The financial implication of this surfeit, involving maintenance of the buildings and staff salaries, is a burden which could lead to bankruptcy of more than one congregation. The Council of Orthodox Synagogue Wardens is of course aware that there is a superfluity of synagogues.

The visiting student chaplain, the arrival of a Lubavitch rabbi, and the recent appointment of a community development worker, all dealing with the younger age group, have put a further financial burden on community resources. The many housebound and disabled people are rarely visited by the ministers and the latter are hardly — if ever — seen meeting their members in the Youth and Community Centre. They are also conspicuously absent at communal events, such as Holocaust Day or Israel Independence Day — unless they are invited to officiate. Nor are they seen in the audience at cultural meetings such as those of the Jewish Historical Society or of the Council of Christians and Jews. It seems that in Britain most rabbis are nowadays given a purely academic rabbinic training without a pastoral component, while only a few have attended a university and benefited from a wider knowledge of the secular world.

Education and Youth

In 1968 the number of Jewish children attending the King David Schools, 688, was at its zenith. In 1964, the King David Primary School had moved from its original site, in the centre of the city, to the Childwall complex in the heart of the community. Three years later comprehensive secondary education was introduced in Liverpool, with the conglomerate secondary schools operating on split sites. This made the bilateral King David high school attractive to Jewish parents. The pupils from the primary school were guaranteed a place in the high school. In 1968 almost all the pupils in the two-form entry primary school were Jewish but today there are only 187 Jewish pupils with an average annual fresh intake of 25. In the high school, with a three-form entry, the corresponding figures for Jewish pupils are 200 today compared to 295 in 1968. The Jewish pupils are now in the minority and the intercalation of Hebrew and Jewish studies into the daily curriculum is becoming a significant problem. It has been suggested that these subjects could be studied in after-school hours, but that might remove entirely the Jewish ethos of the high school. Were it not for the outstanding academic standard achieved in that school, the numbers of Jewish pupils would be far lower. Because of the difficulty of attracting suitable Jewish candidates, the head teachers of both the primary and high schools are non-Jewish but both are

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committed to maintaining that ethos. The high school is a voluntary-aided school and in such cases the local education authority appoints to each school three governors who may be Jewish or non-Jewish. It is possible that in the not-too-distant future these, together with the head teacher and two teacher governors and the two parent governors, might constitute a non-Jewish majority on the governing body of the school. In the primary school, which has recently become grant-maintained, the position is slightly different but the same scenario could develop there.

Until 1966 each of the four major Orthodox synagogues had its own religious classes. The success of the King David schools, with Hebrew and religious studies being an integral part of the curriculum, led parents to believe that their children need not attend a *heder*. The amalgamation of these classes, later to include the independent former *Talmud Torah*, into the Merseyside Amalgamated Talmud Torah (MATT) was an inevitable development which was not easy to establish because of the parochialism of the congregations. Even so, in 1968, a total of 320 children were receiving supplementary Jewish Education. Today there are only some 50 children attending MATT. At the time it was hoped to construct an integrated curriculum between the day schools and MATT so that pupils attending both would not have to endure the teaching of the same texts yet a satisfactory education could be provided for those secular day schools; but this was not to be. The *Yeshiva* which, before 1945, boasted some 25 *Kol Hayom* (day) students (and a host of distinguished alumni as well as part-time students) is now a shadow of its former glory; in fact, together with a *Midrasha* for girls, it is more a post-*bar mitzvah* annex to the MATT. A consequence of the removal of Jewish education from the responsibility of their synagogues has been a weakening of the ties between them and the children of their members. The youth section of Harold House provides a wide variety of activities: as well as a Junior Club there is a drama group, a Bnei Akiva, Habonim-Dror, a very active Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade, and sports facilities.

Until 1967, the adult modern Hebrew classes were held in Zion House in the Toxteth area of Liverpool. As in the case of Manchester, the local education authority was approached and agreed to finance these classes, which were transferred to the King David high school as part of the Childwall Evening Institute. The authority also agreed to extend the classes to include Jewish history, Biblical texts, Jewish religion, and Jewish cookery. There was then an enrolment of 231 and an average weekly attendance of 160. Since then there has been a dramatic decline in the number of classes and the number of those attending them; there are now only three classes, of which one is modern Hebrew. The only other regular educational activities, apart from the *shurim* in the synagogues are the SEED programme conducted by rabbis and lay Jewish scholars, some coming from Manchester,¹⁵ and monthly meetings of the Liverpool branch of the Jewish Historical Society. There is also the

Jewish Theatre and Cultural Group whose programme has only a small Jewish content.

Welfare Organization

The relief of the Jewish poor was originally vested in the principal synagogues, hence the term *parnass* — the person responsible for welfare — was given to the senior officer of the congregation. There had been non-synagogal welfare bodies in Liverpool since the early part of the nineteenth century, the oldest of which was the Hebrew Philanthropic Society founded in 1811. With the political unrest in Central and Western Europe from 1830 onwards and the frequent pogroms in Eastern Europe there was a constant, often small in numbers, influx into Liverpool. Each of these immigrant groups established its own place of worship but their welfare needs became the responsibility of the whole Jewish community. This has been termed the 'Liverpool Experiment'¹⁶ and its success was recognized as far afield as the United States.¹⁷

Small societies such as the *Bikur Holim*, *Somech Nofim*, Children's Country Holiday Fund, Bread and Flour Society, Women's Personal Service Society, and at least five others were established but the largest by far was the Board of Guardians for the Relief of the Jewish Poor of Liverpool which was founded in 1875. In 1964 it was renamed the Merseyside Jewish Welfare Council. It has accepted responsibility for those smaller societies, mentioned above, which still have funds. Today it has a wide spectrum of activities including financial help, counselling, visiting the sick, and providing *kasher* meals through meals-on-wheels and luncheon clubs. For many years it placed the needy in houses converted into flats. In 1962 the Housing Committee became the Liverpool Jewish Housing Association, independent of the Welfare Council, and in the following year an appeal was launched to raise funds for the erection of purpose-built flats. National and local authority grants provided the bulk of the necessary finance and today a significant number of the elderly live in this complex together with their non-Jewish neighbours. The Welfare Council also organizes the burials in the communal cemetery, on behalf of the Representative Council, and is responsible for arranging the *taharah* (preparation for burial) for the whole community.

An ageing population results in many persons suffering from degenerative diseases with associated physical disabilities, while advances in medicine have led to the survival of many younger disabled people. In order to enable the latter to play as large a part as possible in the life of the community, the Welfare Council has actively promoted access for the disabled to many buildings and the provision of such aids as magnifying glasses and large-print books. As far back as 1947, the Council of Liverpool and District Jews, the original name of the Representative Council, appreciated the needs of the ill and disabled and took the first

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steps in founding what is now the Stapely Residential and Nursing Home. In 1996, 30 of the 36 rooms in the residential section have been occupied while in the nursing home section all 39 rooms were occupied.

Zionism

Liverpool has a proud tradition of Zionism; the *Hovavei Zion* (Lovers of Zion) society was founded in 1891. Today, the Zionist organizations are primarily concerned with fund-raising with hardly any cultural activity. Many Liverpool expatriates played a vital part in the *Yishuv* and, later, in the establishment and strengthening of the State of Israel. The city still is second to none in fund-raising for a variety of Israeli causes. There are women's groups affiliated to WIZO but there are no corresponding groups for men. The establishment of the State of Israel with many people going there on holiday and the lack of interest in public meetings are the principal causes of the demise of specific cultural Zionist societies. Since the early 1960s the community has benefited from the services of an Israeli *shaliah* or *sheliha* (emissary), who works primarily with the younger generation and who organizes the promotion of all activities connected with Israel, especially those functions related to Israeli national days. They have also helped in teaching Hebrew in both the day schools and adult classes.

Funding

The methods used to finance the Jewish organizations of Liverpool are similar to those in other British communities. Synagogues levy seat rentals, encouraging payment by charitable covenant, and most invite contributions from those called up to the Reading of the Law. While this offers an opportunity to contribute on the occasion of a *simha* or a *jahrzeit*, it constitutes an additional financial burden for the few regular synagogue attenders. The synagogues have also had to launch appeals for further monies to fund exceptional needs, usually for the fabric of the buildings.

The four major institutions, Harold House, the King David Foundation, the Stapely Nursing and Residential Home, and the Welfare Council, rely mainly on major appeals held every seven years (to conform to the earlier requirement of seven-year charitable covenants)¹⁸ and the timing of these is controlled by the Representative Council. Only 30 per cent of the community respond to these appeals and most of these donors choose to contribute to all the appeals. The organizations concerned benefit from government and local authority grants but, in the case of the latter, these are constantly in jeopardy because of the parlous state of Liverpool's finances and their continuation in the future cannot be guaranteed, particularly at the present levels.

The King David Foundation, which levies fees for Hebrew tuition, was supported by the Zionist Federation Education Trust, now renamed the Scopus Jewish Education Trust. In recent years the grant was severely reduced and now it has ceased. The Youth and Community Centre makes charges for membership to both individuals and organizations using its rooms for meetings and it holds an annual fund-raising dinner. The Welfare Council sends out an appeal each Passover and Jewish New Year and the Stapely Home solicits donations on the occasion of a *jahrzeit*. Liverpool also has a Hebrew Associated Charities Fund which raises monies from donations on the occasion of *simhot*; at burials and tombstone consecrations; and from the *Kol Nidrei* appeal in synagogues on the eve of *Yom Kippur*. The sums raised are modest and are distributed to local Jewish charities.

Fund-raising for Israel follows the same pattern as elsewhere. The joint Israel Appeal, with a separate Women's Division, is held annually while the Jewish National Fund organizes collections for specific causes. As many as six women's groups within a WIZO Council both raise funds and have cultural programmes. Mainly because of a shortage of volunteers, there are no fund-raisers for other Israeli causes, apart from one person collecting for *Magen David Adom*. In 1974 each of the central committees involved in collecting for the academic institutions (such as the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) was asked if they would agree to a single body being set up in Liverpool to collect for all of them and divide the income between them; the proposal was unanimously rejected to the detriment of all. One change in the manner of fund-raising in recent years has been the virtual disappearance of Jewish charitable dances and dinners. The cost of *kasher* catering has meant that most of the profit made at the few functions which are held comes from the advertisements in the accompanying brochures. The influence of the more religious elements which eschew mixed dancing does not appear to be a major factor in Liverpool.

The original constitution of the Representative Council specifically excluded fund-raising from its activities and relied solely on an affiliation fee from constituent bodies together with a voluntary levy on synagogue members. Because this levy, like those for the Board of Deputies and the Chief Rabbinate Fund, is separately itemized in their accounts, some members choose not to pay it. Additional resources are necessary to fulfil all the responsibilities which the Council has accepted in recent years, including the organization of constant security in synagogues and other Jewish buildings — which requires the use of sophisticated and expensive technology. The salary of the *shali'ah* had been previously paid by the Jewish Agency with the local community being responsible for his or her expenses, but that arrangement has ceased. However, the presence of a regular annual intake of Israeli law students at the University of Liverpool has enabled the last two *sheli'hot* to be appointed from amongst their

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wives. This removes the need to find accommodation for them. Half the cost of the community development worker is paid by Jewish Continuity¹⁹ and the other half by the Jewish community. Financial support is required for the Resource Centre and other minor projects. The Council was taking on responsibilities without secure funding. Some generous donors helped specific projects but the overall position was unsatisfactory. The first fund-raising enterprise was the production in 1986 of an annual year book which provided substantial revenue from advertisements. Part of the profit of the Jewish bookshop, run under the auspices of the Representative Council, is given to educational projects of the Council, while the remainder is given to other Jewish educational and religious projects. It was only in 1995 that the Council achieved charitable status,²⁰ allowing it to benefit from tax concessions. The Council also collects money from the Orthodox synagogues for the community's share towards the salary of the regional students' chaplain.

A proposal to raise money from the production of a communal newspaper, which would be distributed free to the whole community, was rejected by the Representative Council. Such a newspaper could have been a means of providing general information and communication for Liverpool Jews. The cost to the organizations for advertising in the publication would have constituted a saving in both postage and secretarial expenses and there could have been an income from commercial advertising. Small appeals, usually made by post, come from a variety of local and national organizations while women's associations hold coffee mornings, 'good as new' sales and other fund-raising functions.

The Future

The progressive decline in the size of Liverpool Jewry, with an increasing proportion of the elderly on fixed incomes, is a situation characteristic of most Jewish communities in Britain. In Liverpool this has been apparent from the time of the first demographic study and projection of these figures, provided the trend continues, leads to an estimated size of under 1,800 Jews by the year 2010. This is based on the prediction that in the next 15 years there will be more than 1,000 deaths, not more than 350 births, and a continuing emigration of both the younger generation and those who have retired. The Representative Council has organized three symposia since 1977 at which financial reports and future projections have been presented to the officers of the synagogues and institutions, but their response to forward planning has been less than enthusiastic. With this in mind, in 1990 the late Dr Myer Goldman, then president of the Representative Council, suggested the formation of a community fund. The only tangible outcome of this was

the commissioning in 1995 of an independent report on the four major institutions. That report is now being considered by the relevant bodies.

Clearly communal expenditure will have to be reduced and the decreasing income optimized. Both educational and welfare services must be maintained at the highest standards while proposals for capital developments must be evaluated most carefully. The Representative Council could consider establishing a central community fund akin to the funds which are collected by community federations in the United States.²¹ Apart from financial advantages, such a federation could lead to a greater degree of co-operation between various local Jewish bodies. There is a plethora of communal kitchens and the consolidation of present resources is long overdue. The kitchens of the Welfare Council, the Stapely Home, and the Youth and Community Centre have all been refurbished within the last few years, with the help of public funds. There is also a kitchen in the King David schools. It should have been possible to establish a single centre for all such communal catering. The future of the community, as always, will largely depend on Jewish education. A single body responsible for Jewish education in the day schools, MATT, and the Yeshiva would rationalize the employment and deployment of qualified teachers in all these institutions.

Any change usually has disadvantages and, in the case of a central communal fund, these are:

- i. The underlying fear that the total amount collected under a federated system might be smaller than the sum at present collected separately — but the experience in America, and elsewhere, has shown that this fear is not justified.
- ii. Problems over the distribution of funds — but the allocation could be decided by the benefiting organizations, an independent committee elected by donors to the fund, or a combination of both.
- iii. Those people who have their favourite charities — but they could be allowed to assign all or part of their donation to particular organizations.
- iv. Such a fund would place excessive power in the hands of a few people — but the latter could be monitored by a committee specifically appointed to be accountable to them at an annual meeting of all donors or their elected representatives.

In this proposal, fund-raising for Israel has been excluded. This matter is becoming increasingly important and has already been debated in America.²² There is the growing belief that as Israel's economy continues to grow, its dependence on funding from the Diaspora is decreasing. The withdrawal by the Jewish Agency of financial assistance for *shelihim* and Israeli teachers in the Jewish day schools has placed an added burden on local communities. Jewish Continuity is considering linking with the Joint Israel Appeal to sponsor such projects but that would mean that the

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decisions would be made centrally in London, rather than peripherally where there is a better appreciation of local needs. In America there is already a change in emphasis in the distribution of funds with a greater proportion going to local causes. With a finite amount of money available in the community, the synagogues cannot be omitted from future planning. Any savings can only benefit the congregation in particular and the community in general. The superfluity of congregations and the cost of maintenance and staffing has already been mentioned.

This paper has attempted to portray the present situation of a provincial Jewish community and it has argued for the introduction of communal funding. Liverpool, with its impressive façade of communal organizations, has some exceptional difficulties. It must ensure that the infrastructure is secure. Time is not on its side and in this context the words of Isaiah are apt: 'I asked: "Lord, how Long?" And He answered "Until the cities fall in ruins and are deserted, until houses are left without occupants"'.²³ Must Liverpool Jewry wait until then?

NOTES

¹ J. Willme, *Sepherah Shelosh. Three letters, sent to some dispersed, but well-advised Jews, now resident at Liverpool* (London, 1756). (These are deposited in the Mocatta Library, University College London.) In July 1996 a document came to light confirming that there was a Jewish community in Liverpool in 1742; *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 August 1996.

² Louis Hyman, *The Jews of Ireland* (Jewish Historical Society of England and Israel University Press, London and Jerusalem, 1972), p. 51.

³ B. L. Benas, *Records of the Jews in Liverpool*, Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (Liverpool, 1901), vol. 51, pp. 45-84.

⁴ V. D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England 1850-1950* (London, 1954), p. 171.

⁵ Mansion House Fund, Liverpool Commission, *Memoir of Proceedings* (Liverpool, 1882).

⁶ Mervyn Goodman, *Liverpool Jewry in the Dispersion* (WZO) (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 52-67.

⁷ Mervyn Goodman, Annual Demographic Reports to Merseyside Jewish Representative Council 1965-95.

⁸ Stephen Miller, Marlena Schmool, and Antony Lerman, *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews; some key findings of the JPR Survey*, Institute for Policy Research (London, 1996).

⁹ *Key Statistics to Liverpool Wards 1971/81/91*, Liverpool City Council, Central Policy Unit.

¹⁰ More recently financial strictures have led students to choose institutions of higher learning in their own towns; they can live at home without the worry of paying rent and other outgoings. However in Liverpool, of the 13 Jewish pupils of the King David high school accepting places in universities and colleges in 1995, only one enrolled in Liverpool. This contrasts with 10 non-Jewish pupils, out of 22 at that same school who took up places in Liverpool.

¹¹ Local housing associations are non-profit-making bodies, run by voluntary committees, providing homes for people of limited means. They are supervised by the national Housing Corporation which was established by Act of Parliament in 1964.

¹² The four main Orthodox synagogues, and the Progressive synagogue, have their own burial grounds. The smaller congregations never had their own cemeteries and to cater for their needs, two independent burial societies came into being but their cemeteries have since become full. The communal cemetery is now used by families of non-synagogue members, out-of-town Jews, and those who expressed a wish to be buried there as it is nearer than some of the synagogue cemeteries to the centre of the community.

¹³ Jonathan Sacks, *Community of Faith* (London, 1995).

¹⁴ Nicholas Kokosalakis, *Ethnic Identity and Religion: Tradition and Change in Liverpool Jewry* (University Press of America, Washington, 1982).

¹⁵ The Project SEED Europe is a network which provides Jewish adult education on a one-to-one basis.

¹⁶ Albert M. Hyamson, *A History of the Jews in England* (London, 1928), p. 383.

¹⁷ R. Morris and M. Freund, *Trends and Issues in Jewish Social Welfare Services in the United States, 1899-1958* (Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1966), p. 147.

¹⁸ A person who pays income tax can enter into a deed of covenant with a charitable organization, recognized by the Charity Commissioners. This must now be for a period of four years; previously it was seven years. The charity can reclaim from the Inland Revenue, the tax that the donor would have paid. For example, a person who pays 25 per cent income tax and donates £75 a year would enable the charity to reclaim £25 back from the Inland Revenue.

¹⁹ Jewish Continuity was conceived by Chief Rabbi Sacks (*From Jewish Continuity to Jewish Continuity. Studies in Renewal* 5 (London, 1993). It 'disburses funds to finance projects which enliven and enrich Jewish life and which recover Jews at the very margin of the community'.

²⁰ Philip Bernstein, *To Dwell in Unity* (Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1983).

²¹ Daniel J. Elazar, *Community & Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry* (Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1995).

²² Seymour M. Lipset and Earl Raab, *Jews and the New American Scene* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1995), pp. 129-37.

²³ Isaiah, 6, v.5.