

Leo Baeck College

LBC Alum

February 2016/Adar 1 5776

Welcome to LBCAlum

Welcome to the first LBCAlum of 2016. Huge thanks to Nicole Taub, who worked on LBCAlum from the start but who has now moved on, and my gratitude to Rhona Lesner who has stepped in to help me with this issue. The mix of articles this time is somewhat eclectic and I hope you find them interesting. Please think about contributing something of your own to a future issue; let us know if you've been reading a particularly compelling book, and especially if there is any item of Personalia that you would like to share. Contributions should be sent to rhona.lesner@lbc.ac.uk

Rabbi Dr Charles Middleburgh, Dean

Inside this issue:	Pages
WOMEN RABBIS IN THE PULPIT RABBI ELLI TIKVAH SARAH WITH RABBI DR BARBARA BORTS	2-3
CONTRIBUTIONS OF PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM IN AUSTRALIA RABBI FRED MORGAN	3-4
GOD IS IN A COFFEE CUP RABBI PAULINE BEBE	5-6
THOUGHTS ON SPIRITUALITY AND HOSPICE CARE RABBI DR CHAIM JOSEPH WENDER	6-7
A RABBI GOES TO AUSCHWITZ RABBI WALTER ROTHSCHILD	7-11
EUROPEAN JUDAISM	11
WORDS FROM THE PAST RABBI JOHN RAYNER z"l	12
ERNST LEITZ OF WETZLAR: HELPING THE PERSECUTED RABBI FRANK DABBA SMITH	13-14
PERSONALIA	15
"I'VE BEEN READING THIS BOOK....."	15

Women Rabbis in the Pulpit. A Collection of Sermons Edited by Rabbi Dr Barbara Borts and Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah



Contributors to Women Rabbis in the Pulpit
at the book launch

Women Rabbis in the Pulpit - A collection of sermons was launched at Leo Baeck College on 7 December 2015 in celebration of Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick, the first woman rabbi to be ordained by the college. The event, hosted by LBC Principal, Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris, attracted a large audience, and included many of the 46 women rabbis who contributed sermons to the book.

The impetus for *Women Rabbis in the Pulpit* came from a (personal) challenge to Barbara at *Bet Debora* Jewish Feminist Conference, which was held in England in April 2015. When discussing what else we could do to further the study of women in the rabbinate, one of the delegates suggested that Barbara could, among other things, publish a collection of her sermons.

However, since 2015 marked the 80th anniversary of the ordination of the first woman Rabbi, Regina Jonas, in Germany on 27 December 1935, and the 40th of the ordination of Jackie Tabick, the first post-war female rabbi in Europe, Barbara thought the more immediate priority was to produce a publication to celebrate these important anniversaries. What better way to do this than by collecting sermons from as many colleagues as possible and so create a testament to women's involvement in the 'pulpit.' Barbara approached Elli and the project took off.

We asked women to choose the sermon

that they wanted to contribute and explain why they chose that particular one. The reasons are interesting and varied, as are the sermons.

The sermons collected were delivered on a variety of different occasions, several on *Shabbat*, some on festivals, and the greatest

number during the *yamim nora'im*, the 'awed days'. The authors employ Biblical and rabbinic sources, yes, but also poetry, prose, newspaper articles, web pages, and popular music, among other things, demonstrating how to fuse Jewish teaching with the other materials that are important in the lives of their congregations. The sermons also display a wide variety of styles and approaches - scholarly, didactic, poetic, spiritual, personal - expressing a variety of individual rabbinic voices. Celebrating the women's rabbinate, the sermons demonstrate a plurality of perspectives and experiences.

The themes explored are equally diverse. To reflect this diversity, we decided to arrange the sermons thematically under headings, and chose the following: Living a Jewish Life; Being Human; God and Spirituality; Responses and Responsibility to the World; Feminism and Gender; Life and Loss.

Sadly, two of the 55 women ordained since 1975 are no longer alive. The book concludes with tributes to Sheila Shulman, z"l, and Erlene Wahlhaus, z"l, who received *s'mikhah* in 1989 and 1999, respectively.

Women in the rabbinate have made a difference. It is in hearing the prayers of our tradition being led by women rabbis that changes such as non-gendered language and the inclusion of women's poems, prayers and songs are slowly becoming the norm in progressive communities. It is because of women rabbis' embodied experiences as women that various hitherto

Continued/.....

unacknowledged life cycle and life events have been commemorated or celebrated. It is through women’s scholarship that texts have been re-examined and read in the light of the full partnership of women in Jewish life.

As each year passes, women rabbis throughout the Jewish world are, together, extending the great project of transforming Judaism into an inclusive inheritance. With the publication of *Women Rabbis In the Pulpit: A Collection of Sermons*, to mark the 40th anniversary of the ordination of Jackie Tabick, the first woman Rabbi in Britain and Europe, and the 80th anniversary of the ordination of Regina Jonas, the first woman Rabbi in history, another milestone has been reached.

Contributions of Progressive Judaism in Australia Rabbi Fred Morgan

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in his book *The Dignity of Difference*, makes a superb case for learning to live with diversity as the ultimate purpose of the Divine creation. He applies this argument to the plurality of religions but he stops short of applying it to the multiple expressions of faith within Judaism itself. Rabbi Sacks speaks as a liberal when it comes to “inter-religious” understanding but his liberal attitude fails when it comes to “intra-religious” understanding.

As a Progressive Jew I celebrate the plurality I find within Judaism. This is my personal credo. More than this, however, I think it is essential to recognise the special contributions that each expression of our life as Jews that have not come from any other source. Modern history has shown that we

need these insights and initiatives in order for Judaism to thrive and remain true to its mission in the world. In saying this, I am not suggesting that all Jews should affiliate to Progressive synagogues or identify with Progressive forms of Judaism. On the contrary, I believe that diversity is central to the Divine purpose, within Judaism as well as beyond it. Like Rabbi Sacks, I feel that sameness can only be brought about through a totalitarian form of authority, and that is not a good thing. But unlike Rabbi Sacks, I hold that it is important to acknowledge what is good in other expressions of Judaism, even those with which we do not agree. This is the way to achieve the “dignity of difference” that is the leitmotiv of Rabbi Sacks’s book.

Progressive Judaism has made significant contributions to Judaism in many crucial areas. I am going to concentrate on two of them in this article. The first of these is women’s rights. Sensitivity towards women’s roles came about as an aspect of a more general awareness of human rights that began after the First World War but really developed after the Second World War in America and other liberal democratic societies, including Australia. As a result of this growing awareness, education for girls leading to a bat mitzvah ceremony in parallel with the traditional practice of bar mitzvah was introduced in the non-Orthodox movements. Women took on lay leadership roles in synagogues. In the 1970s the major non-Orthodox rabbinical seminaries began ordaining women as rabbis and cantors.

It is thanks to these developments that the role of women has gradually changed in Orthodox circles as well. Today women sit on the boards of many Orthodox shuls, in many mainstream Orthodox shuls b’not mitzvah



UPJ Rabbis, presidents and professions at leo Baeck Centre, 2013 Photo: Dean Schmideg

ceremonies are common, some Orthodox shuls in Jerusalem and elsewhere have instituted female minyanim in which girls can leyn Torah, and there are now egalitarian Orthodox synagogues such as Shira in Melbourne at which girls celebrate bat mitzvah with the whole congregation in the same manner as their male peers. The ordination of one of Melbourne's own Orthodox women teachers as "Rabbah", announced several months ago in *The AJN*, is simply the latest stage in this movement which began some decades ago in Progressive Jewish circles. These developments have come to be seen as an organic development within Orthodox communities. But, though they have a halachic basis, they did not "fall from heaven". Without the impetus from Progressive Judaism over several decades, it is inconceivable that they would be taking place at all within the Orthodox world.

The second contribution made by Progressive Judaism is a renewed concern for social justice. This came about after centuries of inward-looking self-absorption on the part of Jewish communities around the world, and especially in the shtetlach of Eastern Europe. These were indeed thriving, vibrant communities, but they took little interest in issues of social justice in the world around them. It was only with the creation of nation states and the extension of citizenship to minority groups that the Jewish community came to engage with other groups living in the same societies. This dynamic gave rise to liberal expressions of Judaism. These sought to bring Torah based notions of justice to the societies in which they lived. The early Reform Jews saw this as a rediscovery of what they called "Prophetic Judaism", a Jewish practice that focused more on the deep ethical insights of the prophets than on the legal minutiae of halachah. It was, in effect, a redressing of the balance that they felt had been skewed by an over-insistence on ritual activities at the expense of a broader social-ethical vision.

As a result, Reform Judaism in America became deeply involved with social-political issues of its day and took an active role in promoting social justice, especially in the inter-War period. From the 1960s onwards there has been a move in the many branches of Progressive Judaism to integrate social

justice concerns with elements of halachic Jewish practice, and thus to re-create a Jewish vocabulary and context for social justice activities. One of the fruits of this amalgam has been the emergence of the notion of "tikkun olam – repairing the world", as a means of locating prophetic values within a halachic framework. The way that the Progressive world appropriated this Hebrew expression – first found in the Mishnah, then in the liturgy (the "Aleynu" prayer) and then in Kabbalah, meaning different things in each context – is in itself a good example of the Progressive approach to Jewish tradition.

"Tikkun olam" is now used right across the Jewish world as a motivational phrase, directing attention to our obligations beyond our Jewish boundaries to the global society in which we live. It is popular in all the major denominations; books on the topic have been produced by Orthodox as well as Reform rabbis, and it encapsulates a Judaism which sees itself as one religion among many yet with a world-class mission. Out of "tikkun olam" has emerged active involvement with interfaith dialogue, ecology and climate change, refugees and asylum seekers, the rights of indigenous peoples, and the status of Israel within our messianic ideals. Though these concerns were originally raised in the modern period as a reflection of Progressive Judaism's focus on "Prophetic Judaism", they have now percolated through the diverse expressions of Judaism in all directions. The organisation "Stand Up", aka Jewish Aid Australia, is a product of this process, as is the "Mitzvah Day" project that takes place simultaneously in several countries in mid-November.

Just as Orthodox Judaism has been and continues to be a source of enrichment for Progressive Jews, so Progressive Judaism has been and continues to be a source of enrichment for Orthodox Jews. This is true whether or not we acknowledge the fact. But by acknowledging it, we live out the "dignity of difference" that is so central to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's vision of the world, a vision that I as a Progressive Jew share.

*Rabbi Fred Morgan AM is Emeritus Rabbi,
Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne and
professorial fellow,
Australian Catholic University*



Rabbi Fred Morgan

“God is in a cup of coffee”

Rabbi Pauline Bebe

Nov 2015 Huffington Post

On my way to the synagogue each week, since last January, I stop in front of all the candles, flowers, short letters, drawings and pencil cups left on top of a makeshift sidewalk memorial on Richard Lenoir boulevard. Little by little, I saw the flowers fade, the candles burn out – but isn't that the nature of a candle to flicker in and out, like life itself?

I was not able to outmanoeuvre the memory; rather it sorrowfully withered away. Perhaps grief had become like garments of skins that clothed our souls; or perhaps because, as the Psalmist also said (Ps 103:15-16): "enosh kekhatzir yamav", "a human being, his days are like those of grass, he blooms like a flower of the field... A wind passes by and it is no more, its own place no longer knows it".

How quickly one is forgotten, in the very place he or she once occupied! Even if I'm dimly aware that men, women and children were guarding this open wound, engraved forever in their flesh, in reality pedestrians are simply just walking past this sad memory; and the injury seems to be fading away. Paris, after all, was regaining her rights, her sunny disposition. Don't we say that we learn to live with our wounds? Even the picture of Ahmed Merabet had disappeared –that policeman shot in cold-blood at the street corner of our synagogue– whose smile was almost eerily comforting, which now I miss.

Ten months later, as many months as the fingers of two hands, hands which, with full awareness, can gently touch each other out of love, like ones sculpted by Rodin, or beat out the time during a concert, like those of rock singers... or even shout their support to athletes, or, of their own choice, wield a gun and murder. Ten months later terror has struck again, and our children have learned to recognise these sounds to which we did not want their ears to be accustomed: sounds of shootings and explosion.

This time, the targets were no more rebellious freedom-loving cartoonists, nor Jews in a supermarket, or children in a Jewish school or soldiers. This time, one could no longer put a label on their forehead and say "it's not me, it's

someone else" or even "am I my brother's keeper?" while shrugging his or her shoulders. Yet, they were told they should not say "Yes - but", they were told that when a Jew was attacked, it was the French Republic which was under attack, when freedom of speech was violated, such as satirists, it was freedom itself which was crushed, that it had nothing to do with communities fighting against each other, importing conflicts from elsewhere. They were told all this, but they didn't believe it, they didn't want to hear it.



Friday night, blood was shed, dreadfully once again and this time, everyone understood that in a morbid and deadly exaltation, regardless of the target, the murderers didn't see faces anymore but only numbers - and the bigger the number, the better their glory in a cruel and obscene way.

Words, buried a long time ago in our collective memories, reappeared: war, enemies, evil, cruelty, retaliation, strikes... And other images appeared, those of the victims: young and smiling, those of the terrorists: young and smiling – impossible to differentiate one from the other. We would so much like to “read” evil, identify it, but it is not written on one's face! Neither the origin, nor the social environment, nor even the level of education helps explain their radicalisation. But the ideas, they are clearly discernible: the cult of death, the praise of martyr hood, the abdication of reason, a binary system of hatred of everything that doesn't fit in their system of thinking, blind obedience to bloodthirsty leaders.

Saturday morning, I saw my city, Paris, stunned. I saw the blood running into cups of coffee, Paris wounded. I saw once again the candles, bouquets of flowers, and notes, left at the corners of scarred streets. I saw the silence



imposed upon by death. But Saturday as well, I was proud of the bat-mitzvah who, after spending a night shedding tears, read from the Torah... upholding the victory of words, of thought, of the essential question... and who had said, "are we not all interpreters?"

I was proud of these people, defying their fears, gathering up their courage to come to the synagogue and sing with wounded hearts our liturgy that carries hope and peace. I was proud of those Parisians who had invaded the terraces of cafés and for whom having a drink was an act of resistance. I was proud of all those who fought to save lives and heal, police officers, investigators, doctors and first-aid rescue workers.

I was - and still am - proud of this city where atheists, nonconformists, lay persons, rationalists, scientists or religious are able to walk hand in hand. Where Imams, Rabbis, Priests, Pastors, Buddhist monks and lay people are able to write together a hymn to humanity, as we did in the 11th district; where women do not have to hide their faces because they are women; where people rush in the morning to buy their golden brown baguettes; where the museums and monuments talk of all of our pasts; where sports are celebrated; where diversity is pampered; where Art can be expressed freely in all its forms; where rock music challenges preconceived ideas, and where youth actively re-imagine the norms of artistic expression, daring to be different.

I love Paris, where cafes are places to live – where we learn to love, to discuss, where their counters, in the early morning hour, support sleeping elbows. I understand those who say that we shouldn't pray for Paris; because in Paris, to have a coffee is an act of freedom and of spirituality. It is like dancing under bridges, or wandering along the banks of the Seine River. Because Paris IS a prayer.

"Surely, the Eternal is present in this place and I didn't know it" (Gen. 28:16), says our ancestor Jacob, waking up from his dream. God is certainly not in a speech which spews forth hatred and destruction, rather, God is in a cup of coffee!

The French original appeared in the Huffington Post

Thoughts on Spirituality and Hospice Care

Rabbi Dr. Chaim Joseph Wender, F.LBC

Greetings to the Leo Baeck College community from sunny Florida, USA. My name is Chaim Wender. I was ordained at LBC in 1979. Subsequently, for twenty-eight years, I served in the pulpit. Most of those years were in my native USA, but from 1990-1995, I was rabbi of the Woodford Progressive Synagogue.

My greatest interest in the rabbinate had long been in the area of Judaism and gerontology. Consistent with that interest, during my years at Woodford, I was also privileged to write the ULPS pamphlet, "Where We Stand On Ageing", and act as the first chairman of the ULPS Task Force on Ageing, Doroteinu. Since 2008, I have held the post of Rabbinical Coordinator for the Hospice of Palm Beach County, here in South Florida.

To my mind, pastoral care in the hospice setting is the quintessential spiritual care. By definition, our patients and their families cannot realistically hope for the conventional medical outcome of cure. However, our patients and their families and our staff can and do, indeed, aspire to achieve an outcome of *healing* - healing of pain and suffering, on the physical, emotional and spiritual levels.

Our highly trained, experienced and caring interdisciplinary teams of physicians, nurses, certified nursing assistants, social workers, chaplains, music therapists and bereavement therapists, working in tandem, bring an array of skills to address the needs and concerns of our patients and their loved ones.

From the earliest stages of admission, through the aftermath of bereavement, our teams patiently, perseveringly and unwaveringly strive to help those in greatest need to understand and accept the reality of the situation with which they are confronted, and to find the *shalom*, the peace of mind, body and spirit, that will lead them to find reasons for affirmation even as they journey through the valley of the shadow. And above all, as they venture on this journey, they know that they are not, and will not be, alone.

Specifically, as chaplains, or pastoral counsellors, we apply a variety of techniques

Continued/...



Rabbi Dr Chaim Joseph Wender, F.LBC

in our spiritual caring of our hospice patients and their families. Our spiritual caring begins with supportive presence and listening actively, with care and interest. We encourage the patients, and those dearest to them, to engage in reviewing the life of the patient, with a view to achieving the recognition that there is far more here than meets the eye.

**A RABBI GOES TO AUSCHWITZ ,
REFLECTIONS ON JANUARY 27th 2002.
Rabbi Walter Rothschild**



The frail, often elderly, individual before us, has experienced many days and years of well-being and meaningful life, of blessings received and shared, that we dare not forget. For through remembrance of the good times and the good works and the joys that have preceded, fear and tears and self-pity and regret can begin to give way to gratitude - and gratitude is a key to healing of wounded hearts and spirits.

With gratitude, this unique ministry can then proceed, with assent, to scriptural reference and prayers. And, as we open mind and heart to the comfort and solace of prayer and holy writ, we are reminded of the G-d who is with us in all seasons of life and health. This is the G-d who will continue to be with us in the final pages of our Book of Life, even as that G-d was with us in the beginning, and throughout our earthly sojourn. Hence, we may find a sacred text, such as Psalm 121, to be particularly apt in this context: "The Eternal One will guard your going and your coming, now and forevermore."

I have never travelled to Auschwitz by the 'traditional way'; instead, I prefer to take a passenger train, not a freight. From Berlin - where I live - there are good links by both day and night trains; the only real problem with the latter being that one is woken at the border for the passport controls. But on this year, since I work in the Liberal Jewish community in Munich, and January 27th fell on a Sunday, I had to get a train on Saturday late afternoon - Motzei Shabbat - to Salzburg, change there for a train to Vienna, change stations and catch the night train through to Oswiecim (pronounced "Ozvyenchim"). As a rabbi, I travel all over Europe, and mostly by train. Despite everything, it is a civilised form of transport and brings you to the city centre rather than some scruffy airfield on the outskirts of nowhere. So I am no stranger to night trains.

There is a certain very special and private pleasure each time I buy a Return Ticket to Auschwitz, a pleasure intensified when one sees the old poster in the camp exhibition banning Jews from buying railway tickets on the Nazi "Ostbahn". It really is the most appropriate way to come here - knowing that each bump in the rail, each old brick

building, was passed by others over a half century ago. They, of course, did not know where they were heading, nor (most of the time) what exactly awaited them. For them it was just a slow, agonising, uncomfortable journey with no facilities and no view..... One wonders. Did those who could get to the grille and look out actually follow the route, did they have enough local knowledge to know where they were headed ?

So from München, the former "Hauptstadt der Bewegung", the 'Capital of the Nazi Party', I take a train through Bavaria, through Freilassing (junction for Berchtesgaden) to Salzburg. Here there are only ten minutes to change, but a comfortable Austrian Euro-City express takes me past Linz, Hitler's favourite Austrian city, and then winding through the darkened Wienerwald to Wien.

Vienna sits on the spot where worlds meet. Wien Westbahnhof (West Station) is a part of Western Europe. Here arrive the luxury trains from Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium..... Wien Südbahnhof (South Station) comes in two parts at two levels. The "Süd" part is a part of Southern Europe; here the trains leave for Italy and the Mediterranean, for the Balkans



Rabbi Walter Rothschild

- Slovenia, Croatia..... The "Ost" side, in contrast, is already Central Europe. Somehow, I like it. In its dingy post-war reincarnation there is none of the former Imperial magnificence left, more a flavour of the concrete 1950s and the Cold War. Here stood my train - the 21.25 "Chopin", mainly Polish sleeping or couchette through coaches for Warszawa (Warsaw) and for Krakow (Cracow), and even a modern red-white-blue Russian sleeping car for Moskhva (Moscow). (I took one of these once from Brussels to Moscow and back - a very comfortable trip.) On the neighbouring track is the evening train for Bratislava - mostly Slovakian coaches, but also an Austrian one and a Ukrainian sleeper for Kiev, with its stove burning coal briquettes, the smell wafting nostalgically under the canopy. Just after we depart, the train of Hungarian coaches from Budapest is due to arrive. Truly this is an international station. One for ordinary travellers, not wealthy tourists.

The couchette for Krakow is almost empty, and I have a six-berth compartment to myself. A blessing, for there is little spare room for luggage. It seems overheated and has the usual semi-faecal and semi-coal-smoke odours of such vintage vehicles. But on a journey like this one does not complain. All things are relative. The Conductor is polite, and notes from his clipboard - "Ah, the passenger for Oswiecim". He says nothing more, nor do I. There is no need. Who else travels to this place at this time? He gives me my bedding and leaves me alone.

We set off through the dark over the Donau and along the old Imperial Nordbahn to Lundenburg (now the Czech border town of Breclav), past Strasshof, where the dark engine shed looms - now a museum filled with preserved steam locomotives, it was built with slave labour in the 1940s and, according to some reports, there are still unmarked mass graves on the site. There is History along every kilometre of this route. But soon it is time to try to sleep.....



German occupied Poland in 1939-40

I awake with a shock. It is 2am, we are at Ostrava (the German "Böhmisches Ostrau"), there is some shunting, then off we go past Bohumin to the border station at Petrovice. Yet more shunting. The platforms are very well lit, there is a busy Police and Customs office on the main platform. Three trains are in at the same time, and our coach is shunted onto another and then back onto a different set - eventually we have a Polish locomotive, two coaches from Prague and two from Vienna; the rest of our coaches have joined various Russian, Czech and Ukrainian vehicles at adjacent platforms. This, of course, will have been the route from Theresienstadt. The Czech and the Polish police come through. Passports, please. Civil. Not threatening. But at 3am on a dark and very cold January

morning, one realises the coach was not overheated after all - it was just right.

In fact a cold, wet January Sunday is in many respects the best time to visit Auschwitz or Birkenau - there are not many other tourists around, no groups of "March of the Living" teenagers or self-righteous zealots. I am coming here because I have been invited - for the third time - to be "the Jewish representative" at the annual commemoration ceremonies to mark the liberation of the camp on a similar cold January in 1945. The small, elderly and penniless committee of Polish survivors is incredibly grateful that a Rabbi bothers to come - yet it is I who should be grateful for the invitation to perform this mitzvah. Last year my wife and son came too - many of her family, including her father, had come all the way from Westerbork in Holland. Only her father came back, and even that was by foot to Odessa, for repatriation by sea. One doesn't grumble about overheated sleeping cars in such circumstances. Years ago, in Leeds, after a funeral, I found myself talking to a former sailor on the "S.S. Monoway", the ship that made three return trips taking refugees from Odessa to Marseilles, and bringing back Cossack former prisoners-of-war, heading for certain torture and death under the Stalinist regime that branded all who survived the war with the Wehrmacht as "traitors". Whether Soldiers or Slave Labourers, it was classed as a crime to come back alive..... The history of the last century is SO messy. What does "coming home" or

“repatriation” mean in such circumstances?

We crawl now through dark empty stations and past sidings filled with coal wagons; we are running a few minutes late - but then, who wants to rush to Auschwitz? I am simply glad to be nearly sixty years late. The Polish railways have an enormous backlog of maintenance - truly, those who are afraid of high speeds need not worry here. But they function. At 04.33, six minutes behind schedule after a journey across half of Europe, I am the only one to alight at Oswiecim, a seven-platform junction station with lines heading four ways. Maybe those who criticise that “the railway to Auschwitz should have been bombed” ought to look at a railway map. The countryside is mainly fairly flat and featureless; there are a few bridges over rivers, but nothing that could, even if bombed, not have been repaired within three days under war conditions. This was - and still is - an incredibly busy network of lines, serving coal mines, power stations, a major locomotive works at Chrzanow, a sugar factory..... Far too strategically important, and with far too many loop lines and duplicate routes, to be severed for long. And as for the trains already under way, from Westerbork, from Drancy, from Saloniki - they would have got through, with little delay. Railwaymen on all sides pride themselves on things like that. The story of British and American railway engineers restoring blasted tunnels and demolished bridges, of restoring blitzed lines and yards, is one of amazing achievement under great pressure. Germans, Poles and Russians - they were no slouches, either. So I really

doubt whether a single life would have been saved, whether a single additional person would have been given pause for thought, would have feared that “the Allies know what we are doing”. Sorry if this shatters an illusion - but that’s the way it is, when one bothers to read some history. Apparently the main threat to crippling the Nazi supply lines came with the dropping of mines into the Danube - the loss of barges carrying oil from Romania was severe, and the river was harder to clear of wrecks than any railway marshalling yard.



Present day Oswiecim
Town square

Even on a Sunday there are some early-morning commuters on the bare platforms. I walk over the windy footbridge to check a hunch, and find I am right - the old black wartime 2-10-0 steam locomotive that had been rusting under a blanket of snow in January 2000, and which I did not have time to check in the foggy January 2001, has indeed gone, vanished. A pity. It would have been an impressive exhibit. In the garden of a railway house is a restored kilometre post: “350 kil. von Wien.” A reminder that this was the old main line, Vienna - Cracow.

At 7, as planned, I meet up with a Polish Catholic friend from Berlin, and we head on foot for the “Auschwitz I” camp, only ten minutes away.

The locals are very keen always to point out that they live in “Oswiecim”, whereas “Auschwitz” was a purely German creation. My friend has a girl friend from this dingy and muddy little town - she hates saying where she comes from. One day, he told me, another girl on the train asked her this normal everyday question, and laughed at the reply; Never having had this response before, she asked why? It turned out, the other girl came from the village of Treblinka..... What it must be like, to carry a Brand of Cain on your very birth certificate.

But - for those who come for the first time - it is always a shock to note that this camp, this notorious place, was at the edge of a town, a town that has since expanded almost to surround it. Like that at Dachau, too. Mauthausen perches on a hilltop, Neuengamme was in the marshland south of Hamburg, Dora in wooded isolated valleys in Thüringen - but here, there are urban buses passing by the gate, and one can understand not only the outrage of those who complain, but also the human needs of those who live here, when from time to time a proposal emerges for a supermarket or a disco in the locality. Of course it is Bad Taste - but what is the alternative? To raze the entire town? For better or worse, people live and work here, too. The bus depot is just up the road.

Red and white Polish flags fly from lamp standards. This is not only the Liberation Day but the Polish National Day of Mourning. The complex of brick two-storey blocks was originally a large garrison, an extensive set of barracks for

Galician officers who must have had a frightfully boring existence under the sullen Silesian sky. Barracks, store rooms, a rail siding connection at a strategic junction - it formed the perfect site for the purpose. But the new inhabitants were there to be tortured and starved and humiliated and murdered in myriad and inventive ways.

A small group has gathered. There is a brief ceremony at the Wall of Death. A small courtyard between Blocks, the windows on one side boarded over, the upper windows on the other half bricked up, posts stand there with metal hooks - from here the people were hung by their arms. Including the man who comes forward now with a wreath - an early political prisoner with an early, three-digit number, my friend informs me; somehow he survived, somehow he helped later to organise a group to form a committee to preserve this place when no-one else was interested - at the outset the volunteers had to lodge in Hoess's former house, use the same bath the Commandant had used.... Brief speeches are made, all in Polish - by people who suffered here, by people whose parents or grandparents were shot here, by a former Kindergarten teacher, two of whose children were shot here.... A trumpet is blown, three drummers beat a rhythm, candles in red glasses are laid; then the wreaths come, scores of them, the wreath-layers formed up in rows four abreast. I notice one on behalf of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland, one on behalf of the city of Wolfsburg, home of Volkswagen.....

We clergy are to speak and

pray later, but there is time for a quiet Kaddish before we are led to buses and driven the short distance to the Auschwitz-II Birkenau complex, enormous and empty as we march in procession down the main access road, parallel to the ramp, to the sidings, the most famous stretch of railway in the world. At the end, between the ruins of demolished crematoria, the International Memorial rises dark and threatening. Israel's Ambassador, Sheva Weiss, delivers a passionate and fluent oration in Polish - I understand everything, though I do not understand a word. Then more wreaths, while the cold wind blows. How could people stand still here at



Appell for hours at a time, without the benefit of coats and breakfast? Two years ago I watched as three members of the Polish Army Honour Guard, fittest of the fit and in full winter uniform, keeled over during the ceremony and had to be bundled into waiting army ambulances and treated for the cold.

It turns out, the organiser explains, that we "religious" are to say our prayers into microphones on a podium near the crematorium. Will God hear any better? Does it

matter now anyway? The survivors are ailing now, many bent, with sticks, and they sit on rows of wooden folding chairs. There will not be many more years before this committee will either vanish or need to be reborn.

So we take our places - a local Catholic priest; my friend the German Catholic layman; myself, a British-born Reform Rabbi; and - and a Polish Buddhist! This year it seems the Polish Protestant bishop and the Orthodox priest could not come. So we step to the microphones.

And the heavens suddenly open. They weep with us. Strong winds nearly blow my siddur out of my hands, I have

to clutch my hat. My siddur is soggy within minutes. But somehow I read the Prayer for the Six Million, in German as well as English - very deliberately, for I think it is important that a Rabbi from Berlin should recite Jewish prayers in German here, a place to which so many German Jews came, from the Grünwald and Putlitzstrasse freight yards. German is not JUST the language of Eichmann and Mengele. I add "El Maleh Rachamim", the wind whipping the words away as I sing, and end with a Kaddish.

It is done. The dead have been honoured, but have not gone away. They stay here still, somehow. But the journalists and the TV crews pack up, the elderly survivors shuffle off and disperse, my task is accomplished. There are no more speeches, no air-conditioned buses, no banquet. I may go.

As I have some time I explore a little further than last year, and then walk along the rotting railway tracks from the end past the ramp to the gate, from the gate across the road, and then there is a jungle, knee-high snow and mud, trees growing over and through the tracks. Nothing has rolled over here for years. But I persevere, interested in following the trail. My soggy coat gets covered in burrs and brambles, my shoes are not suitable for this quagmire. Two fences block my way and force a detour along a muddy field. It seems that the owner of Ulica Pivcina 12 has extended his garden across the disused tracks. The trail is regained and followed through high dead grass to the spot where it joined the main system at the edge of a set of sidings. Here I find "The point of No Return", the point - Americans would call it a 'switch' - which directed the

loaded trains onto this short spur, the destination always visible across the fields. I am fascinated by the details - this is a very specific form of industrial archaeology, the industry in this case being Death. The line was laid only in 1944 to increase efficiency - until this point the victims had to march the distance I have just walked, maybe 2 kilometres. The layout of the tracks does not make sense at first, then it becomes clear that a point has been removed, that here was the spot where locomotives would uncouple and there they would have run round so as to be able to haul their trains into the rearward-facing spur. I find the remains of the little cabin where the pointsman no doubt sat on cold days. This was a well-organised and well-constructed system, designed for heavy traffic.....

I have seen what there is to see, and it is not long now, between the rain showers, to the station, passing on the way the spot where the 1.5 kilometre long spur line to 'Auschwitz I' used to link to the goods yard - part of the track lies there still, and the buffers at the end, but a road has been built over the section by the station, cutting it off. While

awaiting our train, my friend and I discuss Theology. Where was God when Cain killed Abel? Why did God not protect Abel? What is the point of punishing Cain when it is too late? Is there any point in vengeance, or is it just a preventative measure? Catholics believe in a God who was prepared to watch his own son be nailed to a plank of wood - out of Love. How can Jews relate to such a belief? Or to any belief?

And eventually my train to Krakow comes in - only a humble country stopping train, but that most important of all symbols - the train away from here, away from here, away from here.....

Rabbi Walter Rothschild has been the Rabbi of Beth Shalom Liberal Jewish Community, Munich, and also Landesrabbiner for Schleswig-Holstein. He currently serves Or Chadash community, Wien. This article reflects the situation in 2002 - since then there have been some changes, the stations at Wien have been replaced by a new and very modern 'Hauptbahnhof' but there is still a night train to Krakow. A version of this article appeared in 'Jerusalem Post'.

European Judaism

Spring 2016

Rabbi Professor Jonathan Magonet

The next issue of European Judaism, spring 2016, coincides with the European Union for Progressive Judaism conference and includes histories of progressive Judaism in Holland, France and Austria, as well as accounts of developments in Germany and the Czech Republic. A 'Documenta' section includes a number of articles and photographs from WUPJYS conferences in the 60's. The Autumn 2016 issue is dedicated to the memory of Sheila Shulman. We would welcome any photographs of Sheila that people would like to share.

Words from the Past

Rabbi John Rayner CBE z"l

In a sermon reflecting on the grim fast of the ninth of Av, and the Shoah, given in 1977 at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood, John Rayner, z"l, said the following:

There is in all of us a tendency to hold God responsible for what happened. I believe that is a relic of an untenable theology, and that in reality what happened happened not because God willed it but, on the contrary, because God's will was flouted. It was not God who was silent at Auschwitz, it was humanity. God spoke all right, as God always does, but humanity refused to listen. But if that is so, then our duty is clear. It is to change humanity, beginning with ourselves. It is, negatively, to practice vigilance and to conquer the prejudice, the intolerance, the aggressiveness and vindictiveness in ourselves and our fellow men and

women. And it is, positively, to cultivate those qualities and attitudes and modes of behaviour which make for conciliation, harmony and peace.

The task is daunting. All the more do we need to grasp every bit of help we can get from one another, from our tradition, and from the God to whom that tradition is dedicated, whose power flows unceasingly to those who open themselves to its influx. Because we shall often fail, we cannot be sure that what has happened will not happen again. But unless we try, we have no right even to hope so. And unless we try, we betray ourselves, our God and our martyrs. We cannot undo their suffering, but next to that, their dearest wish would surely be that we should do whatever lies in our power to ensure that their children's children shall not suffer like

them. That, when all else has been said and thought and felt, is the task to which the Ninth of Av demands that we should dedicate ourselves. We dare not say that then the death of the martyrs will not have been in vain. But we can say that then our mourning for them will not have been in vain. *Eyt livkot ve-eyt lischok*, 'There is a time to weep and a time to laugh.' Through our efforts and with God's help, may the time for laughing come, *bimheyrat ve-yameynu*, speedily in our days.



SAVE THE DATE

THE KAUFMANN ANNUAL DINNER
GUEST SPEAKER: PROF MONA SIDDIQUI OBE



Leo Baeck College
SIXTY YEARS
AT THE HEART OF PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

25th MAY 2016
MONTCALM HOTEL

RSVP: dinner2016@lbc.ac.uk

Ernst Leitz of Wetzlar: Helping the Persecuted Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith

As a study of both corporate and individual behaviour in the context of Nazi Germany, my PhD research concerning Ernst Leitz of Wetzlar — the manufacturer of the renowned Leica camera — is situated and seeks to build on the insights of scholars within two main spheres of academic activity. The histories of businesses during this period that were non-explicitly governmental corporate entities are vital to this project. An understanding of the actions of the so-called ‘rescuer’, as initiated within the discipline of sociology, is additionally relevant.

My dissertation details activities to help persecuted Jews and non-Jews in three primary but non-exclusive ways: first, giving training and or employment to Jews, half-Jews, non-Jews married to Jews and supporting non-Jews who had engaged in democratic politics prior to the Nazi assumption of power; second, helping, in a consistently humane manner, Jews, half-Jews and non-Jews married to Jews to leave Germany and enabling them to succeed when abroad; third, intervening to help employees and others subjected to criminal prosecution by the Nazi regime. There is evidence, for some eighty-five people who were helped in

different ways, throughout the duration of the Nazi regime.

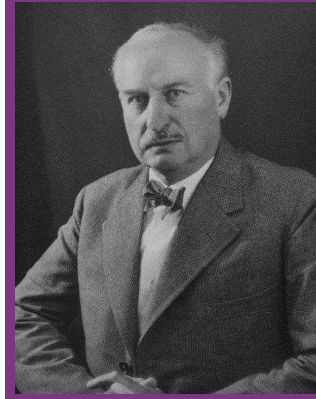
Until this present study, the subject of the activities of the firm Ernst Leitz of Wetzlar and its sole owner Ernst Leitz II during the period of the Third Reich appeared primarily in the form of investigative journalism. I have been a participant as an author and as the subject of interviews as well as further comment.¹ Within this arena, controversy has emerged with regard to the actual numbers of persecuted people helped or rescued by Ernst Leitz II and whether or not he may be regarded as another Oskar Schindler in terms of behaving audaciously in opposition to the regime.²

Ambivalence is present when discussing the public face of Leitz as shown by advertisements, Christmas circulars to employees serving in the Wehrmacht as well as organised festivities. A public image in conformity with the Nazis’ outlook was deemed increasingly necessary as the regime implemented its racial, economic and military aims. Also, Leitz produced armaments to the military including in-house designed aiming and navigation devices for artillery, tanks and rockets. A particular area of contention

is how to regard the usage of forced labour by Ernst Leitz of Wetzlar during the time of the mobilised economy in Nazi Germany.³

The equipment that was fully developed by in-house experts obviously made the Leitz factory strategically very important to the government. Even so, Ernst Leitz II felt acute pressure to join the NSDAP during this period of seeming Nazi invincibility.⁴ First, he persuaded his son Ludwig to apply in 1939 after the Ehrenfeld-Türk affair — when support of a prominent Jewish camera dealer was discovered by a Gestapo spy — and the beginning of the war. Realizing this was apparently insufficient to prevent the authorities installing committed Nazis to direct his company, he submitted his own application in 1941 just after his seventieth birthday and at a time when a seemingly invincible Germany had made vast conquests.⁵

A 1942 NSDAP character assessment of Ernst Leitz II, while praising his devotion to the welfare and working conditions of his employees, emphasises his unyielding opposition to Nazi racial doctrine and his retained democratic political attitudes.⁶ It is expressed, however, that



Dr Ernst Leitz II in the 1930s

¹Frank Dabba Smith, *Elsie’s War: A Story of Courage in Nazi Germany*, (London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 2003).

Frank Dabba Smith, “Ernst Leitz of Wetzlar and Altruism During the Holocaust”, in *Essays in Honour of John D. Rayner*, eds. David Goldberg and Edward Kessler (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2004), 13-27.

Mark Honigsbaum, “A New Life Through a Lens,” *Financial Times Magazine*, 3 February 2007, 16-21.

Thomas Kielinger, “Der Gute Mensch von Wetzlar,” *Die Welt*, 9 February 2007, 10.

Jean- Pierre Langellier, “Au bout de l’objectif, la liberté,” *Le Monde*, 17 February 2007, 3.

²Alois Koesters, “Doch kein Schindler,” *Die Zeit*, 22 March 2007, 13.

Karsten Porezag, *Ernst Leitz aus Wetzlar und die Juden—Mythos und Fakten*, (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2009).

³Heidi Friedrich, “Der andere Schindler,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8 March 2007, 40.

⁴Spruchkammer file for Ernst Leitz II (Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Wiesbaden)

Ibid. Ludwig Leitz applied for membership to the NSDAP on 30th November 1939 and was accepted as member number 7902988.

Subsequently, Ernst Leitz II applied on 10th March 1941 and on 1st April 1941 received membership number 8822317.

⁶Report dated 26th October 1942

he is not a significant threat to the regime due to his advanced age and lessened day-to-day leadership role in his company. This may have been accurate as Leitz's appointment diaries do indicate that he spent much more time away hunting than in earlier years. Nevertheless, he and his daughter, Elsie Kühn-Leitz, soon became involved in a risky attempt to help a Jewish woman escape deportation by helping her to cross into Switzerland.

Questions have arisen as to whether Ernst Leitz II was 'courageous', 'altruistic' or merely 'decent'.⁷ These varying labels have proliferated without sufficient engagement with an academic discourse so as to offer a genuinely helpful and illuminating contribution to understanding the complexities of human behaviour within the context of the relationships between business and the Nazi dictatorship. There remain temptations and pressures, in both German and Jewish settings, to view actions in black and white terms as either that of a 'saint' or 'sinner'. Such controversy, as well as the current academic interest in complex 'grey characters', inspired me to delve into this topic in depth, as a PhD researcher, in order to evaluate the evidence critically and to place it into an historical framework.

My study of the behaviour of Ernst Leitz II, his family and his company concludes that this astute and paternal international businessman

desired to maintain existing relationships through the offering of compassionate practical help, throughout the duration of the Nazi regime. In contrast to Peter Hayes' landmark study of the senior executives at IG Farben, Ernst Leitz II, due to his strongly held democratic outlook and relative autonomy as a sole owner, acted compassionately towards the persecuted. On the other hand, his company was an important supplier of equipment to the German military and Leica cameras were employed not only for producing countless propaganda photographs but also utilised for propagating racist concepts and perpetrators' notorious souvenir photographs. Nor can the persecuted people who were helped by Leitz be viewed merely as victims, for many, in turn, contributed to these ongoing relationships through their personal loyalty as well as working skills. Fortunately for this researcher, friendships continue even today between the descendants of Ernst Leitz and these families.

As I reflect on the long academic and personal journey made during many years I have devoted to this research topic, I have noted changes in my approach to the Holocaust. As mentioned, I no longer regard the conventional binary distinctions between people to be at all adequate. Labels such as 'rescuer', 'victim' and 'bystander' do little to describe complex realities of many individual cases. I've worked with so-

called 'half-Jewish' and 'quarter-Jewish' descendants and I've come to understand that vast numbers of 'Aryan' families included Jewish relations; how can one simply say generalise into 'us' and 'them' categories? More than ever, I cannot regard the enduring emphasis on Jewish tribal 'victimhood' to be at all helpful when it comes to making positive relationships with others, whether on personal, communal or national levels.

As a Liberal Rabbi and a PhD researcher, I am concerned with the survival of a form of Judaism that features, at its core, universalistic humanitarian faith values and reason. I regard the fusion of 'chosenness' and 'victimhood' as a toxic combination of negative values that leads potentially to destructive and even grotesque behaviour towards those regarded as outsiders. In an extreme expression, genocide may result but both history and the present are filled with societies that may have stopped short of 'genocide' but, nonetheless, have engaged in systematic oppression of those deemed to be 'less chosen'. My ministry, therefore, is concerned with supporting the dignity of all individuals together with actively fostering conciliation and cohesion with other faith communities. Together, we take the responsibility of cooperating in order to exercise rigorously the values of compassion, justice and humanitarianism for all.



An advertisement for the Leica appearing in June/July 1940, ('Everything is grasped with the Leica.')

⁷ Karsten Porezag, *Ernst Leitz aus Wetzlar und die Juden—Mythos und Fakten*, (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2009).

⁸ Peter Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

“I’ve been reading this book....”

Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton

I have been reading "The Other Side of Sadness" by George Bonanno.

Bonanno is an American academic whose life work has been research into the psychology of grief and bereavement. He discards the well known theory that grief runs in stages, with the bereaved person gradually moving on from one to the next. Instead he describes grief as an "oscillating search for comfort."

Grief is tolerable, actually, only because it comes and goes in a kind of oscillation. We move back and forth emotionally. "Grief is like a bomber circling round and dropping its bombs each time the circle brings it overhead." It is that respite from the trench of sadness that makes grief bearable. It is the marvellous human capacity to squeeze in brief moments of happiness and joy that allows us to see that we may once again begin moving forward.

One or two out of every ten people tends to have grief reactions that continue to interfere with their ability to function for several years or longer after the loved one’s death. One crucial insight is that prolonged grief is dominated by yearning, the repetitive and futile search for the lost loved one. Bonanno writes movingly about this.

One of the most surprising findings in this book is that psychological debriefing has never been shown to be useful as a global intervention for the general public. The results of the study were shocking. Three years after the accident, patients who had received the simple one-hour debriefing session were doing more poorly in many different areas of their lives than the members of the control group. They had

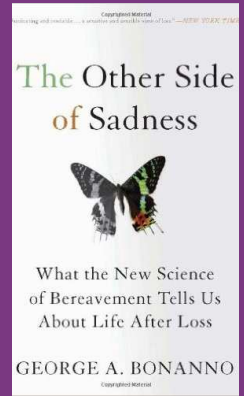
greater levels of distress, more severe physical pain, more physical problems, more impaired functioning in their daily lives, and greater financial problems, and they even reported less enjoyment as passengers when someone else was driving the car. Could it really be the case that such a simple intervention harmed these patients? What about the most distressed patients? Did they, at least, benefit from the intervention? Actually, their reaction was even more decisively negative.

WHO issued a clear warning on its Web site: "Single-session Psychological Debriefing: Not recommended."

Another interesting insight is that one type that seems to be especially susceptible to death anxiety is the authoritarian personality.

Bonanno compares American and Chinese attitudes to grief. He describes the Chinese ceremonies of sending ancestors gifts by burning joss paper and generally trying to get in touch. In contrast with the West, where imagined conversations are often unhelpful and a bad sign, this ritualised "getting in touch" seems to help the Chinese. In fact they have no words for grief or bereavement. The difference seems to be that they imagine they are helping the soul of the deceased person. Even if they don't really believe it, the ritual seems to help. We may perhaps wish to compare this to kaddish and yahrzeit observances

In short, this book is a "must read" for all of us who work pastorally with bereavement. It is challenging and may make us rethink much of what we have been doing for years. The simple message is that rituals help, but counselling often won't.



Personalia

Mazal tov to Frank Dabba Smith on successfully defending his doctoral dissertation on Ernst Leitz of Weslar: Helping the Persecuted.



Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith



Leo Baeck College
At the Heart of Progressive Judaism

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the spring edition of LBCAlum

Leo Baeck College

Sternberg Centre for Judaism

London N3 2SY

www.lbc.ac.uk

Email: info@lbc.ac.uk

Telephone: 020 8349 5600

At the heart of Progressive Judaism