

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Judith Freedman

JUDITH Freedman, who died in London on 20 December 2009, was for fifty years associated with the production of the *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, which her husband Professor Maurice Freedman had helped establish half a century earlier and which served and serves as the vehicle for the dissemination of high-quality research into problems of social formation, ethnic identity and demography amongst Jews both of the diaspora and of Israel.

Dr Freedman was herself a scholar of international repute. Born into the large and well-connected Djamour family in Egypt on 22 September 1921, she was educated at the University of Cairo and at the London School of Economics, where she completed her doctoral research. This investigation, focussing on issues of kinship and matrimony within the Malay community of Singapore, resulted in two influential monographs, *Malay Kinship & Marriage in Singapore* and *The Muslim Matrimonial Court in Singapore*.

Her professional interest in the social anthropology of south-east Asia had brought her into contact with a fellow researcher in this field, Maurice Freedman, late of the Royal Artillery. The couple were married in London in 1946. She collaborated with Sir Raymond Firth (her doctoral supervisor, Professor of anthropology at LSE and one of the founders of modern social anthropology) in his researches into issues of family and kinship in a south London borough. Maurice, meanwhile, had returned to LSE as a lecturer, succeeding Firth as Professor of anthropology there in 1965. Five years later Maurice moved to Oxford, where, on the retirement of Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard, he had been elected to its prestigious chair of social anthropology, and to an All Souls fellowship. Ever strong in her prejudices, Judith insisted on remaining in London: though she had numerous Oxford friends, she could not abide its donnish society and the high-table politics it spawned.

Judith and Maurice did however share a passion for interdisciplinary studies. They were both deeply committed to their Jewish identities, and preoccupied with problems of Jewish survival and development in the post-Holocaust world. Encouraged by LSE's new director, the economist Sir Sydney Caine (whom the Freedmans had known at the

University of Malaya, where Caine had been vice-chancellor), Maurice and LSE's renowned Professor of sociology, Morris Ginsberg, reacted positively to an invitation from Dr. Aaron Steinberg, head of cultural department of the World Jewish Congress, to establish an interdisciplinary academic journal devoted to the study of Jewish social relations. So was born (1959) the *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, with which Judith Freedman's name and reputation were pivotally connected first as assistant editor and later, following Maurice Freedman's sudden and unexpected death in 1975 at the comparatively young age of 54, as managing editor and secretary.

That the *Journal* survived both the heartbreak of Maurice's early death and the withdrawal of WJC funding five years later is due entirely to Judith Freedman's efforts. But for this single-minded (some would say obstinate) devotion she paid a heavy price. Her own academic career — which had promised much — came to a halt.

It is easy to overlook now how important the *JJS* was in providing a vehicle for the publication and dissemination of research of the highest quality touching both upon British Jewry and upon the larger Jewish world. Judith gave the most generous of interpretations to the meaning of 'sociology'. In the pages of the *Journal* are to be found essays and book reviews covering every conceivable aspect of Jewish history and of Jewish social affairs, the peer-reviewed material of interest not merely to sociologists and social scientists but to historians, philosophers and students alike of Judaism and of comparative religion. The regular 'Chronicle' section, which Judith herself composed, provided the distilled essence of relevant published research findings worldwide.

To the (unpaid) editorship of the *Journal* Judith brought the most rigorous academic standards. To its publication she devoted all her considerable energies, even when grave illness would have led a less single-minded editor to relinquish the role. She produced each issue of the *Journal* almost single-handedly, insisting — completely undaunted by the advent of the digital age — on the submission by post of two typescript copies of manuscripts that were to be considered for publication. But her standards of editorship and production were impeccable and her yardsticks of academic rigour were beyond question. She also insisted on what would now be termed 'plain English'. She was known to rewrite articles completely where she felt that the quality of English was not sufficiently robust, a conviction she carried into everyday life, sometimes refusing to settle bills until they were rewritten so as to be — in her view — intelligible.

Judith was buried on 23 December 2009 near to her husband at the Golders Green cemetery of the West London Synagogue of British Jews. There were no children of the marriage.

Geoffrey Alderman

IN MEMORIAM

His Honour Judge Israel Finestein

THE death has occurred of His Honour Judge Israel Finestein, QC, who as well as being an avid supporter of the *Jewish Journal of Sociology* was a frequent contributor to its Book Reviews section.

Israel Finestein combined three highly successful careers, as a lawyer of distinction, a historian of the Jews in Britain and a communal leader. As one of British Jewry's elder statesmen he was centrally involved in many of its communal institutions, his presidency of the Board of Deputies of British Jews proving a fitting climax to a life of service to the needs of others.

Israel Finestein — Shmuel as he was affectionately known — was a Yorkshireman, born into a large, orthodox Jewish family in the Sculcoates district of Kingston-upon-Hull on 29 April 1921. His father was a tailor, who had emigrated from Chervyen (near Minsk) sixteen years earlier. Finestein progressed from the local grammar school to Trinity College Cambridge, graduating with a double first in history in 1943. The then Master of Trinity was the celebrated historian G. M. Trevelyan, and both he and Finestein's tutor, George Kitson Clark, urged him to undertake postgraduate research. But he turned instead to the legal profession as a career. In 1946 he entered the chambers of Quentin Hogg (later Lord Hailsham) at Lincoln's Inn and was called to the Bar in 1953, becoming in turn a Queen's Counsel, a Crown Court judge and a Deputy High Court judge in the family division. He also served as chair of the Mental Health Review Tribunal.

But history remained his first love. A member and twice president of the Jewish Historical Society of England, Finestein maintained the tradition of scholarly research into the history of the Jews in England carried out by gifted amateurs. Specialising in the Victorian period his early work threw new light on the legal framework within which the campaign for Jewish emancipation had been conducted, but in a series of learned articles and books his scholarship ranged widely over the sweep of Anglo-Jewish history in the 19th and 20th centuries.

A commanding speaker and a natural chairman, Finestein was drawn inevitably into the work of a wide range of Jewish voluntary

HIS HONOUR JUDGE ISRAEL FINESTEIN

bodies both in the UK and worldwide. Chief amongst these was the Hillel Foundation, which he was a founder, and the Council of Christians & Jews, on whose executive he served. But as his legal career drew to a formal close he found himself drawn into the fractious world of intra-communal politics within Anglo-Jewry.

Finestein believed, deeply, in the centrality and continuing relevance of the great institutions of Victorian Anglo-Jewry: the Chief Rabbinate, the United Synagogue and the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He abhorred schism. During the “Jacob’s Affair”, in the early 1960s, he had worked hard behind the scenes in an attempt to heal the multiple rifts that this *cause célèbre* had triggered. In 1991, already a vice-president of the Deputies, he agreed to stand for the presidency against his fellow vice-president, the former Labour MP Eric Moonman. The United Synagogue regarded it as vital that the presidency be retained by one of its senior members. Following his victory Finestein used his three-year tenure of the presidency to institute long-overdue reforms of its organisation and constitution while underpinning – through the force of his own personality — its public status.

Judge Finestein was the recipient of many communal honours, including an honorary doctorate of laws conferred on him by the University of Hull. His wife of more than half a century, Marion (née Oster) predeceased him. There were no children of the marriage. He died on 12 October 2009 and was buried at the Bushey cemetery of the United Synagogue.

Geoffrey Alderman

SMALLER JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA

Suzanne D. Rutland and Sol Encel

INTRODUCTION

DEBRA Renée Kaufman, in a review of Moses Rischin and John Livingston's *Jews of the American West*, commented that it was important to bring the margins into the mainstream:¹

... as a feminist scholar, I know a great deal about marginalisation and being on the periphery. I also know the joy of helping to bring the margins into the mainstream.

She added that the religious and ethnic Jewish experience in America 'varied by region and historic moment', and gave as an example the fact that there were almost no Eastern European Jewish migrants in the West.²

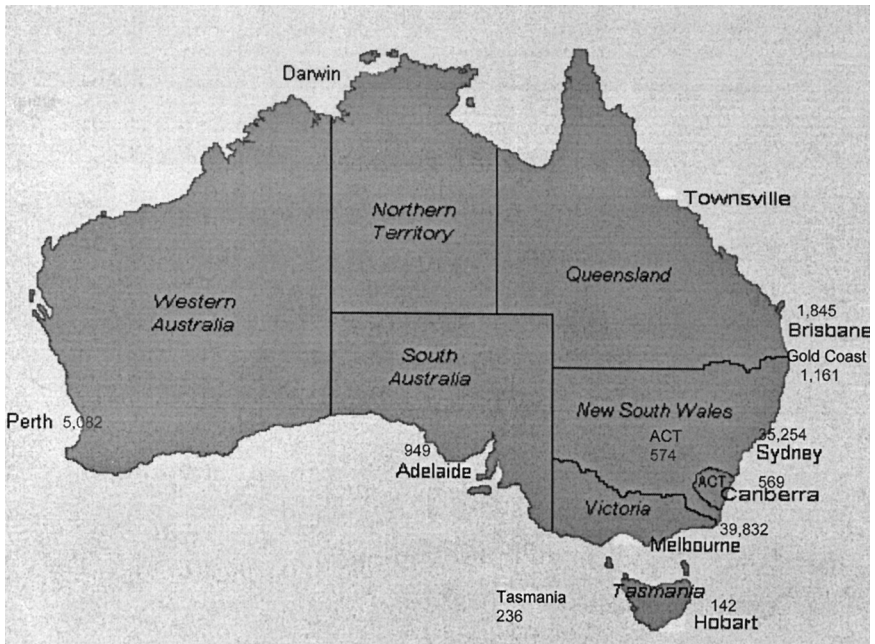
This article aims to bring the focus of the more marginal Australian Jewish communities into the centre. It will provide a brief historical overview and then examine the major contemporary issues and problems confronting the smaller Jewish communities of Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), which are usually overshadowed by the dominant Jewish communities of Victoria and New South Wales.

Fortunately, Australia has reliable (if under-enumerated) data on its Jewish communities. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducts a population census every five years and the responses to all questions are tabulated without sampling. A standard question at the census, unchanged since the federation of Australia in 1901, requires respondents to state their religious affiliation. The definition of 'Jewish' relies on self-identification, consistent with the approach used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other central statistical agencies throughout the world. However, some Jews may consistently decide for a number of reasons not to disclose their religious denomination: it is not compulsory to answer this question. There may be the fear of antisemitism, distrust of government agencies, or reluctance to divulge personal details. Moreover, those who regard themselves as

Jewish but who are not observant may not wish to have their identity linked only with religion. An estimate of 20 to 25 per cent has been accepted as a constant under-enumeration factor by a number of Australian demographers. In 2001 and again in 2006, very reliable statistics for Sydney were gathered from educational bodies and they confirm a census under-enumeration of around 20 per cent. Therefore, whilst the census gives a total of 86,000 Jews in Australia, the likely total based on 20 per cent of under-enumeration is closer to 105,000.³

Most Australian Jews live in Melbourne and Sydney — 46 and 41 per cent respectively. These two cities represent 18 and 21 per cent of the overall population. The rest of Australia (including the smaller capital cities, regional, and rural communities) accounts for 61 per cent of the total Australian population but only for 13 per cent of Australian Jews. More than half of these are recent immigrants from South Africa living in the isolated city of Perth in Western Australia, 3000 kilometres from Sydney and Melbourne. The spread of this population is shown in the table and map below, which are based on actual census figures that have not been readjusted for under-enumeration.⁴

CENSUS 2006 Religious Affiliation: Judaism



Map showing location and Jewish Communities, Census 2006

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Table I.
Census 2006

Judaism	Males	Females	Total	Total Population Counted
Adelaide	468	481	949	1,105,840
Brisbane	940	905	1,845	1,763,131
Canberra	289	280	569	323,057
Gold Coast (Local Gov Area)	578	583	1,161	472,280
Hobart	67	75	142	200,525
Melbourne	19,160	20,672	39,832	3,592,767
Sydney	16,960	18,294	35,254	4,119,191
Perth	2,497	2,585	5,082	1,445,976
Tasmania	113	123	236	476,480
ACT	294	280	574	324,033

A series of focus-group discussions was held in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Canberra, Adelaide, and Perth from November 2005 to November 2007. These discussions were part of a larger project on the political sociology of Australian Jewry, through a Linkage Grant supported by the Australian Research Council and a number of Jewish communal bodies. Each focus group included stakeholders from the major Jewish communal organizations, encompassing the main leadership, women's groups, and the youth groups. The major issues canvassed included education, succession, assistance from the larger Jewish communities, communal unity (especially in relation to cooperation between the Orthodox and Reform communities), anti-semitism, and anti-Israel manifestations. The question of communal leadership received particular attention in Queensland because of the complications arising from two distinct communities in Brisbane and the Gold Coast. In Western Australia, on the other hand, there is a strong, well-established structure of communal organizations, reinforced by immigration from South Africa. These discussions reflect the importance of increased support needed by the smaller communities from their larger counterparts in Victoria and New South Wales.

Commenting about regional settlement, Deborah Dash Moore has noted the impact of chain migration in the United States: it produced concentrations of immigrants from specific sections of Europe — such as the Ukraine in Philadelphia or Bavaria in Cleveland. In a complex sentence, she stressed:⁵

The mix of peoples, including subsequent migrations from different areas than the initial Jewish population, and forces of urban geography in turn produced aspects of Jewish life that exerted an influence on Jews growing up in the city.

She also pointed out a 'predictive power of where a person chooses to live in terms of socio-economic status and social psychology, even generations removed from immigration'.⁶ Another factor in the United States is that Jewish settlement in the West and other parts was largely due to internal migration from the major centres on the East coast.

The effect of immigration has also profoundly influenced the character of Australian Jewry since 1945 but the effects have varied considerably from one centre to another. Although the Jewish communities of Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) vary greatly, their recent history reflects the dominant role of immigration. Thus, South African migration to Perth has been a major factor in recent developments there. In contrast, the development of the Gold Coast in Queensland is mainly the result of internal migration, mostly from Melbourne.

It is also important to consider the location, including proximity to the two dominant communities of Melbourne and Sydney. It is worth pointing out that L. S. Weissbach notes in her study of Jewish life in small-town America that 'geography is a vital factor in determining the way history unfolds'.⁷ Through the qualitative data gathered during the study we hope to shed more light on commonalities and differences in the smaller communities, the impact of place, and the challenges of survival.

THE QUEENSLAND JEWISH COMMUNITIES

The growth of Queensland Jewry has been slow and patchy. A number of Jewish families settled in Brisbane after the colony of Queensland separated from New South Wales in 1859. The Brisbane Hebrew Congregation was established in 1865, under the leadership of Jonas M. Myers, who proved to be the backbone of the community for 43 years. It took time, however, for a synagogue to be built, and it was only in 1886 that the present synagogue in Margaret Street was built. It is still standing today and caters for the main Orthodox community in Brisbane. In the early 1900s some eastern European Jews (who escaped from Tsarist Russia via China) settled in Brisbane and established the South Brisbane Hebrew Community, which has remained a very small group. A few German Jewish refugees found their way to Brisbane and after the Second World War, some Holocaust survivors settled in the area with the assistance of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society. In 1981 the Brisbane Progressive Jewish Congregation was incorporated and in 1990 Sinai College was established as a primary Jewish day school in Brisbane in the grounds of the Jewish Communal Centre in Burbank. It caters for both Jewish and non-Jewish students up to Year 7 (ages 5 to 12).⁸

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Since 1980, migration to Queensland has been largely ‘internal’ arrivals from other Jewish communities, particularly from Melbourne. The 2006 census recorded a population in Brisbane of 1,843, which gives an adjusted figure (taking into account the under-enumeration) of between 2,200 and 2,500. Over the last decade the Brisbane Jewry has been growing from 1,553 in 1996 to 1,633 in 2001 and to 1,843 in 2006. The demographic history of the other Queensland community, in the Gold Coast local government area, is strikingly different. Until the 1970s, the Jewish presence on the Gold Coast was largely transient, made up of temporary visitors from the southern States, especially Victoria. Since then, it has grown steadily, numbering 963 in 1996, 1,080 in 2001 and 1,176 permanent residents at the 2006 census (giving an adjusted figure of approximately 1,400).⁹ Unlike Perth, where immigration has been dominated by households with young children, the Gold Coast community is (on average) older than Australian Jewry as a whole. Relations between the Jews in Brisbane and the residents of the Gold Coast are complex, as shown by the focus-group discussions recorded in this article.

THE BRISBANE FOCUS GROUP

The most important issue identified by this group was described as ‘involvement’, rendered particularly difficult by the small size of the community. ‘The work of AUJS [the Australasian Union of Jewish Students], for example, suffered from the fact that it was difficult to recruit Jewish students’.¹⁰ The AUJS representative said that his university age peers, who should have been the backbone of Jewish activities, were leaving Brisbane for Sydney and Melbourne. Another participant described the Brisbane community as ‘friendly’, but comfortable with being secular: ‘To go to synagogue regularly is seen as a bit weird’. The community was also seen as lacking in *Yiddishkeit*, and the speaker declared: ‘if my grandchildren weren’t living in Brisbane, I would leave’.¹¹

Susan Bures, the editor of the *Australian Jewish News*, queried in an article written in the late 1980s whether we should ‘say *Kaddish* for Brisbane Jewry’. This was deeply resented at the time, and several participants pointed out that although Brisbane had a comparatively large proportion of older people, it also had a large number of teenage children who would be served by Sinai College (the local Jewish school). One speaker commented that the number of children aged between five and 16 was the highest that anyone could remember. (There were estimates numbering 450.) The problem was that there was a gap between generations: no individuals in the 25–45 age group were participating in the focus group. However, the Zionist youth movements (particularly Betar) were strong and their

members who had attended leadership programmes in Israel would provide the base for the community leaders.

The president of the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) struck a hopeful note when she described the establishment of the Keshet group of Friends of WIZO:¹²

I find it fascinating that Keshet has non-Jewish members who then decided to join WIZO and start their own groups. They were attracted by the community spirit. I don't see Brisbane as a hopeless Jewish community — it's possible for us to work together.

It is worth noting that Joseph Saragosi, a local millionaire philanthropist, was a major source of support for Sinai College. He died a few weeks before the focus-group discussion took place, but his son (Lewis) has remained on the board of the school and he participated in the focus group. At the end of the session, the group recited *Kaddish* (memorial prayer) for the late Mr Saragosi.

Community Organization

The existence of twin communities has brought about a divided organizational structure and a degree of friction. Since 1998, Brisbane and the Gold Coast have had three representative bodies: the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies, which acts as an umbrella organization for the two Jewish Community Councils (JCC) in Brisbane and the Gold Coast. One participant explained the situation as follows:¹³

Approximately seven years ago, when the Board of Deputies was one organization covering both Brisbane and the Gold Coast, I felt that it did represent the community competently and capably. But since then, the Board of Deputies has shared that responsibility with the Jewish Community Council. The Board still represents us on a local through to national government level, which I feel is still working and functioning very effectively, for example on issues regarding security and antisemitism. But as far as the JCC goes, the relationship between the two has ceased to exist. The Board still meets with the heads of the JCC, but the mechanism for getting information has ceased. So I don't feel that the JCC is being effective in representing the two communities.

A member of the Board of Deputies commented further on the consequences of the split:¹⁴

Under the previous Board of Deputies structure, there was an opportunity for every president to hear about the issues other organizations were facing, and to be able to communicate with each other. Tonight is one of the first nights in a long time that the presidents and representatives of the various organizations are talking and bouncing around ideas.

Another participant recalled that multi-level meetings were held regularly and attracted many delegates. However, delegates from the Gold

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Coast complained that the meetings were always held in Brisbane, and involved too much travel, so it was decided to have separate meetings of the Community Councils and to convert the Board into an umbrella structure, which encompassed the two Councils. Unfortunately, the structure did not work, and the distance between the Gold Coast and Brisbane seemed to be unbridgeable. As an illustration, one participant mentioned that the Jewish National Fund was about to launch a major campaign on the Gold Coast, but only three individuals from Brisbane would be attending. A further comment contrasted the situation with Melbourne and Sydney: 'It's a mind-set issue. In Melbourne and Sydney people wouldn't think it was of any consequence to drive across town for fifty minutes to get to a meeting. That type of commuting is part of their life'.¹⁵

Some participants put forward a more radical approach. They argued that the two communities had become quite separate and there was no real demand for amalgamation. The answer might be to recognise the differences and create a federation of Queensland Jewish communities.

Relations with interstate Jewish communities

Despite some complaints about isolation, there was general agreement that there was much useful contact with the larger communities and with the national communal bodies such as the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) and AUJS. This was partly as a result of personal links, but also owing to positive steps such as teleconferences. 'What it really comes down to is the fact that we are Boundary Riders — not in the big house in the middle, but out chasing the flock'.¹⁶

On the other hand, a delegate from the Board of Deputies argued that more could be done to help: professional staff from Melbourne and Sydney could come to Brisbane for a few days at a time and give the benefit of their expertise. A similar point was made by other speakers, who complained that overseas emissaries did not always come to Queensland, allegedly because of shortage of funds.

Anti-Jewish and anti-Israel manifestations

The group generally agreed that this was not a problem in Queensland. 'Redneck' elements (that is, whites from a lower socio-economic status), who used to make crank calls, had apparently transferred their activities to the Muslim population. The League of Rights, a right-wing antisemitic organization (established after the Second World War) used to be strong in Queensland, but was now moribund. The Muslim community itself had not exhibited the kind of radicalism found in the southern cities, and had responded positively to inter-

faith initiatives: Christians, Jews, and Muslims came to the local Muslim school for a meeting chaired by well-known journalist, Geraldine Doogue, presenter for ABC Radio National. One local peculiarity was the presence of large numbers of Muslim tourists on the Gold Coast during the winter: they were said to be escaping from the extreme heat in Arabia. This was welcomed by the tourist industry and had not created any significant problems.

THE GOLD COAST FOCUS GROUP

The major problem identified by the Gold Coast participants was the same as in Brisbane: 'involvement'. This was spelt out in more detail by one of the rabbis, who deplored the level of apathy in the community and its origin in the lack of basic Jewish education: 'When a person is educated and appreciates what it's all about, then you have an assurance of continuity'.¹⁷ Another rabbi observed that a lack of involvement was evident despite the fact that there were three synagogues — Modern Orthodox, Chabad, and Progressive. 'Every so often I run into someone and by chance discover that they're Jewish'.¹⁸ He also noted that a significant number of Israelis were living in the area, but that they chose not to socialise with the local Jewish community.

The 'disappearing Israelis' were also commented on by another participant:¹⁹

The only one who can bring them out is the Chabad rabbi. He seems to play the Pied Piper with them. He doesn't charge them for anything and provides them with free food. In a strange way they don't want to join anything but they do want to participate. He was able to get a hundred to attend the first night Seder at Passover.

The problems of Jewish education were also stressed by another participant, who spoke of the effect of small numbers: that was why the day-school, King Solomon College, could provide only primary education.

An interesting comment on the issue of 'involvement' was made by a speaker, who complained that a high degree of communal activity could have detrimental effects on kinship relations:²⁰

As a result of the time we have had to spend in all those community organizations, it has turned our children off having any Jewish involvement. Our children, who now live in Sydney, don't put their hands up to belong to any Jewish organizations.

Community Organization

A range of views (as in Brisbane) was expressed about the structure of the Board of Deputies and the Community Councils. One particularly

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caustic reaction was to describe the situation as being like ‘Chelm’ (the mythical Jewish *shtetl* populated by idiots). The speaker went on to say that he had never in his life seen such a silly structure:²¹

The Board of Deputies is a myth. It is the roof body of the two Councils, which means that technically it consists of only three people. It doesn’t do anything for the community that I know of, but the Community Councils aren’t doing much either. It is essential for us to have a good working Board of Deputies, which can be a full member of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and act as a representative body. Our Board of Deputies cannot speak with a clear voice for the Jewish community. It’s a paper tiger.

Another speaker traced the history of relations between the Brisbane and Gold Coast communities:²²

The Gold Coast was a little brother to Brisbane for a long time, but it started to grow and assume its own identity... We started off very informally. There were nine or ten organizations, which used to meet every couple of months, particularly to arrange a communal diary so we didn’t clash with each other’s functions. That worked for quite some time and then people wanted to formalise the arrangement... I agree that having two separate Community Councils is quite useless. It’s not achieving anything. When we have a meeting the same people come and the same people don’t come.

A speaker who grew up on the Gold Coast recalled that there had been close contacts in her young days between members of youth organizations in the two centres, but that it was now ‘extremely difficult to develop such joint activities’.

There was considerable discussion about the problem of travel between Brisbane and the Gold Coast, a problem believed by nearly all to be merely psychological.²³

Brisbane and the Gold Coast are more distant from each other than we are from New York... I know people who work in Brisbane and live on the Coast, and vice versa, and they travel every day. There’s a psychological barrier which stops people from travelling to Jewish events, but they will travel for work and to attend sporting events.

A representative from the Jewish National Fund (JNF) noted that the organization used teleconferences to maintain contact for people who could not come to meetings.

Anti-Jewish Manifestations

There was virtually unanimous agreement that the community had been free of anti-Jewish or anti-Israel activity. One participant (who was an immigrant from France) observed that, in comparison with

his native land, antisemitism was practically non-existent. He had never experienced any hostile remarks when he wore his kippah (skullcap) in public. Other speakers noted the generally positive response to the public celebration of Hanukah. On the other hand, one participant was concerned about the influx of Muslim tourists from the Middle East during the holiday season. Another noted the persistence of stereotypes, expressed in such phrases as 'playing on the Jewish piano' (cash register).²⁴

There was great concern about anti-Israel statements in the mass media, but that had no particular local connotation. There was stress on the positive aspects. The former Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie, had taken part in a trade delegation organized by the local branch of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce. Griffith University in Queensland had established a multi-faith centre to which the Jewish community made substantial contributions. An annual multi-faith service is held on Australia Day, in which the Jewish community plays a major part: Sheikh Taj al-Hilaly, the previous, controversial Mufti of Australia from the Lakemba mosque in Sydney (known for making anti-Jewish and anti-Israel statements) attended the last meeting but was not invited to speak.

THE PERTH JEWISH COMMUNITY

Jews have been present in Western Australia since the 1840s. The first Jew to be elected to an Australian parliament was Lionel Samson, who was chosen to represent Fremantle in 1849, several years before Baron Lionel de Rothschild took his seat in the United Kingdom parliament in 1858. However, Perth Jewry began to develop only in the 1890s with the discovery of gold in the Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie areas. The Perth Hebrew Congregation (PHC) then grew in numbers, with its members migrating mainly from eastern Europe; some came from Safed in Palestine, mainly through chain migration, which continued until after the First World War, with a tight, strongly Zionist community emerging. After 1945, very few Holocaust survivors settled in Perth: they had been encouraged by the local leadership to move on to Melbourne and Sydney for fear that Perth Jewry might not afford to support them. The Liberal movement developed in the 1950s, with Temple David established in 1952 in the Mount Lawley area. In 1974 the Perth Hebrew Congregation also moved to Mount Lawley, where Carmel School had already been established in 1958: it had developed gradually from a kindergarten to a full primary and then high school. Perth Jewry also built the Maurice Zeffert Old Age Home in Mount Lawley, so that all the key communal institutions were clustered.²⁵

The fact that by the 1960s Perth had developed a strong communal structure, was closer to South Africa, and was less expensive than the

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larger centres made it an attractive place for Jewish migrants from South Africa; 12 per cent of them settled in Perth and the impact of that migration has been spectacular. The demographic history of Western Australian Jewry has been studied in detail by Dr O. B. Tofler (himself an immigrant from Sydney). He has shown that between 1940 and 1970, the Jewish population of Perth and Fremantle remained virtually static around a figure of 3,000. Since 1970 it has increased to approximately 7,000, helped by a baby boom in the 1980s. These numbers differ considerably from census results. The census of 2006 registered a Jewish population in Western Australia of 5,082. We know that it is widely accepted that there has been under-enumeration by a ratio of at least 20 per cent. Dr Tofler's results, based on extensive community surveys, are more reliable.²⁶ (Some community leaders believe that the actual figure is closer to 8,000, which may indicate an element of wishful thinking.)

According to Dr Tofler's research, one-third of the present Jewish population in Perth originated from South Africa, adding a strong 'Litvak' (Lithuanian) element to the established community, whose forebears came from the United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, and Palestine. South African immigration has also been a strong stimulus to Jewish day school education, especially through Carmel School; pupils from South African households have predominated in that school.²⁷

THE PERTH FOCUS GROUP

The Perth focus-group displayed a range of views across a scale ranging from optimism to pessimism. One of the pessimists pointed to a 'mis-perception' that the community was united and going in the same direction:²⁸

It isn't. There are a number of fragmented organizations, and that fragmentation impacts quite severely on support for the various organizations.

The same speaker maintained, however:²⁹

We have a powerful small dynamo in Perth, but we need to get it co-ordinated. I get very despondent and upset when I see the lamentable financial condition of some of our organizations.

Pessimism about the future revolved around issues similar to those in other communities, such as the danger of assimilation and the age gap between the present generation of community leaders and the younger age groups in their 20s and 30s. As is the case in other small communities, there was concern about the loss of young people who move to the larger centres in the eastern States:³⁰

Keeping the kids in Perth is one of the biggest problems we have . . . They leave here pretty soon after finishing university, which leads to the problem about future leadership.

Pessimism is also fuelled by the small size and the isolation of the community. The ‘tyranny of distance’ was referred to by a number of participants: ‘Perth isn’t on the way to anything — we’re the most isolated Jewish community in the world’.³¹ Another speaker referred to the problem that visiting emissaries were usually fitted in between Sydney and Melbourne:³²

People want to hear a good speaker, but Perth does unfortunately get shoved in between Melbourne and Sydney or at a time when it’s not really convenient.

However, an optimistic view is clearly expressed by Dr Tofler, who noted a slowdown of the trend for couples to leave Western Australia for the eastern States, and who also drew attention to the growth of Jewish activity in the shape of developments such as the increase of *kasher* food outlets, the establishment of a Jewish Community Appeal, and the formation of a Jewish male choir. Dr Tofler’s demographic analysis shows that the immigration of large numbers from South Africa has transformed Perth Jewry — but migration has slowed down since the 1990s and the size of the community has not significantly altered. Only one of the participants in the focus group was a South African immigrant, and he stressed the need for efforts to attract more migrants from South Africa, where the social situation had continued to deteriorate, and many Jews would be seeking to emigrate:³³

We need, as a community, to ensure that they consider Perth as one of their options. About eight years ago, we had a ‘Committee for 10,000 by 2000’, but it seems to have died. I think the South Africans have a lot to offer, and the community should try to make immigration continue.

These statements were echoed by another speaker, who praised Carmel School for its efforts to recruit pupils from South Africa:³⁴

They send envoys and deputations. They’ve shown scripted films of life in Perth, not just confined to the schools. And earlier in the piece it had a dramatic effect in inducing migration from South Africa . . . Other organizations should undertake similar actions.

A particular feature of the focus group was the frequency of references to *Hasbarah* [in Hebrew, literally ‘explanation’ but it refers to efforts to explain Israeli government actions and promote Israel]. ‘I think that the most important issue facing us is *Hasbarah* — explaining ourselves to the wider community’.³⁵ Another speaker stressed that *Hasbarah* was a necessity for all small and large communities around the world.

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‘We have to get people to understand that Jews, and Israel, are not an evil force in the world’.³⁶ *Hasbarah*, stressed another speaker, does have a great effect on our survival and how we are viewed around the world.

Hasbarah was further emphasised by one of the participants who had worked closely with the Australia-Israel Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC), which had supported efforts to establish good relations with Federal and State politicians. On the other hand, ‘grass roots *Hasbara*’ was described as more important in the long term:³⁷

Links to parliamentarians and so on are extremely important. But for the long haul, each and every member of the community should be prepared to stand up and be identified . . . I send greetings to family and friends for *Rosh Hashanah* (the Jewish New Year), but in the last couple of years I’ve started broadcasting them far and wide to all my business associates. Some people thank me, some people ask what’s that, others display their knowledge and reply in an appropriate way, showing that they understand the meaning of *Rosh Hashanah*. We have a couple of hundred people we send greetings to, and if everybody in our community was doing that sort of thing, it would have an enormous impact.

A counterpart to this view was presented by a speaker who criticised the Jewish residents for keeping a low profile, which he described as ‘security negative’:³⁸

We keep a low profile, we try not to be seen. We should stand up and say: ‘We’re Jewish, we’re proud of it, we make a difference to this community’.

A speaker whose son had studied law at the University of Western Australia (UWA) provided a practical example of *Hasbarah*. Referring to the custom of having a Friday night family dinner on the Sabbath, he noted:³⁹

The Law department was having a final year dinner on a Friday night, and he excused himself because he had Shabbat at home [and] the organisers of this Law function changed the date to a Saturday night. After that, we had law students who came to our home on Friday nights. A number of them were Asians, who were enthralled by the experience. This was all because my son wanted his profile as a Jew to be known at the university. He has made lifelong friends among these non-Jews, who were captivated by a Shabbat in a Jewish home.

The activities of the Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) in promoting a positive image were commended by a number of people. Although one of the AUJS representatives deplored the apathy among Jewish students, he also noted the strength of the organization, reflected in the fact that four out of the last five national presidents had come from Perth. One way of overcoming apathy was to try new approaches, like the recent ‘Jew Year’s Eve’ party, organised by a brand-new umbrella organization. The party, held the night before

Rosh Hashanah, attracted 260 people between the ages of 18 to 30 years.

One feature of the Perth focus-group, by contrast with the other communities both large and small, was that education did not figure largely in the discussion. Carmel School is obviously regarded as a success story, and the few references to it were uniformly favourable. A few speakers stressed the importance of Jewish education, but did not discuss it at length, while another speaker was concerned about the crucial importance of finding Jewish educators for the next generation. Relations between the various religious streams also elicited little discussion, with the exception of the representative from the Progressive synagogue, Temple David, who described his personal experience:⁴⁰

My wife was not born Jewish and we got married through Temple David. She's not accepted by the mainstream Jewish community. There are a lot of Jews in Perth, converted through Temple David, who are not accepted by the mainstream Jewish community. Many members of Temple David have partners who were born other than Jewish and have through the Temple gone through a Reform or Progressive conversion. And for those concerned about assimilation, until such time as Jews who are Jews through anything other than an Orthodox conversion are accepted, then we will assimilate.

Anti-Jewish and anti-Israel manifestations

There was general agreement that there had been no significant rise in anti-Jewish or anti-Israel sentiment in recent years, despite incidents such as the daubing of swastikas on the premises of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. At the political level, successive State Premiers and Opposition leaders have expressed their support for Israel.

The main exception was the rise of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish manifestations in the academic world, described by the AUJS representatives:

In 2003 there was a definite increase during the second intifada of antisemitic taunts on campus. People would come up to AUJS stalls, ripping down our posters or placing swastikas on them. With the recent war in Lebanon, we found a large increase of antisemitic acts. People were heckled at UWA for holding meetings to promote peace.⁴¹

Another speaker commented on events at Perth's Murdoch University, where anti-Israel literature was distributed, which condemned Israel as a destructive force.

THE ADELAIDE JEWISH COMMUNITY

By far the most negative focus-group interview was with Jewish residents in Adelaide, although they do not constitute the smallest of

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the communities. The colony of South Australia was founded in 1836 for free settlers (not as a convict settlement) with 11 commissioners; one of them was Jewish: Jacob Montefiore, nephew of Sir Moses Montefiore. In the early 1840s a number of younger sons of influential Sephardi and Ashkenazi families settled in Adelaide and in 1846 for the first time services were held for the high holy days (Jewish New Year and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement). The congregation developed rapidly, was granted land to build a synagogue and in 1851 the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation consecrated its new premises, in a street called Synagogue Place. The building was expanded in 1872 and services were attended there until 1988. The congregation moved to a new community centre in Glenside in 1990. Today, the 1872 synagogue building in the city still stands, but it is used as a nightclub.

In the nineteenth century South Australian Jewry was well entrenched, integrated, and highly respected — as were the country's other Jewish communities. Emancipists Emanuel and Vaiban Solomon established a thriving trading business and there were six Jewish Members in the House of Assembly and one in the Legislative Council. But the community remained very small and there was a high rate of assimilation. Only a few refugees from Nazism and survivors of the Holocaust migrated to Adelaide, unlike the case in Melbourne and Sydney, which received significant numbers.

Egyptian Jews constituted the major wave of immigration to South Australia. They had either voluntarily left after the Suez Crisis of 1956 or had been expelled. Discussing this wave of migration, Racheline Barda commented:⁴²

Where did the Egyptian Jews settle once they landed in Australia? In view of their predominantly urban background, it was obvious they would be attracted to the three capital cities, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Big cities usually offer better work opportunities as well as a stronger community network. Strangely enough, the city that attracted them most, at least initially was the smallest of the three, Adelaide, the preferred place of settlement for nearly half of the pre-1955 arrivals. It was certainly the place where they became the most visible and where they formed the largest single ethnic group within the broader Jewish community. Out of a population of 985 Jews in Adelaide recorded by the 1961 census, they numbered about 400, although the people I interviewed quoted much higher numbers. Whatever the case may be, they had a much more significant impact on the Adelaide community than their compatriots in Melbourne and Sydney.

That population transfer was largely the result of family sponsorship and of chain migration. One early arrival, Max Liberman, established a successful textile factory and energetically sponsored his relatives and friends within three years of his arrival. The minister of the Adelaide

Hebrew Congregation and his wife actively helped to integrate them into the local community.⁴³ The Egyptian migrants enriched the local Jewry. One of them later served as Lord Mayor of Adelaide from 1993 to 1997. As was the case with many Jewish entrepreneurs, Liberman moved from textiles into the construction industry. He was largely responsible for the development of a number of satellite towns around Adelaide, Perth, and Sydney and served as Chairman of the South Australia Housing Trust from 1975 to 1980.⁴⁴

Adelaide Jewry, in spite of its small size, can boast that it has most of the institutions of an established Jewish community. Apart from the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation (which is nominally Orthodox) there has been a Reform Temple, Beit Shalom, since the 1960s. A Jewish day school (Massada College) was established in 1980, and it has catered for children aged from five to 12. Social, sporting, and Zionist organizations operate — including the Maccabi Club, initially built and fostered by the Egyptian Jewish migrants, the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO); and Zionist Youth organizations. The South Australian Jewish Board of Deputies was founded in 1950 but it later followed Melbourne's decision to change its name to the Jewish Community Council of South Australia (JCCSA).

Despite these developments, Adelaide Jewry has failed since 1960 to attract many newcomers from South Africa, Russia, and Israel and it has continued to decline in numbers. A number of South African migrants were attracted to Adelaide in the 1980s, partly as a result of Adelaide Hebrew Congregation's 'Think Adelaide' campaign. Most of them had moved by the mid-1990s to the larger centres. In 1998, Bernard Hyams published *Surviving*: it highlighted the problem of Adelaide Jewry.⁴⁵ Now, as the 2007 focus-group interview showed, the Jewish residents of Adelaide are clearly struggling to survive as a community.

THE ADELAIDE FOCUS GROUP

In 2007, we gathered a representative group of all the main community organizations: the Jewish Community Council of South Australia, the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation [orthodox], Beit Shalom [progressive], JNF, WIZO, UIA, and the two Zionist youth organizations, Habonim and Netzer. All participants presented a picture of an ageing and dwindling community, which had lost the critical mass of its members as a result of either assimilation or migration. Those who left had gone to Victoria or to other Jewish centres in Australia, or to Israel. It is mainly the young who are leaving; a member of the group commented that his daughter went to Israel in 2002 with 11 other high-school graduates; only two of that young group were still

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in Adelaide in 2007. It is now feared that when the older generation become grandparents they will also choose to move away to join their children and grandchildren. One participant stressed that the dwindling community is not a result of assimilation but of the young residents wishing to preserve their Jewish identity by moving to a larger Jewish centre where they are more likely to meet a suitable Jewish partner and maintain a Jewish life-style.⁴⁶ Those remaining in Adelaide have commented that some of the individuals who had previously been involved in communal endeavours had also lost interest and drifted away, adding to the sense of decline.

The dwindling numbers create challenges at every level, such as finding new leaders to replace those who have retired or died, or simply attracting enough people to attend synagogue or community functions. The generation between the ages of 25 to 45 was the 'me' generation, focused on career and building a family with no time to spare for community work. This particularly affected participation in the women's organizations such as WIZO, which was struggling to find younger women willing to be actively involved. One interviewee commented:⁴⁷

But it still boils down to the lack of numbers in our community and as much as we try, if there is a lack of births, a lack of weddings, all of these things. All we seem to do is have the funerals. That is the problem with Adelaide. We need to increase the baby booms, from one to at least two or three. So it is a huge concern.

The leaders of the two Zionist youth organizations in the focus group believed that there was no Jewish future in the area.

However, there are still some institutions which contribute to Adelaide Jewry, especially the school and orthodox synagogue and the Beit Shalom Temple; but there are no funds to maintain their premises properly or to provide adequately for the salaries of rabbis and other professional staff. In his history of the community, Hyams commented on various episodes which highlighted the rivalry between the Orthodox and Progressive congregations in Adelaide in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴⁸ The situation has been further exacerbated because of the major legal problems involving the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation (AHC) after the dismissal of their rabbi. The leaders of the AHC believed that they had been given no support from the larger centres when they had to deal with a very serious problem.⁴⁹ The rabbi remained in Adelaide and in March 2009 is said to have gathered in competition a congregation in his home.

One institution significantly affected by the decline in numbers is Massada College, the Jewish day school. At its prime in the late 1990s, it had an enrolment of more than 100 students: a third of them were not Jewish. By 2007 the numbers further declined to fewer

than 45 students, with concerns expressed that future enrolments would be even smaller. One member also noted that many of the pupils come from homes where there is minimal Jewish observance and the task of the Jewish Studies teacher is, therefore, more onerous.

As mentioned earlier, there is resentment that Adelaide is always bypassed when international speakers or Israeli entertainers are brought to Australia. One person described Adelaide ‘as the city one flies over to get somewhere else in Australia’.⁵⁰ There is a sense that the community is just ‘a poor cousin’, neglected by the larger communities of Melbourne and Sydney. Attempts have been made to remedy the situation: the Jewish Community Council asked for advice from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and a strategic plan was developed. Resources had to be used more effectively. For instance, the school campus and community centre should be put to more use and links with Melbourne Jewry should be strengthened: Melbourne youth leaders should come to Adelaide regularly and direct educational programmes. There are also too many different community organizations, and it is essential to establish more co-operation between the orthodox and the progressive synagogues. In these circumstances of general malaise and soul-searching, more women had assumed key leadership positions.

One tentative solution canvassed was to encourage more immigration to Adelaide: only a few South Africans and Russians have come — not enough to have an impact. Some Israelis have settled in Adelaide and its vicinity, but only a few involve themselves with the community. They have tended to remain aloof from their local co-religionists — preferring to have close relationships with fellow Israelis. Thus, their arrival has failed to strengthen the local community in terms of the Jewish structures of the area.⁵¹

Anti-Jewish and Anti-Israel Manifestations

Members of the focus-group believed that Adelaide Jews were generally respected by the wider Australian society. There seemed to have been fewer antisemitic incidents recently. Long-term Holocaust denier, Dr Fredrick Toben (whose Adelaide Institute continues to operate on the web) propagates antisemitic messages, but the interviewees believed that this had very little impact on the local Jewish community. They noted that the major area of concern was the Australian Friends of Palestine (AFPA) and the pro-Palestinian activities on university campuses. During the 2007 federal election campaign, the AFPA in Adelaide ran a public campaign against the then Liberal Minister for Ageing, Christopher Pyne, elected to federal parliament in 1993, and a former president of the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Israel. The AFPA criticised Pyne for being an ‘uncritical supporter of

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Israel',⁵² but the campaign failed and he was re-elected. The focus-group interviewees expressed concern about the activities of an independent member of the state parliament, Kris Hanna, who visited Israel and Palestine in 2007, supported by the Friends of Palestine. Hanna is an outspoken supporter of the Palestinian cause, writing in his website blog against what he calls the 'separation wall'.⁵³ In contrast, state Labor parliamentarian, Michael Atkinson, supports Israel and spoke positively about Israel at a Jewish National Fund function at the end of 2007.⁵⁴

THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY'S JEWISH COMMUNITY

Canberra is one of the newer communities of Australian Jewry; it developed only after the Second World War. In the nineteenth century, there had been Jews in the area — the Jewish community of Goulburn being the most notable. By the early twentieth century most of them had either become assimilated or moved to Sydney or Melbourne. After federation of the various Australian colonies to create a united nation in 1901, the decision was made to develop a new federal capital, but the building of Canberra began only in the 1920s and the new parliament house opened in 1927. In 1933, there were only four Jews in Canberra, two of whom were the Governor-General, Sir Isaac Isaacs, and his wife, but by the 1947 census there were 26. The first service was held in 1949 and the congregation was inaugurated in 1951, but was slow to develop, meeting in private homes and halls for 20 years. In 1959 the Commonwealth Government gave a leasehold grant of land free of all rents and taxes to Canberra Jewry and the foundation stone was laid by the then Prime Minister, Robert G. Menzies. However, the Canberra National Jewish Memorial Centre was opened only in 1971, this development being made possible with government assistance and with funding from other Jewish communities.

However, one issue had to be resolved before beginning to plan the erection of the building: what would be the rôles of the Orthodox and the Reform branches of Judaism? Eventually, a compromise agreement was reached, whereby there is only one permanent place in the building exclusively dedicated to worship as a consecrated Orthodox synagogue, while Liberal services are held in the auditorium. This plan was approved by the Sydney Beth Din but not by the Melbourne Beth Din, which withdrew its support for the project. Since the opening of the centre, the Orthodox and Liberal congregations have functioned in harmony: there is some overlapping of personnel and there is often a combined *kiddush* after services.⁵⁵ Sylvia Deutsch has described this continuing cooperation as 'a shining example of unbroken communal harmony'.⁵⁶

In 2006 there were more than 600 Jews in the Canberra area, of whom 350 were members of the community — consisting largely of public servants, and of students and staff at the Australian National University. Thus, it is not a wealthy business-based community and it tends to be transient. Moreover, Orthodox Jews experience difficulties in observing a strictly religious life style: there is no local *kasher* meat outlet or *mikvah* for ritual bathing; they have to rely on Sydney or Melbourne. As a result, there are only a handful of households who can maintain the Orthodox traditions, such as keeping the Sabbath strictly. At present Chabad are seeking to build a *mikvah*, but the location is away from the community centre in Canberra and there is concern that this might have a negative impact by splitting the community.

One key factor is the location of the community in the federal heartland of the nation. In 1958 the Israeli Embassy moved from Sydney to Canberra, and its staff over the years have further invigorated the congregation and that has added an extra dimension to Canberra Jewry.⁵⁷ In 1986, the president of Israel (Chaim Herzog) dedicated the David Ben-Gurion memorial gardens, which complement the memorial groves to the Australian Jewish service personnel, honouring the memory of the Australian Jews who died in the two world wars.⁵⁸ The Zionist Federation of Australia decided in the 1990s to provide an office in Canberra; but it has not been able to maintain it. The one policy for which there has been bipartisan support was the right of the State of Israel to exist.

THE FOCUS GROUP OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The focus group of Canberra Jewry raised issues similar to those in the Adelaide group: problems of continuity and assimilation; the low levels of Jewish literacy; the lack of a critical mass in terms of numbers; the need for greater cohesion in the community; and financial challenges. A major concern was that of involving the 'lost generation' of the residents aged between 30 to 50, especially those with young children. One comment was: 'Somehow we are not doing anything they want or they're not telling us what they want'.⁵⁹ Another suggestion was about broadening the leadership base 'because it is the same small group of people who tend to [do] ten jobs each and we can't seem to broaden that'.⁶⁰ Australian Jews also must provide communal security on a voluntary basis and in Canberra they have to rely on a very small group of people to do so. It is a vital necessity: the Canberra Jewish Community Centre was attacked four times and there was attempted arson during the 2006 Lebanon war.

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However, the members of the focus group were not despondent. Most of them were either academics or public servants — some of them in very senior posts. On several occasions during the discussion there were comments on: (a) the intellectual level of the community; (b) the fact that several Canberra Jews had a good knowledge of Jewish traditions and Jewish practice; and (c) they had members who could lead a service and read from the Torah. One participant stated:⁶¹

I suspect that a lot of the reason why we are different, one of the reasons why we are so much more active, when I compare this community say to the Brisbane one where I was brought up, is just I think the intellectual community here. I mean the average member of this community has at least a basic degree and maybe a higher degree. It's just not so in these other communities, and it shows.

Another key factor is the National Canberra Jewish Centre, which is unusual as both the orthodox and progressive congregations use the same facility for their services and members of the two congregations meet afterwards for *kiddush*. This creates a sense of unity and purpose within the community. One member said:⁶²

We provide an enormously wide range of activities and that range of activities has increased in the last year and more so in the last five years. So, in many ways, I am fairly optimistic.

Another member was of the same opinion:⁶³

... at the same time this community, in common parlance, punches well above its weight. We do far more than you would normally expect from a community of this small size.

An added advantage is the presence of the Israeli embassy in Canberra; its staff have joined the congregations. Since Canberra is the national capital, it attracts many visitors (including key Jewish figures) and the local residents therefore do not complain of being bypassed as is the case of Adelaide, Brisbane, and Perth.

As to Jewish education, Canberra was aware that it did not have the funds to provide and maintain a Jewish day-school. Both Adelaide and Brisbane had to struggle to maintain their Jewish schools. One solution was to provide innovative Jewish educational programmes which targeted parents as well as children — such as the one which was run over the Christmas holidays. It was successful, and it was suggested that it could be extended. The need for family education was discussed, as it had been in Adelaide. One of the Sunday *heder* teachers complained that parents seemed to use the classes as ‘a babysitting service’ — dropping off their children and then going shopping.⁶⁴ The group believed that more needed to be done to involve parents in their children’s Jewish education: for example, the tutor would not prepare a boy for his Barmitzvah unless his parents also attended the

child's class. Some participants canvassed the idea of free classes, which would teach basic Judaism — or even a fun course such as 'how to cook Jewish blintzes', which would be offered to parents on a Sunday morning.

Another important issue was about ways of increasing Jewish involvement and attracting new members. One suggestion was that when a person attended a Friday night service for the first time, it was very important to extend an invitation to a Friday night dinner. Such hospitality is usually remembered and it could help to draw new members into the community.

Again and again the isolation of Canberra was stressed: greater support was needed and more speakers should be willing to come from the two major centres of Sydney and Melbourne. Offers of assistance were not always followed through, while the individuals who did come, did so sporadically. One example was the monthly adult education programme (developed by the Melton Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and offered through its Sydney branch) which lasted for three years, had been very positive but after it ended there had been no follow up. Moreover, when speakers were available, they requested very high fees, which the community is unable to pay. Some may find it surprising that not many dedicated Australian Jews or visiting Israelis are willing to volunteer to visit Canberra at no great cost to the small community which is eager to receive them.

Anti-Jewish and Anti-Israel Manifestations

When the discussion turned to the problem of antisemitism in Canberra, it was stressed that the situation in the Middle East affected attitudes to Australian Jews. It was also believed that Israel's image had declined since 1967 and that whilst Israel had once been seen as having the moral high ground, that image had been tarnished after the Six-Day War of 1967 and there has been resentment against Israeli settlements in the occupied territories in the West Bank. One of the participants commented:⁶⁵

I think people make absolutely no distinction between the two, and the old idea of a Jewish identity distinct from a Zionist Israel identity certainly doesn't rub outside. So, whatever happens in Israel happens to Jews here.

Anti-Israel feelings in Canberra were seen to be strong in three key institutions, described by one participant as the 'trinity of ignorance':⁶⁶ these institutions were some of the church leaders; the media, especially the *Canberra Times*; and the Australian National University. That university's attitude was very worrying, both because of the Islamic Centre⁶⁷ and the radicalism of left-wing student bodies such

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as Socialist Alliance. In 2005 when the Australasian Union of Jewish Students wanted to provide a stall for Israel Week, there was a great deal of opposition until they were finally permitted to do so and only if they paid for their own security.⁶⁸ Some members of the focus group suggested that there was a need to speak diplomatically to people of influence in Canberra about the situation in the Middle East.

There was a generally positive outlook in the final discussion about communal structures — in spite of concerns about financial and other problems. Members of the focus group praised the democratic procedures: the meetings were open and everyone had a free voice. One comment was:⁶⁹

It is not easy, but I think we do surprisingly well. We are mainly cohesive. It is not just religious/orthodox or whether we've got a *mikvah*, or what we do with someone who wants a Bar Mitzvah who is perhaps not too Kosher being Jewish — all of those sorts of issues are tackled [in a] very adult [fashion] and are very effective. I think we ought to be very proud . . .

CONCLUSION

Common Themes

Despite the obvious differences between Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia, and the ACT, at least four common themes emerged from the focus — group discussions.

Continuity and Survival

As in all small communities, the participants in the focus groups were concerned about continuity and survival. The ageing of the present population, and the departure of young people to the larger centres of Melbourne and Sydney, were mentioned frequently in the discussions.

Neglect and Isolation

There was a sense of grievance about the fact that the larger communities had failed to provide sufficient support for the smaller, more isolated centres. That resentment was particularly strong in Queensland and Adelaide. In Western Australia, there was more emphasis on the brevity of visits from overseas emissaries, who were said to make a short stop in Perth on their arrival in Australia before proceeding to the eastern States, and a similarly short stop on their way out of the country.

Israeli Migration

There were three main waves of recent immigration: from South Africa, the former Soviet Union, and Israel. The Israelis are most likely to settle outside Melbourne and Sydney, with 16.1 per cent living in the smaller states, including 7.1 per cent in Western Australia and 6.3 per cent in Queensland,⁷⁰ but they do not generally live in areas of high Jewish concentration and, as was made clear in the focus-group discussions, it is very difficult to involve them in Jewish activities. They, therefore, do little to reinforce the local Jewish communities.

Day-School and Jewish Education

The uncertain future of day-school education was a matter of particular concern in Brisbane, where the community had struggled to maintain its school (with the fortunate assistance of a notable local philanthropist). Although the school did survive and recruited an experienced Jewish educationist from overseas, it can maintain its numbers only by enrolling a significant number of non-Jewish students. In Adelaide, it was clear that the Jewish day-school numbers were declining to the point where it was no longer viable. In Western Australia, there was much more confidence in the future of Carmel School, but there was considerable stress on the need to recruit more students from South Africa.

Tensions between the Orthodox and Progressive communities

In smaller communities, co-operation between the different branches of Judaism is important for survival. Tensions between the different branches hinder community development. For example, in Adelaide there is a sense of rivalry between the Progressive and Orthodox congregations, so that they do not try to work together to deal with the problems facing the community. Maintaining buildings in two different locations is a drain on Adelaide Jewry's limited finances. In contrast, the Canberra community — which is much smaller — is also more united and is better able to maintain communal viability. There is just one centre, which serves the needs of both the Orthodox and the Progressive congregations and, even if the Jewish residents are dispersed, the area in Canberra is more concentrated and there has been one location from which all activities flow.

Antisemitism and anti-Israel activities

By contrast with the larger centres, focus-group participants agreed that there were remarkably few manifestations of anti-Jewish or anti-Israel sentiment among the general population, and gave a number of examples of good relationships at a variety of levels.

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Impact of Size, Place, and Geography

Our study confirmed that size alone is not a criterion for viability. There is a comparatively small difference in size between the Jewish residents of Western Australia and of Queensland, but the Western Australian community is active and much less concerned about its ongoing viability. That is because most of the population is concentrated in Perth — in and around the Mount Lawley area. This geographical concentration already existed in the 1970s before the major wave of South African migrants.⁷¹ Whilst the radius has been widened in recent years, newer settlement patterns are contiguous with that area and that has enabled Carmel School to develop into a full primary and high school and to endure. A strong Jewish school has been a definite pull factor for immigration. Perth's very isolation reinforces the community, since members are less likely to think of moving away.

In contrast, the Adelaide Jewish community is much more dispersed. Whilst the Perth Hebrew Congregation had already sold its inner city synagogue in the 1950s, the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation made that move only at the end of the 1980s. However, the community is not concentrated around Glenside; there were hopes in the 1980s and early 1990s that there would be a sufficient number of students to develop Massada into a high school, but those hopes were not fulfilled. Hyams has argued that this is a major factor in the movement of South African families to the larger centres. The close proximity of the strong Jewish community in Melbourne acts as a magnet, with a number of influential families from Adelaide moving there.

Similarly, Queensland Jewry faces the problem of dispersed populations, with different centres in Brisbane and the Gold Coast, each with small Jewish primary schools. In Brisbane itself, the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation is still situated in the city centre and the Jewish residents are dispersed across a large area. The creation of a Jewish community centre in Burbank, where the Sinai School is located, has not had the desired effect of creating a Jewish greater concentration.

Jewish residents in various towns or geographical areas are clearly affected by the general trends of the wider society. That is most obvious in the contrast between Melbourne and Sydney and the smaller communities. As mentioned above, that situation is well known in America and has occasioned comment.⁷²

Increasing Concentration in Melbourne and Sydney

Jewish communities in the United States have recently shown a trend to move away from the major Jewish centres to more outlying areas. Sidney Goldstein has noted in various studies the redistribution of

American Jews, in surveys of 1970 and 1990. ‘Americanisation’ and secularisation are said to be the cause of this drift away from the main Jewish centres.⁷³ One researcher has described this process as being the ‘youth drain’.⁷⁴ The young people leave the smaller communities mainly in order to achieve upward social mobility. There is an increasing professionalisation of American Jewry, with the consequent loosening of family ties and increasing secularisation.⁷⁵ However, the situation in Australia is in marked contrast. The persons we interviewed commented that young Jews were moving to the larger centres of Melbourne and Sydney because of their desire for a fuller Jewish lifestyle, and for opportunities to meet a Jewish partner in those large cities — not as a result of a weaker Jewish identity.

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NOTES

¹ D. R. Kaufman in the book review of Moses Rischin and John Livingson’s ‘Jews of the American West’, *American Jewish History*, vol. 83, no. 1, March 1995, p. 132.

² *Ibid.*

³ There have been a number of demographic studies and much has been written on the issue of under-enumeration. See for example W. D. Rubinstein, ‘Jews in the 2001 Australian Census’, *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. 17, part 1, 2003, p. 75. Other key scholars in the field include Sol Encel and B. Buckley, *The New South Wales Jewish Community: A Survey*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1978; John Goldlust, *The Melbourne Jewish Community: a Needs Assessment Study*, Canberra Bureau of Immigration Research, 1993; and Gary Eckstein, *The Sydney Jewish Community Demographic Profile*, New South Wales Jewish Communal Appeal, 1999.

⁴ Gary Eckstein, personal email communication, 2006.

⁵ W. R. Ferris *et al.* (Roundtable) ‘Regionalism: The Significance of Place in American Jewish Life’, *American Jewish History*, vol. 93, no. 2, June 2007, p. 116.

⁶ *Ibid.*

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⁷ L. S. Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005, p. 8.

⁸ For background on the Brisbane Hebrew congregation, see Morris S. Ochert, 'History of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. 9, nos. 6, 7, 1984, pp. 457–465, 509–521.

⁹ Information and figures provided by G. Eckstein.

¹⁰ Brisbane Focus Group meeting held at the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation, Margaret Street, Brisbane, 8 November 2005. The members of the group were interviewed by S. Encel, assisted by S. Saxon.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Gold Coast Jewish Community Focus Group Meeting, Katranski Hall, Gold Coast Congregation, 10 November 2005. The interviews were carried out by S. Encel, assisted by Sandy Saxon.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ For a detailed discussion of the Perth Jewish community, see David Mossenson, *Hebrew, Israelite, Jew: The History of the Jews of Western Australia*, Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1990.

²⁶ O. B. Tofler, 'Socio-demographic Study of the Perth Jewish Community, 1870–2005, unpublished report, 2006.

²⁷ For information about the Perth Jewish day-school, see O. B. Tofler, *Forty Years On: a History of G. Korsunski Carmel School*, Perth: Sponsored publication (n.d. [2000]).

²⁸ Perth Jewish Community Focus Group Meeting, The Jewish Centre, Perth, 29 October 2006. S. Encel and S. D. Rutland conducted the interview.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ O. B. Tofler, op. cit. in note 26 above and discussion between S. Encel and Tofler in Perth, November 2006.

³⁴ Perth Focus Group interview, 29 October 2006.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Racheline Barda, 'A Journey to the "Edge of the Diaspora" — the Jews from Egypt', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. 18, part 3, June 2007, pp. 392–393.

⁴³ S. D. Rutland, 'Egyptian Jews in Adelaide: a case study in oral history', *Oral History Association Journal*, vol. 6, 1984, pp. 19–24.

⁴⁴ Barda, op. cit. in note 42 above, pp. 394–395.

⁴⁵ Bernard Hyams, *Surviving: A History of the Institutions and Organizations of the Adelaide Jewish Community*, Adelaide: Jewish Community Council of South Australia, 1998, pp. 217–218.

⁴⁶ Adelaide Jewish Community Focus Group Meeting, Rose Harrison Hall, Temple Beit Shalom, 21 November 2007, interviewed by S. Encel and S. D. Rutland.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hyams, op. cit. in note 45 above, pp. 193–194.

⁴⁹ 'News', *Australian Jewish News (AJN)*, 16 November 2007, p. 11 and Peter Kohn, 'Adelaide in Crisis', 'Outlook', *Australian Jewish News*, 23 May 2008, p. 17.

⁵⁰ Adelaide Focus Group interview, 21 November 2007.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *AJN*, 13 November 2007.

⁵³ <http://www.kh.org.au/category/articles/> Accessed 12 February 2008.

⁵⁴ Adelaide Focus Group interview, 21 November 2007.

⁵⁵ Israel Porush, 'The Canberra Jewish Community', *AJHS Journal*, vol. 9, part 3, 1982, p. 220.

⁵⁶ Sylvia Deutsch, 'The ACT Community', in S. D. Rutland, *Triumph of the Jewish Spirit: 40 Years of the Jewish Communal Appeal*, Sydney: Jewish Communal Appeal, 2007, p. 117.

⁵⁷ S. D. Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia*, second edition, Sydney: Brandi and Schlesinger, 2001, p. 378.

⁵⁸ Deutsch, op. cit. in note 56 above, p. 117.

⁵⁹ ACT (Australian Capital Territory) Jewish Community Focus Group interview, Canberra Jewish Centre, 2 April 2006, interviewed by S. Encel and S. D. Rutland.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ A whole discussion at the group was devoted to the position of the Centre for Arabic, Islamic and Asian Studies. It was believed that the funding for that centre, which was matched dollar for dollar by the university, comes from the Emirates and Iran, with funding for a Turkish lecturer from Turkey. This Centre is an important acquisition for the university since it brings in both money and students. One member of the group stated that one of his son's friends had written an essay which favoured Israel: he was called in by his tutor and told that he would receive either a credit or a distinction. On the other hand, he was told that he could obtain a higher mark if he took a

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more critical line towards Israel. Another member of the group commented that the Centre was 'a paid propaganda machine operating through the ANU'.

⁶⁸ A particularly worrying incident occurred at Australian National University in 2006. A member of Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) put an anti-racism AUJS sticker on a Socialist Alliance discussion-board on racism for Orientation Week. A member of Socialist Alliance, a left-wing group, immediately ripped the sticker down. When the AUJS member asked why he had removed it, the Socialist Alliance member abused her and accused Israel of being racist. The interviewee commented that left-wing members on campus were ignorant of the situation and could not differentiate between Judaism and Israel.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Suzanne D. Rutland, *The Jews in Australia*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 144.

⁷¹ Roger Hill, 'The Jews of Perth: A Socio-Geographical Analysis', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1975, pp. 6–47.

⁷² Ferris *et al.*, 2007, pp. 114, 117–119.

⁷³ See S. Goldstein, 'Population Movement and Redistribution Among American Jews', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology (JJS)*, vol. 24, no. 1: June, 1982, pp. 5–24 and 'Jews on the Move: Implications for American Jewry and for Local Communities', *JJS*, vol. 32, 1990, p. 21, 1990; and U. Rebhun and S. Goldstein, 'Changes in the Geographical Dispersion and Mobility of American Jews, 1990–2001', *JJS*, vol. 48, 2006, pp. 5–33.

⁷⁴ Murray Frost, 'Analysis of a Jewish Community's Out-migration', *Jewish Social Studies, A Quarterly Journal Devoted to Contemporary and Historical Aspects of Jewish Life*, 1982, vol. 44, p. 232.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

THE SWANSEA JEWISH COMMUNITY — THE FIRST CENTURY¹

Harold Pollins

THE town and port of Swansea (in Welsh, Abertawe) was the location of the first Jewish community in Wales, although its origins are a matter of tradition rather than of definite evidence. There is a general view that the origins of provincial Jewish communities in Britain start with pioneering visits by hawkers, travelling in the countryside. Some of them, it is said, would settle down to open fixed shops in favoured towns. It is possible that this might have been Swansea's story. The first name available is said to be that of Solomon Lyons who had a business of some sort there in 1731. He may have been a pedlar earlier but nothing else is known of him. A second name, in the same decade, was that of Lazarus David, who was born in Swansea in 1734; he went to Canada and helped to found the Montreal community of *Shearith Israel*.²

But that is mere conjecture. More reliable evidence was contained in a manuscript of 1859, which was the basis of a newspaper article, published in 1933, 'The Early Days of Jewry in Swansea'.³ To this can be added the researches of W. C. Rogers, published in a short reference in another newspaper article, 'Business Men and Councillors of the Past; Old Families who Founded Swansea'.⁴ The newspaper articles were used by Cecil Roth in his *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, 1950, p. 103. They state that the first Jews in Swansea were David Michael and Nathaniel Phillips, who arrived in 1741, followed soon by two men named Cohen (perhaps Jacob Cohen, died 1819⁵) and Joseph (probably an ancestor of Benjamin Joseph, born in Swansea about 1791 — he died in 1877 aged 86). Descendants of the latter two were said still to be members, in 1933, of the then Swansea congregation. Another account speaks of David Michael being accompanied by his brother Moses, as well as Samuel Levi.⁶

Jacob and Levi Michael, the sons of David Michael, were born in the 1750s, probably the first Jewish children to be born in Swansea, and there must have been an increase in numbers since in 1768 a burial ground was established. The ground was leased from the town

council, one of the lessees being David Michael, whose occupation was given as silversmith. He was also responsible for organising the first place of worship; according to the *Herald of Wales* article, he ‘built the first synagogue: it was part of his house, at the back of his usual sitting-room, and was capable of containing thirty or forty persons’. This was in Wind Street and was succeeded by a room in the Strand, which was used for some thirty years until 1818 when a 99-year lease was taken on a piece of land in Waterloo Road on which to build a synagogue.

One other name is usually recorded, that of Jacob A. Moseley, a watch and clock maker, who was ‘for many years in the cavalry corps’.⁷ He died in 1845 and was thought to be the father of Ephraim Moseley, one of the five men who founded the 1818 synagogue.⁸ The others involved in the 1818 synagogue were Levi and Jacob, the sons of David Michael; Jacob Cohen; and Ephraim Joseph (the father of Benjamin, a long-time resident).⁹ The Michaels were in business as silversmiths, jewellers, milliners, and general furnishers; that is the description in W. C. Rogers’s notes on the Michael family. However, advertisements in *The Cambrian* refer to a wholesale tea house, a tea and coffee house, a grocery business, and as insurance agents.¹⁰ Cohen was the father of Douglas Cohen, born 1807, who qualified in Edinburgh as a doctor, and served in Liverpool but in the 1830s was at the Swansea Infirmary. Ephraim Joseph is described in 1812 as a jeweller in a report of the death of his wife.¹¹ The 1859 manuscript described the synagogue building as having a ladies’ gallery and seating for about seventy people (it is not clear if that number included women). Presumably the writer had first-hand knowledge of it as it lasted until the new synagogue in Goat Street was built in 1859.

The published accounts of the history of Swansea Jewry have little more to say about the community in the years before more information becomes available in the 1830s and 1840s. Cecil Roth referred to the appointment of a shohet in 1829, the only officiant of which he had knowledge. But there must have been a sufficient number of Jews in the town to support a shohet and also a synagogue.

One can get some idea of who those Jews were, despite the absence of membership lists, and before the days of civil registration, by a number of devices. First, from 1804 *The Cambrian* newspaper was published in Swansea and it contained some news of Swansea Jews. Second, from the 1851 and later Censuses, which gave people’s place of birth, one can establish who was said to have been born in Swansea before 1837, when civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths began. Later Censuses can also be used, particularly useful when people had moved away from Swansea. Notices of deaths in the *Jewish Chronicle* sometimes mention Swansea as a place of birth or residence. One has

to be aware of the fact that the place of birth recorded in the Census was not always accurate: a person might be recorded as born in Swansea in one Census, and in Merthyr Tydfil in the next.

One of the earliest names in the newspaper was that of Hyam Barnett, Silversmith of Gloucester, who opened a 'room in Swansea'.¹² In the *London Gazette* we read of the bankruptcy of Benjamin Joseph, 'Jeweller, Dealer and Chapman'.¹³ In 1826 Michael Marks, watchmaker, silversmith, '&c. late of Cardiff,' opened a business at 4 Castle Street.¹⁴ There are references in *The Cambrian* to several officiants: in 1813 Joseph Cohen, clerk to the synagogue, died (21.8.1813); nine years later it recorded the marriage of Rev. Moses Moses, 'Hebrew Teacher'.¹⁵ In the early 1830s the newspaper noted the marriage of Mr Miers, 'Minister of the Synagogue' and of the marriage of Harris Joseph, 'of the Jews' Synagogue': an official of some kind? In 1841 he was a 'Taylor' and in 1851 a Hawker. In 1838 there was a reference to Samuel Frankel who gave lessons in Hebrew and German.¹⁶ Another officiant was Barnett Abrahams, who appears in the 1841 Census. His son, Louis, was to become Headmaster of the Jews' Free School in London.

In 1859, when the first appeal for funds was made, for the building of a new synagogue, the Warden of the synagogue, Simon Goldberg, explained its need through the increase of population. He said that when the existing synagogue was built in 1818, there were four Jewish families in Swansea.¹⁷ Perhaps he meant to refer to the five men who founded it and there may have been others; several women, whose married names we have, were (according to the Census) born in Swansea. They may, or may not, have been part of the families of the five founders. They were Mrs Ann Marks (born c. 1803), wife of Mark Marks; her maiden name was Michael, but neither she nor the other Michael women mentioned below appear to have belonged to the original Michael families. Their names are not on the extensive Michael family tree prepared by W. C. Rogers. Another wife was Mrs Rosetta Marks,¹⁸ but her maiden name was Cohen and she may have been a daughter of Jacob. Mrs Hannah Walter (wife of Leon D. Walter, woollen draper) whose maiden name was Michael, as was that of Martha Polak, born about 1806, the wife of Samuel Polak whose family lived in Pontypool and in Newport, Monmouthshire. There was also Sarah Michael, who married Benjamin Joseph.¹⁹ She was possibly his first wife; his wife's name in Censuses from 1841 was Matilda.

In addition to these possible families there might have been some transient residents. From the Censuses of 1851 onwards (which give birthplaces) one can find families, some of whose members were recorded as being born in Swansea but had moved to other locations. Before civil registration from 1837 the following (along with some

long-term residents) lived in Swansea. From *The Cambrian* we read of M. Rosenberg and D. Cohen, who had been partners, as well as of Rev. Moses Moses, already mentioned, as has been the shoet Meir ben Judah. They were temporary residents; two families became long-term residents, those of Moses Moses (from Lissa); and Greenbone Jacobs. In the 1830s, before civil registration began in 1837 — judging by the birth of their children in the town, or Swansea was the place of birth of single men — there were Abraham Lyons (Clothier); Emanuel Levi (Painter); Jacob Levy (Watchmaker); Moss Isaacs (Tailor); Moses Moses (from Bedford, Pawnbroker); Mordecai Harris (Jeweller); and Charles Jacobs (a Hawker). Joseph Barnett lived mostly in Merthyr Tydfil but was in Swansea in the 1830s where three of his children were born. One, Henry Barnett (Pawnbroker), became a long-term resident. His parents settled there later in the century. There was Mrs Rebecca Levy, a Librarian, and Mrs Catherine Cohen and their children. Most of this information comes from the 1851 Census, by which time many had moved to other places. The occupations are those of 1851 and may have changed since the 1830s.

Another way of observing the pre-1837 community is through the number of births. Again, one can do this from the Censuses of 1851 and later, either from the returns of families resident in Swansea or from those which had now moved on, although it is more difficult to locate Swansea births in families which were only resident there for short periods between Censuses. One might come across them purely by chance.

These are the figures of the decennial births of Jews in Swansea.

1791-1799	3
1800-1809	10
1810-1819	6*
1820-1829	13
1830-1837	28

* This includes a son of Catherine Cohen named Esdaile P. Cohen, who died in 1856 in America. No date of birth is given. I have arbitrarily allocated him to the decade in the Table as his three siblings were born between about 1805 and 1815.

They are the ones I have been able to find and the numbers should be regarded as minimal. They may illustrate a growing community, or merely reflect the increasing availability of information — that is, the people whose place of birth is recorded in the Censuses from 1851 will not include many from the early years of the century, given the comparatively short span of life at that time.

One piece of information indicates the acculturation of at least two residents. The list of founder members of the Swansea Philosophical

& Literary Institution (later the Royal Institution of South Wales) included Douglas Cohen MD and Mr Mosely, The former was the son of Catherine Cohen who, as mentioned, had graduated in medicine at Edinburgh University and in the 1830s was at the Swansea Infirmary. I take it that Mosely was Jacob A. Moseley.²⁰

NOTES

¹ I am grateful to David Morris of the West Glamorgan Archive Service for the provision of much material.

² Cecil Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry*, 1950, pp. 102–4.

³ *Herald of Wales*, 12 August 1933, p. 1.

⁴ *South Wales Evening Post*, 14 January 1947. This can be supplemented by W. C. Rogers's detailed notes in West Glamorgan Archive Service, D/D WCR Genealogies 113–135.

⁵ *The Cambrian*, 27.3.1819 ; his wife Catherine lasted until 1865 — death notice *Jewish Chronicle* (henceforth *JC*) 24 March, p. 1. She was aged over 90.

⁶ N. H. Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation 1730–1980*, 1980, p. 29.

⁷ *JC*, 25.6.1858, p. 222. In some accounts he was said to have been a Sergeant in the Glamorgan Yeomanry at the time of the invasion scare of 1804.

⁸ Roth, in Note 2. Since the known children of Jacob were born from 1804–1821, this is unlikely, unless Jacob was married twice, and Ephraim was the issue from his first marriage.

⁹ *Herald of Wales* in Note 3.

¹⁰ Wholesale tea, *The Cambrian*, 27 July 1805; wholesale tea and coffee, *ibid.*, 7 May 1814; grocery, *ibid.*, 30 May 1807; insurance, *ibid.*, 20 December 1806.

¹¹ *The Cambrian*, 23 May 1812.

¹² *Ibid.*, 21 July 1804; he died in 1815; *ibid.*, 11 February 1815.

¹³ *London Gazette*, 10 August 1813, p. 1593; *ibid.*, 10 May 1814, p. 995.

¹⁴ *The Cambrian*, 28 January 1826. Perhaps he was the M. L. Marks who married Ann Michael of Swansea later that year: *ibid.*, 22 July 1826.

¹⁵ Cohen, *The Cambrian*, 21 August 1813; Moses, *ibid.*, 2 March 1822. Was he the Moses Moses from Lissa, Poland, who continued to reside in Swansea, although in the Censuses was first a silversmith, then an outfitter, then a pawn-broker? It was not unusual, however, for these low-paid officiants to have a secular occupation.

¹⁶ Miers, *The Cambrian*, 2 November 1833; Joseph, *ibid.*, 18 July 1835; Frankel, *ibid.*, 12 January 1838.

¹⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 April 1859, p. 1.

¹⁸ Wife of a Michael Marks — marriage notice in *The Cambrian*, 22 June 1822.

¹⁹ *The Cambrian*, 3 May 1828.

²⁰ West Glamorgan Archive Service, RISW Council Minutes, RISW SOC 1/1a.

BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL

Marlena Schmool

(Review Article)

LEONARD SAXE and BARRY CHAZAN, *Ten Days of Birthright Israel: A journey in young adult identity*, 223 pp., Brandeis University Press, Waltham, MA, Hanover and London, 2008, n.p.

ALL through reading this slimmish volume I was kept aware of the *mechanisms* of identity formation. This is unsurprising given that, first, the objective of Birthright Israel is a project to strengthen Jewish identity — by taking young people who have never previously visited Israel on a fully subsidised ten-day trip there, and that, second, the book concentrates on the pedagogic and sociological theories underpinning this objective as much as it describes the details of the scheme itself.

As I read, I pondered on how my own Jewish identity is continuously developing and on Israel's place in the process throughout my life. This sets one frame for the comments which follow. My personal narrative is fairly commonplace for those of my Second World War generation. I was brought up in Leeds (which by British standards has long been a large Jewish community) and my Jewishness was taken as a given in a 'traditional', close-knit community that was and is very strongly Zionist. I had an old-fashioned, solid *heder* education (five times a week, weekly children's services, continued past bat-mitzvah-age), learnt *Ivrit* and was active in the youth groups and clubs that provided the strong social capital which, as any current reading of the local Jewish newspaper makes clear, continues to fuel communal activity while nowadays the synagogues also present many opportunities for Jewish study for all who are interested. This was a cognitively consonant and comfortable background where people knew who you were and, if they considered the matter at all, probably believed that you thought just as they did. This primary socialisation firmly grounded my Jewish identity.

Then I became the first in my family to go to university and to go away from home to study — both very unusual moves for a British

woman in the late 1950s. Predictably, at this time of young adulthood, questions from new friends — who for the most part had never previously met a Jew — prompted self-questioning. A room-mate asking over coffee how I could be Jewish but not Israeli led to an impromptu, whistle-stop lesson in Jewish history and the concept of Diaspora — and to a discussion of how I could simultaneously be British and Jewish. This question has since become a perennial of British Jewish identity questionnaires in a general social environment which does not easily recognise the hyphenated identities that give rise to Polish-, Italian- or Jewish-Americans. We are British Jews (or British Muslims) but never Jewish Brits!

It therefore struck a personal chord when the authors of *Ten Days of Birthright Israel* gave their interest (p. 3) ‘in young adults’ quest for meaning and the dynamics of their identity formation’ as one plank in their analysis of the ‘journey’. There the move to university is pinpointed as a pivotal time when questions, whether internal or from others, often focus on personal heritage and its meaning. The Birthright Israel scheme seeks to build on this soul-searching and looks to use this period of emerging adulthood as a means of establishing a strong Jewish identity that will solder participants to formal community.

Of course, such questioning does not require a change of scene; it can happen wherever young adults find themselves, and moreover it is not confined to young adults. However, drawing on the evidence of earlier Israel trips for younger people and on John Dewey’s notion that true education is rooted in experience, Birthright Israel as described in the book takes people in this age-group as the raw material for a particular educational experiment based on the place of Israel in Jewish life and identity. Birthright Israel is clear about its aim to transform lives.

The group visit to Israel is not a new phenomenon and since their inception after the establishment of the State of Israel, trips have become increasingly more focussed and sophisticated. For my cohort of European, Israel-oriented students, a summer trip to Eretz Israel was definitely formulated as a precursor to Aliyah. As part of a PATWA (Professional And Technical Workers Aliyah) programme organised by the Jewish Agency (now the Jewish Agency for Israel — JAFI), it entailed a train/ferry journey to and then a sea voyage from Marseilles, on one of the last journeys of the 1948 immigrant carrier *Artza*. PATWA’s underlying intentions were equivalent to Birthright’s: if you did not eventually go to live in Israel you would at least have an experience that should link you through life to the Jewish people world-wide and particularly to Israel. To this end the boat in 1961 was packed with students from all over Europe although the British contingent, which was about 30 strong, mostly kept together. We did not discuss what kinds of Jews we were; simply

being on the trip suggested a similarity of identity though there was an underlying awareness that some were more likely to find work in Israel and that some were more religiously observant. Indeed meeting up over the years either by chance or design it is clear just how varied we were or became — Shomrei Shabbat, traditional, secular but all without question Zionist in the uncomplicated way that was possible before Occupied Territories, Intifada and Green Line became everyday parlance for Jews and the world media alike.

Once in Israel we came into contact with the Israeli-in-the-street through the jobs we had in hospitals, factories or schools while many had family or friends to visit. Some were our peer group, others were not. As a group we had a bus-tour taking us from north-most Metullah to the Negev (including a stop at Eilat with its sole hotel), the walk up Masada before dawn and ending in Jerusalem which at that time meant going to Migdal David, the Mandelbaum Gate and the outpost at Ramat Rachel. The book shows how these elements have remained the backbone of youth visits to Israel and are incorporated in an updated way in the Birthright programme. The memories of that first visit have stayed with me through a life-time of returning both professionally and socially. Although I never ‘went on Aliyah’ (the American ‘made Aliyah’ gained currency in Britain much later), my links to Israel through family, friends, marriage and work have remained strong although an unquestioning acceptance of all that Israel does began to dissolve after the Six Day War in 1967. Did that first trip transform my identity? Who knows? At that time the examination of personal identity — Jewish or otherwise — was not as open and blatant as it has since become.

Nevertheless, the question existed and it provided the second frame in which I read the volume. As a post-graduate student I had tried to look at what would keep teenagers Jewish and the questions posed then covered those topics, still being puzzled over today, which are the impetus for Birthright Israel. The main readers for the courses I followed were anthologies of American research: ‘Identity and Anxiety’ (where one out of more than 40 articles covered Jews) and Marshall Sklare’s compilation ‘The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group’¹ contains an article about Jewish attitudes to Israel. The latter was my introduction to the Sociology of the Jews and to Jewish sociologists working on Jewish issues. It helped set me on the road as a Jewish community researcher in whose work Jewish identity and continuity were to become central questions.

The broad rationale behind much demographic and social community research in the last 40 years has been ‘how can we keep Jews attached to the community?’ of which the unrefuted corollary has been that a *strong* Jewish identity is a *sine qua non* for staying in, and that, for example, educational interventions at all ages and of all

types will help hold people in the communal ambit. I do not wish to decry the very many efforts and I of course accept the need for community action if the attractions of the wider world are not totally to outweigh the pulls of the Jewish community. However, the volume called to mind some questions and problems I personally have with this strategy.

The short biographies of the leaders and the participant-observer-reporting of the *mifgashim* (peer-group gatherings of Israelis and visitors) endorse an openness which is a major strength of the project *as reported*. And there lies my difficulty with this book. As I said earlier, I found it readable and accessible. The theories are professionally established; the practice is comprehensively described, and the quotations for chapter-headings are pleasing. But a sense of self-congratulation soon became over-riding and I began to wish for some greater questioning. I recognised that this would not come in the descriptive sections but hoped that the evaluation would be more searching especially as we are told that this was an important part of the process (how else do you check on the results of an experiment?) and that quantitative assessment together with field-based observations had continued for more than seven years.

By 2007 more than 100,000 out of some 150,000 participants had been surveyed. These are formidable numbers which are summarised as providing: “an extremely positive and consistent portrait... participants returned home changed as a result of their experience” while... “the impact seemed to last over time; no matter whether evaluations were conducted three months or a year or more after the program, similar results were found”. However, the “effects on actual engagement in Jewish life were far more modest than the attitudes expressed” (p. 138/9).

The fuller analysis of the evaluation data states clearly that: “the central question is whether the impact of the program is sustained or ephemeral”... and that “it would not be surprising if the impact of the program deteriorated over time” (p. 151).

However, given that the project aims to affect *individuals' attitudes*, is it adequate to talk about change — as opposed to differences — mainly by comparing semi-defined groups rather than by examining specified groups' differences over time? Out of 15 charts, only two give trends which compare year-groups and are presented in order to assess differences between Birthright participants and non-participants. The comparison showed that over two to three years the strength of difference in connection (a) to Israel and (b) to the Jewish people had narrowed — suggesting that the impact was not being sustained and leading to relatively conservative estimates of programme impact. More of this kind of analysis would have been illuminating while these and other charts would have benefited from better labelling

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(rather than having potential headings incorporated in the text) and from basic information about sizes of samples.

Thus, in spite of the abundant optimism with which the programme is presented here, my reservations resurfaced with the evaluation. How long will the outcomes of the social experiment last? How much funding is required to follow at least a representative sample of each cohort for, say, a further ten years into their more mature adulthood? Very importantly, because most activity that positively reinforces Jewish identity takes place within a face-to-face community, what happens to the geographically-mobile young people whose lives take them to far-flung places? Is virtual community a realistic alternative? The long-term outcomes of this programme will be shown only through experimentally-controlled longitudinal research which is costly. No community which senses it is declining could afford to await the results of such research and will do whatever it thinks will be effective. As I write in December 2008, the question is: can the charitable foundations afford to continue financing Birthright Israel.

NOTE

¹ The Free Press, Glencoe Illinois, 1958.

CHANGE-OVER IN ANGLO-JEWRY

Harold Pollins

(*Review Article*)*

ISRAEL FINESTEIN, *Studies and Profiles in Anglo-Jewish History*,
xiv + 290 pp., Vallentine Mitchell, London and Portland OR,
2008, £40

ISRAEL Finestein has been beguiling us for more than half a century with numerous, usually well-researched, essays on aspects of Anglo-Jewish history. They have appeared in a variety of publications and in recent years he has collected many of them, together with previously unpublished work, often updated, in a series of books. Despite the variety of publication occasions, he has aimed, in this latest volume of collections, to provide a theme for them and states at the start of his 'Preface and Acknowledgements':

The connecting link between these diverse chapters is what is often called 'the ceaseless flow of change'. All the characters under consideration were faced with the one certainty in history, namely change. Their responses are part of their historical interest.

This is an unexceptionable view of history and he expands the point by writing (p. xi) about the

steady transfer of office and influence from lay leadership based on lineage... to lay leadership whose style and aspirations sprang from comparatively recent immigration.

The 'characters' are those examined in biographical studies in 12 of 14 chapters, discussed chronologically, and covering a long period — from Joshua van Oven (1766–1838) — in 'A Dynasty for its Time, 1760–1905: The Van Ovens in Britain' — to Harold Fisch (1922–2001), 'Oxford to Jerusalem via the Arctic'. The reference to the Arctic is where he served as a Naval officer during the Second World War, on convoys carrying supplies to the Soviet Union. The book under review starts with a previously unpublished lecture, in a general chapter: 'Educational Minimalism in the Ascendant, 1850–1914:

* Written before Israel Finestein's death

Profile of Jewish Leadership at bay'; it is, broadly, a sad story of poor educational provision for children as well as failed efforts to encourage Anglo-Jewish intellectual activity, although there were some bright spots. However, in an endnote, he comments that there has been a 'plethora of Jewish religious, cultural and educational developments' in the second half of the twentieth century.

Although Israel Finestein was born in the provincial town of Hull, his focus in this book is on London and, especially, on the United Synagogue — the main synagogal organisation in the capital. However, in a general essay on 'London and the Regions, 1850–1914' he interestingly describes the tension between the capital and the provinces — with some sympathy for the latter which often objected to London's pre-eminence and to what was perceived as its neglect of the former. But even at the start of the period he is writing about, some of the local communities — such as Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool — had already developed their own strong institutions, sometimes in advance of London's. Towards the end of the century a large number of small provincial communities came into existence, composed mainly of new immigrants who, although pious, did not have the resources for the creation of an infrastructure or for employing competent religious officials. The latter were usually immigrants themselves, and did not at first speak English. Such an official was usually designated as 'Reverend', and normally combined the offices of shoḥet, ḥazan, baal koreh, and mohel, often for a pittance of a salary. Many remained for no more than a few months and moved on. But London, through individual munificence, did help (a) by providing funds for the building of synagogues (or for conversion into synagogues); and (b) through the Provincial Ministers' Fund which granted subventions to augment local salaries as well as to provide for Visiting Ministers from larger communities.

The subsequent biographical chapters deal with a number of disparate men (apart from one chapter about women, engaged in 'a Victorian Velvet Revolution') but not all were in positions of lay leadership in the Jewish community. James Picciotto (1830–1897) was, as the sub-title of the chapter states, a 'Pioneer Anglo-Jewish Historian'. He was primarily a journalist whose major work was *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History* (1875), based to a large extent on the archives of the Bevis Marks Sephardi synagogue. Another journalist was Chaim Bermant (1929–1998), whom Finestein calls 'the modern Israel Zangwill' and comments:

From Zangwill to Bermant there was no other Anglo-Jewish satirist of comparable quality to either.

Harold Fisch was not a lay leader in Britain since he spent more than half his life in Israel as an academic at Bar-Ilan University. Some of the essays are well-researched pieces, with sources duly noted; others are short, sometimes extensions of obituaries.

Three figures flourished in the Victorian period (although one — Albert Henry Jessel, Queen's Counsel — lived until 1917). They symbolise, despite the differences between them, the themes and attitudes which were to be challenged. The essays about them are long and based on detailed research. Lionel Louis Cohen (1832–1887), a member of the investment banking dynasty which began with Levi Barent Cohen, also inherited a tradition of communal service, but he 'believed unreservedly in oligarchic rule' (p. 62); he had been a major figure in the Jewish Board of Guardians (the major Jewish social service in London) since its foundation in 1859, and he was instrumental in establishing the United Synagogue in 1870.

Lionel Louis Cohen is a crucial figure. He viewed with alarm the growing immigration of eastern European Jews and their 'foreign' ways. Like most British-born Jews he disliked Yiddish ('the jargon') and supported efforts to anglicise the newcomers. Until the immigrants were assimilated into the established Anglo-Jewish community, he thought that it was essential that the 'recognised hegemony over the Jewish community, at least in London, on the part of the old families (of which his own was the epicentre), should be sustained' (p. 62). However, his desire for communal discipline came up against the individualistic indiscipline of the new *hevrot*. Samuel Montagu (who was a member of another grand family) supported the newcomers, and formed them into a separate Federation of Synagogues.

Cohen became a Conservative Member of Parliament. Another grandee was Sir John Simon (1818–1897); he was born in Jamaica, the son of a coffee planter, and was deeply influenced by Jewish history and religion (he had considered a ministerial career or at least a preaching one). He also believed 'in the Jewish mission to mankind, an ideal he never abandoned' (p. 99). He was an early supporter of the liberation of slaves; indeed, his father had liberated his own slaves. It followed that John Simon favoured the North in the American Civil War. In Britain, where he had studied law, he became a Queen's Counsel, and entered politics as a Liberal. He was also unlike Lionel Cohen in being an active member of the West London Synagogue, the first Reform synagogue in Britain, as well as in the new Choveve Zion movement. He was sympathetic to the working class, advocating self-help and some minimal support for their representation in Parliament. But he appears to have little to say on Jewish immigration to Britain and therefore the essay sits uneasily in this collection.

The third major character was Albert Henry Jessel. He was active in various Jewish organisations and was deeply attached to Judaism, but he 'was clearly less interested in theology than in the assimilation of the eastern European Jewish immigrants into the Anglo-Jewish community. He saw the United Synagogue as a potentially anglicizing influence upon

them . . .’ (p. 125), yet he also tried for some sort of association with the Jewish Religious Union, the newly-formed breakaway organisation, later to become the Liberal Synagogue. In his view it would reinvigorate the community which he characterised as apathetic. Hermann Adler, the Chief Rabbi in 1909, towards the end of his life, referred to the ‘languid and half-hearted support given by our younger brethren to the cause of Judaism, its synagogues and charities’, and commented that it was a greater threat to Anglo-Jewry than the Jewish Religious Union (p. 142).

There are three shorter chapters on twentieth-century communal leaders; they are based on obituaries written by Finestein. These men were of eastern European origin but the father of one of them was born in Britain and had qualified as a solicitor. The son, Frederic Moses Landau (1905–1999), also became a lawyer, a barrister, and he was a member of the Board of Deputies of British Jews for more than five decades, as well as a Treasurer in the United Synagogue. However, as an independent voice, he also joined the new Masorti movement in the 1960s while retaining his United Synagogue links.

Victor Lucas (1916–1997) was born in the East End of London, above his father’s drapery shop. He was commissioned in the British Army during the Second World War and obtained the rank of Major. He became an important figure in London Jewish life. He was deeply attached to the United Synagogue, regarding its laws and customs as being in no way in conflict with the Judaism of his youth but believing that they supplemented and even protected them ‘in the new age through a measure of English order, good sense and discipline’ (p. 251).

It can be argued that the first major break in the Anglo-Jewish establishment was the election of the leading Zionist, Professor Selig Brodetsky, to the Presidency of the Board of Deputies during the Second World War. Lucas did not take to the Zionist Group on the Board; indeed he joined the Anglo-Jewish Association which had once been anti-Zionist and still kept its distance from it. He became President of the United Synagogue in 1984 and did his best to modernize it; in one meeting he argued that ‘we must discard what I would call our overly-cautious status quo mentality’ (p. 254) and welcomed, for example, membership equality of men and women.

In the 1950s the United Synagogue came under attack, this time from Salmond Solomon Levin (1905–1999). He was an exact contemporary of Landau’s, and was born in Limerick, Ireland, where his immigrant father was the religious functionary to the small congregation which in 1904 experienced much local hostility. This followed antisemitic sentiments by a local preacher but the Jewish community had an outspoken leader in Levin’s father. Perhaps his later independence and forthrightness as well as his thorough grounding in Jewish learning came from his father. In London he was a member of the

United Synagogue for more than sixty years and was elected in 1955 as an honorary officer against the candidate recommended by the President, Ewen Montagu. 'The events of 1955 marked the onset of the dramatic end to a long era' (p. 241). Montagu was the last President who was a descendant of Levi Barent Cohen — his mother was a Cohen. On his retirement in 1961 he was succeeded by Sir Isaac Wolfson, the son of a Polish immigrant and a keen Zionist. 'Now was to be the turn of the English (or British) children of the "ghetto", which in whatever form had for so long been envisaged, feared or hoped for in various respective quarters' (p. 241).

Levin agreed with Chief Rabbi Brodie's position in the 'Jacobs Affair' of the early 1960s. Rabbi Louis Jacobs, a leading theologian, was widely expected to become the Principal of Jews' College, but the Chief Rabbi had successfully objected to the appointment on the grounds that Jacobs's religious views were unacceptable, as expressed in *We Have Reason to Believe* — although that book had been published some years earlier. Some have argued that this veto was to prevent Jacobs becoming Chief Rabbi after Brodie. When the office of minister became vacant at the New West End Synagogue, where Jacobs had previously served, he was again prevented from taking it up. Soon after, supporters of Jacobs opened the New London Synagogue, thus inaugurating the Masorti ('Tradition') movement.

Finestein describes the ending of the Jacobs Affair and notes that the Masorti movement 'grew in numbers. As did movement to the right of the United Synagogue' (p. 245). This last is the only reference to what some might consider a major change in recent years.

It is somewhat surprising that Israel Finestein did not go into more detail about the Jacobs Affair and especially its reverberations in both the Jewish and general press. It seems to me too that more could have been made of the growing split between the 'right' and the 'left' in the Anglo-Jewish community. This can be shown statistically, from the figures of synagogue membership. The most recent report on such matters, by the Research Unit of the Board of Deputies¹ states (p. 22):

These findings provide some support for the view that there is a trend towards polarisation within the community, in which groups on the 'right' and on the 'left' of the synagogal groupings axis are growing, while the mainstream groups at the centre of the axis are showing the most significant decline.

The 'left' is defined as Masorti, Liberal, and Reform synagogues; the 'right' by those synagogues 'whose members are assumed to be halachically observant'; 'mainstream' means mainly the United Synagogue and the Federation of Synagogues, as well as some independent congregations and those provincial congregations which recognise the Chief Rabbi.

There is another meaning of the growing split between the ‘right’ and the ‘left’ in Anglo-Jewry. According to some, the United Synagogue has been taken over by the ultra-Orthodox (who elect ministers of that persuasion) and has adopted the views and attitudes of the present Chief Rabbi, Sir² Jonathan Sacks. We must also bear in mind that these ultra-Orthodox (*haredim*) have a high birth-rate and, it has been postulated by responsible demographers that they will become a major force in Anglo-Jewry.³ However, there is the example of other Jewish groups, such as the Oxford community, whose synagogue is used by all Jewish denominations.

Three small errors are worth mentioning. On p. 59 he refers to the *New Dictionary of National Biography*; that should be amended to *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. In the chapter on Jessel he states (p. 123) that he was an active member of the ‘newly formed Jewish Students Society at the University [of Oxford]’; but he was an undergraduate in the 1880s and in David M. Lewis’s *The Jews of Oxford* (1992), there is no mention of such a society until the formation of the Adler Society in 1904. The author refers on at least two occasions (pp. 217 and 226) to the minister of the Birmingham congregation as Joseph George Emanuel; he was always George Joseph Emanuel.

NOTES

¹ Dr Rona Hart and Edward Kafka, *Trends in British Synagogue Membership 1990–2005/6*, 2006, www.boardofdeputies.org.uk accessed 2 February 2009.

² Now Lord

³ Daniel Vulkan and David Graham, *Population Trends among Britain’s strictly Orthodox Jews*, June 2008, www.boardofdeputies.org.uk accessed 2 February 2009.

BOOK REVIEWS

VERONICA PENKIN BELLING, *Yiddish Theatre in South Africa: A history from the late nineteenth century to 1960*, x + 194 pp., Isaac & Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, Cape Town, 2008

South African Jewry is overwhelmingly Lithuanian in origin. Yet, though Yiddish-speaking, the Jewish emigrants who made their way to the British and Boer territories at the southernmost tip of the African continent at the end of the 19th century were unable to sustain a Yiddish culture — and in particular a Yiddish theatrical tradition. This circumstance was in stark contrast to the history of Yiddish culture in North America. Why?

In this slim but erudite volume Veronica Belling, Jewish Studies Librarian at the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies & Research at the University of Cape Town attempts to answer this question. In so doing she throws much light on some larger issues, notably the intra-communal tensions thrown up by the rise of Zionism and, more controversially, the condemnation of all things ‘communist’ by the Afrikaans nationalist governments that ruled South Africa until the end of the apartheid era.

The first recorded Yiddish theatrical performance in what became, in 1910, the Union of South Africa took place in Johannesburg in 1896, just a decade after the sensational discovery of gold that had led to the founding of that city, and just two decades after the establishment of the first professional Yiddish theatre, in Jassy (Roumania). The Jassy theatre was the brainchild of the Ukrainian-born playwright and poet Abraham Goldfaden, and as Goldfaden’s protégés moved from eastern Europe to the west (Goldfaden himself settling in the USA) some naturally found their way to South Africa. There they encountered a number of problems that eventually proved insuperable.

The Lithuanian Jews of South Africa naturally spoke Yiddish. But they did not see themselves as flag-carriers of a Yiddish culture. In the Boer republics Jews, for the most part, faced discrimination and hostility. As the battle-lines were drawn between the Boers and the British, most South African Jews declared for the British. They were also Zionists, and enthusiastic supporters of the revival of spoken Hebrew. Whilst visiting Yiddish theatrical troupes generally received

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a warm welcome, at least in Johannesburg, the Anglo-Jewish establishment that profited (literally) from the British victory over the Boers (1902) made little secret of its hostility to Yiddish theatrical productions in Cape Town, where the survival of Yiddish served only as a reminder of poverty and servility. That there were Yiddish-speaking actors and actresses of great ability (notably Sarah Sylvia) could not be doubted. But if they were to make a living they had to move either to London (as Sylvia did) or to the USA.

The inter-war years might, under other circumstances, have led to a revival of Yiddish in South Africa, as the artistic and literary freedoms now available to Jews in eastern Europe could be exported (so to speak) without much difficulty. Acting against this possibility, however, was the undisguised sympathy for Nazi Germany amongst Afrikaners, and their scarcely disguised anti-Semitism that led to the passage first of the Quota Act of 1930 and then of the Aliens Act seven years later. But another factor was also at work. Second-generation Jewish, Yiddish-speaking immigrants were a mainstay of the Communist presence in the country. The Jewish establishment was aghast. During the 1930s a number of attempts were made to establish a permanent Yiddish theatre in South Africa. All failed. Even visiting companies could find themselves the objects of communal hostility, not made any the more bearable by petty squabbling and feuding.

Belling concludes (p. 140) that 'nowhere outside Eastern Europe was the Yiddish language successfully transferred to the second generation'. This is not strictly speaking true. Yiddish is alive and well in some English cities, in the city and state of New York, and in parts of Israel. But in all these localities it is underpinned by a particular — and particularly positive — religious and cultural distinctiveness. I can however agree with her that in South Africa Yiddish encountered 'a derogatory and indifferent attitude... that was entrenched right from the outset' and that it 'simply never featured in the construction of South African Jewish identity'. South African Jewish communal bodies at best ignored it and, at worst, connived at its marginalisation. As she writes (p. 141), 'the Communist sympathising, anti-Zionist, anti-religious *Yidisher Arbeter Klub* [founded in Johannesburg in 1929] was boycotted by the establishment' and its activities, including its Yiddish theatrical productions, were barely reported. Few tears were shed when it disappeared under the yoke of the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950. By 1960 the Dramatic Section of the Yiddish Culture Federation (established 1947) had died a natural death.

Yiddish theatrical productions are still to be seen in post-apartheid South Africa. But only as exotic reminiscences of a colourful but troubled past.

GEOFFREY ALDERMAN

BOOK REVIEWS

LARISSA REMENNICK (ed), *Between Tradition and Modernity: The Plurality of Jewish Customs and Rituals*, ii + 138 pp, Sociological Papers Volume 13, Sociological Institute for Community Studies, Bar-Ilan University, 2008

In Israel, in the interconnected worlds of Jewish tradition and secular modernity, customs and rituals can act either as anchors, holding communities fast to the *mores* of whatever particular part of the diaspora they happened to originate from, or solvents, breaking down ancient barriers as part of the process of nation-building. Or — perhaps surprisingly — they can act as both, at one and the same time. In this volume of papers Professor Remennick has brought together the work of six scholars researching within this broad field. Two overarching themes stand out.

The first is the manner in which communal customs, such as the colourful henna ceremonies of the Yemenite Jews — the ritualistic anointing of the bride with a red dye — though they have all but lost their original purpose (primarily, in this case, to ward off evil spirits) have survived and flourish now as assertions of cultural distinctiveness. In Israel ethnically distinct synagogues — such as those of Jews originating from the Caucasus — also survive and flourish, in spite of the fact that from a religious standpoint there is little justification for them.

The second is the adoption — the invention in some cases — of quasi-religious customs and ceremonies with the aim (whether realised or not) of banishing or overriding religious customs that, it might be argued, divide Israeli Jews rather than unite them. In several Israeli cities ‘secularised’ versions of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service (the Friday evening welcoming of the Sabbath) are now offered to non- or even anti-religious Jews who would refuse to attend any form of synagogue event. Why? Because such secular services acknowledge the Jewish nature of the state, and the Jewish identity of the participants, without deferring to any religious establishment. For much the same reason gay and lesbian couples take part in marriage ceremonies that deliberately ape religious ritual — for instance each partner to the union will break a glass, in imitation of the customary breaking of a glass by the bridegroom at a religious wedding.

But even amongst the nominally orthodox — couples, say, who are not observant but who, perhaps to please their parents, acquiesce in an orthodox wedding — ritual is manipulated with the ostensible aim of stressing the separation of the new from the old. Instead of a glass, the bridegroom might break a piece of furniture, or, to emphasise the equality of the sexes, the bride might break a glass ‘unofficially’ after the ceremony.

The irony is, of course, that in trying to break with the past those who indulge in such behaviours are in fact reconnecting with it. Change

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embraces continuity. Not the least virtue of these papers is their collective assertion of this basic truth. As Professor Remennick observes in her introduction, what we are seeing here is the renewal of Jewish rituals, not their extinction.

GEOFFREY ALDERMAN

NECHAMA TEC, *Defiance: The True Story of the Bielski Partisans*, xxii + 374 pp., Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2008, paperback £7.99

This book was first published in 1993 and is re-issued to tie-in with the 2008 film with the same title, based on it, produced by Edward Zwick, who writes a Foreword in this edition. The author, herself a Holocaust survivor, was an academic sociologist and she uses her expertise in that subject in discussing certain aspects of the story; but much of the book is an historical account of a large group of Jews who survived the Nazis by hiding in the forests in western Belarus. They were led by Tuvia Bielski and his two brothers, Asael, and Zus, and their group amounted in the end to over one thousand people.

The notion of partisan resistance in the Second World War conjures images of heroic armed struggle, along with sabotage. In this account there is very little about such matters. They were armed — and the men who had rifles had a high status — and took part in fighting the Germans, although most account of these activities is devoted to their searching out German soldiers retreating from the Red Army's advance in 1944. Unlike many partisan bands, the main objective of the leadership was saving Jewish lives. They accepted all whom they encountered, or who were encouraged to leave the ghettos, so that the old, women, and children, formed a large part of their otriad (detachment).

Moreover, as might be expected, much of their activity was concerned with the supply of food. This was obtained from local farms, mainly by coercion. But later, the otriad became a hive of industry, according to the availability of craftsmen. Indeed, in this group it was the working-class who became the élite, the intellectuals among them losing their social status. Eventually, a number of workshops were created; for clothing, leather working, watch making, carpentry, hat making, and bread making. There was a blacksmith's shop, and a hospital; there was a sausage maker (kashrus was kept by only a small number). Because it was such a large body of people there had to be a structure and the author has a brief discussion on charismatic and bureaucratic authority. She especially notes Tuvia Bielski's charisma but also spends time examining the otriad's hierarchical organisation.

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The story obviously centres on the group, but is placed within a more general account of, for example, the conflict between the Soviet government and the Polish Government in Exile in London, which resonated in the relationships between Russian and Polish elements in the various partisan groups. Moreover, she tells of the problems between the Bielskis and the Soviet partisans, of which formation the Bielski otriad in due course became a part. She speaks of antisemitism among the Russian and Polish partisan bands, resulting in the deaths of some Jews as well as Jewish fighters from those bands joining the Bielskis to escape antisemitism.

One of the most interesting chapters is on women. Jewish women, leaving the nearby ghettos, aiming to reach Bielski, might be raped or murdered on the way. The policy of admitting all Jews meant that as many as 35–40 per cent of the total were women. But they were not treated equally; while men could raise their status by acquiring guns, even women who had guns could not go on food expeditions. Their activities were the traditional ones, such as caring for children. Most young women looked for a man for protection and status, but there were no official weddings. There were many casual sexual relationships but some of them were long-lasting. Tuvia, the leader, was keen to save children, but hardly any were born. Instead there were many abortions.

This is an academic work, fully referenced, but much of the evidence comes from the author's interviews with survivors conducted mainly in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Strangely she does not overtly discuss problems of methodology, of the validity and reliability of the evidence she amasses, especially of memory. Now, it may be that the experiences of their time in the western Belarus forests were indelibly fixed and were recounted accurately but this is unknowable. Implicitly, she is aware of the question, as she compares, from time to time, the accounts of an incident from different sources. Thus, as the whole group of a thousand or more left the forest hideout in 1944, once the Germans had retreated, there is controversy as to whether Tuvia Bielski, the leader, shot a man called Polonecki for in effect disobeying Tuvia's order. (There are other accounts of individuals being shot for various reasons.)

However, the fact that there might be differing recollections or even inaccurate memory of details does not invalidate the main features of the story. On the whole the book rings true, as an excellent addition to the corpus of literature on the *shoah* as well as to Jewish military history.

HAROLD POLLINS

CHRONICLE

In June 2008 Daniel Vulkan and David Graham published a Report of the Community Research Unit of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, entitled 'Population Trends among Britain's Strictly Orthodox Jews'. Its Executive Summary stated:

Births

We estimate that 1,056 Jewish babies were born in Stamford Hill (London) and Broughton Park (Manchester) during 2007. In addition, between 250 and 350 other babies were born to strictly Orthodox Jews elsewhere.

Marriages

Since 1990 the total number of strictly Orthodox marriages in Britain has been increasing at an annual average rate of 4.0%. Of the 283 couples whose engagements were announced in Stamford Hill in 2007, 69% involved one non-British partner.

Population size

We estimate the size of Britain's strictly Orthodox population to be between 22,800 and 36,400 people (mid-point 29,600). This is out of about 300,000 Jews in Britain. Strictly Orthodox Jews comprise one-third (33%) of all Jewish children (under 18) in this country.

Annual growth rate

The average annual growth of Britain's strictly Orthodox population from the early 1990s to the present (2007) has been at about 4% per annum.

The Introduction to the Report states that the term *haredi* is 'an umbrella term to describe Jews who emphasise a strict adherence to Orthodox Judaism' and adds that the largest concentrations are in

- Stamford Hill in London — which for the purposes of this report is defined as the five wards of Brownswood, Cazenove, Lordship, New River and Springfield in the London Borough of Hackney, plus the ward of Seven Sisters in the London Borough of Haringey.
- Broughton Park in North Manchester incorporating the wards of Broughton and Kersal in Salford, and Sedgley in the Borough of Bury.
- There are also *haredim* in the Borough of Gateshead in Tyne and Wear, and in the wards of Golders Green, Hendon and Edgware in the London Borough of Barnet.

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The Report specifies:

The strictly Orthodox community is not homogeneous. Amongst the Ashkenazim, who account for the majority of strictly Orthodox Jews in Britain, the main distinction is between the *hasidim* and the non-*hasidim*. The *hasidim* comprise a number of distinct sects. Amongst the non-*hasidim*, a distinction is often made between ‘German’ and ‘Lithuanian’ customs. The Sephardim are distinguished primarily by their country of origin.

Estimates of the proportions of strictly Orthodox Jews belonging to these various sub-groups can be gleaned from data on strictly Orthodox schools in Stamford Hill. Table 6 summarises the enrolment data for boys in Years 1 to 7 by denomination.

Table 6.
Enrolment of boys in strictly Orthodox schools in
Stamford Hill, 2006/2007

Denomination	School(s)	Pupils (Year 1 to Year 7)	Percentage of Total
Satmar	Talmud Torah Yetev Lev	450	26.8%
Belz	Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass	383	22.8%
	Talmud Torah Beis Aharon		
Bobov	Talmud Torah Bnei Tzion	181	10.8%
Vizhnitz	Talmud Torah Chaim Meirim	169	10.0%
Skver	Talmud Torah Toldos Yaakov Yosef	137	8.2%
Lubavitch	Lubavitch House School	111	6.6%
Non-hasidic	Getters Talmud Torah	249	14.8%
	Yesodey Hatorah School		
Total		1,680	100.0%

A second source of data which provided an indication of the size of the Satmar movement within Stamford Hill is a Satmar-only version of the *Shomer Shabbos* directory which, in 2000, listed 657 households in Stamford Hill. By comparison, we can interpolate Table 6 to obtain an estimate of the total number of strictly Orthodox households in Stamford Hill at that time of around 2,500.

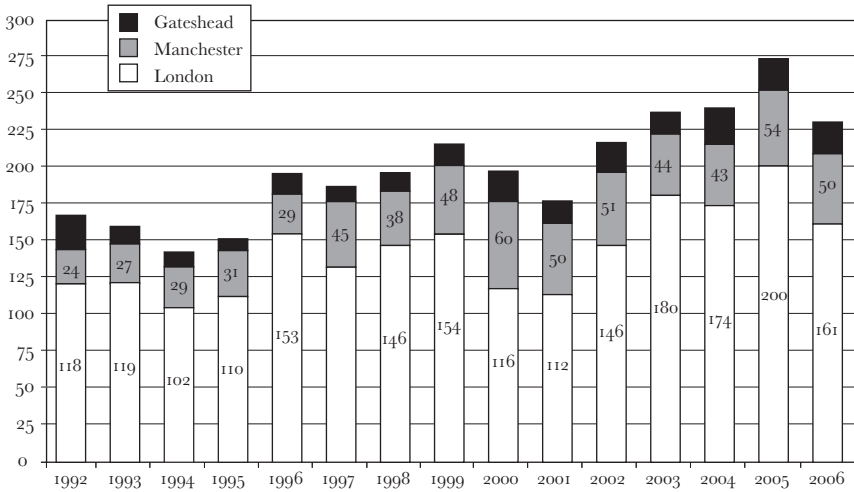
In Manchester, fewer schools are identifiable with particular denominations, and it is not therefore possible to use school enrolment data to estimate the relative sizes of the different denominations.

Strictly Orthodox Marriages

The Board of Deputies collects data each year on the number of marriages which have taken place in synagogues in Britain. Graph 3 shows the total number of marriages taking place in strictly Orthodox synagogues by geographical area, for the 15-year period 1992 to 2006. The data show irregular growth over the period and also suggest that there has been a slight shift of the population away from London towards Manchester.³

³ It should be noted that marriage-related data are also published in *Kol Mevasser*; however they are incomplete, and therefore have not been reproduced here.

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Graph 3. Total strictly Orthodox marriages, by area, 1992–2006.

Strictly Orthodox Births

Circumcision data are collected annually by the Board of Deputies and used to estimate the size of Jewish birth cohorts. However, as noted in our report *Community Statistics 2006* (Graham and Vulcan, 2007), these data do not distinguish between denominations. They do not therefore provide a means of determining the number of babies born in the strictly Orthodox community, making it necessary to turn to other sources. One method is to record the number of *shalom zachar* ceremonies in the community. This is a celebration which takes place on the first Friday night after the birth of a male child, and is observed customarily by Orthodox Jews of Ashkenazi origin. Notices of such celebrations in Stamford Hill are published in *Kol Mevasser*.

For various reasons (such as birth timings or religious holidays) not all male births are recorded as *shalom zachars*; however residual births are published in a separate section of *Kol Mevasser*.

Kol Mevasser also includes announcements of some female births. However, since the number of these is significantly lower than the number of male birth announcements, it is clear that the records are incomplete. Therefore the total number of female births must be estimated by imputation. Assuming that the male to female birth ratio is the same for the *haredim* as that of the national population of England and Wales, we obtain a total estimate of 14.5 births per week in Stamford Hill, and 735 for the period from January 2007 to December 2007.

Total Number of Strictly Orthodox Births in Britain

In total these data sources suggest that at least 1,056 *haredi* babies were born during 2007 of which 30.4% were born in Broughton Park. This does not

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include any babies born to *haredi* Jews in North-west London or Gateshead; however, based on the ratio of the number of strictly Orthodox Jews in these two areas to the national strictly Orthodox population, we estimate that between 250 and 350 babies may be added to this total.

*

In June 2008 we received a publication from London's Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), *New Directions, New Achievements*. It states:

JPR aims to advance the fortunes of Jewish communities across Europe by developing policy ideas for an inclusive Europe where difference is cherished and common values prevail. Our vision is of a continent that provides Jews and other minority groups with the opportunity to maintain and develop their cultural, religious or ethnic traditions, in harmony with society's overarching common values, while playing a full part as citizens in their respective countries.

The eight-page publication ends with the statement that the JPR has a three-fold task: 'Dissemination: To ensure that our policy research is of value to European Jewry, JPR will concentrate on translating the results of research and new thinking into practical policy ideas'.

The second task is 'Key Issues: Develop a new definition of "community", which will include and empower all, rather than ostracise and denigrate'; and the third task is entitled 'Fit for the Future: The value of policy research and the generation of policy ideas lies in its insistence on asking and answering the question: What kind of future do we want for our children?'.

*

The Times newspaper of 23 February 2006 has an article (page 81) on 'Eating of Israel's forbidden fruits'. It states that 'orthodox Jews face an ethical dilemma in their supermarket shop'.

Orthodox Jews are orchestrating their own boycott of Israeli goods... the boycott is not motivated by politics, but by a biblical injunction. 'In the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath at rest, a Sabbatical to the Lord', it is stated in Leviticus. The article states that according to some rabbis, the seventh year began in September 2007 — which means that no new crops can be planted, so vegetables cannot be grown. Minimal maintenance can take place only on fruit trees, defined as those that bear produce year in year.

'So as Gaza looks to Israel for its fuel, Orthodox householders look to Gaza for their vegetables'. Agricultural produce from areas which are outside the Land of Israel as defined by the Talmud — is perfectly permissible... This dependency has worked relatively well in the past.

However, the article goes on to comment that for centuries that Sabbatical had been little more than an academic subject, as few Jews lived in the Holy Land. One leading rabbi is said to have stated that farming could continue if the land was sold to a non-Jew and then bought back when the sabbatical was over. According to *The Times* article, the British Jewish mainstream has rejected the land sale custom and advised 'to avoid using products that are grown in Israel'.

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CHRONICLE

In November 2008 the Community Research Unit (CRU) of the Board of Deputies of British Jews issued a report on Britain's Jewish Community Statistics 2007 (by David Graham and Daniel Vulkan). Their key findings were:

Marriages — The number of marriages in 2007 was 911, a slight increase on the previous year's total, but still 9% below the number achieved in 2005. The trend over the last decade continued to be flat.

Gittin (divorces) — 229 couples obtained a *get* in 2007, the lowest figure in almost twenty years, however this figure was likely to be smaller than the true number of divorcing couples that married under Jewish auspices.

Burials/cremations (deaths) — 2,948 burials/cremations were recorded in 2007, a decline of 5% on the 2006 figure. During the past decade the number of recorded Jewish deaths had declined by around 25%.

Understanding the data

The authors say 'These data are collected on behalf of the whole community. It is the only survey to do this on an annual basis and therefore the data are unique in being able to show changes over time. From the point of view of community planners, the data represent the most up-to-date portrayal of the Jewish community in Britain. Although they are indicative of actual demographic trends, they only represent those Jews who have chosen, or whose families have chosen to associate themselves with the Jewish community through a formal Jewish act, i.e. circumcision, marriage in a synagogue, dissolution of marriage by a Beth Din or Jewish burial or cremation. Consequently, Jews who have not chosen to identify in these ways do not appear in this report. Further, it should be recognised that these data are collected regardless of institutional denomination. They therefore include some individuals who would not be recognised as Jewish by all sections of the community'.

