Supplemental Articles
To An Uncertain Future: Volume II, 1992-2013

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Lafayette College
TO OUR FAMILIES
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Robert I. Weiner and Richard E. Sharpless
INTRODUCTION

This collection of articles, essays, reports, letters, and miscellany represents the opinions of the members of the Jewish community of Dijon during most of the decade of the 1990s until the present. Originally published in Mazal Tov, the quarterly journal of the community, as well as in La Lettre Communautaire (1981-1995), these writings provide a supplement to, and hopefully, additional insights towards understanding Dijon’s Jews, as presented by the authors’ An Uncertain Future: Voices of a French Jewish Community, 1940-2012, University of Toronto Press, 2012.

As the authors explain in An Uncertain Future, the Dijon community was, and is, representative of similar communities throughout France and even, perhaps, of post World War II Europe. For example, it evolved through the various stages of renewal, growth, a flourishing maturity and, in recent decades, a slow demographic decline accompanied by potential threats of resurgent anti-Semitism. But the Dijon community also was unique: despite its relatively small size in the early 1990s of approximately 250 families, it fostered practically every aspect of Jewish life and identity. Children and adults, Jews of European background and newcomers from France’s former North African colonies, all found places in local, national, and international organizations housed within the confines of the impressive synagogue. There was, literally, “something for everyone,” and broad participation.

To aid the reader’s understanding, this volume is organized by topics, and from the general to the specific. This includes, for example, articles on French Jewish history, the Holocaust, Israel, the Jews of Dijon, and their responses to anti-Semitism and relations with
Christians and Muslims. Unfortunately, the Holocaust and its dark shadow, plus past French anti-Semitism and its current iterations, appear frequently as subjects of articles. Israel, its accomplishments and travails, also is much discussed.

Although the communal journals published from the late 1970s to the present contain an array of information from the mundane to the serious, what is presented here are the views and interests of the community’s most articulate and, often, most important members: It should be noted that the majority of these are of Ashkenazi, or European origins.

The Ashkenazis, understandably, dominated the community’s synagogue leadership and organizations throughout most of the post-World War II era. It was their ancestors who built the synagogue in the late 19th century, and who survived to rebuild the community in the first decades after the war. They also held the economic power due to their established places in Dijon and its surrounding region.

The inflow of immigrants from the former French colonies of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco in the 1960s dramatically changed the composition of the Dijon community. By the 1970s the Sephardim were in the majority, and at the end of the century they were equal economically to the earlier community members. Initially, the North African and other Sephardi immigrants were more concerned with establishing themselves economically in their new homeland, and with maintaining their religious traditions in their radically new environment. Rather quickly, however, they achieved these goals and won community leadership positions. They also were in the forefront in establishing and enlarging a new Lubavitch community in Dijon. Their views and opinions are, of course, present in the journals, and representative of
their particular concerns. This includes their dedicated efforts to support the security and welfare
of Israel, and to combat anti-Semitism in France.

As stated above, this volume, the first of two, [the second volume, covering 1978 to
1992, is forthcoming] covers the past two decades, years first of dynamic growth and
achievements, followed by the recent decade of demographic decline, economic stress, rising
anti-Semitism, and communal divisiveness. It is hoped that these pages provide additional
material for understanding the fascinating subject of contemporary French Jewry as represented
by the Dijon community.
French Jewish History

This section contains articles about major events in French Jewish history from the First Crusade (1096) to events during May and June 1968. With one exception, all of the articles were written by Henri-Claude Bloch, a dominant figure in the Dijon Community during the 1980s and ‘90s, and its major chronicler. Descendent of one of five Alsatian families who re-established the community during the French Revolution, Bloch authored two books on medieval and early modern French Jewish history. He was researching the 19th century history of Dijon’s Jews at the time of his death in 2005. The community honored his life and work by naming the community center’s all purpose hall for him.
Saint Bernard and the Jews


In the history of Occidental [Western] Christians and Jews, the year 1096 marks a rupture, with the first crusades and the first real pogroms, during which the communities of the Rhine Valley were ruined. The chronicles explain that these massacres were organized by impassioned bands.

In 1146, a monk named Raoul, native of France, traveled all over Germany, assembled crowds, and preached a message of hate:

‘Before you fight against the Israelites, avenge He who was crucified; His enemies, the Jews, are they not near you?’"

Rabbi Ephraim, son of Jacob of Bonn, the chronicler of this second crusade reports:

‘The Lord hears our moaning. He will turn towards us… Against the demon (this is Raoul), he will send an honest cleric of considerable renown… He is called Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, and he declared in his numerous sermons:

‘It is written in the Psalms on the subject of Jews: “Do not kill them for fear that my people forget…”’

In 1095, with the exception of certain clergymen who defended the Jews, no prince of the Church had raised his voice to prevent these massacres. But why? Would the abuses of 1096 have moved the man of 1146, making him say “Never again”? Never again the shame of innocent blood uselessly shed?

The example of another considerable figure of the time, Pierre the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, is there to show that this is not the correct answer. Certainly, Pierre the Venerable does not want the death of Jews. But the letter he writes to the king of France is not a plea in their favor:
“If Bernard boldly takes the defense of Jews, it in no way leads to the weakening of the “Jewish problem” in a confusion of good feelings.”

Finally, the historian Gilbert Dahan elaborates in his study what I wanted to summarize for you:

“The genuine reason for Bernard’s attitude, it is the Jewish chronicler Ephraim of Bonn who gave it to us… Bernard of Clairvaux, he tells us, knew and understood the Christian religion and, by it, through it, the message of Judaism. For him, only the defense of the ‘Kingdom of Jerusalem in peril’ counted. It was not then necessary to persecute the Jews, to kill them or to expel them. They were scattered. They were overthrown. They suffer too much cruelty from Christian kings and the people. If the Jews are completely erased, how will one be able to hope for the salvation that they were promised for the end of time – their final conversion?”

_Henri-Claude Bloch_
The Wheel of Jews


Since the beginning of the 13th century, Western Jews were obligated to wear on their clothes an exterior sign intended to distinguish them from Christians.

The Church took the initiative on this measure to prevent relations between Christians and Jews.

The wheel appears to be of French origin in the diocese of Paris. The wheel or rouelle is brought up by the Council of Narbonne (1227), by the Council of Arles (1234), in Avignon (1237), in Béziers (1246), in Albi (1254), in Arles (1260), in Valréas (1268), in Nîmes (1284).

The kings of France imposed the wheel on the Jews in a series of decrees, the oldest was that of St. Louis on June 19, 1269, confirmed by Philippe le Hardi [Bold], Philippe le Bel [Fair], Louis X, Philippe V, Jean le Bon and Charles V.

The age at which the Jews had to begin to wear this sign varied. In Marseille, it was set at 7 years, in Arles at 13 years.

The wheel was placed on the chest. The first color prescribed was yellow saffron. St. Louis chose yellow; Philippe le Hardi and Louis X allowed yellow or red or even white.

In 1279, the Abbot of Saint Antonin allowed the Jews to wear, in place of a large imposed wheel, a narrow wheel embroidered in thread and not very visible. In 1280, Philippe le Hardi confirmed this benevolent arrangement.

Exemptions appear to have been relatively numerous. It was equally supposed that the wearing of the wheel was quite often abandoned, especially in Spain, but was reinforced in 1371.

Henri-Claude Bloch
Jews in Beaune


In the Nouvelle Galia Judaica [Galia Judaica News], one reads a note concerning the “Jew street” (page 315). Currently, it is called Jean-Baptiste Etienne Street. In the times of the Castrum, it was outside of the town. In 1203, in the time of the commune, it was included in the city.

The community was probably not very large. However, they maintained a synagogue (Histoire de Beaune [History of Beaune]). More details are not known.

The Jews were banished in 1306 but the name of the street persisted until the Revolution. It is only as a result of a deliberation on December 30, 1912 that the street ceased to be called Jew Street.

In 1806, for an imperial inquiry, the subprefect underlined the absence of Jews in Beaune. In 1840, at the time of a census, the town council established a list of 39 Israelites living in town.

On February 19, 1844, there were 62 people, brought together in 21 families. These Jews came from Alsace, but – what is surprising – after 1872 one finds only 22 Israelites in Beaune. After the annexation of Alsace by Germany, many Jews come to Dijon, but very few to Beaune.

Their activities were typical: peddlers, cloth merchants, two horse traders, a tax collector… But, surprisingly, there were two kosher butchers in Beaune; slaughtering on site. There was also a professor: Maurice Lion.
Among the Israelites settled in Beaune in the 19th century, a special mention must be given to Moïse Lion, teacher at Monge College for 25 years. He was born in Dettwiller (Bas-Rhin) on June 25, 1816.

His parents, Jacques Lion and Sarah Lévy, settled in Beaune in 1830. He was appointed Professor of German in 1838, at age 22, and remained one until 1864. He then left for Alençon and Paris. He died in Charbony in 1901.

Moïse Lion was a fervent Israelite. He proved this in several collections of poetry written in Beaune: *Voix de Sion [Voice of Zion]* (1860), *Schirim ou Inspiration [Poems or Inspiration]* (1862).

In 1860 Professor Lion suffered quite violent anti-Semitic attacks. Here is an example in an excerpt from the paper *La Revue Bourguignonne [The Burgundian Review]* from April 7, 1860:

“…but here we are not in Jerusalem. It is no longer suitable for anyone, not even for a Jew who spits on the face of Christianity.”

Moïse Lion protested vigorously April 18, then the 25th. But the feeling “Israelite and Frenchman always” was incomprehensible for the clerics of the 19th century.

In the obituary article that appeared April 16, 1901, in the midst of the Dreyfus Affair, Henri Lambert stresses the love of homeland that Moïse Lion had; his son, officer out of St Cyr, died in service in Madagascar, and his second daughter was named France.

It is said of Moïse Lion: “He was an extraordinary intellect, of a pleasant character, as affable as possible”, a friend of the progressive thinker.

Here is an extract from one of the poems by Moïse Lion, appearing in the Beaune paper on September 12, 1860:
And why are we cursed, being the son of Solomon

And kept forever, solitary, sublime,

In joy or tears, under crimson or chains

To guide or to support, the God of the universe

Only expecting the fields more pure where the light

Bathes its golden streams in all damp eyes.

If that is why Israel offends,

Let us be proud! And let us fight, with our eyes and soul facing heaven.

Henri-Claude Bloch
The Nathan Aron Affair (1786-1789)


Historians agree to set the emancipation of Jews on September 27, 1791, with the decree of the National Constituent Assembly, granting to the Jews the rights of citizens. Emancipation, is it equality? In fact, it is not until a half-century later that equality becomes total. [A special Jewish trial oath was abrogated in 1846.] However, well before the French Revolution, well before emancipation, the sources of equality for Jews with other French people were in place.

In Haute Alsace, in the Sundgau, near the Swiss border, the small village of Hagenthal-le-Haut had an important and strong Jewish community of 260 individuals (52 families). The family of Nathan Aron (born March 29, 1735) included nine people (parents, four children and three servants). Nathan Aron was a rich merchant who did import-export with the Swiss districts. He bought big quantities of hemp and of linen, which he stored often in Berne, where he went frequently.

A denial of justice (of which Nathan Aron was victim in Berne) beginning in 1787, enabled France, on the eve of the Revolution, to defend the principle of equality for the Jews of France.

In 1786, a dispute pitted Aron and his associates, Wolf Brumsel and Léopold Samuel, against André Wirth, a young farmer manufacturing cloth and linen in the district of Berne. Aron and Brumsel registered a complaint against the abuses of André Wirth who demanded a pension of 28 thousand livres, at a time when this amount was regulated in Strasbourg.

Well-known in Switzerland and Alsace, Nathan Aron asked and received from the French Ambassador, Jean Gravier, Marquis de Vergennes, protection and guaranteed equality. The
ambassador, according to the treaty of 1777 between France and Switzerland, opposed a measure that Berne could institute against Nathan Aron.

The Marquis de Vergennes wrote to the Avoyer of Berne, first magistrate of the district in 1786, to explain the problem. The affair became serious, however, when Aron and Brumsel were incarcerated in Berne. The Swiss toll collector, Jean Muller, joined with Wirth who plotted the affair, and was finally accused of deceit. But, despite all opposition, Nathan was incarcerated in Berne on February 1, 1787.

On February 7, Soleure, the Marquis of Vergennes, argued the case and demanded the release of Nathan Aron. The Council of State of Berne did not listen and kept Aron in detention on the charge of concealing the truth.

The lawyer of the sovereign council of Alsace, Haim l’Aîné, demanded in the name of the king of France the liberation of Aron. Berne refused. From the ambassador, the agenda passed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs who threatened Berne with reprisals.

Nathan Aron, 52 years old, was freed, as were his associates.

The Count of Montmorin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, invoked the treaty of 1777 and stated that he objected to the attitude of Berne, and backed Nathan Aron, who demanded reparation for the vexatious experience.

The general lawyer of the Sovereign Committee of Alsace, Arnaud Loyson, addressed a letter to the count of Montmorin, concerning the violation of people’s rights, and the reprisals that could apply, a French subject having been arrested, put in prison for 49 days, stripped of his money, jewelry and things of commerce – totaling four thousand livres.

Berne, in an act of vengeance, ruled on December 17, 1787 to deny Jews all commerce in horses, large and small livestock, gold and other currency, and all forms of merchandise. It was
in fact forbidden to all Jews, without exception, to trade in the cities under the domination of the Bernois. The Bernois refused to believe that France would support reprisals on behalf of Nathan Aron.

The Marquis de Vergennes proposed then the following solution: having refused to reimburse Nathan Aron, he justified confiscating the mortgages and other goods that belonged to the Bernois. In 1788, a seizure was imposed on the people of Berne.

On January 28, 1789, Nathan Aron won the case: Berne reversed its policy.

One sees that in 1788, Louis’ France – by the grace of God, King of France and of Navarre – defended and represented the French Jews against the foreigners.

In May 1789, the Marquis de Vergennes was called back from Switzerland to Versailles. To atone for the denial of justice Nathan Aron suffered, he tried to do something to seek revenge against the Bernois.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles Gravier, a Count of Vergennes; the ambassador of the King of Switzerland, Jean Gravier, a Marquis de Vergennes, were unanimous in defending the Alsatian Jews, subjects of the king, in international relations.

The Nathan Aron of Hagenthal-le-Haut Affair constitutes, on the eve of the Revolution, a first battle, a precursor to the struggle for the equality of Jews.

Nathan Aron (1735-1818) established himself in Dijon in 1792. He was the first president of the Jewish community of Dijon. The de Vergennes were natives of Dijon. The Marquis, former ambassador, was a friend of Aron’s. Samuel Blum, son-in-law of Nathan Aron, and his brother David, also resided in Dijon.

Henri-Claude Bloch
On the eve of the Revolution, the 40,000 Jews of France belonged to four distinct groups: Sephardi, Ashkenazi, Comtadin, and Parisian.

The Sephardis or Portuguese were descendants of Marranos, converts to Catholicism who, staying secretly faithful to Judaism, had to flee the Iberian inquisition and settle in the southwest of France. They formed a group of 5,000 people of which half live in Bordeaux.

The Ashkenazis, or Germans, were the most numerous with 30,500 members, established in Alsace, in Lorraine and in three dioceses where anti-Jewish prejudice remained very alive.

The Comtadins, Jews of the Pope or Jews of Avignon (2,500 people), were mainly spread across the four districts or ghettos of Avignon, Isle-sur-Sorgue, Cavaillon, Carpentras, the rest being scattered in Aix, Arles, Lyon, and Montpellier.

The Parisians, numbering 500, belonged to the three previous groups.

If the Sephardis and the Comtadins were rich and respected, the Ashkenazis were poor and despised. It is understandable why the first, more influential, were emancipated by the Constituent Assembly on January 28, 1790.

In Alsace and in Lorraine, the fear of a complete emancipation of Jews triggered, on the part of the clergy and the nobility, a violent anti-Jewish campaign which produced a counter-campaign financed by Cerf Berr [wealthy Jewish notable]. This led to a debate organized in
Strasbourg, February 27th 1790, by the Society of Friends of the Constitution. It resulted in an anti-Jewish statement:

The destruction of the ancient regime, without being due to a Jewish plot, is equivalent to a desire of Judaizing the country. (A country that counts one Jew for every 700 inhabitants!)

June 20, 1791 saw the aborted flight of Louis XVI to Varennes; the counter-revolutionary fever fell, the Assembly rediscovered its liberating purpose. On September 27th 1791, a deputy of Paris, Adrien Dupont, assured his colleagues that any trace of discrimination must disappear in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution: he then proposed to emancipate the Eastern Jews. On the brink of dispersing, the Assembly voted for this emancipation with near unanimity of those present.

For French Jews, from 1791, anything became possible in the framework of a nation to which they belonged without restriction. It is understandable that they remained grateful to the Revolution and to the Republic for this liberation, until 1940.

Henri-Claude Bloch (adapted from a study by P. Pierrard and P. Girard)
The Crémieux Decree


No French decree, to my knowledge, aroused such a reaction over so long a time. All the same, this decision was not extraordinary.

Promulgated very legally by the provisional government of the Republic, October 24, 1870, this decree granted French citizenship to 30,000 native Algerians. It wasn’t much certainly; but the 30,000 were Jews.

This decision was not treated lightly. The question had already been carefully considered by King Louis-Philippe [1830-1848] and Napoleon III [1848-1870].

Crémieux gave his name to the decree, the original copy of which, long deemed lost, was found at the Municipal Archives of Alençon.

In the beginning, the decree was well received. The Jews voiced their satisfaction; the French Algerians accepted it. It was an excellent measure of a generous, just and civilizing France.

There was however a certain anxiety, particularly among the Muslims who saw in the decree a harmful effect of colonialism and, curiously, among certain Jews who feared that their Judaism would suffer from it.

Anti-Jewish propaganda has fed off the Crémieux Decree for a number of years. [The French proletariat revolt in 1871 took it as an excuse.]

Toward [1871], a new governor [of French Algeria], Admiral Gueydon, conservative and anti-Semitic, who was, in his own words, “against the Arabs of Jewish religion,” had the idea to create a mobile [Jewish] group for protection. The Jews refused to take part. They did not want
to arm themselves against their own (Arabs). Admiral Gueydon asked for the repeal of the Crémieux Decree but, subtly, proposed that the Jews be deferred under rabbinic statute. Thiers*, who would have followed his advice, hoping to be called the Liberator of the territory, however, dared not attack the decree because he needed the Rothschilds. Consulted, Mac-Mahon** declared that the Crémieux Decree was a mistake, but to repeal it would be an even worse mistake.

From 1884 to 1898, the anti-Semites took up the battle several times, through legal means, and through violence. They failed.

With the arrival of Vichy, the Crémieux Decree was repealed. Vichy legislated, without any constraint, after enacting the Statutes of the Jews. Many protests were made, particularly [those] of the representatives of Algerian Judaism.

November 8, 1942, Algeria rejoined the Allied camp. In 1943, the decree was reinstated [again emancipating the Jews].

*Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877) was a prominent historian of the French Revolution and one of the great French political figures of the nineteenth century.

*Patrice de Mac-Mahon (1808-1893) was a French general and politician with the distinction Marshal of France. He served as Chief of State of France from 1873 to 1875 and as the first president of the Third Republic, from 1875 to 1879.

* * *
The Glories of Burgundy


Do you know the Hall of States of Burgundy? If yes, you have already admired the monumental painting that adorns the back of this room: “The Glories of Burgundy”. Here is a piece of its history and that of its 40 personalities.

To put a painting portraying such a subject within the ancient room of the States of Burgundy, in Dijon, at the time of its renovation in 1894 was certainly a clever way to recall the prestigious past of the province. However, one must choose among all those who were distinguished by their exemplary lives, their courage, their merit, their talent, or even their genius.

It was not easy; the mayor of Dijon, François Bordet, had to decide. He kept the names of men who had counted in the History of France, in political areas, religious, military, as in artistic, literary or scientific. He even had a woman: Saint Jeanne de Chantal. An official painter, of grand renown at the time, was chosen: Henri-Léopold Lévy (1840-1904) who inspired [Bordet] with one of his paintings made for the Pantin town council. This was a very difficult task: how to represent men whose faces remained most often unknown?

Completed in March 1896, the canvas was shown in a Champs Elysées salon before being installed in the superb setting of gold leaf and lime-wood sculpted by Hiolle. The new Salle des États [State Room] was inaugurated in April of the same year by Eugène Spuller, former minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts.

Today, one no longer disputes the choice of celebrities, no more than the talent of Henri-Léopold Lévy, representative of official art under the triumphant Third Republic.
In the next issue, I will give you the 40 names of celebrities who are found in the painting. But go have a look in the famous room to discover them. The first person who gives me at least 30 names will be rewarded. Write to H.C. Bloch, 40 avenue Victor Hugo, 21000 Dijon. Congratulations in advance.

*Henri-Claude Bloch*
A Quarter of a Century


After May 1968, nothing would be the same. That was a quarter century ago! Then one almost believed: more than hate, more than racism, more than anti-Semitism, more than war. Everyone would love each other, singers, journalists, poets, politicians promised us.

Now all fashions are out of style: beatniks, hippies, hooligans, punks, long hair or short hair, hostility to consumer society, aspiration to freedom of customs, of language, of dress, of drugs, music of all genres.

Twenty-five years later, what do we see? The canon is boiling almost everywhere, young kids work, making war or prostitution, people die of hunger; racism and anti-Semitism are in a fresh upsurge, refugees seek shelter almost everywhere, the rich are more rich and the poor more poor, scavengers and the beggars invade the city streets, fundamentalists impose their law from all sides:

“And me, and me”, as Jacques Dutronc* said so well. I tell myself that, for now, we are still not too bad in France, even if many things revolt me.

The old 68’ers became brave little bourgeoisies but they abandoned many young utopians who dreamed, and who are unemployed, drug addicts, delinquents, beggars, disillusioned, disgusted with everything.

Why are the hawks always stronger than the doves?

Science and technology have, however, made tremendous progress, and the arts have developed in an extraordinary manner. But there remains much to do!

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* A Parisian singer/songwriter born in 1943
Finally, life goes on; it is better to see your glass as half full than half empty. And then, there was a beautiful glow of hope in Israel; thanks to negotiations that are continuing come hell or high water.

*Jacqueline Develay-Ossia*
About Father Pierre


Father Pierre was the man who appeared to be the most reliable, — and capable — without having to fear the result, of the examination of the very essence of the collective conscience of our world. We had nothing to fear from this saint, this priest devoted to the defense of the homeless and disenfranchised, this monk without fear and without reproach in the glorious past of a [World War II] resister and a declared enemy of the National Front.

Unfortunately, all of this has evaporated because this man, far from being a senile old man, became involved in a business that quickly overtook him. Anti-Semitism drove him to flounder in the deepest part of himself.

Diseased cancer cells that eat away at the Christian world were still there. The sickness could seem practically eradicated, but the most famous priest in France came out with the terrible truth, the cancer had not completely disappeared; a metastases resisted the most radical treatments, even at home!

Father Pierre has revived in the media and for us, Jews- let us not kid ourselves- the old scarecrows once thought gone in smoke ovens, but who, even in the deepest sleep, kept one eye open. Father Pierre, by his statements and letters, provides comprehensive support to the ideological, political and theoretical architecture of Garaudy*

But we note that the Father does the same reading as Garaudy about, notably, the Promised Land and the Book of Joshua, considered by [Father Pierre] to be the first Holocaust in human history, no more or less than a Canaanite Holocaust.

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* Roger Garaudy is a French philosopher whose works are controversial due to his anti-Zionist, negationist views.
And Father Pierre does not stop there. He refers us to a new application of principles enshrined in the famous fake Protocols of the Elders of Zion,** a conspiracy of Jews worldwide, a pillar on which Nazism was founded.

Here is Father Pierre, carried away in this current that reveals the keys of his rereading of the Bible—the Book of Joshua—as if he saw the prophetic anticipation of the project revealed by the Protocols. And the circle is complete. This dismal process definitively destroys the reasoning of the most popular man in France.

Several years ago, Father Pierre declared, concerning the state of Israel:

“I notice that after the constitution of their state, the Jews, the victims, became the executioners. They took the houses, the property of the Palestinians. It seems to me that God is in communications with Moses at all times, by telephone or fax…”

We should already have realized March 28, 1991, what Father Pierre really was, but many of us closed our eyes and ears.

*Henri Claude Bloch*

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** Infamous fraudulent publication in tsarist Russia, 1903, maintaining that an international group of Jewish elders actively sought world domination so as to benefit the diabolical Jews.
French Jews (1992 to 2013)

These selections were written by members of the community who comment on a number of different issues in French Jewish life, including mixed marriages, French recognition of Holocaust guilt, and the governance of Jewish organizations. The articles illustrate some of the recent conflicts in French Jewish life, while also providing an understanding of the nature of relations, for example between the Parisian center and provincial cities like Dijon.
The Special Assembly


Two weeks ago, I received an invitation from the Israelite Consistory of Paris to participate in a special general assembly with the goal of updating the status of this venerable organization.

Questions of procedure have the tendency to bore me and general assemblies hardly interest me. I go there, when I am morally obligated, to please those I like, or because my duties make my presence obligatory. This time, in Paris, this wasn’t the case and the status proposals sent by the president, written in small print, did not arouse my curiosity.

Mr. Benny Cohen’s list was elected two or three years ago at the Paris Consistory by defeating, against all expectation, a moderate consistorial team, who were accused of sleeping a little too much on the job. Pressed by the most religious people, the new leadership was proof of a certain dynamism and his outreach seemed, to me, rather nice.

However, two out of the ordinary elements had intrigued me:

1) An ad page, partly paid by Benny Cohen’s team, appeared in all the Jewish journals, and in which the expected development of the voting was deemed unacceptable.

2) A request was made that people send their voting power [mandate] to the Paris Consistory (with a stamped return envelop). In Dijon, people needed to come, or failing that, to give their registered voting powers to the person of their choice.

Saturday night, so as to have a good conscience, I began to read the new project, having been persuaded at first that the opponents wished to be caliphs instead of the Caliph…

In comparing the texts, I notice three types of developments: they concern the revamping of statues, the method of election of office, and the role of the Beth Din [Chief Religious Court]:
A) Certain desirable modernizations are included: for example, the organization no longer has the sole goal of “meeting the expenses and the maintenance of worship,” but above all to “promote the practice and the development of worship and of the Jewish spirit.”

B) The new electoral system is curious: The office is composed of 26 elected members for eight years. It is renewable by half of everyone every four years. Each new candidate must, from now on, possess the sponsorship of three community presidents and each president can only sponsor a maximum of two candidates. If one wants to sponsor a new list, each candidate must have three signatures, implying that a good third of presidents support them at first. The challenge is difficult to achieve, especially as the President of the Paris Consistory has the right, if he wishes, to revoke the community presidents who would have supported a poor candidate.

With this system, the Paris consistory risks becoming a self-administered organization, its members chosen de facto by co-optation of those in place. Those in office will never change.

C) The new project places the “Av Beth Din” [Head of the Law Court] as guardian of the Consistory. This figure becomes the lead member of the law office, before the Chief Rabbi of Paris.

One can read in article 15: “The Consistory has police powers with supervisory rights over the worship of the Organization. It develops and enforces the applications of administrative rules concerning the practice of worship and the performance of religious institutions that are related, notably with regard to religious teaching, in accordance with the rules of the Beth Din of Paris.”
And, if the reader did not already understand, in article 16: “All decisions of the Consistory in religious matters can only be taken after the confirmed opinion of Beth Din of Paris.”

Not only does the Beth Din of Paris dominate the Paris Consistory, but it dominates France!

Article 36: “The Beth Din of Paris is solely particularly responsible [p. 18] for questions of marriage, of divorce, of conversion, of levirate,* of ritual slaughter, of Kashrut, as well as for the authorization of Cho’hetim and the Chomerin (those who kill in the slaughterhouse or who survey the kosher stores). It intends to exercise its authority throughout France. Its decisions are binding for all rabbis…”

So, the national authority that is the Central Consistory of France is definitively replaced by the Beth Din of Paris and its secular arm, the Consistory of Paris. The liberal movements, or ‘haderim, are omitted from French Judaism.

As you read this, my decision has been made, more than the plan to run around the lake (there is Lake Meudon, so I’m not out of place!) and, this Sunday, December 20th 1992, I will be at the general meeting that is set for 9 a.m. at the Central Consistory, 19 St. Georges Street, next to the Victoire [grand synagogue].

After a small detour or two, and a perilous search for a parking space, here I am already. It is twenty to 11.

* The required marriage of a widow to a brother of her deceased husband
In front of the door, there are three or four police cars; the staff seems somewhat nervous. I expect to find a half empty big room and soporific speech, brightened by some impertinent questions; and yet here I am in a large, filled hall.

The crowd gathers, which does not prevent it from being colorful and as diverse as friendly. Everyone complains about the organization of things. My neighbor arrived at 8 a.m., and she waited outside for over an hour. She was not always able to get into the general meeting.

In two minutes, I am convinced that no one around me approves of the bill. A woman likes the Beth Din, but cannot swallow the new electoral system. A man asks for silence, and reads an “In the World” article out loud, noting today’s vote as being an attempted takeover by the fundamentalists! “Benny, resign” chants the reciter and his friends heartedly, before leaving ...

People try to keep them: “Don’t go! We need your voices!” Others answer: “Don’t you worry, they will return, they are going to the corner café to quench their thirst.”

In front of me people are talking about teargas grenades… It seems that an opposing office member had wanted to follow a friend of Benny Cohen’s into the synagogue; the security team would not have taken this hope kindly! The police would have intervened and order would have been restored.

Behind me, a Benny Cohen supporter declares to his neighbor: “Such a scam, even Mitterrand would not have dared attempt it.” An old activist moans: “It’s very sad, this is the end of the Paris Consistory!” To which his companion answers: “No, it’s the end of Benny Cohen!”

**Cartoon:**

“Tell me David, don’t you believe that you’re overdoing it?”

“I don’t answer to Arabs.”
Finally, at 11:20, I come to a small room where the permanent staff of the ACIP [Paris Consistory] bustles in front of four computers.

Every person must present his business and identity card; the scrutinizer verifies registration and then asks for the voting powers. He orders his disciple to give the newcomer an envelop with a voting card on which there are three choices: “yes”, “no” and “no opinion”.

The cards are different colors, and resemble good points. Mine is poor, there is a “1” on top, but on others you can read: “2”, “5”, “10”, “100”… packets of 100 mandates on which you automatically check “yes” or “no”… what a dream!

Then I get to the Grand Synagogue… Surprise, it is nearly empty… one thousand people, maybe 1500: a pittance in this temple that is about to burst when Chief Rabbi Sitruk gives a lecture!

I approach the Tebah [ark] where I find a small group of men, to ask them if I can vote and save myself because the assembly had not yet begun, and there is no question of waiting for it to end!

The discussions are going well. One asks me straightaway how I analyze the situation. I try to develop my feeling and my representatives confirm my statements. They belong to the community of Sarcelles, of Melun, of Tournelles… and they add to it: in effect, in the new statutes, allusion is regularly made to a private deal that was not announced and they are asked to rule on its application! I then give my vote form to one of these men in order to escape because time is passing very quickly.

Just when I take a break, around 11:15, a group of men declare the session open in a hostile hubbub. One of the directors asks the women to move to one side and the men to the other. This is copiously booed, and the audience refuses to obey, so Benny Cohen appears at the
stand rousing a storm of insults and jeers. In vain, he attempts to take over, but no one can hear a single word from his mouth; in desperation, he flees through a back door.

At this spectacle, my feelings are shared: on the one hand, my base instincts make me happy to attend an “event,” but my conscience saddens in contemplating a synagogue so scorned. I move away from these clamors, so I can take refuge under the archway, where the Consistory personnel made coffee; the employees are half-reassured, they believe that the audience would harm them! In front of a cup of coffee, I have a talk with a woman from Bagnolet, a “refugee” like me, in the outer area. She explains to me that she came to remind Mr. Cohen of his promise a year ago on the subject of a Talmud-Torah in Bagnolet… The poor woman had come for something constructive!

A bird alights two meters from us. I exclaim: “See the dove of peace, all is not then lost!” They immediately respond: “But, don’t you see that this is a pigeon?”

Who then is this pigeon?

At 2 pm, I accompany Claire and Murielle to the synagogue where they have to lead the Hanukkah celebration. The President of Meudon, although I have not seen him, was at the “meeting.” He left it around 2pm and told me there was no vote, that the Chief Rabbi of Paris had been copiously booed, and that he should not have had to enter the arena.

On the Jewish radio, they announce that, around 4 p.m., the president of the Consistory made a statement.

At 4 p.m. exactly, I am at the house and I hear Benny Cohen announce that the bill was accepted with 80% of the vote! Then a statement from the opposition points out the many irregularities of the vote, in particular during the vote counting when the opposition was
excluded from the room. It [the opposition] also remarks that the president must have had more than 2,500 mandates in his name!

At night I speak about this with Lucien [Mestman], the President of our little community, who considers, if these facts are confirmed, reuniting the community presidents of the region without the Paris Consistory, and that a decision will be made to block the entire system.

The next day on the news, the Jewish channel reports that the elections were canceled and that the opposition filed a complaint with the court. I try to learn more about it from the radio but, alas, the Jewish channel is clouded by Israeli news, and seems to ignore what happens in Paris! I say “alas” but it’s probably “so much the better” because such events are not to our honor!

I must wait for the publication of the Tribune Juive [The Jewish Tribune] to read a terse article saying that the “Yeses” had prevailed with 2629 votes to 629, and that Benny Cohen had 2600 mandates! Not bad, no?

This is the opinion of Chief Rabbi Sitruk, chief rabbi of France, who, on the radio Tuesday morning, admits to having disapproved of the timing of this bill, but one can no longer strongly condemn the lack of respect that the opponents have shown for the synagogue and for the rabbis. “What desolation for the image of our community,” he concludes!

Michel Lévy
Permanent Correspondent of The New Letter
in the Paris region

Editor’s Note: In most recent news, the vote was canceled.
Dear Friends,

I am worried – but not about politics, I would like to talk about French Judaism… We are experiencing a phenomenon of radicalization [of Judaism] throughout France…

We gradually see a development within French Judaism, a tendency to break with customs and cultural values that make up the very definition of our society. In turning one’s back on the society that we had accepted, in our way of thinking and behaving, we risk creating a dangerous situation. Fundamentalism, at home, risks imposing customs and specific cultural references.

Religion, institutions founded on dogmas and an understanding of trust between believers, is today attacked from both outside and inside. Sects and schematic movements exert a constant pressure while they prepare to join another postulate; even within religion. Fundamentalists push the implications to extreme limits that they believe they can take from the original credo.

I recently read an article on this subject. It stated that if this movement becomes widespread, it would lead to a double schism.

Irreparably, the Jews as a whole would be increasingly marginalized and rejected from civil society. Only those who became ultra-religious would be considered as true Jews and not those who, without sacrificing their Jewish identity, take part in the social and cultural development of the country.
Equally serious would be the schisms within the Jewish Community itself. Indeed, for many years, the community phenomenon has been institutionalized. It is recognized and accepted by all. If, even within this community, a schism occurred between the good and evil Jews, all it would result in is a mutual exclusion and perhaps some anathemas.

Rav Léon Askenazi (Manitou), director of the Orsay School [postwar Parisian Jewish academy], founder of the Rachi Circle, then from Mayanot in Israel, as well as the Yair center, was recently in Paris where he expressed his concern. For him, there could be no question of abandoning Judaism, its philosophy, its morality, and its world-view.

Adequate education should therefore be reaffirmed through the universal principles of Judaism. Admittedly, this medium of education is profoundly different from traditional Talmudic schools. It is not a question of all the Jews of France flowing in the same orthodox mold, nor of reconnecting with the pre-war years where the only model was that of the [more assimilated] French Israelites. Thank God, the situation is different.

I have nothing against the Jews who practice the Hilloula of Baba Salé [Sephardi custom], nor against those who study Yiddish in order to enter the Nachman of Braslav style [Hasidic] yeshivas. On the contrary, I expect total tolerance: that each leaves others the right to practice his religion as he sees fit, without proselytizing of any sort.

We sadly have to, on this subject, denounce those responsible who are not an insignificant part of the orthodox Rabbinate. Robert Gamson said:

“Know that, if you need Judaism, Judaism has even more need of you.”

Yes, but in a tolerant manner, without pressure or requirements of any sort, each being free to accept advice from others and to practice, according to their duties, a welcoming Judaism.
This French Judaism must wake up. Will they want to? Will they be able to? Only God knows!

Henri-Claude Bloch
Reading


À la recherche d’un people [The Search for a People] according to Claude Askolovitch (summarized in an article appearing in *l’Arche* [The Ark, the most important national Jewish journal]).

Three days of meetings, more than 20 editors represented, books galore but, overall, many questions remain unanswered. Why do the *Peuple de Livre* [People of the Book] not read more?

Jewish themes have had an unprecedented boom. The informed community was delighted with this cultural reality, but the bulk of the community remained indifferent. Intellectuals complain of not having reached the *Jewish Street*, of leading a passionate movement but which leaves indifferent the same ones whom it addresses. The *Peuple du Livre* has trouble deserving its name.

Last year, some 300 books about Judaism were published, which are read by the important personalities in Paris.

Jewish publications are moving more and more towards the serious, deep, history and reflection of Judaism.

Only 20 years ago, it was not possible to procure in French the works of Gershom Sholem [greatest scholar on Hasidism]. Today, this writer is almost entirely translated in French.

Schmuel Trigano launches at the Fayard house a huge study on the history of Jewish society. Lattès prepares to publish the treatises of the Talmud. Verdier reissues *Nefesh Hahayim* (The Soul of Life). Toledot deals with Hasidism at the Éditions Du Cerf [French religious
publishing house]. For Albin Michel, the history of Spanish Jews before 1492 will come out in paperback. Marc Alain Ouaknin, rabbi and successful author, juggles brilliantly between Talmud, Kabbalah, philosophy, false paradoxes and true dexterity.

Next to all these books dealing with the past, reflections on French Judaism of today, the sociological, political studies, the contemporary polemics like *Le Sionisme trahi ou les Israélins du dimanche* [Zionism Betrayed or the Israelis of Sunday] by Roger Ascot, are scarce.

Despite the efforts of the press and the Jewish radio, the Jew street seems more fascinated by the religious revival and its events than by the slow progress of written thought.

The distribution venues of the specifically Jewish book can be counted on one hand: a few bookstores in Paris and the provinces.

The current spiritual leaders of French Judaism, although charismatic, have published nothing. Meanwhile, we distribute on audiocassettes the lectures of these same popular rabbis, as do the preachers addressing an illiterate public.

The contrast represents the whole French Jewish community, torn between intellectual aspiration and low brow tendencies.

Maurice Ruben Hayoun is the founder of the *Patrimoine du Judaïsme* [Heritage of Judaism] at the Cerf house. He declares:

“…We will have the alibis of a Christian society that, itself, will have discovered and appreciated Judaism. The Jewish editorial phenomenon is already out of steam because we have failed to find a specifically Jewish audience.”

And Hayoun continues, very bitter:
“Basically, the Jews are not interested in their culture. When we work on these themes, we are not well regarded in the Community; we are looked upon with a mild contempt even though it is recognized elsewhere!”

The writer [Hayoun] published a series with “Que Sais-je” [“What do I know”] with the P.U.F. [University Presses of France] – parent company, the Éditions Du Cerf – Catholic publishing “pur jus” [pure juice] whose literary director is Father Nicolas Jean Seal, a Dominican. A Christian house is becoming the beacon of Jewish publishing.

Finally, Catherine Stern and Gilbert Werndorfer opened, in 1983, the bookstore Bibliophane [Bibliophile], on rue des Rosiers in Paris. It has now become the great distribution center of Jewish books.*

Maurice Ruben Hayoun also says: “Some claim to monopolize Judaism, maintaining that they are more traditional. At the same time, they are ignorant of everything else, the whole history. But us, the supposed secular people that publish books, finish by better understanding tradition, the traditions, of some rabbis.

Michèle Kahn published 80 works for youth. She also translated and adapted a great number of foreign texts. Several of her books were themselves translated in Europe, Australia, South America, the United States, Japan and Israel. She regularly collaborated with literary magazines since 1987 and she is vice-president of the jury of the Rotary literary prize.

Writers ask the questions: Do children find answers to their quest for identity in books?

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* Bibliophane, later taken over by a more orthodox owner, went out of business in 2007. Our favorite Jewish bookstore in the Marais area is Librairie du Progrès, 23 rue des Ecouffes.
We are forced to recognize, according to the verse of Psalms: *The things which our fathers told us, we will not hide from our children* (III 78); these transmissions have suffered a myriad of duds!

*Henri-Claude Bloch*
Opinion - Community Involvement and Religion

The Intolerable Interference of Grand Rabbi of France, Mr. Joseph Sitruk


I call to mind the statement of the Chief Rabbi of France [Sitruk]:

“The March 27 cantonal elections: it is my duty to tell the Jews not to vote on this day particularly essential in the Hebrew calendar.”

Your statement was scandalous, Mr. Chief Rabbi!

You are in France, France is a secular state of law, and religions do not have to interfere in the laws of the Republic. I remind you that we live happily under the law of separation of Church and State [1905 Law, following the Dreyfus Affair].

The incitement to incivility is a serious offense. Do not confuse liberty with authority! Pious Orthodox Jews and Liberal Jews have the free will to decide what suits them. It’s not up to a higher religious authority to impose dogmatism in our civil life. By your behavior, you join the intransigence of a certain Imam who declared that the Koran was the only law and not the laws of the Republic.

Luckily, a decree bans the wearing of religious symbols in secular schools (headscarves, kippas, crosses).

Chief Rabbi, Sir, assuming your role in the community—that is quite logical. But you exceed your rights when you impose your will, flouting the “secular” laws of the Republic. By acting as you have just done, you give additional arguments to the anti-Semitic movements of the Right and extreme Right.
You are going to soon stand for reelection to the head of the French Rabbinate. I hope that the Council who must choose the Rabbi who represents French Judaism to the Authorities of the Republic punishes you by not renewing your mandate [Sitruk was reelected for two additional terms of office]. The French Jewish community needs a Chief Rabbi respectful of the Republic’s laws and representative of French Jews and not of the Orthodox Jewish community that is in the minority.

_Claude Israel_
Mixed Marriages

The Official Position of the French Rabbinate

The Problem


If, on the one hand, one is pleased with the incontestable revival of French Judaism (more schools, synagogues, restaurants, radios, etc); on the other hand, entire families have disappeared without a trace: gently, one loses oneself among the masses. It’s a cry of alarm launched at today’s generation.

Not Racism…

Our opposition to mixed marriage is not the result of either racism or social segregation because there is no law that requires a Jew to marry a Jew simply because she is of the same “race” as he. The myth of the race that excludes a man from friendship, the right to life, liberty, and happiness, because of his origin or the color of his skin does not exist in Judaism.

We must remember the emphasis of the prophet Amos (IX, 7)

Are you not for me like the children of Ethiopia, O children of Israel?”

Or of God addressing Jonah (IV, 11) or really, going back further, is it not about the history of man –and not on that of Israel –when one opens the Torah? And Abraham, the Hebrew, the first man who chose God was himself chosen to become “a benediction for all the families of the Earth,” (Gen XII, 3) for all humanity.
The Ban is Religious

“What is at stake,” wrote Professor Bénichou in Information Juive [journal] “is our survival; the lasting quality of the Community is the first threshold of renouncing, the first act of abdication.”

It represents a sort of tentative physical and moral suicide of the Jewish people, since it gives strength to the astonishing and mysterious survival of the Jewish Community and its message. It is a sort of treason to the generations past who lived and suffered for Judaism, who made the greatest sacrifices – even the supreme gift – for God and for His Law.

The Spouse and the Children

For some, there is neither treason nor abandonment. Judaism had its time. They push recklessness until you send announcements and [then] are surprised at your impoliteness and your narrow-mindedness [that you push to no end to congratulate them as necessary]. Or, for us, “a marriage must be founded on solid bases where all foreseeable fortunes are joined in accord and to complement one another harmoniously.” Is it reasonable to add the supplementary risks due to the difference of religions, mentalities, customs, and traditions?

And the children? Everyone knows that, in Judaism, religious affiliation is determined by that of the mother. The child is only Jewish if his mother is Jewish. The name does nothing, the father in vain calls him Cohen or Lévy. In vain, he vigorously asserts that his son is or will be Jewish like him. Still, according to the Torah, he would now not be considered as such.

Conversion as a Solution?

Some want to reconcile their two loves: the one that “destiny” put in their path and the one of ancestral tradition of which they are proud (moreover without knowing exactly why) and that they wish with all their soul to see perpetuated by their children. The non-Jewish spouse
would be this way integrated in the Jewish milieu, everything could improve; above all, “she
does not ask for anything better than to convert,” we say with infinite admiration. Think then:
she deigns to accept Judaism! And what surprise to hear an opposing view! Some thought that
the conversion is a mitzvah; that Judaism must try to “win friends.” Without a doubt, the
welcome of a proselyte is a mitzvah when it comes to a disinterested conversion, when one is
faced with sincere vocation. A real conversion cannot signify anything other than the acceptance
of the Torah and the mitzvoth in all their particularities.

**Fighting against Mixed Marriage**

Our society, with its multiple temptations, is a permanent “danger” for the young
generation living in an open, tolerant environment that does not know any borders.

Of course, the state of Israel is likely to return to Jews the feeling of their identity and the
will to affirm it. But again it is necessary that those are nourished, well-rounded. Nobody else
can object to outside pressure that knowledge, study, return to the texts, to the sources. This
education should begin with preadolescence; the educators, masters, rabbis must approach this
problem during the preparation at the Bar Mitzvah, by speaking at every occasion, discussing in
circles of young people, ensuring that these circles multiply. It is necessary to give children the
conscience and pride in their affiliation with Israel, in the valor of the treasure chest in which
they are deposited, to get them to make a solemn promise only to marry a co-religionist.

**Conclusion**

The Rabbinic Tribunal, in Paris, can examine certain cases of merit and make exceptions
for proselyte candidates, to the extent where it is foreseeable that the applicant has the sincere
desire and the opportunity to lead a life consistent with the requirements of the Torah. That’s
why, in Dijon, we follow the Rabbinic Tribunal regarding candidates’ conversion and children
from a Jewish mother. If we are very happy to train young people from mixed marriages, with courses in Talmud Torah and a follow-up, nevertheless we take no further responsibility as the Beth Din has not properly given its approval for a conversion. The circumcision by a mohel (or doctor), the Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebrated in a liberal synagogue do not guarantee any affiliation to Judaism.

Rabbi Simon Sibony
News Releases from the Central Consistory: Crimes of the Vichy Regime


The Israelite Central Consistory of France, Union of Jewish Communities of France, representing 230 Jewish communities, all, without exception, victims, 53 years ago, of the deportation of a number of their members, wish to congratulate and thank the President of the Republic, Mr. Jacques Chirac, for his words through which, for the first time, the criminal actions of the Vichy Regime were denounced and condemned in the name of the Republic.

This discourse from July 16, 1995, in which the President of the Republic also criticized the racist arguments and exclusion of a certain political party [the National Front], will remain registered in the memory of all Jews of France. (7/19/95)

On July 26, 1995, the President of the Republic, Mr. Jacques Chirac, welcomed the President of the Central Consistory, Mr. Jean Kahn.

In the course of a cordial conversation, a number of subjects were brought up. In particular, President Jean Kahn reiterated the gratitude of the Jewish Community for the words of the President of the Republic, during his speech July 16, when he, at the time, denounced and condemned the crimes of Vichy, recognizing the responsibility of France, and criticized the terms of exclusion developed by a certain political party. He also recalled the strong positions that France adopted in the conflict in what was formerly known as Yugoslavia.

Jean Kahn submitted to the President of the Republic the project for the creation of the European Institute of Higher Hebrew Studies in the buildings of the Rabbinic School situated at 9 rue Vauquelin, Paris 75005.

This Institute, the only one in Europe, can become the center of rabbi training and community events for all of Europe, including the communities of Central and Eastern Europe.
This project, which was proposed by the Central Consistory and Chief Rabbi of France, benefited from the positive opinion on the part of the President of the Republic.

Otherwise, Mr. Jean Kahn explained the anxieties of the Jewish Community of France regarding acts of terrorism and, particularly, those which tragically cast a shadow over France, affirming that the Jewish Community of France would fight, next to the authorities of the Republic, all those who want to plunge the country into a climate of terror. (7/28/95)
Two Evenings at the Bernard Lazare Circle


Michel Lévy did a good deed. I wanted to discover this Bernard Lazare Circle, the weekly lectures, the ambiance. The problem is that it takes place in Paris and that the meetings take place Thursdays, the day when friends and I put our library in order.

It is Michel Lévy who convinced me to go. We arranged to meet on the rue St. Claude one Thursday evening in November 2002 at about 7pm. Then we returned there with our spouses on January 30, 2003.

First phase: dinner. You pay your entrée to two charming ladies and you discover a room with some tables and chairs, intersected by a counter behind which three women (and sometimes even a man) busy themselves, cooking in some pressure cookers and with a microwave oven. One offers you a soup, a cold plate (salmon or a meat paté and salad), a hot plate (Ashkenazi specialty), a dessert (strudel, cheesecake...), a drink, and, on the tables, as much water and bread with cumin as you like. I was salivating! I took everything that I wanted, I carried my plates to a table, I dined well, and then I returned to the counter to announce what I had eaten and pay my bill. Everything was done on the honor system, no one gets in on the sly, and the ambiance is warm.

These are old regular customers who are openly pleased to be with friends; therefore they do not choose to converse with the new people. I had my open sesame: the Name of My Uncle and the Letters of Louise Jacobson [Harrowing anthology of Holocaust letters from Cathie’s aunt, edited by Cathie’s mother, Nadia Kaluski].

We chatted with Henri Bulawko, with Jean-Michel Rosenfeld: two pillars of the community and two friends of my uncle and mother. I felt extraordinarily at home, in my
element. I was surrounded by Jews like me: Ashkenazis mostly, often non-practicing (the Bernard Lazare Circle is an association of secular Jews), profoundly attached to Judaism, gourmands of culture, eclectic discussions and friendship. I have often heard that I was atypical. But there I was normal!

After the meal arrive those who come only for the lecture. One passes into a well-arranged room and settles in. There, the conversation continues—people embrace each other, find each other again, circulate; it is very convivial.

Then the serious session begin, before a suddenly well-behaved and attentive audience.

The first lecture I attended had a surprising title: *The Atheist Faith of the Secular Jews*, by Yaacov Malkin, an Israeli author. This book was published by El Ouns and prefaced by Albert Memmi.

Three people spoke about this essay: the translator, Izio Rosenman, Violette Attal-Léfi and Rachid Aous. These last two belong to the SEM association (Europe Mediterranean Synergy) which is an intercultural secular Judeo-Arab center whose purpose is to promote meetings and exchanges, to develop the ties existing between the French, Afro-Mediterranean, Jewish, and Arab-Muslim cultures.

Rachid Aous is the boss of publisher El Ouns.

Their speech included themes of tolerance, overture, and hope. With people like them, war is not possible, friendship is the only way. The room was under a spell, the question/answer segment prolonged the evening until 11pm, a half hour longer than usual. It was Rachid Aous who was questioned the most.

For the second lecture, the room was so full that it was necessary to open up the mobile partition. The lecturer was prestigious: Dominique Strauss-Kahn...he interested his audience in a
totally different manner. The questions were sometimes impertinent but he responded very simply and without ever using the *langue de bois.* Several unruly people tried to carry on beyond the schedule, but the president of the meeting was firm and he succeeded courteously at limiting the damage.

The CCJD [Jewish Cultural Center of Dijon] made contact with SEM and didn’t hesitate in scheduling a lecture in the autumn.

As for me, I will return to Paris some Thursdays to pass my evening at the Bernard Lazare Circle.

*Cathie Bussidan*

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*Note: Langue de bois (wooden language) is language used by politicians that sounds nice and appeals to people’s emotions.*
Journeys and Point of View: Jew Born to a Non-Jewish Mother…


The movie Le Tango des Rashevski affected me like a detonator, for in it I found the tender expression of numerous things that dwell in my heart and soul. Moreover, my wife helped me use the eyes of a loved one with respect to the questions that the spirit has trouble resolving. We’ll never forget that the Song of Solomon is neither a response, nor a commentary of a commentary…

Being Jewish born to a non-Jewish mother, not circumcised, raised Christian, I joined the DROR [Liberal Zionist Movement] in my adolescence after the Six-Days War, which, surely woke up buried feelings in my father’s heart.

Then, as a young adult, life kept me in France and I lived as a “Frenchman of Jewish origin.” I married the woman I loved; my children were brought into the French world, with French names, a republican baptism and a catholic welcome. But I had painted the word shalom on my house, as well as the three signs: the Star of David, the cross and the crescent.

Later, in 1993, while living in the suburbs of the international city of Evry, I began a new path, not of techouva [religious return], but of consciousness, of clarification and development of my Judaism. It was a clumsy, winding, difficult path full of errors, of disillusions, but also of learning, or joys and of personal growth.

In 1994, I think, I took part in a secular Seder organized by the young UJFP [French Jewish Union for Peace]. One stage was reached this year, 2003, when I took part in the Seder at the community in Dijon.

I know today that, as a member of the community, loyal and correct, Jewish in my heart and spirit, I will be first and always a Frenchman, married to a Frenchwoman who I love above
all else, and father to French children who will have their own families that they love with women or men whom they love as well.

I also know that I will always be a *goy* [Gentile] for numerous Jews, and in particular, for the religious institutions. Because, I’m sure, today, that I will never accept the caudal forks [circumcision] that the Consistory imposes on us.

Indeed, it’s like this: official Judaism, exists in a country where the liberals and the seculars are minorities, and Judaism is the object of judgments in which the first criteria are racial. What does the conscience of the individual matter, the faith of the believer or his secular principles, his culture, Jewish or not, his family’s heritage; Judaism is firstly a function of a racial criteria, “Is your mother Jewish?”

And on this basis, we’ll ask the *guer* [stranger, non-Jew] for some difficult guidance, archaic and unjust signs, while it suffices for the “automatic Jew” to complete a *ketouba* [marriage contract]. The conversion will require that the *guer* respect all sorts of *mitzvot* [commandments] that a large part of Jews widely ignore automatically. He will have to adhere to the most obscure concepts of Judaism (ah, the charm of angels, the pragmatism of Paradise…) and above all else immediately instill in his family the weight of religious practices; this regardless of the liberty of those he loves, or even at the risk of their love.

There is, during the course of this conversation, a digest of all the reasons that eventually condemn fundamentalist communities. And if one considers 60% of the mixed marriages for Jews in France, it seems suicidal to perpetuate the alternative orthodox exclusion. On the other hand, the cultural heritage and religious Jews should incite the Consistory to overcome the racial barriers and to call into question ancient practices. This questioning has nothing against the Law.
Indeed, archeology, linguistics, shows us today at what point it is important not to stop at the letter of the texts, taking into account the context of their origin: almost always in chronological disagreement with history, often inspired by the political necessities of the time period (in particular in the service of Judah’s kingdom), generally produced and reproduced with the relative precision of a time when the true bureaucracy gave way to poetry and morale. Moreover, the liberals have been conducting numerous studies and research for many centuries that show how many texts themselves evolved.

Finally, it is evident that if there is something divine in our texts, the idea of a God who is the head clerk dictating the revenue is as ridiculous and stupid as that of a God who is a grocer, marking in huge book the number of mitzvot per client before readjusting his pencil between his ear and his big hair to divinely judge.

The job of welcoming a stranger should have a warm and tolerant support for non-Jewish spouses in their discovery of Jewish culture.

Moreover, the respect due to the individual and to the family should inspire a relaxation of mitzvot to permit the non-Jewish spouses to participate in them, without renouncing their religion, rituals, in this case more cultural than religious. And the indestructible bond that exists between the religious and the civil should be revised in the light of the generosity and the intelligence to permit individual interpretation (and secular if the case arises) of the practices and rituals that give rhythm to Jewish life. Likewise, there is a certain cruelty to impose on the families a life of heartbreak, which is the consequence of the alternative of exclusion or conversion.

There exists today an individual conscience that makes the obligation of the woman to adhere to the will of the husband unacceptable. This is a violation of conscience. Likewise, the
exclusion of children of non-Jewish mothers seems like an attitude full of inhumanity and contempt for the rest of humanity. This is contrary to the spirit of the Torah.

Thanks to the orthodox education of children, it seems in contradiction with the ideals of individual liberty (like the requirement of sincerity which has to accompany all religious thought processes) insomuch as Judaism will weigh on the child and the young like a racial fatality instead of being the result of a free choice in the age of reason.

Finally, for the Jewish people living in France, and therefore French, the choices imposed by the orthodox majority are reflected in the exclusion of secular Jews and sometimes even those who might choose the liberal path within the community.

Best wishes,

Daniel
Reflections after the visit to an exhibition at the Hôtel de Ville [City Hall] in Paris:

From Refuge to Trap, Jews in the Marais

Edelman, Annie. "Réflexions après la visite d'une exposition a l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris:

I spent part of my life at 7 rue des Rosiers, above Goldenberg’s [famous deli, now a clothing boutique], where my grandparents lived. As a child, I was fascinated by the spectacles that were going on all the time in this neighborhood, so I used to stay at the window for hours, watching the colorful, diverse crowd, brought to life by an incessant bustle.

My grandfather was called Noé Rabin [not a rabbi] and he used to receive many phone calls asking for his opinion. He always explained, in Yiddish, that Rabin is written with a single “b” and then, hang up politely [rabbin=rabbi]. At the end of his life, maybe tired of these calls or maybe just a little mischievous, he ended up giving out comments and advice.

How sad that he had not been contacted before the war by Mr. Carton (Roule Avenue in Neuilly-sur-Seine), provisional administrator of Jewish goods during the war!

The contact details come from a short, handwritten letter from the exposition at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. The letter drew my attention to the problems that troubled its author.

In this report penned with a purple ink quill, with many fine and formed letters, the author shows the “case of Mesyeg Icek,” from October 18, 1942, “a traveling merchant” who, following the rules, “returned his licence, having no shop or stock. Every morning, he simply rents a stroller for three francs and sells his goods.” The letter ends with a sentence separated
from the rest of the text to show how complicated Mr. Carton’s life was: “What should he have done?”

In order to find a follow-up to this story, I did a little research using Serge Klarsfeld’s book, *Mémorial de la Déportation des Juifs de France* [Memorial to the Jews Deported from France, published 1978].

Icek, who was called Mesyng, was born in 1886 in Gora, Poland. Nine months after the interrogation by Mr. Carton on July 22, 1942, he was deported to Auschwitz in the number nine convoy. In this convoy was also Touba Mesying, born in 1898 in Nicolaieff, in Poland. A parent or his wife perhaps?

To answer Mr. Carton, after having studied Icek, there was still more work to be done.

*Annie Edelman*
Pauline Bebe: A liberal woman Rabbi


Pauline Bebe, the only female rabbi in France [as of 2006], opens a House of Liberal Judaism in Paris.

The house, the first of its kind in the capital (where orthodox Judaism dominates), will be inaugurated on April 9, near the Bastille. It is meant to be “a religious and cultural space open to everyone, Jews and non-Jews,” explains Mrs. Bebe, 41, founder of the Liberal Jewish Community in Île-de-France in 1995.

Built in the old parking street Moufle, this bright, modern center, designed by the architect Marc Fitoussi, calls to mind the memory of the Shoah.

“During the war, this was a metallurgy factory where, according to witnesses from the neighborhood, Jews who were deported worked,” says Mrs. Bebe.

The center should be inaugurated by the Socialist Mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë, by the Mayor of XI urban district, Georges Sarré, and by religious officials and the associations in the neighborhood. The religious part of the synagogue will be inaugurated in May.

The space, which is property of the Municipality of Paris, was rented at a very low price with an emphyteutic lease [under condition of improvement] to the Maayan center (“the source”). For the last 10 years, the center has brought together Mrs. Bebe’s community and the Nitsa cultural association (“the bud”). The project, with a total cost of 1.6 million Euros [about $2 million,] was financed by donations and aid from Jewish foundations as well as by grants from the Municipality of Paris and the region dealing with cultural development.

There will be a polyvalent room with three hundred seats, equipped with moving walls and illuminated by vaulting made of glass pavement; the room is back to back with another six
class rooms and the rabbi’s office. Stained glass windows, paintings, tapestries, mosaics, statues and a special stone from Jerusalem adorn this “synagogue of the arts.”

Later on, they expect to expand the project to the basement, where a cafeteria, media library, dance and art studios will be built, connected to the ritual bath (“mikveh”), supplied by rain water collected on the roof and brought down by a special downpipe, that doesn't contain any metal.

Liberal Judaism, born at the end of the 18th century, lauds adaptation to modernity, particularly dealing with equality of rights and responsibilities among men and women. This movement, open to inter-religious dialogue, has an important role in the world, with its more than 1.6 million members.

In the new house, there will be dance, theater, and expositions, but also meals for the homeless. The services will be full of music: “Latin-American culture, since part of the community comes from Argentina, but also rock,” explains Mrs. Bebe, a mother of four. Her husband, the American rabbi Tom Cohen, plays electric guitar.

“I experience much less criticism today, I don’t feel excluded. I have good relationships with my orthodox colleagues,” Mrs. Bebe adds.

Her community, one of 15 liberal communities in France, contains more than 300 families.

Ordained in 1990, she did her rabbinic studies at the Leo Baeck College in London, becoming one of the first female rabbis in Europe.

AFP [French Press Agency] – April 5, 2006

Maurice Gislain Bensoussan
I had the chance to attend a very beautiful exposition at the Orangerie Museum in Paris on Chaim Soutine, a painter born in Russia in 1893 in an orthodox Jewish family. The 22 paintings shown have a rare beauty, containing portraits of famous people, friends, or trades like a small pastry chef, or a footman, as well as a series of flowers or animals.

There are several works on gladiolas, each as dazzling as the next. The colors are vivid, the faces deformed, the trees fallen, the French village in which Soutine resides seeming to dance under his palette. In the museum library, I found a beautiful book on Yiddish tales: De Chelm à Varsovie [From Chelm to Warsaw], from which this is taken, full of humor and wisdom at the same time:

Reb Mendel goes to the station for a trip to Warsaw. Finally arriving in his compartment, he is preparing to take a well-deserved nap when a young Hasid arrives, all out of breath, his clothes disheveled, delighted to find a free seat.

- The end of peace, thinks Reb Mendel…

The young man very politely addresses Reb Mendel, asking the time. No response; he asks again; still nothing. He doesn’t understand: is he deaf, mute? A third time, he asks his traveling companion who finally answers him:

- Look, think, you ask me for the time, if I answer you, we will talk during the whole trip; we will almost be friends and, of course, I will invite you to have tea at my house and there, oy vey! You will see my daughter, Dvorah, the apple of my eye, you will fall crazily in love with her and you will ask to marry her.
- Do you really think that I want to give her to a man such as you, who doesn’t even have a watch?
On this, Reb Mendel falls back into his seat, very happy with himself. Phew! What a peril he just avoided!

Fortuné Huli
A friend gave me a little book that I devoured: *L'Intranquille (Autoportrait d’un fils, d’un peintre, d’un fou)* [The Disturbed Untranquil *Self-portrait of a son, a painter, a madman*)] by Gérard Garouste (of Talant stained glass windows fame) with Judith Perrignon.

He is described this way: “I am the son of a bastard who loves me. My father was a furniture dealer who retrieved the property of deported Jews. Word for word, I had to disassemble the great deception that was my education. At 28 years old, I experienced my first attack of delirium, then others… Childhood and madness are my bag. For a long time, I only had many questions. Today (2009), I am 63 years old; I am not a wise man, I am not healed, I am a painter. And I believe I can pass on what I understand.

This son of an anti-Semite learned Hebrew, read the Torah and the Talmud and married a Jew. Raised poorly, he became a world-famous painter.

The book has the power of a novel, filled with Judaism, family secrets, art, madness and love. A deeply moving self-portrait.

Cathie Bussidan
The Jewish Community of Dijon

Many aspects of Jewish life in Dijon are found in these selections: history, change, important leaders, and the diversity of members’ understanding of Judaism. Of particular interest is the community’s division between the synagogue majority and a small but very active minority gathered around a Lubavitch couple. Other articles deal with the role of the community’s Radio Shalom, and the activities of the France-Israel Association.
The Community after the War


After the war, in 1946, despite the deportation of many Ashkenazies, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur the synagogue was full. All the young people, boys and girls (I was 13 years-old), climbed to the second floor. The ladies wore their most beautiful fall outfits for the first time and the gentlemen were dressed in elegant three-piece suits.

Rabbi Choukroun was a good man, but austere. When we went to his house, he would timidly say hello, then he would return to studying the Talmud. His young wife would give us Hebrew lessons; she also taught us religious Israeli hymns.

They lived modestly in a little apartment, next to the Place St. Michel. They had a very wise young child. I have a twinge of regret when I think of them.

Mr. Choukroun used to eat very little. He contracted tuberculosis. He had no resources to treat himself and soon succumbed to illness.

Mr. Grossman was appointed the Shamash. He was a peddler. His wife reared the four kids properly, kept the synagogue, community hall, and garden in perfect shape and never once complained. All was impeccable. During important services, Mr. Grossman enforced quiet in the synagogue.

Those were good days when all the surviving Jews were delighted to meet and pray together. Harmony reigned within the community.

Every Wednesday evening, Mr. Elnecave, who was a little older than us, would organize gatherings for young people. He would give us advice about everything. He particularly advised
future couples to fix their hair very quickly, in the morning, when they wake up, in order to not appear unkempt in front of their spouses.

Sometimes, we had the opportunity to hear a lecturer or a traveler speak about their experiences.

I have fond memories of that time.

Jacqueline Develay-Ossia
General Assembly of 1/26/92: Excerpt of the Moral Report of the President


Many events happened in 1991: the still important arrival of Soviet and Ethiopian Jews, the continuing Intifada, a perceptible insecurity in Israel, the disappearance of the Soviet Union with the birth of different states, the start of peace discussions in the Middle East, and the recognition of the state of Israel.

**Diaspora and Extreme-Right**

Yet another grave danger is taking shape for we Jews of the diaspora: it is the rebirth of the most reactionary nationalisms, in France as much as in Europe.

The Chief Rabbi of France warned us against the Le Pen phenomenon and the extreme-right and showed us the necessity, this time, of organizing.

**Congratulations**

I would like to congratulate, on behalf of all of us, Jean-Claude Dahan, who was just elected in Paris, [consistorial] President of the Bourgogne region – Franche-Compte, the region grouping Belfort, Besançon, Dijon and maybe Chalon-sur-Saône. The regionalization within our communities will become very useful: to speak to authorities on behalf of a much bigger number has a weighty advantage.

**The Locale and its Financing**

A few months ago, the [synagogue] board decided, despite certain opponents, to buy a piece of a building, profiting from the chance to acquire a space very close to the synagogue: it
will be transformed into an all-purpose room and cultural center. Another thank you to those who
gave donations for this purchase (around 180,000 francs [$35,000]). Certainly, we hope for
more, much more.

With the city guarantee we will be able to borrow a sum allowing us to obtain, if
necessary, a loan of 250,000 francs [$48,000], at a rate of 9.5% over 12 years. We must then
repay 32,000 francs [$6,000] per year. We hope to be helped by the Unified Jewish Social Fund* and by the Funds of Community Solidarity, a new aid organization whose president met with us. We also wish that co-religionists who have not yet responded to our successive calls will take over: we hope for 100,000 francs ($19,000) more in donations. In short, if you continue your financial support, the loan could become reduced.

**Community Activities:**

**Services**

We see more and more devotees at services on Friday night and Saturday morning and, amongst them, many women. This is a huge satisfaction. These services are also held Monday and Thursday mornings.

Attendance is teeming at the temple for parties and we rejoice, even if depressing incidents undermined the night of Yom Kippur [arguments related to the seating of women]. On this occasion I received reproaches that I found unjust.

**The Kindergarten**

Its activity has considerably increased: currently 16 children come every Wednesday. Another thank you to Danielle Heymann and Annie Sibony for the efforts and time they gave this activity, which they would like to be able to share with one or two extra volunteers.

**The Friendship Club**

* The Unified Jewish Social Fund is the central French Jewish fundraising and allocation organization.
Always so dynamic, under the drive of the tireless Madame Haas, President of Charity, helped by a very active team.

**The Maccabees**

This is a big success. Many youths frequent it and we are unconditional supporters of its volleyball team.

**Hebrew Class**

Myra Huberfeld continues to teach them with success on Wednesdays.

**The Women’s International Zionist Organization (WIZO)**

Madame Dahan and her active committee organize parties and meals, without forgetting the sale of citrus fruit.

**The Keren Kayemeth L’Yisrael (KKL)**

Raymond Mesquis is carrying on despite some conflict between the French leadership and Jerusalem [who gets what percentage of funds].

**The Jewish Scouts**

Marie-Anne Degoix and Marie Sananes assure the smooth operation after the departure of Claire and Murielle Lévy. Many boys and girls participate in this scout movement and undertake outings, camping and lots of activities.

**France – Israel**

We greet its creation in Dijon under the impetus of Bernard David, a former Dijonnais who has returned.

**B’nai B’rith**

A lodge will soon be started in Dijon.
Bible and Talmud Course

Rabbi Sibony and Mr. Kohn lead these sessions more and more frequently.

Talmud Torah

Twenty-five students divide up into three classes taught by the Rabbi and Madame Kohn.

La Nouvelle Lettre, Diaspora Le Lien [The New Letter, The Diaspora Link] and other newspapers

Our secretary and journalist, Michel Lévy, left Dijon with his family for the Parisian region. But, under the impetus of Cathie Bussidan, aided by Mireille and Patrick Simon and Anne and Roger Sananes, our paper, more and more interesting with the addition of a new team, is perfect. Lévy deserves our commendation for having cared for La Lettre Communautaire [The Community Letter] singlehandedly and having maintained it for several years.

However, we are agreeing to a one-year trial for the magazine Diaspora Le Lien [The Community Link]. You have already received two copies of it. You will receive another magazine in two months (issue 6): this is Actualité Juive [Jewish Current Affairs], which, up to now, has only been circulated in Paris. Sixteen thousand copies have been sent.

Conclusion

You have a united and devoted team that does, and will do, the impossible for the smooth operation of this community.

Henri-Claude Bloch

Add:
We have the pleasure of informing our co-religionists that the construction of the new center is beginning. Those who have not yet made their commitments are invited to do so. Donations from all will be welcome: it is not too late to participate.

A Word from the Rabbi


Dear Friends,

We must now think of the return to work and of the holidays of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot that are quickly approaching.

On the community level, it is assessment time. And it’s time to examine one’s conscience.

We regret the loss of members of our community. May their souls be bound up in the Sechet [merit] of their life and in the heavenly Garden of Eden. Amen!

If we recorded few births, we have however celebrated many Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. A big Mazel Tov, and congratulations to the parents.

Congratulations to Martine Fitoussi and Emile Hazon who celebrated their marriage, Kedat Moché Veisraël [according to the Laws of Moses and Israel], in our synagogue. Mazel Tov to Mr. Chlouch who decided to build a Jewish home and to live in the Parisian region.

The ACID [Israelite Religious Association of Dijon] met the challenge of building the community hall. The layout is finished. We thank those who worked so that we have large premises, practical for many gatherings. However, the biggest thing left to do is repair our beautiful synagogue, as much inside as outside. Even in receiving subsidies for the repair of the façade as a historic monument, part of the cost is our responsibility… and it’s necessary, one
day, to think about it. We must, furthermore, consider equipping our synagogue with a new Séfer Torah [Torah scroll].

The year 5753 saw the installation of a radio station in Dijon become a reality, Radio Shalom. The Voice of Peace exists. For some this is unthinkable, for others impossible. Thanks to the efforts of a few and the active participation of many of us (unfortunately not enough) some high quality programs are offered ever week. The music delights our heart. We hear Kol Israël [The Voice of Israel-official radio broadcast] every day and Paris is closer to us.

The Kindergarten attracts more and more children from a young age. The Talmud Torah is full; four levels are offered. There are classes for post-Barmitzvahers, EEIF [Jewish scouts], BBYO [B’nai B’rith Youth Group], classes and lectures on Judaism and Israel, La Nouvelle Lettre [The New Letter] etc., the activities are numerous, our Community is lively.

Here is my message for the year 5754: our duty to all is to preserve unity, harmony and—why not—good spirits between all our members, those we thought to be more “wise” than others, more “intelligent” or more “practicing”. We must rather judge our neighbors favorably, as it is said in Pirke Avot, Don’t distance yourself from the community.” We must also remember:

- That the 2nd Temple was destroyed because of “Sin ‘att Hinnam,” baseless hatred….
- That, sometimes, it is better to use diplomacy and perseverance to bring back the stray flock…

In Leviticus, it is stipulated “Ve’charta a lahé Kamokha”, love your neighbor like thyself; this is a central principal of the Torah, Rabbi Aquiba tells us. We must, in spite of our small
differences of opinion, of sensibility, instead look for the unity of our Kehillah [community],
respecting each other, neighborly love, in short, anything that can “bring spirits together rather
than divide them…” Amen!

We must build rather than destroy. May we finally see the prophetic words realized, and
the Messianic era draw near.

Amen!

Hag Saméah! Happy Holidays! To anyone and everyone.

*Rabbi Simon Sibony*
To Our [Two] Butchers


Gentlemen,

Our coreligionists who eat kosher have a lot of difficulty stocking up during your vacations and are very annoyed. The criticisms and protests are numerous. The Community asks you to take heed and to make sure to vacation on different dates. Thank you.

Henri-Claude Bloch
Opinions: Radio Shalom


Thanks to Radio Shalom, I could retrace the live of my family during the Occupation, in using the *Lettres de Louise Jacobson* [*Louise Jacobson's Letters*] (my younger sister), those from our mother and those from our father.

This was not a joyful enterprise but this work of memory seemed necessary to me and brings me some peace.

*Nadia Kaluski-Jacobson*
Gather or Divide?


Our children Pauline and Guillaume, after having followed the religious education classes regularly for several years, have unfortunately not been able to have their Bat and Bar-Mitzvah in Dijon for the sole reason that their mother is not Jewish...

We thought, wrongly, that a Community served to unite, not to divide...

We have therefore been constrained to go elsewhere. We were welcomed by the members of the synagogue Community of Copernic [Liberal] with warmth and especially with an open mind. They understand the need to consider only the deep desire to practice Judaism and do not allow themselves the right to judge and determine who is afraid of being Jewish and who is not.

This selection is unacceptable and it is high time that the Jewish community (traditional) admits, as a whole, that there are not good Jews on one side and bad Jews on another. There are only individuals who want to practice their faith in a synagogue without hurting anyone. Systematically rejecting them because they are not biologically Jews compared to others is outrageous! Faith is love, not exclusion… But I’m not optimistic!

There you have it, just a “slap in the face” and the “an arrow in the heart” will be given to members of the Copernic Community to which we now belong.

*Veronique and Guy Attlane*
Word from the President


In the name of the Board of Directors, I present to you all our best wishes for Chana Tova, for the new year, health, and prosperity for you and your family.

We fulfilled our first objective, the restoration of the roof of the synagogue whose total cost adds up to 260,000 Francs [c $55,000], with a grant from the Minister of Culture of around 60,000 Francs. Thanks to your generosity and that of certain non members of the ACID, we were able to quickly raise the sum. The work was of extreme urgency, as the building had suffered considerable damage, and we risked losing this place of prayer that is very dear to all of us.

At the moment, we must occupy ourselves with the cupola and the heating system, which will be very expensive. The first estimate left us stunned: it amounted to 1.3 million Francs! Far from discouraging us, we contacted other enterprises to get the best deal.

It is clear than a sum of this importance will be difficult to amass quickly within our community and we count on substantial [outside] help. We have taken steps to that effect with the official authorities.

For the moment, we are balancing the operating budget, but your generosity, during the Tishrei holidays, will be decisive.

I know that you are assailed by requests, but the future of the community is at stake and the mobilization of each, according to his possibilities, is important. We must react against the danger of disappearing due to the lack of resources and participants. We have already expanded our efforts.

Armand Sibony
**Word from the President**

Dear friends,

Reactivated six months ago, the C.C.J.D. [Cultural Center of the Jews of Dijon] is working well. We welcomed journalist Michel Gurfinkel, who came to speak to us about the elections in Israel, and the Israeli dancers. We presented an excellent film in a video session. By the time you read this, you will have in your memory the conference of my friend, Yvez Obadia, on Christopher Columbus.

As you can see, our activities are diverse and their subjects can interest all audiences.

While hoping that you will appreciate them, and that you will always come in great numbers to support us (and that will be our reward), I extend my cordial shalom.

*Lucien Mestman*
Life of C.C.J.D. [Jewish Cultural Center of Dijon]


The C.C.J.D. today has 105 members; this is good, but we are hoping that other friends will join us. All Jews and a number of non-Jews are interested in Jewish culture and can find, through the C.C.J.D., an activity that interests them. And why not create it? Dear members, we hope that you will convince your entourage and increase our numbers.

We also hope that we will have the pleasure of seeing many people at our activities because it is, while interesting themselves in various fields, that members of the Community, of all sensibilities, bind [our community] closer together and strengthen it.

On October 19, a group of people met in the community room to see (or see again) A Stranger Among Us. There was even an intermission with chocolate ice cream… It was a friendly, pleasant evening.

Our Christopher Columbus evening on November 17 was a great success. The lecturer, Yves Obadia, fascinated by her subject, fascinated her audience. We thanked her cordially. Sixty-five people filled the room. The buffet, prepared by the devoted and talented members of the C.C.J.D., was superb and delicious. After having regaled our spirits, the C.C.J.D. then regaled our taste buds.

In 1997, we will organize other gatherings that are in progress. We begin January 5, with a film conference on Papua New Guinea.

The jewel will be, in the spring, the exposition Ten Centuries of Jewish Presence in Dijon that Henri-Claude Bloch is preparing for us with the help of the C.C.J.D. activists and the city of Dijon.

Happy Hanukkah and see you soon. Cathie Bussidan
The Day of Jewish Patrimony in Dijon


The Day of Jewish Patrimony, which originated in Alsace, is taking place today in 25 countries. In Dijon, France, it was the occasion to open the doors of the very beautiful synagogue, to show very rare documents, some of which go back to the Middle Ages, and to present two painters: Roger Bokobza and Michèle Weber.

In Alsace, as with countless other places of Jewish memory [during World War II], cemeteries were abandoned, synagogues transformed, at best, into warehouses or garages; at worst, left in ruin. Here it is not the war that exterminated rural Judaism, but modernity: people left for small towns, then for the big ones, then for Paris and Jerusalem. Those who stayed behind were assimilated into the population.

A restoration committee from Strasbourg searched for a way to save these places. By contacting the authorities, they found that their patrimony could be revived; it could be maintained if they had a reason that could justify the expense of such a restoration.

We discovered that the cultural renaissance would come from the tourism sector!

In 1996, under the name Open Doors Day, this joint initiative of The Agency of Tourism Development of the Bas-Rhin and B’nai B’rith Hirschler [service organization named for the famous Alsatian rabbi] was born, progressively spread, and in 1999, became known as the European Day of the Jewish Patrimony.

This year, it was co-organized by the B’nai B’rith of Europe, the European Council of Jewish Communities and the Route of Spanish Judaism.
Twenty-five countries participated. For some, it is haunting to see the exhibitions of those communities that once existed, but for others, it is uplifting to witness the continuity of Jewish culture.

Thanks to the open doors, the tours, the exhibitions, the lectures or the concerts, the general public is invited to be initiated into Klezmer music, contemporary art, theater, and to visit synagogues, ancient cemeteries, ritual baths or the old Jewish quarters.

Thus a beautiful solidarity facilitates the reuniting of more than 10 thousand volunteers and institutions around the cause. Jewish associations, historical societies, tourism offices, municipalities, museums, artists, students—all work in preparation for this day.

Beyond this exceptional day, devoted to meeting with the public, the organizers set the objective of promoting and contributing to the preservation of Jewish patrimony, an integral part of the cultural patrimony of Europe. The creation of a European Itinerary of Jewish Patrimony constitutes a second parallel axis of work.

In Paris, B’nai B’rith, in partnership with the Consistory of Paris, organized a lecture on Sunday, September 5, at 8 p.m. on Maimonides [dominating medieval Jewish philosopher], at the occasion of the 800th anniversary of his death.

But me, I was in Dijon, where all of the community bent over backward to show its neighbors the antiquity and the modernity of its culture.

The synagogue was inaugurated in 1870; the land was given away for free by the city of Dijon in 1869. Alfred Sirodot conceived this building in the néo-mauresque style [neo-Moorish], inspired by the great “Schule” of the rue de la Victoire in Paris: the stained glass windows of the synagogue are exact replicas. Mr. Schanoski, a sculptor in Dijon, decorated the building, which is 39 meters tall.
The curiosity of officials posed a problem during the inauguration [of the day]. In effect, the visitors had to wait patiently for quite a while in the garden before being able to enter. But the organizers had installed some chairs and the heart of the synagogue resembled a garden party, where the visitors chatted happily while waiting for an unlikely aperitif.

_Michel Levy_

B’nai B’rith, the CCJD [Jewish Cultural Center of Dijon] and the ACID [Israelite Religious Association of Dijon] joined forces to organize the first European Day of Jewish Patrimony in Dijon. Actually, it was the 8th in France, but in Dijon, it was necessary for Jocelyne Azancot to lead us in this crazy work so that we found the energy to pitch in.

It is necessary to recognize (modestly) that the CCJD was the association that produced the most hands for work and the most money, which does not take away any merit from the people responsible from the other associations (generally also militants or adherents of the CCJD).

The organizers were surprised and delighted to see more than forty volunteers of all types (almost all members of the ACID and/or of the CCJD) and of all ages mobilize themselves: the youth of BBYO, single members, sometimes accompanied by their adolescent children, seniors responsible for the ACID. The profits will come back to the synagogue, but this day cost the CCJD a great deal. The only profit is the grand success of this day and the essential sympathy that it generated, and some support as well.

To begin, the personalities were invited at 10:30 to inaugurate this exhibit. From 11:00 to 5:00, individuals could make their visit. This involved three parts:

In the synagogue, visitors were informed about the architecture, the symbols and the bases of the religion.

In the chapel, stained glass windows were arranged which were from the local archives borrowed from the municipality or the department; traditional and religious objects that families had entrusted also were exhibited. Volunteers gave all the desired explanations.
Finally, in the community room, one could admire and eventually buy posters of the day, conceived and realized by David Bussidan, from paintings of kiddouch glasses by Michèle Weber and Roger Bokobza. Before their departure, visitors could eat traditional cakes, free of charge, and sign the guest book.

For security, people welcomed the onlookers in front of and behind the gate.

Speaking straight out, this day was a success. We received around 800 visitors, without any problem except for certain moments that “rubbed us” the wrong way. And then we were shocked by the refusal of the regional representative of the French Council of the Muslim Religion (a member of the UOIF [Official Union of French Muslims]) to wear a kippa.

A number of Dijonnais passed in front of the synagogue without, at first, daring to enter. Then they were all happy to finally be able to visit this mysterious building. The comments were positive, the criticisms constructive. Reading the Gold Book is a treat!

The Bien Public [the most important local newspaper] published a very positive article on September 6.

We have a second day of patrimony planned, but for 2006, since it is a big project. The door was open for the Dijonnais; we have definitely decided, based on general demand, to do it again – and even better if possible.

Cathie Bussidan
Dear friends and fellow Jews,

Living in Dijon for 70 years, member of this community for 55 years, member of the ACID [Israelite Religious Association of Dijon], president for 12 years, descendant of a family installed in Dijon for 210 years and which was among those who created our temple, I believe I have the right to bestir myself once again and to take, once and for all, a position opposing those who believe they have the right to judge, to criticize, to decide, to claim, or to demand.

Certain people have hoped for years to take control of our community. I notice that, profiting from the presence in Dijon of a very likable orthodox religious couple, they have unleashed a *fronde* (rebellion) against the Rabbi and the *consistoire* [board] under the pretext that the majority of the faithful are not sufficiently religious, that it is necessary to change everything: the rituals and community life.

Indeed, some demands were accepted, like the changing of rite (Moroccan in place of Algerian) or the removal of women from the ground floor [to the upstairs balcony] for maintaining a good understanding among the faithful and to satisfy the strongest demands, but finally without much benefit.

The Dijon Jews have, for decades, maintained this community, going through the torments and especially the sufferings of Occupation, with the loss of fellow Jews. For 130 years, this community was always traditionalist and did not think of changing because this is the way it maintained this beautiful synagogue, constructed with the effort of all, especially the Alsatians who had left their province which became Prussian in 1870.
I venture to pose a question to all of you: would you like to maintain this community which is far from being “liberal,” as some pretend it to be?

We have arrived at a moment where it is necessary to make decisions: to maintain the [religious] service as it is, accepting the already cited modifications, but leaving to each his free will, despite all these discussions between those who…and those who do not want to accept anything.

There is only one God, who belongs to all of us. I hope that all of our community reunites under the same roof, including with those who believe they possess the “real truth”!

I stop there with these critiques, these reproaches and these wishes, but I had to say it and I said it, thereby displeasing the minority who are not well behaved, who only know how to criticize.

In the period that we are going through we do not need to tear ourselves apart. To all of you, dear friends, to all of you, pull yourselves together, form a united community, for the good of all, especially for our children, foregoing, I repeat, all jealousy.

Cordial shalom,

Henri-Claude Bloch
Bernard David


Bernard Henri David was born July 18, 1931 in Dijon. He was the last of five children. His brothers, Jacques, Paul and Michel, teased him. But his sister, Huguette, protected him and gave him the nickname “Titi.” Titi lived happily from 1931 to 1939.

Then the war started and Bernard had to quit school. Jacques went to the free zone in Louhans and made his family follow him. So they left and hid in Nice where they lived in fear of discovery. Paul died close to Hambourg, killed by a bomb.¹

After the liberation, the family moved back to Dijon. Bernard attended Carnot College (Lycée Carnot) and met Jean Pierre Marielle, a future actor with whom he often played cards.

Then came the years Bernard spent learning the family business, interacting with the young Jewish groups, which he personally invigorated. It was there he met Marcelle Dresler.

Jeanne David [his mother] died in October 1954 and the same year, in December, Bernard married Marcelle. The religious ceremony took place in the synagogue in Dijon, on December 20.

After looking for opportunities, the couple decided to settle in Bourges in the Cher department. A daughter, Corinne, was born there in 1957.

That’s also where the years of hard work and service to others began on a professional as well as personal level.

Bernard and Marcelle were deeply committed people.

Their house was always full of guests: neighbors seeking help or attention, and close friends growing steadily in number.

¹ Hidden, he had volunteered as part of the STO service [Compulsory Work Service] as a French worker in Germany. Sadly, he was killed during a British bombing raid.
Bernard created the Israelite Cultural Association in Cher and became president of the community. He didn’t stop offering help to all his co-religious brothers: one day, he would bring some of the scarce meat in Villete; another day, he would help out in the Talmud Torah in Nevers, Chateauroux and Bourges; or he would play the role of taxi driver and give rides to Orly [airport] to people who were due to leave for Israel…

He was also very much engaged in the France-Israel Association along with Marcelle; he organized dinner discussions/debates, conferences, and met with important individuals.

On the political plane, he was always available and was always at the service of the community.

After 40 years of dealing with agricultural associations and forming solid friendships, Bernard and Marcelle decided to retire and come back to Dijon, the city of their youth, where their daughter lives with her husband and three young children, Simon, Clément and Sarah.

Bernard reconnected to his past. He found alumni from the Marcelle Pardé School and organized reunions.

But he didn’t stop there. He started working for the community; he became treasurer of B’nai B’rith and helped found Radio Shalom.

He took Hebrew courses with Myrna in the company of Sister Odile, who became a close friend of his.

He also got in touch with his old friends from the [Jewish] “scouts” and organized picnics and gatherings.

In 1997, he went to Beersheba [Israel] with Marcelle, and another great period of new acquaintances, friendships, and shared experiences began. Bernard had always been very active.

Again with Marcelle, he started the France-Israel section of Cote d’Or and organized
conferences there.

Unfortunately, he got diabetes and its growing influence forced Bernard to reduce his activities.

Nevertheless, he was still present and continued to participate in many things. Locally, he was interested in building communities, so he became a member of the administrative council of the House of Young People from Montchapet-Maladière.

Bernard had a very determined and “strong” personality. He always defended his ideas, even if they opposed what the others were saying.

Bernard was always a loving husband, a caring father and grandfather, who was very proud of his children and grandchildren.

We witnessed his suffering, his courage, and his hope, which he kept until the end [died Spring 2006].

May he rest in peace with all our love and affection.

Simon Legeret
My Life at *Radio Shalom Dijon*


I have been working at *Radio Shalom* Dijon for four years and, with time, I have learned a lot of things. Learning, this is the key word!

On a professional level, this is an enriching experience. I have always wanted to work in the media, but schools for journalism are very expensive. So, I learned everything on the spot and I continue learning new things every day.

We are never bored at the radio station, except maybe in the summer…There are always new projects: a transmission about Europe, another one on the fight against discrimination, others on the environment, the creation of a federation of the associative radios in Bourgogne. Then, the radio has to participate in a festival of contemporary art, make arrangements for new partnerships, meet with people, come up with fresh ideas, think about the next set of transmissions, and monitor the antenna on a daily basis…there is no time to breathe.

Before I started managing the Radio, I had much more time for journalism. It is an excellent job. Politics, culture, economy, society, sports…one gets to work in all domains, to meet many interesting people and make new acquaintances every day. It is a pleasure to use radio waves to transmit to others what you know.

I have learned a lot on a personal level as well. It is interesting to live your everyday life with a culture, religion, and history that are not your own. One redisCOVERs things like tolerance, respect for others, and mutual understanding.

The Jewish community is like a big family. Everyone here has his or her own personality, ideas, virtues and vices, but all people are united.

*At Radio Shalom,* we work in the same atmosphere. It’s always like this with Julie, David...
and Mathias. We all have strong personalities, but we are a unified team. We do our best for the radio; we work to make it grow without changing the spirit in which it was created. This is a very ambitious goal and it is not always easy to strike a balance and make it work. We are working on this every day.

It is our daily challenge and I love it!

_Nadège_
Reception of Israeli Students


August 23, 2012

Dear Friends,

First of all, wishing you welcome here, we want to tell our young Israeli friends, in the name of the France-Israel Dijon Association, the joy that we feel in being able to meet you during your stay in France, in our city, to broaden your knowledge in French.

**France-Israel Dijon** is an independent association, composed of men and women convinced that the friendship between France and Israel is a moral imperative based on common values.

**France-Israel** - gathers French friends of Israel, regardless of political divisions and denominational differences. We thus work for the reinforcement of economic and cultural ties between the people of France and the people of Israel. We estimate that the tiny state of Israel occupies on the international scene a place beyond measure, a place that is not always based on the admiration it deserves for its many achievements: agriculture, industry, economy, arts, sciences…

Israel is a people that transcends time. The creation of the state of Israel on its land is part of the great human adventure, a very rare development history will record of the 20th century.

We must therefore reestablish certain truths on the subject of Israel and fight against misinformation occurring in the French media that too often obscures the essential: a very young state nourished by a millennial civilization, a democracy, the only one embedded in the middle of authoritarian regimes.
We strive through our actions to inform local media and especially towards public opinion, lectures, travel, exhibitions… Some examples in Dijon include the cooperation agreement of Rabam Hospital of Haifa and the Georges François Leclerc Center on the exchange of doctors. In January, we welcomed Dr. Muriel Haim, founder and president of A Heart for Peace, which works with Professor Rein of Hadassah Hospital to promote, encourage, and develop cooperation and understanding between the Israeli and Palestinian populations, notably in the domains of health and education.

To date, 400 Palestinian children have been operated on at the Hadassah [Hospital] in Jerusalem thanks to a triumph for peace. The health of a child is a cause to be placed outside of all discord.

We must not forget the March 19th massacre in Toulouse at high school Collège Ozar Hatorah of four people, including three children in front of the Jewish school: Jonathan Sandler (French-Israeli), 30 years old; his two children, Ariel, five years old and Gabriel, four years old; and the little Myriam Mosonego, seven years old.

For us in France-Israel Dijon, this is a double punishment, and the shock for Israel; whatever our origins, our convictions, our beliefs, on this day we were simply one family crushed by grief.

Do not forget: July 18 at the Burgas airport, in Bulgaria, the attack that killed five Israeli tourists, the deadliest to target Israelis abroad since 2004.*

This friendship between our two countries, this great hope for peace in a very threatening world, we are convinced that it must become the fight of the youth. Solidarity with Israel is the duty of all; this solidarity, almost natural, is a sign, a guarantee of the good state of the world.

* In February 2013, the Bulgarian government reported the attack had been undertaken by the Hezbollah forces from Lebanon, the military wing of which was listed as a terrorist organization by the European Union states in July, 2013.

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This meeting, far from the embassies, will find a place, however modest it may be, in the heart of our two peoples.

Rest assured that we will not stop supporting you on the path that is your own, the one of courage, of willpower and of ethics.

Rest assured that France-Israel and the other associations present here do not want to miss this meeting of esteem and friendship with history.

Because we do not forget that, when we speak of Israel, we also speak of France, of Europe, of the West, of the free world and democracy. We love Israel because we love France.

The president of FID,

Monique Thébault
I am French, not Jewish and I love Israel


Coolisrael went in search of people outside of the community who can speak to us about their Israel. We met Monique Thébault, a dynamic retiree from Dijon, who is in the process of packing her bag to have a go at the adventure of being a civil volunteer in Israel.

Monique has more than one trick in her bag and will share her career, her attachment, and her impressions of Israel with us.

During her short stay in Paris, Coolisrael interviewed this provincial with a red mane and vivid smile. Behind this woman outside of the community hides a very committed rebel, one to which the question is always posed: “How can you love Israel so much without being Jewish?”

Monique, who are you?

I was born in Angers in 1948 (like Israel). My mother is from a bourgeois family and my father was a worker. My mother studied with Sisters or nuns until age 16, then at 18 she met her future spouse. She became pregnant, but her father did not accept their social difference and he disowned his daughter. I only met him four months before his death.

My mother gave birth alone at the nunnery, where the sisters made her understand that she was living “in sin” because she was not married and she had not yet suffered enough in childbirth.

Despite all this, I was raised to respect Catholic traditions. My mother never did laundry and never cooked meat on Fridays.

My first communion was at 12 years old, after several years of “Catholicism,” with a vicar who repeated at every chance “It was the Jews who killed Jesus.” These are the words that
marked my childhood. The Jews were compared to weeds. All of this made me uneasy, but I never spoke about it to my parents.

At 18 years old, I was also married, but contrary to my mother, I was not pregnant!

My first husband was a plumber and I worked at a bank. In 1969, I gave birth to my son David.

**How did you fall in love with Israel, a country so far from France?**

In the 1980s, I lived in Saumur with my second husband, a bank employee like me, who had been transformed by his work. Like all women, between noon and returning to work, I went to the shops, and there, it wasn’t a lightning bolt, but a fire in a window that set off everything!

I rang, René appears, the owner of this store. To thank me, he invited me out with his wife Jacqueline; she was Jewish, he was Christian. A first step to get past, many questions, books exchanged, bought. I read a lot and learned the history of Palestine becoming “ISRAEL” in 1948. This was the first time that I went out with a person of the Jewish faith: with all that I had heard in my childhood from the Priest, I had little chance to meet any! I discovered many new things that allowed me to understand this religion that I had not known at all.

One day when I went to see Jacqueline, her husband said to me: “She is in bed all day, she doesn’t turn on the light, could you come another day?” I thought that she was suffering; in fact I had just discovered Yom Kippur (the Great Pardon)…

Life, it is not by chance, life puts exceptional people on our path. I wish to pay tribute to Jacqueline and René who helped me make this path.

I next moved to Rouen with my family where the Jewish community was small at the time. Following another change, we lived in Reims. I got closer to the synagogue.
When we settled in Dijon, it’s now been 15 years, I always listened to Radio Shalom Dijon and one day I even won a game! I then subsequently met host Corinne [a Catholic intern at the radio], with whom I very quickly clicked. She had a daughter the same age as my young daughter, who lives in Toulouse.

I thus entered through the small door of the Jewish community of Dijon in becoming treasurer of the cultural center. One day I even thought about converting, but it is difficult with respect to my family. So I remain Catholic with my Jewish roots. I even eat “Kosher style” and pay great attention to what I eat. I even wear a Star of David.

**What are the reactions of those close to you with respect to this passion?**

My family questioned my interest for Judaism and Israel. My friends caution me about security when I travel to Israel. They are scared to go there due to the image of a “country at war” conveyed by the media.

One question came up very often: “How can you love Israel so much without being Jewish?”

Regarding my husband, my son and my daughters, they let me be.

**What year did you take your first trip to Israel and what were your first impressions?**

In 2004, it was decided: I’m going to Israel. People talk about it all around me: “Pay attention, it’s war over there”; “We will pray for you so you return” my friends told me!

My head is already flooded with writings and images read and seen, now the plane takes off, I can finally see Jerusalem. And, like Chateaubriand, “I finally myself perceived this mountain like a round spot below the rays;” and the tears simply flowed. Yes, I was happy to be there, to tread on this earth, yes Jerusalem I see you, yes Jerusalem I feel you!!!! You want to
share this immense happiness with people you love. And, since then, I go every year for a week to discover this little country, so big in my heart.

**You are now President of the France-Israel Dijon Association, can you say more about it?**

In 2002, the France-Israel Dijon Association invited me to a general meeting. I go, I observe. Will I be able to invest myself? The decision was made quickly, my place was there. After these years of meetings and exchanges, the time came to take a stand. 2002, a terrible year for Israel terrorized by suicide attacks. I could not stay neutral with nothing to do and nothing to say, I had to act, to know Israel specifically.

We always look to give a positive image of Israel, where the idea of our logo came from, and also of our expositions “Israel Otherwise – another look at Israel” since 2005. This is our way of balancing information on the subject of Israel. We always aim to encourage friendship ties between our two peoples.

At first, we started with one day, but this was too little a taste and the program was transformed into “Israel Otherwise Week,” despite the fear of other members of the association who said to me: “What will we present, a week is too long!” In fact it proved to be much too short. There was so much to discover, to show: culture, gastronomy, wine, medical research…and more!

In March 2011, I was elected President; this is a huge honor and a great joy for me. I volunteer seven days a week, eight hours a day.

For 2013, we programmed a May “Trip to the Heart of Jerusalem” over three days, stands, wines, books, conferences, “Jerusalem in its historic, geographic, cultural, economic aspects”. A spectacle “Tea in Jerusalem” with Israeli dances, narratives by writers…music… a quiz on Jerusalem….
What would you like to say to our Coolisrael readers who do not yet know Israel?

Take a plane to go beyond the ground, across the sea, among the stones, where life starts with humanity “ISRAEL”.
A.C.I.D. [Jewish Religious Association of Dijon]

January 27, 2013 General Assembly: Moral Report


I. The Synagogue

Security

The mechanical entry system is more than eight years old: this year, following the [March 2012] Toulouse attack, it is used more regularly.

The gate was repainted thanks to the support of generous donors contacted by Armand Sibony and Francis Rahmil, who we thank here in this passage.

This year again, we have not received any threats.

Buildings

The Mikveh is virtually closed, except for the big celebrations and for special requests.

The long-awaited and comprehensive renovation is not conceivable at the moment for lack of money.

The renovation of the stained glass was finished two years ago. Several weeks ago, sheetrock fell on the teba [ark]. This requires damage assessment and probably the consideration of a ceiling repair. It will probably be necessary to solicit local agencies and revive a program of important works.
The maintenance of the garden is regularly carried out by volunteers in the community (always the same, notably the Meimoun, Ayache, Huberfeld, and Cemachovic families), as well as the assembly and disassembly of the *sukkah* (with the help of David Sadigh and Anthony, among others).

We are considering buying furniture for the kitchen and renovating it.

**III. Community Activities**

- **Judeo-Christian Friendships**

  Mr. Jean-Claude Dahan, Michel Levy and the President participate in regular meetings.

**V. Contributions**

For the second consecutive year, we have found a significant drop in pledges during *Tishri* [month in which High Holy days occur].

I remind you once more of the possibility of making the A.C.I.D. [the community] your major heir.

The administration council asks you to accept a two percent rise in dues, a rate that corresponds to annual inflation.

From a financial point of view, with the progressive disappearance of several generous donors and due to the generational non-renewal of the community, we are starting to feel a severe financial shortage.

We have seen for several years already that families that are able to make an effort in donations do not do so and are happy with minimum contributions. Furthermore, donations to the Torah during aliyah [those who say a blessing over the Torah] are increasingly rare and there are even members who routinely rise [have an aliyah] every Shabbat and never make any donation.
This situation is unacceptable and cannot go on forever. We ask you in particular to make donations when requesting blessing for deceased parents.

Henceforth, we officially announce that access to the main synagogue will be charged for family celebrations (bar-mitzvah and marriage), even if one is a paying member of the community. It will be 600 euros for marriages for paying members and 1,200 euros for non-paying members. For the use of the kitchen, a deposit will be requested to preserve the dishes that seem to gradually disappear.

Moreover, we ask those who pay their annual dues in a single payment to do so at the start of the year (end of the first quarter) and not at the end of the year because our charges are due throughout the year and these one-time last minute annual dues arrive too late for our treasury.

The minimal amount of quarterly dues is still 40 euros. Struggling families can of course go to our treasurer to discuss it.

I make the most of the end of this moral report to ask you to take into account the very important work accomplished, within our Administration Council, by all volunteer members whose kingpins are also our treasurer Albert Huberfeld, who works daily to put our accounts in order, Simone Ayache in the organization of celebrations and Cathie Bussidan in secretarial work. And at the end, we must also thank our rabbi, Mr. Simon Sibony, always faithful to his position for so long now and who, thanks to his persistence, is able to maintain regular services throughout the year.

Sorry to all those I did not note and who however work discreetly for the well being of our community; we are grateful to them as well.
To finish, I thank you for coming and participating as much as possible in the A.C.I.D. activities and its sister or fraternal associations that are organized by active members who take great pains to bring our community to life. Thanks also for respecting your financial commitments that are indispensable for us to carry out our mission.

Israël Cemachovic
President

We inform you that our rabbi, Mr. Simon Sibony, who asserted his right to retire as of March 1st, 2013, will still remain the rabbi of our community for an undetermined time in the frame of “active retirement”.

All regular religious services as well as celebrations will be taken care of as usual. On the other hand, his presence for private ceremonies (bar-mitzvahs, marriages, funerals) will henceforth be arranged privately between the families and the rabbi, always with tact and moderation. The Talmud Torah will be run voluntarily [very few students remain in the school program].
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To Our Friend Claudine


In the name of the WIZO and as members, we would like to pay tribute to our friend Claudine, with whom we have worked so much, laughed and strived so much, for the women and children of Israel.

Claudine, her husband and her sons arrived from Algeria in 1962 and settled in Autun before coming to Chenôve in 1967.

Since this date, neither Claudine nor her husband ceased donating their time for the Dijon community in which they became pillars, known and respected by all.

Very quickly, Claudine assumed the presidency of the Dijon WIZO, then she became the regional leader, who linked Dijon and Paris.

We, her WIZO friends, will greatly miss her presence at our sides, her advice, her recipes and her kind little words.

We express all our affection to Jean-Claude, their children and grandchildren.
Some Passover Laws


The Jewish Passover [Pâque], Pessah, is the spring celebration of liberty. The term pâque comes from the Greek word pas’ha, itself of Hebraic origin, Pessah, which signifies passage. It recalls the providential liberation of the Hebrew people, enslaved and persecuted by the Egyptian pharaohs for 210 years.

Ten plagues befell Egypt and brought the end of the obstinacy of a tyrant. The Hebrews began by publicly proclaiming their spiritual independence by sacrificing the Egyptian deity, the lamb, one of the Zodiac signs. They show their conviction, the refusal to believe in idolatry and astral determinism. The people benefit from the opportunity to follow their leader, Moses, en route to the Promised Land. Leaving hastily, they did not have time to bake bread. Only the bread of affliction, the unleavened bread (matzah), could be eaten by the children of Israel.

The Pessah celebration is also referred to in the Bible as, “the festival of unleavened bread” (Hag Hamatsot).

On the seventh day of celebration, Jewish communities celebrate the dry passage through the Red Sea. In synagogues, the biblical account and hymn of Moses that exalt this prodigious event are read solemnly. The Egyptian cavalry, activated by the pharaoh who changed his mind, wanted to bring the Hebrew people back to Egypt. They were saved at the last minute by the timely and temporary drying of the seabed. But the Egyptian army did not have this luck. It was engulfed by the freed waves of the Red Sea.

The songs of worship are reduced in the Jewish liturgy because Providence cannot rejoice in the death of His creatures, even those who oppose His intentions. After having received the
Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, the people wandered for 40 years in the desert before being able to enter the Promised Land.

**The Festival of Signs**

Pessah is the first of the pilgrimage festivals. The faithful were going to the Temple of Jerusalem to offer the first fruits of the barley harvest, the *omer*. During the first day of Pessah, for seven weeks up to the Shavuot festival, which recalls the gift of the Torah and the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, they proceed, each night, with the benediction and counting of the *omer*, in growing numbers, in a sort of spiritual progression and countdown, in the impatient wait for the union of the people with the Torah.

**Practices: Searching for Chametz**

Sunday March 24th [at least in the year 2013], around 9:30pm, following a rigorous cleaning for several weeks, families will proceed, by the light of a candle, to an inspection of apartments, cellars, garages, cars, etc, to verify that not even the slightest crumb of bread or fermented products from grains (wheat, barley, oats, rye, spelt,) called *Chametz* (yeast) remain. All fermentation symbolizes the sin of pride. Leftover Chametz will be burned Monday, March 25th, before noon.

The bread will be replaced by unleavened bread (matzah) during the entire Passover week. One will serve food in dishware exclusively kosher for Pessah, reserved for this period.

**The Fasting of Elders**

Sunday March 25th (from 5:06am to 7:30pm) is also the day of fasting for the first born in God’s honor, who spared the Hebrew elders from the scourge of mortality when the Ten Plagues hit Egypt, according to biblical tradition. The first-born children were exempt from fasting while...
attending the end of the study of a Talmudic treatise, followed by a snack during the 7am service.

The Seder: An Organized Evening

On the first two nights of Pessah (Monday and Tuesday), at the end of the service at the synagogue, a family Seder takes place, a celebratory meal introduced and concluded by the reading of the Haggadah, a tale made up of biblical and Talmudic commentaries on the miracles of the exodus from Egypt. This is an occasion for the children to ask their parents about the great deeds of the story, which they will have to transmit [to their children]. It is customary to invite the needy and lonely. In Dijon, we organize a community Seder on the second night, Tuesday March 26th, in the Henri-Claude Bloch room, for passing tourists, lonely people and families wishing to celebrate the feast with the community or to renew ties with ancestral traditions.

On the table, a large round tray holds dishes that beckons our guests: parsley or celery, salt water, a bone of a shoulder of grilled lamb (sacrificial symbol of paschal lamb), egg -- symbolizing the pilgrimage festivals at the time of the Temple of Jerusalem. This tray, which also evokes the wheel of fortune, also bears bitter herbs (horseradish, romaine salad, endives or lettuce), charoset (grated apple paste, chopped almonds, cinnamon, figs, brick-colored dates, which represent the materials used for the construction of [Egyptian cities] Pithom and Ramses, the hard work and colossal duties imposed on Hebrew slaves).

Each of the guests drinks four cups of wine or grape juice: they correspond to the four stages of liberation from Egypt and foreshadow the future times of redemption and the arrival of the Messiah. Over the course of these two Pascal evenings, we sing the famous song Lechana habaa Birouchalaim (Next Year in Jerusalem).
The Mimouna

Finally, in Sephardic families originating in the Mediterranean region, the Pessah celebration ends with the Mimouna festivities, which encourage togetherness between families. This is the opportunity to bring back bread and cakes made with wheat flour. Joyful return to a normal diet, after a very salutary cure.

“Chag sameach to all.” [A happy holiday]

Rabbi Simon Sibony
Our Sorrows*


Deaths

**Mrs. Claudine Dahan née Arich,** November 30th, 2012 in Chenôve, at the age of 85.

**Mr. Rolland Bensussan,** December 4th, 2012 in the Toulouse region.

**Mr. Marc Partouche,** December 20th, 2012 in Dijon, at the age of 82, brother of Mrs. Raymonde Korn.

**Mrs. Malka Fitzig née Rypstajn,** January 13th, 2013 in Dijon, at the age of 95, mother of Arline Fitzig.

**Mr. Serge Guillaud-Crozet,** January 27th, 2013 in Dijon, at the age of 85.

*The C.C.J.D. [Jewish Cultural Center of Dijon] offers the families its sincerest condolences.*

It is with sadness that I learned of the death of Mr. Guillaud-Crozet. I knew Mr. Crozet well. It is true that he was a great friend of Judaism and the State of Israel. Over the years, he told me some secrets, and he appears to have had some Jewish ancestry. On the other hand, Mr. Guillaud-Crozet also entrusted me with the information that he had worked several years for the Israeli secret service. I wanted to share this with the community in the name of Mr. Guillaud-Crozet.**

Liliane David

[No births.]

*Note the number, and the lack of new births.*
**Author Robert Weiner was also told of these “secrets” by deceased confidant Bernard David, a dear friend of Guillaud-Crozet’s, and Liliane David’s brother in law.**
The Holocaust and Its Impact

The volume of Holocaust memoirs and testimonies, and the passion with which they are presented, provide convincing evidence of the continuing presence of the Holocaust and the Vichy era in the consciousness of French Jews. The fact that several of the authors in this section are Sephardic Jews of North African background demonstrates the impact of the Holocaust, even on non-European Jews and recent immigrants. Topics such as the complicity of the French in deportations and Vichy anti-Semitic laws during the Occupation, and, recently, the appearance of Negationists (of the Holocaust), are hotly debated topics in France. But recognition also is given to the French who sheltered and aided Jews during the Occupation, despite risking their own and their families’ lives. Their courage helped 75 percent of French Jews survive, and they stand as a moral rebuke to those who collaborated with the Germans or who did nothing.
Ad

Yad Vashem: Jerusalem


Commemorative Institute of Heroes and Martyrs of the Holocaust

Search for Witnesses: concerning Jewish victims of the Holocaust.²

To preserve their memory. To fight the action of all revisionists. TESTIFY in favor of all Jews that you know, who disappeared between 1939 and 1945.

Fill out a witness statement in person. Ask for witness statements at: French Committee for Yad Vashem, 65 rue de la Folie Mericourt 75011 Paris 48 05 28 60

Sending these forms and their registration to the Hall of Names is absolutely free.

² In response to negationist/revisionist academics and propagandist anti-Semites who claimed the Holocaust was either a radical exaggeration or just a bold lie, the Jerusalem Yad Vashem Memorial/Research Center sought to validate the names of all Jews who disappeared between 1939-1945.
A Note from the Vice President


This newspaper appears during this transitional period, the seven weeks that separate Passover and Shavuot, the period of the counting of the *Omer,* a little sad after the Passover rejoicings, since it is forbidden to celebrate marriages or bar mitzvahs, at least until the 33rd day, called *Lag Baomer.*

The month of April 1992 was marked by an event that triggered near unanimous protests: the grant of a dismissal to French torturer Touvier.** Paul Touvier was finally tried and convicted for crimes against humanity in 1994, dying in prison in 1996. His trial/affair was one of three Affairs – Bosquet, Touvier, and Papon – that shook French Jews and all decent folk in the 1990’s bringing to the surface memories of French, Vichy collaborationism and Jewish suffering. The grounds of this verdict, given by the three judges to whom the problem had been presented, are a genuine rehabilitation of the Vichy regime. All is dismissed: the emergency laws against the Jews, the statute of Jews, the roundups and the deportation of Jews by the militia under the cover of the senile marshal*… Happily, there still remain, in this country, some witnesses of this sad period, Jews and non-Jews and, all together, we will ensure that the testimonies are and continue to be passed on.

This decision was announced just before the celebration of the Day of Remembrance of the Deportation. The ecumenical service of April 24 was for us the chance to again find our friends, whose presence reassures and comforts us. Lastly, the synagogue was full on the arrival of the authorities, and our faithful, for once, were not in the minority. The delegation of the

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* Sheaves of wheat
** Marshal Pétain, head of Vichy France
community before the Monument of Martyrs was equally important; I am happy that my co-
religionists have understood the usefulness of our participation in these ceremonies.

A few lines to keep you informed of the advancement of development work with respect
to the community center. Thanks to the ability and pugnacity of certain members of the Council
of Administration, who are following this project very closely, we will definitely have a well-
organized large room, even in the smallest details. Admittedly, for budgetary reasons, we will
not certainly be able to, equip it as completely as we would wish to. Nevertheless, some
measures are taken to leave us the possibility to perfect this planning according to our financial
returns. If God wills it, this room will be ready some time in June, and we will be able to think of
opening it fittingly before the holidays of Tishrei [High Holy Days].

Jean-Claude Dahan
Memoir: The Fight of a Dijonnaise


When she asked, many years ago, for the death certificates for her mother and sister who were murdered at Auschwitz, Nadia Kaluski realized with astonishment, pain, and indignation, that they were officially “deceased at Drancy.” They had no gravestone, they had been destroyed, with millions of others, and nothing remained of them, even their death! Information understood. All the people who died in deportation were registered as “deceased” at Pithiviers, at Beaune-la-Rolande, at Drancy, ³ etc. or “missing.”

Nadia and Gilbert Kaluski, with the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICRA) of Côte d’Or, began a battle of David against Goliath, with determination, for years. They told them “It’s the law” and they responded: “We must change this law”, to which they retort: “This is very interesting but, you see, it’s the law.”

They wrote to all those elected, to all the key figures, some thousands of letters, several times, long before the trivialization of arguments from deniers and falsifiers. Some at last understand and, finally, May 15 1985, Robert Badinter [Minister of Justice, Socialist, Jewish] passed a new law in the Assembly.

This was it, they were going to recognize the deportees’ death! Well, no. It was now necessary that each case be studied and that each name appear in the Official Newspaper! More than 130,000 deportees left France for the Nazi concentration camps, including more than 70,000

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³ Among the more infamous French concentration camps, where many Jews died from disease, malnutrition, and the elements. Drancy, in particular, was the center from which most deported Jews were sent to Auschwitz.
Jews. The names began to appear (13 names April 28, 1986). One could then anticipate around 900 years before all cases are settled. And the Kaluskis resumed their work, always so relentless.

The years have passed, Nadia Kaluski continues to goad, as a part of LICRA, the Secretary of State for Veterans that has become computerized; the 82\textsuperscript{nd} decree of February 6, 1992 included 201 names; it has published, up to now, a little less than 10,000 names… But a committee has been created for research. Among the members of this committee, one finds [scholar] Rita Thalmann, of the national LICRA and [Nazi hunter/scholar] Serge Klarsfeld who was able to reach the ministry, to have access to the archives and rediscover the “lost” Jewish files of the Parisian region [now housed in the Holocaust Memorial Center].

At the same time, at the end of the ‘80s, tormented by the idea that the omission will remain after the last witnesses are dead, Nadia Kaluski insisted that there remain a trace of her sister, Louis Jacobson (picked up by the French police at 17 \(\frac{1}{2}\) years old). Louise then attended the high school \textit{Hélène Boucher (Paris)}. Nadia asked the headmaster to put up a plaque in Louise’s name. Of course, she got no response. So, she addressed Serge Klarsfeld to whom she showed the letters that Louise had written to her family and to her friends between her arrest (August 31, 1942) and her internment (February 13, 1943). Nadia Kaluski always guarded these letters carefully. Serge Klarsfeld, moved deeply, asked her for the authorization to publish them. He made a book from them called “\textit{Lettres de Louise Jacobson}” [\textit{Letters from Louise Jacobson}]. (*available for 60 Francs from LICRA)

The following year, a young director, Alain Gintzburger, moved by the Carpentras Affair 1990; [desecration of old tombstones and skeletal remains], contacted Serge Klarsfeld to create a theatrical play relating to the Holocaust. The latter entrusted him with the \textit{Lettres de Louise Jacobson} from which he made an adaptation with the actress Juliette Batlle. This play was
performed in Paris in spring 1991, at the Avignon festival the following summer, with an enormous success, then again in Paris until April 27. The critics were extremely full of praise. Juliette Batlle also did some “readings” of Lettres de Louise Jacobson for schools (she even came to Dijon last February 13).

On February 3, 1992, Alain Gintzburger and Juliette Batlle were awarded the Annie and Charles Corrin prize for “the teaching of the history of the Holocaust”. The Corrin prize competition is placed under the sponsorship of National Education.

The ceremony, chaired by André Frossard, took place at the Sorbonne, in the Richelieu amphitheater full to the seams. Among the key figures who were present: Lionel Jospin, Simone Veil, Serge Klarsfeld, the Chief Rabbi Joseph Sitruk, David de Rothschild, Mr. Barcelline (Veteran Secretariat), Henri Bulawko, Samuel Pisar, Annie Corrin (Charles Corrin, survivor of Auschwitz, founder of the award, passed in November 1991)…

All that largely exceeded the hopes of Nadia Kaluski. But her work so that the mention of “died in internment” is changed to “death of the deported” is not finished. She continues to work on the unclassified as part of the LICRA so that the memory is respected. Help her. Help us. Join the LICRA.

*Cathie Bussidan*
On the Subject of Hidden Children


So that things are clear: since I am in charge of La Nouvelle Lettre [The New Letter], I type, sometimes letter by letter, to be sure I’m not mistaken, including articles with which I am not in total agreement. I correct them, after some mailings or calls for verification, with all the more care since they don’t correspond with my manner of thinking. In the editing committee, which takes note of the texts and judges (very rarely) if it is preferable to avoid certain issues. There are people with varying tendencies and opinions. They are not all in agreement but they democratically accept the opinion of the majority. After the committee’s opinion, nothing is added, nothing is taken away. Mireille Simon and I take care of the layout, scrupulously following what was decided.

I heard about a letter that almost everyone received (except La Nouvelle Lettre, this is why I could not have it appear in the Letters to the Editor). I think that there was a misunderstanding on the author’s part in this letter. The goal of the article, “The Hidden Children,” is not to rehabilitate all of anti-Semitic Poland but to inform that, among the Polish, there are some righteous [Gentiles] whose merit is all the more questionable because they did not save Judaism for these Jewish children at the same time as their lives. It was above all to inform readers of the existence of horribly tormented survivors, torn between their origins and their saved life at the price of abandoning the faith of their parents.

The examples are not many but they exist. I read a story of this sort in Ennemies [ Enemies] by Isaac Bashevis Singer.

I own a superb book, illustrated and commented upon by Ilex Beller: La vie du Shtetl [The Life of the Shtetl]. It reads:
At each political upheaval, war, or revolution, the anti-Semites take the opportunity to exploit and abuse the Jewish population…

In 1939, a group of Jews from my village succeeded in crossing the border… Some of them, exceptionally, were able to save their lives by hiding with peasant friends. All in all, two dozen Jews from my village survived.

In 1983, he returned to his village. He was welcomed, people cried with him in recalling the tragedy that had occurred 40 years earlier.

But no one had any idea… reminded by an inscription of a few words, of the monstrous massacre that was perpetrated here.

Finally, this same book ends with this paragraph:

The death penalty threatened the Poles who helped the Jews. But there were also brave people who helped the Jews, hiding them. I know that during the occupation, Jan Gajevski, my neighbor, took care of the house of Jew Jankel Fingerhut, whom he hid with his wife and his two sons, Abram and Arié. After the war, to thank him, the Fingerhut family helped Jan Gajevski get to America, and he just died in 1984. This was a courageous man.

Marek Halter, who one could not suspect of complacency with respect to unjust causes, is currently working on a film that wants to give homage to those who, their lives in peril, saved Jews: Tzedek [Justice]. He was interviewed for La Nouvel Observateur [The New Observer] (number 1469 from 31/12/92):

The evil must be shown, he said. But after 50 years of necessary denunciations, the moment has come to remind the world that, if Jews were killed, it was possible to save them as well. Evil only exists in relation to good. It is not by chance that the law presents itself in the form of two lists… Six millions Jews have been killed. But more than 500,000 have been saved by ordinary people, at the risk of their lives. It’s to them that I want to give justice…

I’m thinking of this mother superior from a Polish convent where 55 children were hidden. As I asked her why other Catholics handed over Jews, she responded with a slightly sad smile: “It’s that they forgot that the Virgin Mary and Our Lord Jesus Christ were Jews, too…”

They often told me in Poland: 1000 Poles were needed to save a Jew, but to denounce 1000 Jews one Pole sufficed. And yet a woman succeeded in getting 136 people out of the Warsaw Ghetto, with fake identity cards. She showed me “thank you” letters that she received from around the world. She is surprised that they still thank her.
Yes, Poland is an anti-Semitic country, but this is not to say that all Poles detest Jews.

France was Pétainist: 80,000 Jews were deported. The French organized the roundup of Vel’ d’Hiv’. The French police and gendarme carried it out, guarded the internment camps. French railroaders drove the transport trains. But each one of us knows that there were admirable Frenchmen who saved Jews at the risk of their lives.

This is true for all countries, for all people, who had more or fewer righteous ones. But precisely where they had the least numbers, they only had more merit.

Our duty is not only to recognize the existence of our Polish cousins who suffered so much ambiguity in their situation, but to give them our support and our friendship. This is also to give justice to those who saved [Jews]; to admire their courage even if we bemoan that these hidden children have also been hidden from the religion of their parents.*

*Cathie Bussidan

With the unanimous approval of the Editing Committee

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* Many Jews hidden by Catholics were baptized and raised as Catholics. Many others were enabled to remain Jews.
Letters to the Editor: The Hidden Children


I have written in its early stages that *La Nouvelle Lettre* [*The New Letter*] was of a very high quality and… I thought I would stop there! But I must say that today it is even better. Bravo to the whole team who gave us such an excellent newspaper. I take this opportunity, while congratulating everyone, to especially praise Henri-Claude Bloch for his “Que Faire?” [*What to Do?*] of which the comments are so good and should give pause to many of us… I also greatly appreciated the words of Herbert Pagani passed on by Henri Zrihen.

I would like to turn to a chronic condition that created a lot of teeth gnashing, I believe: it concerns the “hidden children” of Poland. Without sharing the vehemence of some upon reading it, I understand it very well: one cannot deny that Poland was, with Germany, the most anti-Semitic country that could exist. Its anti-Semitism based on the Christian “law of contempt” prompted bloody persecutions of Jews, long after the last war. The majority of other countries were very anti-Semitic also but it is not by chance that the Nazis built most of their final solution camps in Poland. I understand (I can’t deceive myself!) that things have evolved somewhat from then. This probably explains in part that Jewish descendants are found there. But it must be emphasized that these saved children were only very rare exceptions, and only to make them Christians. If, just after the war, one had wished that they find their origins, one would have hit a wall, I am sure, as much as the Finaly Affair*, but even more difficult to conduct, and would not have succeeded… However, it is also important to emphasize the courage of some people who saved these children: risking their own lives. A life is a life and life is certainly sacred. In spite of

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*French Affair, in which saved, baptized brothers were hidden from their family after the war, until Jewish pressure led to a papal intervention.*
everything, let’s rejoice that this immensely small number of children are alive, putting their “rescue” in perspective.

Henriette Mesguis
Letters to the Editor: The Hidden Children


We wish to share with you the interest that we took in reading *La Nouvelle Lettre* [*The New Letter*] and congratulate you for the richness and diversity of its contents.

In the last issue, we were particularly interested by the article “The Hidden Children”, which relates the meeting of child survivors of the Holocaust in Poland. We did not think that so many rescues had been achieved, although it is only a tiny fraction compared to all those who perished in general indifference, if not in hatred.

Apart from Roman Polanski [famous film director], who says in his autobiography, how his father had entrusted him, for a fee, to a friendly Christian Polish family, we had heard of very few links between the Resistance and the Warsaw ghetto. Polanski, of course, if he escaped the roundups and survived, did not do so in the best conditions, but he was saved. In France, Lanzmann [famous author, film director] recounts a similar story in *Le Têtard* [*The Tadpole*].

Anyway, and perhaps precisely because of the rarity of these examples, one must give homage and justice to those who saved human lives and allowed the children to survive massacres. If it is regrettable that all links with their Jewish origin have disappeared, we hope that their current reunions allow them, in finding their roots, to weave new links with the community they come from.

If we still mourn our dead (and our family has, in both Poland and France, taken a heavy toll), it is fortunate for humanity that men of all backgrounds and all countries have attempted to vanquish barbarism by providing help and saving lives, often at the risk of their own.

*Elisabeth and Jean Job*
French Israelite or French Jew


I do not know if I am among those “French Jews who found it normal to eradicate this period.”

Yes, “it took more than 40 years for the Jews to wake up and revive the memory of the Holocaust.”

For me, at least, I know what the process was. We emerged from the horror, we created a family, we wanted to protect our children against this horror show from which we emerged. I have, however, had to do it very discreetly because my daughters are very traumatized by the Holocaust!

But when Faurisson, Roques and others who are nostalgic for the Vichy regime dared deny the gas chambers and re-assassinate our dead, we began to speak, to publish, to testify.

Even more, the Barbie trial [1987] brought survivors to the witness stand that had not, until then, ever been able to tell their stories, and this opened an outlet.

I add that I was raised without religion, not by French Israelites, but by Russian Ashkenazis, happy and proud to have become French in 1925. They spoke Yiddish… and French with a strong Yiddish accent.

God being really “on vacation” during the tragic years we went through, I felt no vague desire to turn towards Him. And yet, I feel Jewish to the core. And my husband, Gilbert, whose mother was Gentile, reacted exactly like me.

*Nadia Kaluski*
50th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising


The LICRA [International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism] needed to mark the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. This event, in addition to its emotional strength in our memory, has an exemplary value. The resistance of the Polish Jews, locked in the Auschwitz antechamber, can serve as an example to give us the strength to resist when we need to. But resist how? Against whom? This is the question that we posed of Enzo Traverso, historian, author of a new and striking book: Les Juifs et l’Allemagne [The Jews and Germany]. He came to the Community Center to give us a lecture.

The room was packed full: 65 attentive listeners attended this talk. Remarkable acoustics and an excellent sound system allowed everyone to hear well. I sum up Enzo Traverso’s words.

Heirs perhaps unaware of Masada, the Warsaw ghetto fighters revolted without illusions, not to defeat the enemy but to choose their death. They did not wish to let themselves be led to the slaughter like sheep. This resistance, which is linked to other resistances in Europe, is, however fundamentally different, unique.

As opposed to death camps where man, totally dehumanized, is defeated by technology, the ghetto still includes a human dimension. It is run by its citizens, it has a social and political life; the people try to carry on life.

Insurrection is triggered at the start of the deportations, when the Jews have almost no more strength. Before, they were psychologically incapable of organizing this resistance. No one could predict the gas chambers. Traditionally, the enemy came from the East (Russian or Polish pogroms) and not from the West. Deep down in the consciences of European Jews, Germany represented a model of emancipation.
Judeo-German culture, a vital element of European culture, was wiped out by the Holocaust. This collapse is a central event in the 20th century, affecting all of our civilization.

Today, we live in a world that produced Auschwitz. The Holocaust is both a historic event and a rupture of civilization that one cannot understand: to historicize the genocide, this is to integrate it like a normal event. One can explain the Holocaust; one cannot understand it. It concerned an irrational goal (to wipe out all the individuals of a people) in a rational manner. Nazism is a modern barbarism: it is the industry of death by the most recent techniques.

We must now assume our responsibility regarding the past: what has happened can repeat itself.

This lucid and interesting talk was followed by a discussion. The audience was large: several associations had joined LICRA, inviting their friends: the Federation of Secular Works, the League of Human Rights, the National Federation of Interned and Deported, Resisters and Patriots, etc.

Cathie Bussidan
The Little Girl From Warsaw


A short time ago, my eyes fell on a magazine on the shelf of my dear [deceased husband] Raymond. The cover photo shows a very young girl, alone on a sidewalk of the Warsaw Ghetto, sitting in front of her dead little brother. A terrible photo…

At the same time, I heard news about Lebanon. The heavy Israeli bombardments, the new entry of Israeli soldiers, what could be more natural even if, of course, one can deplore whether this is a truly pressing necessity!

I read or heard, I’m not sure where, that it is not yet accepted, in the world, that the Jews also have the right to defend themselves. It will take time for this principle, recognized for all people, to also be for the people of Israel. It seems to me, alas, an obvious fact: let themselves be attacked in the north of the country incessantly and to not retaliate still seems very natural [to some people] ...

But when I found out that some Jews of the Diaspora (in their protected nest) shared the opinion of the blind people, well then, I looked at the little girl from Warsaw and her dead little brother and I remained completely appalled!

What! Every effort is made to revive the recent wild past, so that the memory of the Holocaust remains, so that we commemorate the memory of those deported from Vel’ d’Hiv’ and we dare act, moreover, as if the little girl from Warsaw had never existed? It is absolutely intolerable!

On the other hand, I would like to remind ourselves that the Holocaust is still too close and that, in this context, I am devastated to meet very often, under the headings of little “marriage” ads in different journals that I receive:
“Ashkenazi to marry JF [French-Jew] Ashkenazi”

or, less often:

“Sephardi to marry JF [French-Jew] Sephardi”.

I even heard some coreligionists of Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian origins wish to marry only Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian Jews! Only 50 years after the little girl of the Warsaw Ghetto, how is this possible? Still they will tell us: “These people still search for a coreligionist!”

Yes, bravo, okay, but the worst part is that they remain confined to this narrow view! ... After Warsaw!... And still, some who were picky eventually married a German, Austrian, or a Norwegian... non-Jew, undoubtedly with a “perfect likeness”. (I have nothing against each of these last people, this goes without saying, I speak in the context of my argument.)

“You treat us then as racists, we, the Jews?” one could retort to me. No, not at all. I am thinking of the southern French who willingly speak of “foreigners” with respect to the people of the north of France. They would moreover certainly be the first to come to their aid when necessary. I think it would be the same for our coreligionists! But these citizens of southern France have all the extenuating circumstances (indeed they often marry with each other, proving their capacity to understand that a little difference sometimes brings more strength!). But we, the Jews, we have no extenuating circumstance: let it suffice us to cast a glance on the little girl of Warsaw and her dead little brother.

Please, let’s have a little decency, a bit of reflection, so that the infinitely sad look from this little girl does not become, furthermore, a look of reproach. She has suffered enough.

Henriette Mesguis
News from Poland


When a prayer meeting came together for the first time, with rabbis and bishops side by side at the Warsaw synagogue, to commemorate the ghetto uprising, some neo-Nazis demonstrators paraded for a quarter hour with cries of “Down with the Jews!”

Itzak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, declared of Auschwitz:

“Each acre of land is saturated here with the blood of the dead. Each hut heard the cries of the tortured. Fifty years later, the cries resonate forever in our ears. We will not forget, we will not forgive.”

*Jacqueline Develay-Ossia*
Medal of the Righteous


French Committee for Yad Vashem to Mrs. Liliane David:

We have the pleasure of bringing to your attention that the medal and diploma ceremony of “Righteous among the Nations” in the honor of Mrs. Maria Marguerite Vertut and of the file of her parents is set for December 22nd at 11am in the salons of the Mayor of Cahors.

It is Mr. Y Amihoud, Consul General of Israel in Marseille, who will lead this deliberation. We hope you can attend, providing oral testimony of your gratitude to those who, at risk of their life, did not hesitate to save hunted Jews during World War II.

- Lucien D. Fayman, Southern France Delegate.

During the German occupation, in 1942, my father and mother were refugees in Cahors and rented an apartment in the house of the Vertut family.

My parents had left Besançon in the beginning of June 1940 to flee the advance of the German army because they were German refugees and my father was on the Nazis’ blacklist.

Mr. and Mrs. Vertut were already very old and lived with their only daughter, Maria-Marguerite (born in 1904). In 1941, when the Free Zone was invaded by the Germans and constant roundups took place, the Vertut family hid my father in the attic of the house for three months. For the safety of my father, the house’s gate remained locked at all times.

One day, the French police knocked on this door. Mrs. Vertut opened it and told them that my father had left. The officers then announced they would return the next day. Mr. Vertut and Maria-Marguerite had, the previous weeks, stacked several blocks of wood behind their house, up to the first floor. They took my father there, going by the path behind the house to a
shack that belonged to them, four kilometers from there. During long weeks, they brought my father something to eat daily while he stayed hidden in this garden shack. He thus was saved and lived.

Later, he found refuge, until the end of the war, with surrounding peasants that some Christian friends had pointed out to him. Furthermore, these peasants, whose names I unfortunately do not know, sent food packages to my mother and my sister.

The Vertut family risked their lives because they sheltered my parents and nourished my father in secret. They never asked for any payment or gifts for their acts. Neither had the peasants.

They accomplished these heroic acts according to their conscience and sense of human morality, quite simply, quite naturally, without asking questions and without taking into account the danger to themselves. They expected nothing in return and certainly did not think that one day they would be awarded for this, at a huge ceremony, in the presence of city notables.

Liliane David
In November 1942, in Nancy, 20 Jewish children from two to 13 years old (and, among them, my cousin Maurice Fride) were the first children to be deported to Auschwitz.

Forty-five years later, on June 27, 1987, my cousin Bernard Fride, Maurice’s brother, was in charge of erecting, in his memory, 20 gravestones in the Jewish cemetery in Nancy. My brother and I were present; the ceremony was very moving.

Bernard Fride wrote a book: *Une mauvaise histoire juive* [An Unfortunate Jewish History] prefaced by Pierre-Vidal Naquet [renowned historian]. It covers, with respect to the deportation of children, the delegate of the UGIF [General Union of French Israelites – elite leadership organ imposed by Nazis] of Nancy during the occupation. This is book is a must-read, even if the truth is displeasing.

The UGIF has already caused a great deal of ink to be spilled.4

Jacqueline Develay-Ossia

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4 Eye witnesses and historians disagree with respect to whether, and how much, Jewish leaders and council members collaborated with the Nazis. What were their intentions, goals, options? Some leaders behaved heroically; others did not. Some were venal; others risked all.
Mention “Died in Internment” on the Proclamations of Civil Status


Letter to

Mr. President of the Republic
Ladies and Gentlemen who are Ministers
Ladies and Gentlemen of the Chamber of Deputies
Ladies and Gentlemen of the Senate

Dijon, September 22nd, 1993

• We have worked 13 years to ensure that Died in Internment is marked on the acts of civil status of the victims

• It was eight years ago that the law was passed unanimously (May 15, 1985)

Yet the names of those concerned appear only in dribs and drabs in rare decrees of the Ministry of Veterans and War Victims: today, out of 130,000 victims, 16,701 names have been published, 1506 civil statuses have been rectified, which, at this rate, would mean that the last decree would be published in 62 years and the civil statuses would be rectified in 690 years. We must recognize that the laws of Vichy were implemented with a different efficiency!

Fifty years after the massacres, some survivors view with bitterness this scandalous void, which falsifiers of history can manipulate.

So please then kindly intervene to accelerate the proper release of decrees.

We thank you, etc.

Nadia Kaluski-Jacobson

Honorary President of the Cote D’Or LICRA
[International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism]
From 1940 to 1945, we lived as best we could for five people in small accommodations in Negrepellis, Montauban, Albi, Alban [communes in southern France].

One day in 1942, my mother received a despairing letter from one of her sisters interned at Drancy with her husband and her three children. From that moment on, she, already anxious, became depressed. Thereafter, the deportation of my father and the death of my grandmother only worsened her condition. She became more and more irritable and had relational problems with those closest to her. My brother and, I especially, became troubled children.

One night in 1942, in Montauban, very late in the night, a policeman came and told us to hide because a roundup was going to take place. No one wanted to hide us more than a few nights. My mother and a neighbor took my brother and me to the home of some farmers. After two months, everyone knew that we were Jewish and my parents had to take us back.

My father had found a place as a skilled leather cutter in a clog factory in Albi. The boss, a member of the Milice [fascist police unit], promised him that nothing untoward would happen to him. In spite of this, two Milice members went looking for him one night at 3 o’clock in the morning. I cannot describe what took place in the course of that unforgettable night.

My father came back once to see us. He went to see a cobbler with whom he had to work overtime that evening, after his work at the factory. He asked him to hide us. In exchange, he said, he would work for free. The cobbler refused.

My father was deported. He returned 18 months later, in a [terrible] physical and mental state! …He was thin, sick, and bitter. We returned to Dijon in late 1945. Having lost everything; courageously; [my father] went back to work.
The members of the Milice [Vichy paramilitary organization] were not punished because they had witnesses who blamed the Germans.

I changed schools 14 times in my life. Imagine such a muddled schooling! Luckily, during and after the war, I read a lot. I had to abandon my studies to help my parents at the market and at the house, like many of my Jewish friends.

When the Finaly brothers⁵ were on television, it reminded me of some things.

From 1944 to 1945, at the age of 11, I ended up in St. Joseph’s convent in Alban, a village situated near Albi. Until that date, no one wanted to hide us—save an old lady, a neighbor on the second floor who offered a room too small for five people.

As I said, my father was deported, my grandmother went to hide in a hospital where she died soon after. My mother and brother were taken into other convents.

When my grandmother died, sadly only five people accompanied the casket, as the rest were afraid.

At the convent, life was hard but, thanks to the sisters, I was fed properly, despite the absence of vitamins, and I could study for my primary school diploma.

The sisters wanted me to become a teacher; they never spoke to me about baptism. One day, I went to ask the canon of the parish to baptize me, thinking I could find peace. He refused and told me: “You must remain Jewish and pray to God.”

After the war, when my father returned from Auschwitz, life was very difficult. My brother and I spent a few months in a Jewish home belonging to the O.S.E. [Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants**]. There, I learned about the Jewish religion, the history of Israel, the songs, and the

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⁵ The story of two Jewish brothers taken in by a Catholic Frenchwoman after their parents were put in concentration camps. Having baptized the children without permission, the woman refused to send the children to live with their aunt in Palestine after the war. In 1957, after a tense scandal, the children were finally returned to their family.

** An association that helps families in difficulty.
dances. It was there, in the company of Jewish orphans, that we discovered the atrocities of the war that disrupted our lives along with those of millions of others.

Jacqueline Develay-Ossia


**Died in Deportation**


Letter to Mr. Philippe Mestre,
Minister of Veterans and War Victims
Dijon, 20 December 1993

Mr. Minister,

I have the honor of acknowledging the receipt of your letter. In our opinion, it leads to several observations.

1) Neither the number of victims nor the number of published names advanced by your services match [the numbers] we identified. LICRA [International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism] Côte d’Or took out a subscription to The Official Journal until 1984. It noted 114 arrested. The first date of 8-2-86, the 114\textsuperscript{th} (and last to this day) date of 8-13-93. It included 17,482 names and 1,764 corrections to the death certificates of the victims. Could we get your list that contains close to 20,000 names?

2) Your letter states “three out of ten cases relate to a deported person whose marital status is not certain or to a worker who died during conscription.” These cases cannot generate the attribution *died in deportation*.

We are asking for explanations from your service office.

On the one hand, it is necessary to understand, it appears, that the fault of regularization comes from what is unknown: the date of birth of the deported. However, we know he lived, except for his birth, at least in part, in France. Hence, he was deported, then exterminated. We know the place and the date of his assassination. (This is what interests us and we feel that it would be sufficient to say the words “died in deportation” since that is the reality.) And, since they are dead, this is not a big request.
On the other hand, a reference is made to a “worker deceased in the course of conscription.” And yet, judgment of February 10, 1991 of the Court of Cassation\(^6\) stipulated that “only the resisting deportees and the political deportees, excluding people forced to work in a hostile country, can boast the title of deportee.” We do not then understand why the forced case of the STO [hard labor in Germany] is discussed in the settlement of the problem at hand.

In addition, Mr. Serge Klarsfeld and Ms. Rita Thalmann are members of the working group supported by the ministerial decree of April 5, 1991 to monitor the implementation of the allocation of the words “died in deportation.” But the task force has not been convened for two years. Around 130,000 political deportees of the Resistance were assassinated. Even though a half-century separates us from these crimes, they must not be ignored. We are certain that you share our sentiment and that you will take measures to ensure that Law No. 85-526 of 15 May 1985 is finally applied.

We thank you in advance and we ask for your support.

Nadia Kaluski-Jacobson  
Honorary President of LICRA Gold Coast  
Volunteer Fighter of the Resistance

P.S. We still have the intention of introducing our point of view to the members of Parliament who received the same response as us.

\(^6\) The Court of Cassation is France’s court of last resort.
A Word from the President


The period that preceded Passover was marked by an exceptional event, the cinematic release of a film of glaring truth: Steven Spielberg’s Schindler’s List.

My wife and I had the privilege of being invited by the President of the Central Consistory of France to the preview on the 28th of last February and, already, after having seen the film, we knew that it would be an Oscar contender. The great thing about this film is not just the story that is told, which represents only one episode of the Holocaust, but above all the educational component that Steven Spielberg brings to this film. He also particularly emphasized this position in the few words he spoke to the audience gathered that night:

“I directed this film with the hope that future generations will keep in their memory this tragic period of our history and will endeavor to better understand it.”

Coming shortly before the commencement of the trial of one of the French knaves of Nazism, Paul Touvier [Nazi collaborator in Vichy France], this vision of things could only please the Jewish Community of France.

Thanks to the efforts of Sylvie Knopfer, A.C.I.D. board member and vice president of Radio Shalom, an afternoon and an evening at a reduced rate could be obtained from the management of the Gaumont Cinema. May the director find here the expression of our gratitude. I hope many of you have been to see this film; if not you still can, as it says on the poster: you will not be disappointed.

Cordial shalom to all.

Jean-Claude Dahan
**Taboo: The Death of Judaism**


“I am plagued by doubts. What if everything is an illusion and nothing exists? In that case, I definitely paid too much for my carpet…” - Woody Allen

February 1944 … February 1994

“The Red Poster,” and the poem of Aragon haunts us…

You had your pictures on the walls of our cities  
Black with beard and night, hirsute, threatening  
The poster, that seemed like a bloodstain,  
Using your names that are hard to pronounce,  
Sought to sow fear in passers-by.

No one seemed to see you French by choice  
People went by all day without seeing you,  
But at curfew wandering fingers  
Wrote under your photos “Fallen for France”  
And it made the dismal mornings different.

Rayman, Boczov, Grzywacz, Elek, Wajbrott, Witchitz, Fingerweig …

In Paris, in 1944, *l’Armée du Crime* was a part of French dignity.

We always expect more from Jews…and it’s necessary, isn’t it? Always and still more unbearable, for Judaism is the link between the blind and the seeing, the living man, the one who doubts, the one who does not make any belief an article of fanatical faith regardless of the respect in which this faith is wreathed.

Claude Lévy wrote in February 1990, in *Information Juive* (a Jewish journal):  

“Historians say they are unfairly labeled ‘revisionists’ so it appears much more judicious to dub them ‘negationists.’”

Futile war of words?

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* The Army of Crime was a group of resistance fighters who committed attacks against the Nazis in occupied Paris. They were executed in 1944.
Do we ignore the vital importance of meaning? J. Trier [Germanic linguist who taught at Munster University] (*Structures sémantiques et conceptives du monde*) shows that by their given meaning, the words constitute a structured set in which each is dependent on the other—the linguistic field (*champ linguistique*) covering up the conceptual field (*champ conceptual*) and explaining a dialectically coherent vision of the world.

For example, if one historian claims to be “revisionist”, he’s aiming to prepare his audience to embrace his opinion with the deference and respect that the tradition – the historical research – attaches to that word.

Because, like people, words have an origin. Revisionism theorist [moderate German Socialist] Edouard Bernstein formulated, at the end of the nineteenth century, the questioning of the theoretical foundations of Marxism. Then, after him, Kautsky, Bauer, Browder…Gorbachev [other Revisionists].

But very quickly, the words *revisionist* and *revisionism* came to designate all those who advocate the revision of a doctrine, of a belief, of a dogmatically fixed truth erected by taboo.

Thus, supporters of Captain Dreyfus, the historians who, before the admission of Yeltsin, asserted that the Katyn massacre was a Soviet crime. Those who want to review the trials of Joan of Arc, Gilles de Rais, Franco, JFK… Revise a judgment; revise history.

Take Louis IX, called Saint Louis. By royal edict, he condemned 100,000 Jews to wear a distinctive sign on their clothes: the wheel. The yellow star before Vichy. Saint Louis organized an unjust trial of the Talmud and burned 24 cartloads of precious Hebrew manuscripts. Should we also recall that he tolerated more than one pogrom when he was not the instigator? So, Saint Louis, taboo?

In matters of horror, man should say everything, know everything: the how and the why.
In this world, there are neither angels nor demons. There is only brother against brother: **Cain killed his brother Abel.**

Then, if we see the evidence and say yes to revisionism, what do we say to the deniers who are only revisionists we wouldn’t want to associate with, and falsifiers? The answer seems obvious and simple. It is not.

It would be impossible and unthinkable to give them a voice... And yet?

In July 1965, the newsletter of the Covenant of Abraham (*B’rit Abraham*) published a book by Paul Rassinier (a former political prisoner at Buchenwald and Dora, former Socialist deputy, militant pacifist and negationism founder with his book: *The Lie of Ulysses* – 1948) and a response to the newspaper.

On both sides, the best supports for Faurisson in these trials and the endless polemics with [historians] Vidal-Naquet: José Benhamou, Claude Karnoouth, Jacob Assous and... Jean-Gabriel Cohn-Bendit.

What do we say also of Michel de Bouard, tortured, deported to Mauthausen, a history professor, member of the Institute, committee member of the History of World War II, former Dean of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Caen and who, resigning the presidency of the Calvados Deportees, declared to *West-France*:

“I was torn between my conscience as a historian and belonging to a group of friends whom I love deeply but who refuse to treat the deportation according to the methods of sound history. I am haunted by the thought that in 100 years, or even 50 years, historians will have questioned the Holocaust and what they discover. The dossier is rotten ... I think ultimately that historians will say that the deportation has to be a myth. That is the danger.”

At last, how do we respond to Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi who directs the Jewish and Israeli Studies Center at Columbia University in New York and who writes:

“The Holocaust, in the image that emerges, far from being forged on the anvil of the historian is melted in the crucible of the novelist ... Curiously, if the Jews do not reject history,
they are not all that prepared to face it; they seem, on the contrary, to wait for a new, meta-historical myth.”

We can answer this: Judaism, through the centuries, has just demonstrated that its “difference”, and (why not), its superiority, were related to the constantly renewed fight against the very idea of taboo.

The essential component of a humanism that has faced barbarism, Judaism keeps surprising itself. Judaism is a nation among nations only through its teaching. Its purpose is to raise questions, what Elie Wiesel called the _Apostrophe of God Himself_.

The Jew does not cease to discover the Jew that he is and, [therefore], he contributes to the greater Humanity, the Humanity that understands that we are all part of a composite extended exciting Humanity.

Jews are always asked for more, and yet to remain Jewish is to confront:

- the Big Bang and the Black Hole
- matter and anti-matter
- the candle that dies and the spark of life
- the unspeakable and the words to talk about it.

In taboo, Judaism radically opposes, without doubt, the confrontation of ideas and theses. Noam Chomsky*, one of the great spirits of our time and the grandchild of a rabbi, prefaced Faurisson’s book _Memoire en Defense_, writing:

> “It is precisely in the case of horrendous ideas that the right of free expression must be most vigorously defended…Advocacy of the right to express ideas that are generally approved is, quite obviously, a matter of no significance.”

March 1944 on some Appelplatz: “By five! Go! Go! Faster!” ...

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* Author Robert Weiner had the honor of studying with Chomsky’s parents at Gratz Hebrew College in Philadelphia. Most Jews would acknowledge that Noam Chomsky is an academic genius, while strongly disagreeing with his radically critical positions with respect to the United States and Israel.
For you, Marianne Cohn, Elie Leopold Bloch, Olga Bancic, Joseph Epstein, because today, a poll of March 1, 1994 indicates that one American in three doubts the veracity of the Holocaust.

We refuse to leave the Holocaust to historical criticism. We know that the taboo benefits from denial. We are not scared of anything.

Brecht said:

“One who knows not is an imbecile, but one who knows and says nothing is a criminal!” Pretending not to know is not only unacceptable…and criminal: it’s suicidal. The death of Judaism: taboo.

Jean-Marc Desanti
A Genuine, Must-see Story


For those who have not seen the Steven Spielberg movie or read the book by Thomas Keneally, they absolutely should see the film. [It] is excellent, I would say even admirable [and] was awarded seven Oscars.

A moving film, it is not quite unbearably sad, because for 1,100 people (usually entire families), the nightmare had a happy ending. One thousand one hundred people were rescued by Schindler. Their descendants are now 6,000. In addition, it does not allow us to despair of mankind because, in the most horrific circumstances, it is possible to remain a human being with human feelings ...

I would like to make a slight correction regarding the article by the journalist Laure Berthier (*Bien Publique* - best local press) following the interview that many people granted him. She did not understand the film, she has not read the book. She says in her article:

“…the honesty of Spielberg, a Jew, is that he shows things from the perspective of a Nazi…”

This is absolutely false. I told her on the phone. She admitted… Spielberg, who is also an American, does not show “the perspective of a Nazi” but faithfully recounts the testimonies of survivors. It is their views that are represented in the book and movie. These are the survivors who made a portrait of Schindler and not Schindler making his own portrait. Moreover, such a thing would have been impossible because [Schindler] died long before the book was published... I myself heard several survivors and children of Schindler’s survivors speak: for them, he was an angel on earth. These are the words of some survivors.
Finally, it should be added that Schindler did not succeed, after the war, in his business affairs. The survivors living in Israel, Germany and the USA supported him morally and financially. He is also buried in the cemetery of Christian Jerusalem [among Righteous Gentiles at the Yad Vashem Memorial].

In his introduction, Tom Keneally, the Australian author, recounts in what circumstances he was taken to hear Oskar Schindler speak, how he interrogated 50 survivors in seven different countries, his travels to visit the sight, to sift through documents…

To use the texture and devices of a novel to tell a true story is a course that has frequently been followed in modern writing. It is the one I chose to follow here--both because the novelist’s craft is the only one I can lay claim to, and because the novel’s techniques seem suited for a character of such ambiguity and magnitude as Oskar. I have attempted, however, to avoid all fiction, since fiction would debase the record, and to distinguish between reality and the myths which are likely to attach themselves to a man of Oskar's stature. It has sometimes been necessary to make reasonable constructs of conversations of which Oskar and others have left only the briefest record. But most exchanges and conversations, and all events, are based on the detailed recollections of the Schindlerjuden (Schindler’s Jews), of Schindler himself, and of other witnesses to Oskar’s acts of outrageous rescue.

And he cites a long list of witnesses.

The introduction and certainly Tom Keneally’s book can prove that the film is the true tale of the survivors of *Schindler’s List.*

*Liliane David*
Was It Necessary to Make Schindler’s List or Especially Not That?


Why a debate?

Do we have the right to make a story of the Holocaust? Should we leave this sad chapter of our history reserved to those who will choose to learn about it?

A museum, actually a horror museum, so terrifying that too few go there voluntarily…

How many of our children, those of the second post-war generation, are involved in this way? They are already rare, so how will it be for the 3rd and 10th generations? The Holocaust, in turn, after the ancient history of the last century or even the beginning of this century, will return in the domain of a few specialists: renowned historians, reputable philosophers, but to a much smaller audience, too.

So bravo to Spielberg for having dared to defy the ban [on Holocaust Representation].

Cinema or literature, as Jacques Attali tried in his time with Eternal Life (1989), an allegorical history of the world, are much better media to perpetuate the memory than history books.

Some will say that Schindler’s generous personality was kept in the film and see it as an affront to the six million dead. (Is it not then possible to show that it was feasible to confront the [Nazi] authority and save men? And since there were just men, a few just men, then there could probably have been a few more. Is it not a lesson for the future as strong as the horror of the Holocaust?)

My mother told me the horror she felt when, at the Alsatian refuge in Lyon with my grandmother, they saw a German soldier knocking on their door early one morning. When they refused to open, a neighbor [answered the call]: he came to fetch a package for the uncle of my
mother in a concentration camp ... The uncle did not return but a Third Reich soldier risked his life to make sure the package was delivered.

Recalling these memories is difficult, particularly when you are trying to find peace.

So, yes, Spielberg has done well to dare.

*Françoise Lefèbvre Tenenbaum*
Memory


On April 25, 1994, the minister of War Veterans and Victims unveiled a plaque in the memory of Louise Jacobson and her mother. This plaque is fixed at 8, rue des Boulets in Paris, where the Jacobson family resided until 1942.

Before a large audience, Nadia Kaluski-Jacobson spoke, finishing up with two poems by [her husband] Gilbert Kaluski, one for Ms. Jacobson (“There are deported mothers”), the other for Louise (“Fiftieth autumn”).

Master Serge Klarsfeld recalled under what circumstances he was convinced to publish the letters of Louise; Juliette Batlle read three of these letters. Minister Philippe Mestre gave a moving, personal speech.

Relatives of the victims were very sensitive to this official recognition.

Among its objectives, LICRA [International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism] gives priority to memory. It has a lot of good will and above all “pull” that carries weight with authorities.
I recently read the book by Pierre Birnbaum, *Fous de la République* [Fools of the Republic]. I can say that this book fascinated me. He has resurrected from oblivion Jewish personalities who influenced their time, before the war, [World War II], the “State Jews” who showed themselves worthy of great respect and admiration. These Jews, becoming “fools of the Republic,” retained worship of the French Revolution. For these demanding patriots, often staunch laymen, their Jewish origins weighed heavily. You had to have the courage to deal with such a subject.

Let’s mention some names: Crémieux, Naquet, Milhaud, Benadires, Laroque* ... All these Jewish officers, generally atheists, still maintained a minimum of rituals and maintained their Jewishness. They were the Israelites who were never ashamed Jews.

I would like nevertheless in this article to draw from the sources of the book, to explain and demonstrate that Vichy was not a hiccup. We will see how the French Head of State cowardly abandoned those he called friends, those who believed him.

We report that 53 years ago, at the end of 1941, a certain number of “State Jews” go to see Marshal Pétain. They discover that their professional lives and even their very short lives risk coming rapidly to an end. The two statutes for the Jews, decreed by Vichy on October 30, 1940 and June 2, 1941, chose voluntarily, without pressure from the [German] occupation authorities, to hit [the Jewish population] with a deep blow. All the high Jewish civil servants who were part of the prefectural corps, of the counsel of the State, of the magistrature, of education, of the army, were devastated by these decisions.

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* Crémieux defended French Jewish rights during the 19th century; Naquet, a 20th century historian, criticized negationism; Milhaud was a French Jewish composer who emigrated to America to escape persecution during the German occupation; Benadires Laroque was a senior civil servant and the father of social security
One can think about the generous Boris Baumann, Bloch, Brisac and Geismar and Georges Cohen Salvador, the magistrates Grunbaum-Ballin, Jacques Helbronner, Pierre Laroque, René Meyer, Professor Marc Bloch.*

Here are excerpts from letters addressed to Pétain from the prefect and the former Minister of the Interior Abraham Schrameck, assigned to residence in Lavandou.

“For me, it would not be dignified, it seems to me, nor to my grandparents and parents, nor to my allies to try to release me from unmerited treatment to which the Jews of France are subject.”

The following letter, signed by a number of personalities and important servants of the State, is addressed to the Marshal. This little known text is signed by the President Jacques Helbronner (honorary president of the Counsel of the State, Commander of the Legion of Honor, Cross of War), by General Boris, by Henri Lévy-Bruhl (professor), by René Meyer (minister), by Léon Weiss (Counsel at the Cour d’Appel), by Georges Wormser (Georges Clemenceau’s former cabinet director) and by a hundred other protesters:

“The French Israelites are from a tradition and culture entirely French. Many French Israelites honored the army, the sciences, the letters, the arts, medicine, and industry. Some taught at the College of France. These French Israelites clearly paid their dues in [WWI and WWII]. Convinced that the collective measures of exception taken against the French Israelites cannot have gotten even the tacit support of the French government…French Israelites still want to believe that the persecutions of which they are the object are entirely imposed on the French State by the occupying authority…French Israelites, more than ever attached to their faith, maintain their hope and confidence in France, their destinies, and the person of the Marshal.”

This letter is poignant and tolls the knell for the [assimilatory] Franco-Judaism stemming from the [French] Revolution. All the Jews, coming from public schools, all of them have difficulty understanding the attitude of Pétain. They still maintain their confidence in this man and in his government.

*Grunbaum-Ballin was a appellate judge; Helbronner was a Pétainist and President of the Central Consistory of Jews in France until he was deported to Auschwitz; Laroque was a senior civil servant and the father of social security; Mayer was a radical politician of the Fourth Republic who served briefly as Prime Minister in 1953; Marc Bloch was a historian who cofounded the Annales School of social history
The illusions of these Jews are terrible. Not wanting to be half-heartedly French, they fight ceaselessly, for three years to defend their positions and their existence. Many pay with their lives for their blind confidence in Vichy.

Jacques Hellbronner, President of the Central Consistory, was deported with his whole family, like Raymond-Raoul Lambert, his wife and his children and Pontremoli (member of the Institute).

Professor Marc Bloch was shot [as a member of] the Resistance.

Georges Mandel and Jean Zay were assassinated. And those are only a few examples.

President of the Bar, Pierre Masse wrote to Pétain, before being deported himself:

“Mr. Marshal, I will oblige you to tell me if I must cast away my brother’s stripes, a second lieutenant killed at Douaumont in April 1916; those of my son, a second lieutenant killed in Belgium in May 1940; my nephew, J.P. Masse, killed at Rethel in May 1940. Can I leave my brother the military medal won at Neuville Saint Waast? Am I finally assured that no one will remove the medal of Sainte-Helene from my great grandfather?”

Pierre Masse knew Pétain, who did not respond to his letter and who did not nothing to prevent [Masse’s] deportation.

What good would it have done to have written one day:

“Mr. Maréchal, please stop this campaign of hate. It’s awful.”

Yes, it’s awful, especially when you consider what happened next!

Henri-Claude Bloch
Fifty Years Have Passed


Yad Vashem asked us to find five students who hid with me in the convent of Saint Joseph in Alban, in order to award the *Médaille des Justes* (Medal of the Righteous) to Ms. Carayon, a teacher still living and, posthumously, to the sisters of the convent.

Thanks to the Chief Rabbi of Strasbourg, I found Jacqueline and Claudine Corbeau. Their parents broke down in tears while reading my inquiry notice, which brought back painful memories. But I’m still looking for Marie Wolf and Monique and Nina Verbludoff.

This winter, Friday, January 13, we arrived in Albi, a charming little pink city where, however, the idea of returning worried me terribly. I found it as if I had left it the day before. I was 12 years-old, at that time…

The *place du Vigan* is still downtown, covered in the same distorted tarmac where the puddles look like giant mirrors. The Grand Café of Pontié is still there, as well as the *Lices*, lined with hundred year-old trees. I recognized the Prisunic refectory which served as National Relief and where volunteers offered meals to the refugees and the destitute, during the Liberation.

*Don’t tell me where you’re from or who you are, but what you’ve suffered.*

This maxim was inscribed on one of the walls of the room.

I found the rustic library, where my mother bought me my first dictionary, and the photographer’s window where my identity photo was long pinned. The office of the militia was replaced by a tobacco office. (The militia uniform froze us with fear! …)

I again saw the barbershop where I was made up to play the role of The Goat of Mr. Séguin.

The two bridges still cross the muddy Tarn that flows ceaselessly.
Here we are at Émile LeGrand Street, opposite the high school that once seemed so big. A beauty salon took the place of the dyeworks, over which we five lived and suffered, in two small rooms.

A hair salon replaced the butcher’s shop where the Albigensians would stand in long lines to get a lousy piece of meat that my grandmother used to mince and mix with bread.

Close by, Échelle Street was restored as the old town became pedestrianized. On that picturesque street was a brothel, a hangout for Germans. I can still hear the music blaring; the songs of Edith Piaf depressing the whole neighborhood.

I cannot forget the day when my father, very pale, left, his bike in hand, giving himself up after he was denounced. When he came back, he was no longer the father I had known.

At the end of Legrand Street, I passed before a bedding store where I had played with a classmate. I went in without thinking and, kindly, I explained who I was. An old lady began to tremble while repeating, over and over, that she remembered nothing. Her daughter told me: “You played with my sister. My parents used to hide wealthy Jews, [like] the Levy’s, who left without saying thank you…”

I’d like to know the sum that these frightened people had to pay for this service! If some Frenchmen were charitable, others profited from the distress of the Jews. In Montauban, my mother purchased the silence of many people by giving them gifts. I admit that, at the time, everyone was afraid of being imprisoned or killed.

The woman my age scribbled, on some paper, the address of the old dyers whom we did not want to visit because they refused to hide us in their large warehouse, where no one would have found us.
The morning of Saturday, January 14, we went to Alban. The village was a desert and the temperature glacial. I visited the home of an old classmate who had spontaneously sent me a testimony. She welcomed us amicably and wanted us to visit the church where, before dying, Canon Roussel transformed it into a modern temple by a Russian painter. Certain superstitious Albanese claim that it rains every day of the fair since Father Roussel removed all the statues in the church.

Then we went to greet the sisters of St. Joseph’s convent which was entirely renovated. During the war, we feared that the dormitory and the main staircase would collapse under the shock of our wooden soles.

The school operates as a day school with a few students and lay teachers. The convent houses a few very old sisters. Mother Superior, much younger, hugged me and thanked me for not having forgotten my stay inside these walls.

“Don’t worry about the Medal of the Righteous, it has been requested by many convents in the region,” she told me.

That afternoon, Ms. Carayon waited for us. She did not think that she would see me again one day. She was often asked what had become of the six Jewish girls. She saw me arrive at the convent, too big for my age, 10 years-old, very skinny and very pale because we did not eat much at home.

We promised to meet again. She believes the sisters and teachers were only doing their job and that they don’t at all deserve the Medal of the Righteous. However, they lived days and nights in fear when we would stop for resisters nestled in the mountains (where they could organize themselves in spite of Germans and collaborators).

Jacqueline Corbeau also called and wrote from Haguenau to Ms. Carayon.
For her, the most beautiful of medals is not to be forgotten.

Jacqueline Develay-Ossia
Bravo Mr. Chirac!


In the name of my husband (because I’m sure he would have done so), in my name, no doubt partnering us with so many others, I say: Bravo, Mr. President, for talking in this way at the monument in memory of the deportees of the Roundup of Vel’ d’Hiv! Bravo for having the courage!*

General De Gaulle would almost certainly not have been able to do it easily at the Liberation without huge conflicts. The period we wanted to erase had been supported by too many Frenchmen. As to Mr. Lang, he fell into the most complete ridicule as a result of his comments.

So, even if it is easier for Jacques Chirac than it was for General De Gaulle, it nevertheless took the President’s courage when those who are nostalgic for Vichy are still living and some of their offspring have taken over.

Without forgetting to pay tribute to all the Resisters (alas a rather weak percentage if one excludes all the last minute Resisters), I want to repeat with the purity that was [my husband] Raymond’s: Bravo and thank you, Mr. President!

*Henriette Mesguis*

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* President Chirac broke the taboo, accepting Vichy France’s willing complicity in facilitating Germany’s Jewish policies and in developing its own anti-Semitic policies, prior to German pressure.
During the war, in 1940-41, I was in my second year of high school at lycée Carnot with a young Israelite, a boy with the last name of Katz. I think I [correctly] understood that his father was a rabbi in Dijon.

At the time, I held childish and narrow views of the world and its problems. I knew nothing of the drama that the Israelites lived. The milieu with which I associated: my family, my neighborhood friends, lived without being able to seek knowledge properly and take really adult positions.

This frame of mind was not described: I don’t know anyone who has spoken [of it]. This apparent indifference—this self-delusion—was not specifically related to the Jews.

I can tell you, to illustrate my point, as someone who lives a few hundred meters from the Army’s shooting range where the executions took place, we knew every time men and women fell. I’m still wondering how we could fall asleep on days when the salvos had resounded. I still hear the terse remarks of the “adults” in the neighborhood.

These few indications will help you understand that, seeing the yellow star on the jacket of my friend, I asked him what it was.

Actually, I felt like a “little boy” next to the young Katz. He fascinated and surprised me. This trick of not bringing his books on Saturday impressed me straight out. [Traditional Jews do not carry or write on the Sabbath.]

I had sympathy for him and I felt something stronger one day when, while messing around, I violently knocked his head against the wall. I was sheepish, he put me at ease with a smile that I can still see, saying: “It’s nothing!”
And then, we were living a few hundred meters from each other, him in St Dominique, me at the Boudronnée. We walked to school together.

Then, there was an incident. I was part of a band of urchins. One day when I was with them, we met Katz and his older sister who were returning home. My friends insulted my classmate, named [Katz], who was very strong for his age, and charged like an angry bull.

My friends made a run for it. Me, I again waited sheepishly. He threw me to the ground. I played dead. He was beside himself. He did not hit me. He railed at my friends. His sister looked very bored and called him back. I cannot remember much more of what I said—it was probably nothing or a few empty words.

After this incident, I have no other memory of this boy.

I’ve thought of him often since and wonder, mortified, what he must think of me.

When, older, I became aware of the realities of this time, I couldn’t stop wondering whether he had escaped the terrible risks of the time.

I sometimes asked the Israelites if they knew this family. A storekeeper had even told me that he made enquiries.

Perhaps someone, in your community, could tell me what happened to the Katz family.

I must tell you also that I would be very happy to receive your newsletter, which I know of thanks to the parish priest of Sombernon. I am one who has trust in our God, the God of Israel. I have total confidence in His Promise, total confidence in the Word that is in our hearts.

I pray with all the peacemakers.

Let it be according to His Word.

André Quantin
Dear friends,

At the time of the deportation memorial, in which most of the authorities are present or represented, our community comes in small numbers. I know that, unfortunately, many have left us but we must continue this tradition. It is up to the children and the grandchildren to take over. The synagogue is full but only about twenty of our fellow Jews are present [for the memorial] and that seems abnormal to me. I thank you for responding to this appeal so that the memory remains forever in these official moments.

Here is the integral text:

Mr. Director representing the Prefect of the Region,
Mr. Deputy-mayor of Dijon,
Mr. Senator, President of the General Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen of the civil, military, and religious authorities,
Dear friends,

In opening this ceremony, I express to you, in the name of our community, our satisfaction to see so many of you helping us so as to never lose the memory.

It has been more than 53 years since the allied forces liberated humanity from the most murderous nightmare we had known. It has been 53 years since the appearance before mankind of this cold, cynical, methodical machine that was Nazism.

We must indiscriminately condemn all the violence and all the physical and moral constraints that prevent human collectives and individuals their inalienable right to liberty and happiness.
At the dawn of the third millennium, where we hope for peace for humanity, we must monitor the forces that encourage racism, intolerance and fundamentalism. Our community, in associating itself with all the spiritual communities of the free world, marks this anniversary each year.

In several years, the last witnesses of the Shoah will disappear; the martyrs will be dead. It will be up to future generations to continue to perpetuate the memory and to maintain the duty of memory.

Violence is expanding. One can see new waves of violence erupt all over the world. After the civil strife in Africa, the barbarity in Algeria, war was at our doors. How does one stay indifferent to the drama of the Balkans, a two-hour flight from our country? After Bosnia, here is Kosovo. It is why the vigilance of men of good will is today more necessary than ever. Let us pray that this violence ends; let us pray that the suffering of men, women, children, and the elderly ends: let us pray together so that wisdom returns.

I thank you.

I congratulate the new Administrative Council of the C.C.J.D. I learned with pleasure of the election of Cathie Bussidan as president. I present her all my congratulations and I wish her full success in her new office.

Armand Sibony, President of the A.C.I.D.
In Search of the Past


Why is it necessary to turn to burlesque or dramatic films that hardly seem to recall the Shoah?

The film about which I will speak [Hidden Luggage] was broadcast last February 28 on Canal + [premium pay television channel launched in France in 1984]. It is a Belgian-Netherlands feature film by Jeroen Krabbé, made in 1998, with Isabella Rossellini, daughter of Ingrid Bergman. All the actors, known or unknown, are excellent.

At present, this kind of film does not convey anything else to me but the friendship of a young girl and an autistic child.

The story is set in Anvers in the 1970’s. Chaja, an emancipated student driven by her philosophy studies, comes from a typical Jewish family; her father, a survivor of the Nazi camps...

In order to earn a little money, Chaja responds to an announcement that asks for a young girl to take care of numerous children. She falls in with a Jewish orthodox family whose traditions she does not understand. Madame Kalman, the mother, notices right away that Chaja likes the children and decides to keep her in spite of her controlling husband.

Simcha, an introverted five-year old child, intrigues the young girl. The father, very pious and very severe, does not understand why Simcha does not want to recite [the three prayers of Friday night]. The child is traumatized and his brothers and sisters make fun of him.

Chaja goes to walk the twins and Simcha in a park where they find a pond and some ducks. Simcha begins to smile at the young girl who teaches him to say “duck” and then other words. Madame Kalman is hopeful, but Simcha still refuses to speak to his father, a hard man, who holes up in his office where no one has the right to enter. One day, Chaja, by curiosity,
enters in the room where Monsieur Kalman, in tears, prays in front of the photos of his family who died during the Shoah.

Chaja asks her father’s friend to teach her the three Friday night prayers. With patience, she finishes by repeating them to Simcha, who recites them to his father, who is crazy with joy.

Despite some rather lively discussions on the religious practices of the *Hasidim*, Chaja makes efforts to understand them. On the eve of a high holiday, she argues with Mrs. Kalman and leaves by slamming the door, then she changes her mind and comes back clothed in a simple dress and helps prepare the meal.

The ground floor of their building houses an anti-Semitic caretaker. The Kalman family remains polite. Mrs. Kalman always says, “We must answer evil with good.”

One day, the caretaker has a brush with Chaja. He blocks the stairs so that she can’t leave. Fearless, she steps through a window on the first floor and, like an acrobat, she was on the ground floor. She passed by the caretaker like a jellyfish.

The next day, Mrs. Kalman waits for the young girl in the street and asks her not to come for several days. Simcha, not seeing Chaja coming to pick him up, leaves alone to see the ducks. Unfortunately, he drowns in the pond. Men in black (police) hold Chaja responsible for the death of the child and hunt her down. The caretaker, who had failed to lock the building door, appeared upset.

Before letting Chaja leave, Mrs. Kalman takes her in her arms, holding Chaja against her, then tears the neckline of her dress as a sign of mourning.

Life resumes its course. Chaja helps her father dig holes (looking for hidden family treasures); she gets along with him better and rediscovers the joy of living.
I do not know what to think about this film, very dark at times. It is a film on intolerance that always seems to be there, here, pursuing us constantly and will never be eradicated. Let’s look at things head on and not be foolishly optimistic.

Best wishes.

Jacqueline Develay-Ossia
Speech for the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Liberation of the Auschwitz Camp


Mr. Cabinet Director of the Prefect,
Dear Fellow Jews,
Dear Friends,

It is with great emotion that we participate, tonight, at this commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp. To begin with, this service should not have only an internal dimension for the Jewish community but, given the significance of the awareness of the event, as much at the national level as international, we have recently decided to spread the information more widely.

But can we really speak of “liberation” to understand the title of commemorations that took place here in France and on the spot in Poland? Or is it necessary, rather, that the anniversary be the sad uncovering of the horror of extermination camps that for a long time were believed to be simple camps of concentration or work?

This was a mass extermination of the Jewish people and Gypsies who, for the first time and in a unique manner in the history of humanity, occurred both internationally and industrially.

Because of all the genocides that preceded and, alas, followed this sad period, only the Shoah was carried out under a grand directed scale, by its simultaneous production in a multitude of conquered countries and, on another hand, by the utilization of all the industrial methods known at the period (railroads, creation of vast regrouping camps, gassing, cremation…)

This discovery at the end of the war in January 1945, at a time when Paris had been liberated in August 1944 and Dijon in September of the same year, cast dismay among the armed allies who, after so many sacrifices on the battlefield, individually found installations for putting
large numbers of civilians to death, these camps partly destroyed at the end of dissembling by the fleeing Nazi troops.

Alas, for the several million survivors, brutal displacements occurred shortly before the arrival of liberating troops, strays on the streets of Poland in a glacial cold in a state of physical and immense moral dilapidation; the path of return was not easy, for the simple and good reason that it had not been planned at all.

For those who could reinstate themselves in the society of their country, they were not surprised to find that anti-Semitism did not disappear despite the terrible trial that the Jewish people suffered: two-thirds of European Judaism disappeared in the smoke of crematories.

In France, however, despite the active collaboration of the Vichy government, the Jews proportionally suffered the smallest deportation: “only” a quarter of the Jewish population of France was deported. And this thanks to the aid supplied by the French population who listened to their heart more than to reason, which had prompted, for fear of death, a lack of opposition to the projects of the Nazis and their accomplices.

This belated discovery of extermination camps, hardly three months before the end of the war, cannot not raise the question that has now become ritual: were the Allies well-informed or not about the extermination of Jews and Gypsies which was decided in 1942?

One must alas today respond to this question in the affirmative. Yes, the highest authorities of the allied countries were well informed and they did nothing to stop it! There, where some well-aimed bombs could have seriously paralyzed the enterprise of extermination, nothing was tried under the fallacious pretext of preserving forces with a view to the final offensive.
Yes, some contemporary arguments refer to the problem for Europe at the time, the presence of more than 11 million Jews, considered as unassimilable and of whom people did not really regret their disappearance.

Today, at a time when the survivors are fewer and fewer, we, the children of survivors, soon have the charge of passing on the memory and of testifying to the next generations about what was the hell of extermination camps, so that, never more, can such a horror reproduce itself.

The attacks against Jewish people and sights in Western Europe in general and in France in particular, occurrences in the context of the importation [to France] of the conflict of the Middle-East, reminds us that the situation still remains relatively precarious for the Jews as long as anti-Semitism, which is the reproach of what they [Jews] are and not of what they do, continues to rage in certain minds.

I would like, dear fellow Jews and dear friends, for each of you continue to preserve for the longest time possible, in your heart and in your spirit, the memory of our ancestors, gone forever in the torment of the 20th century, a torment which was finally nothing but the outcome of two thousand years of the “teaching of contempt,” as was defined by the great historian, Jules Isaac [worked with the Papacy prior to Vatican II].

Is there anything worse than the systematic destruction of a people, taking the pride of Jewish citizens of Vienna, Frankfort and Vilna, and also of Tunisia and Libya, burning their holy books, stealing their dignity, their hair, their teeth, making them numbers, soap, ashes of Treblinka and of Dachau?

The response is, yes, there is something worse: to do all of that and to deny it afterwards. To perpetuate all of that, and to then remove from the victims - and from their children and grandchildren - the legitimacy of their sorrow.
And finally, these lessons are essential today because we are witnesses, again, to a violent assault against the fundamental principle of the sanctity of human life. Perhaps the greatest foundational idea that the Bible has given to humanity is the simple truth that all men, all women, all children, are created in the divine image and therefore have an infinite worth. For the Nazis, the value of a human being was limited, indeed expendable. The main thing to know was the amount of work he could accomplish, how many teeth he had, what quantity of hair a woman could supply. For the Nazis, the destruction of a human being or of a hundred, of a million, of six million was unimportant. He was nothing but a means for a perverse end.

At the same time, when we see what the survivors have given to humanity, we can only begin to imagine what could have been given to the world by the millions who did not survive. We mourn for their loss, even today. Each fiber of our being perceives their absence. Each family knows the suffering.

I thank you.

Israël Cemachovic
January 27, 2005
Testimonial: My Grandmother was “Righteous”


One or two things that I know about my grandmother:

My paternal grandmother, Joséphine Obein, widow from the 1914-1918 Great War, lived in Roubaix, in Northern France. In the years 1941-1942, she hid Jews in her house. She was denounced by her “cathos” [Catholic neighbors].

She had to run away, so she ran across France with her son Paul (my father) and her daughter. They found refuge in the Pyrenees, next to Igon, where they remained for some time and met my future uncle!

They joined the Berry [resistance] (Dun sur Auron) in 1943. Paul did his military service there and guarded Jussy-Champagne. In this village, he met Solange, my mother, who he married and with whom he settled down.

After the marriage, my grandmother and my aunt Renée also settled down in Jussy-Champagne.

My grandmother never went to live back north, since her house was destroyed during the bombardments.

She was a woman of strong temperament! She could easily see the traitors and the collaborators everywhere, but she had great respect for General de Gaulle.

The above testimony, passed on directly by my grandmother, was never written down, until today. It was just in my memory. All witnesses from this period are long dead, so that’s the best I could do in terms of details.

Marie-Jeanne Martin
**Memory: Nadia Kaluski-Jacobson**


This page, which appeared very often in *Mazal Tov*, used to be written by Nadia Kaluski-Jacobson. I will attempt to speak of her not as my mother, but as a beloved community member.

She was Jewish from her origins, her environment and her family. But no one in her family was practicing. Her parents were “narrow” in mind and spirit. One of them was pro-tsarist and the other was for the Russian Revolution. Her father came from France, the country of liberty – of human rights of Victor Hugo, of Zola, of the French Revolution. A tolerant country where a Jew is a citizen like any other. Her mother wanted to go to America, but decided to stay in Paris. Both of her parents refused to practice religion. However, their friends were also Jewish immigrants. They were all secular Jews.

Nadia was the second child of three children. Charles, four years older, joined the Resistance in Lyon once he was demobilized from the army. Then, he founded an association for Arab-Jewish friendship; he was an influential member of an association of veteran Jewish resisters, and regularly visited the Bernard Lazare Circle [Liberal Jews].

Louise was six years younger than Nadia. She was deported to Auschwitz at the age of eighteen.

Nadia had to bear the consequences, too. Her education as a well integrated French citizen did not help her escape wearing the yellow star. Her Jewish origin came back to her like a boomerang. She remained secular, but was still a resister. She joined her brother in Lyon a month before her mother and her sister were arrested. She resisted with all her might: she acquired fake documents and transported tracts under the military’s nose.
Gilbert, her husband since December 19, 1939, was a prisoner in Germany. During the occupation, she sent letters and packages to her husband, mother and sister.

After the war, when she came back to Paris, she met her husband again and they had two children: Cathie in 1946 and Mireille in 1947. But very soon, Nadia had to face what she had been refusing to accept for a long time: her mother and sister were never coming back. She wanted to move to Israel but Gilbert’s mother was Catholic. It was too complicated for him and he preferred to stay in France.

She had a lot of responsibilities in her everyday life. She had to raise and feed her children. She took a teaching position in Saône-et-Loire, in a village, where there was enough food. As a secular and republican teacher, she conducted the education of her daughters in school as well as at home. Then, when they went to secondary school, she moved to Chalon-sur-Saône, a city with a variety of schools.

There she resumed her pre-war activity: the Socialist Party, Family Planning, and FNDIRP (Fédération nationale des Déportés et Internés, Résistants et Patriotes). The couple participated in these activities together.

She kept the letters that her mother and sister had written in prison and then at Drancy, but she never showed them to anyone.

The girls took the baccalaureate exam and the parents moved to Dijon. They continued Family Planning and after the Six Days War, they left MRAP [Movement Against Racism and for Peace] and founded a section of LICRA [International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism]. They started attending lectures in the community. Their interest in Zionism was growing.

I married Michel in the Synagogue. It was not a problem; he was in the family [Jewish]!
Then the Holocaust denial thesis appeared. Nadia requested the death certificates for her mother and sister: according to those documents her mother and sister had died at Drancy. Something had to be done and it had to be done quickly. Gilbert and Nadia, helped by LICRA, wrote to all parliamentarians and asked that the law be modified and contain the clause “died during deportation.” They succeeded with the Badinter Law [Jewish, Minister of Justice 1981-86, 1985 law], but it was far from being applied everywhere.

Nadia wanted to put a memory plaque in her sister’s name on a wall in the school that she was teaching in. She asked Serge Klarsfeld for help. He got to know the letters that Louise had written from Fresnes and Drancy and they became of great interest of him. He did some research and found other young girls from the same school who had been deported. To achieve this, Nadia spent hours photocopying the old register books; she even became sick from phlebitis, but they succeeded. The two of them visited the school director many times until he finally agreed to put up a memory plaque, but without mentioning, “because of their Jewish origin”.

Serge Klarsfeld edited a brochure with Louise’s letters.

The Jewish cemetery at Carpentras was greatly damaged [1990].

A gifted young couple that worked in the theater came to Serge Klarsfeld and asked him for a subject for their play. He let them read The Letters of Louise Jacobson and they made a one woman show: Alain Gintzburger was the producer; Juliette Battle played Louise’s role. This was the beginning of an exceptional friendship between Nadia and the couple.

The play was performed at the festival in Avignon. People from all over Europe came to see Nadia and asked her to translate Louise’s letters and the play.

We suggested she write a book about Louise. At the age of 79, she bought a computer and, with my help, she learned how to use it. She wrote the book, *Louise Jacobson’s Letters*, which was published by Robert Laffont. This book, as well as the play, were translated into several languages. Nadia was interviewed by newspapers like *l’Unita* and television stations in several countries. The play was performed everywhere, including the German cities where there were concentration camps.

We shouldn’t forget her tender love for Israel. She donated money to several organizations: the Israeli Embassy, CCJD, WIZO, Daughters and Sons of Deported French Jews, etc.

Since then Nadia concentrated all her efforts on the memory of Louise and other victims.

To the very end, she gave testimony at educational institutions, libraries, and meetings. She corresponded with people from all over the world; she has friends everywhere. She continued to look carefully at the names that appeared in the official journal in order to include them in the “Died during deportation” rubric.

Her last talk on television was on September 25, 2005 on *France 2*.

The world lost an important and passionate witness, a secular Jewish woman typical of her time, an important figure of the Jewish community and of the associative life in Dijon.

No one will be able to replace her.

*Cathie Bussidan*
The Significance of Israel

Together with the Holocaust, Israel is the most important external reference in French Jewish life, and perhaps its most important unifying common denominator. Most French Jewish have relatives and/or friends in Israel, and many visit frequently; for example, on vacations.

The articles in this section confront issues such as dual loyalty, the history of Israeli-French relations, the elusive peace-making process with Palestinians and surrounding Arab states, and the significance of Israel for others as well as Jews.
Dual Loyalty


We will not choose between the State of Israel and France because we know from the depths of our historic experience and from our moral conscience that our attachment to France and our attachment to Israel are perfectly compatible.

Those who would like to tell us today that it is necessary to choose between Israel and ourselves take on their shoulders the psychoses and mentalities for which we not long ago had to pay the cruel price of the destruction of European Jewry…

Those who would dare tell us today that we must choose between Israel and France take on their account the diabolic dead-ends in which the Nazis burned the Jewish victims when, in the work camps, they sometimes leave them the “choice” between their mother and their wife. Real love refuses to be split into two beings which, by the law of human conscience, is able to, and must be, merged in the same love. Dual loyalty is not a reprehensible ambiguity. It constitutes, on the contrary, of one of the highest privileges of human morality.

André Neher

“Break the circle”

Dans tes portes [In Your Doors], Jerusalem, 1972, Albin Michel
The Jews of France and Israel


May 18, 1948: Proclamation of the State of Israel. That day, in Paris, at Vel d’Hiv’ [winter stadium, site of horrendous July 1942 roundup of over 12,000 Jews by Vichy Police and Nazis] of evil memory, around 2,000 Jews celebrated the creation of the new state. Many orators spoke: the principal dignitaries of the communities, the representatives of all political parties, in a noisy ambiance and in a rush.

This event was a harbinger of great symbolic strength. Unfortunately, after this demonstration, everything returned to complete silence. The Jews of France, in their immense majority, were not flooded by an irrepressible passion for Israel: suspicion, reticence, these were the main feelings. The Jews of France were French like the others. Israel began a change of direction. One had to see it…

“Israel, it was revenge,” says Badinter. Yes, but only accepted by a small part of the Jewish community.

From Herzl to the Six Day War

From the introduction of Zionist theses by Théodore Herzl, the Jews of France had shown their reservations: “Zionism contradicts the world view of French Jews since the 1871 emancipation date” [creation of French Republic, following the Paris Commune, with universal male suffrage and equal citizenship among all religions]. Assimilation and Zionism were incompatible. There cannot then exist an ideology more dangerous, more anti-French.

It is only in 1967 that the Jews of France began to improve their relations with Israel: always an ambiguous situation, built on lies and deceit. But they also share the doubts of [author] Emmanuel Berl: “Where has this come from, having never renounced my Judaism, I have been
reluctant in regard to Zionism?... Why? From the heightened desire to be like everyone else in France.”

The Birth of Israel

A part of French Jews, led by the express or unconscious will to definitively break with Judaism (mixed marriages, refusal of religious education for children), refused all privileged relations with the State of Israel.

After Auschwitz, the Zionists hoped for a deep psychological and political mutation. Ben Gourion, who didn’t hide his hope for a significant part of the Jewish community of France to choose exodus, very quickly became disenchanted.

“Palestine, remarked Simone Veil [survivor and political leader], I hardly know where this is going. Maybe this is a home for other Jews but not for us.”

“After the first days, says Jean Daniel [author, editor], I detached myself from Israel to the point of no longer thinking about it.”

Regarding Raymond Aron [eminent scholar], the birth of Israel does not arouse any emotion. He does not identify with the pioneers who built the State.

For Lévy-Strauss [eminent scholar and grandson of the chief rabbi], “Israel is a state founded by our second cousins.”

The fear of dual loyalty

The “Israelites” [assimilated Jews] were on track to miss a meeting with History; they didn’t see that the birth of Israel was a crucial moment in their history. Quite the contrary, Israel disturbed them.
Raymond Aron had understood that the existence of a Jewish State would by nature complicate one’s relationship with France. A bias to Israel could let someone think he was a bad Frenchman.

Certainly, we trembled for Israel, after the assault launched by the Arab troops; but it was the French Jews, first, who questioned the concept of dual loyalty. Who had prompted this reflection? No one!

Yes, many questions arose: homeland of soil or sentiment? What to do the day where the French and Israeli interests diverge?

Raymond Aron (him again) said: “The Jews cannot, if they claim equal rights, serve two Caesars at the same time.”

What need did they have to justify themselves in advance? Nothing foreshadowed the incidents. But the French Jews were on their guard.

**The Rabbis of France and Israel**

The rabbis took a strongly virulent and anti-Zionist position: “The Zionist doctrines cannot be reconciled with the principals of French Judaism.”

For the record, almost all the rabbis who had taken this position have by now made their aliyah and spend their happy days in the Land of Israel!

Ady Steg, famous surgeon, and a senior leader of the CJM [World Jewish Congress], adds: “At the synagogue, we didn’t have a single prayer for the State of Israel. We celebrated the Republic, that’s it.”

**The French Jewish intellectuals and Zionism**

You’d think you were dreaming when you read certain articles in which many anti-Israeli attacks came from Jewish writers and intellectuals. (Elsewhere, many non-Jews didn’t
understand this position: they thought that all of France had been aligned behind the Israeli banner. To be pro-Israeli is to find yourself in agreement with everyone.) These Jews were not gentle with Israel. “Israel was born from violence and risks perishing from violence tomorrow” said Aron.

Israel was not trusted; we were not positioned to support the Hebrew State. In a pinch, we defended our “little cousins” from afar, we helped them a little. The French Jews seemed disoriented, they struggled in all sorts of contradictions.

Zionism contradicted the French Jewish worldview. With a Jewish State, the universalism of Jewish thought risked no longer being appropriate. Assimilation is a dogma that Zionism jostled: for some, a more perverse ideology did not exist.

Twenty Years of Indifference

And the French Jews went through 20 years without much regard for Israel. Few of them made the trip; it was difficult to envision a state where there would only be Jews.

In 1962, Israel was vexed by the attitude of Algerian Jews who, in great majority, considered themselves full French citizens and preferred to settle in France rather than Israel: only 30,000 out of 150,000 made the trip – and some came back.

Doctor Nahum, settled in Sarcelles, declares in the Nouvel Observateur [New Observer]: “Israel, this is a miracle, a regret, a terror. We are ashamed, deep down, to let them sort it out there, with the Arabs.

The Six Day War

In June 1967, faced with serious threats to its security, Israel attacked Egypt with aerial forces; Egyptian aviation was rapidly crushed. In six days, this war ended, Egypt, Jordan, Syria
asked for an armistice. The French Jews, for six months, had been immersed in the dreadful anguish of seeing Jews exterminated again.

Adam Loss, Director of the Fonds Sociales [central Jewish fundraising/allocation organ], said: “I had never felt such a rift, all French Jews were hopeless.”

Anne Sinclair [TV personality, former wife of Dominique Strauss-Kahn]: “I was 19. I declared myself Jewish at this exact moment.”

Simone Veil: “We felt deeply within that its [Israel’s] destruction would have prevented us from living.”

Vladimir Jankélévitch [philosopher]: “If Israel dies, it will leave us the eternal shame of having let the survivors of Auschwitz die.”

De Gaulle

But the Jews of France then discovered De Gaulle’s position, De Gaulle decided on an embargo. De Gaulle broke away from Israel: “France is not engaged with any states involved.” And yet, France was the principal supplier of Israel’s arms, and the embargo, it was clear, only hit this state. At a press conference, De Gaulle declared: “the Jews, this elite people, sure of themselves and domineering…” De Gaulle had struck the Jews of France deep down, sharply breaking the harmony that existed between himself and the community.

On December 6, 1967, De Gaulle imposed a new affront on the Jews of France: “The Head of State does not intend to consider French Jews as foreign nationals.” This was an incredible blunder, with an unquestionable Vichy stench. In fact, De Gaulle wanted to caution the Jews of France – who had to respond above all to a demand of discretion. He was convinced that the Six Day War had placed the Jews outside of the national consensus. It was his belief that
the fact that French Jews from now on sought a place within the Jewish people was suddenly revealed.

These were serious charges that provoked a strong reaction from Raymond Aron in *De Gaulle, Israel et les Juifs* [De Gaulle, Israel, and the Jews]. We discovered another Aron, passionate, mocking, sometimes unfair, but who did not lie, and this was a Jew who addressed the General, the only politician that he had constantly defended. “There was something serious, he said, it is the words chosen by De Gaulle, all borrowed from anti-Semite rhetoric. A statesman lowers himself when he has resorted to such a process, one of national stereotypes and racial prejudices.” For Raymond Aron, De Gaulle had thrown the Jews back into their ghetto; he would never be able to forgive him.

De Gaulle was completely confounded, totally mixed up: “Israel and Judaism, Frenchness and Judaism, loyalty to a homeland and active sympathy for a state both close and foreign.”

Ady Steg declared: “Since the liberation, the French Jews have been reluctant to ask: why Vichy? Why the Final Solution?” De Gaulle had been forced to avoid this blockage; now, he had opened the box.

**And next?**

I spent the seven-year term of Giscard d’Estaing, who made the famous trip to Jordan viewing Israel [from afar] and what happens next, the declaration of Prime Minister Raymond Barre concerning “the innocent French”* after the [1980] bombing of the Copernic synagogue….

Serge July responds: “Naturally, the Jews are not innocents, and if they are not innocent, they are guilty… Guilty of what? Of being Jews!”

* Non-Jewish Frenchmen were killed, rather than Jews.
Anne Sinclair declares: “The French Jews have made an essential contribution to political society: to be caustic and engaged in places where it can hurt.

Blum and his Popular Front achievements;
Mendes-France and decolonization;
Veil and the termination of pregnancy [abortion legislation];
Badinter and the abolition of the death penalty.


*Henri-Claude Bloch*
**Fundamentalism and Peace in the Middle East**


Fundamentalism and Peace in the Middle East was the title of the conference organized in Dijon, on Tuesday June 22, [1993]. Flower room, by France-Israel, B’nai B’rith and the Community.

Before a large audience, among which one notes the presence of the Moroccan Consul and Muslim listeners, Raphael Israeli, professor at the University of Jerusalem, explained the problem posed by Islamic fundamentalism.

Fundamentalist Islamic organizations developed over the course of the last decade and began on the path of violence and terrorism in the name of Islam.

Hamas and the Islamic Jihad launch their operations against Israeli targets from the territories run by Israel. The principle objective of these organizations is to demolish Israel through Holy War.

But these organizations also assassinated dozens of Arab residents of these territories, suspected of having had contact with Israelis.

It is certain that social and economic problems drove many Muslims to embrace radical Islam, which offers an outlet for difficulties of daily life, a hope for the future. Faithful to their principles, fundamentalist Islam calls for total war against Western infidels, designated by their expressions: *worshippers of the cross and new crusaders*. Terrorist activities of these organizations extend through all of the Middle-East and in Africa:

- In Egypt with radical Islamists
- In Algeria with the FIS [Federation of Islamic Soldiers]
- In Jordan the growing threat of Muslim Brotherhood makes the throne tremble
• In Lebanon, where Hezbollah reigns
• In Syria [the city of Hama] where a violent reaction led to 30,000* deaths [in 1982]
• In the Sudan where Iran is playing a more and more important part
• In Iran, naturally, the main source of subversion

The spokesman of Hamas declared in 1991: “I am in favor of true peace and justice. This can only take place after the departure of Jewish conquerors to their country of origin.”

However, we must make peace. We cannot build this peace by making war. Israel must refuse to negotiate with the Palestinians as long as the Intifada goes on. In short, Raphael Israeli wonders: when will we truly see a situation of peace established in our beautiful region?

Henri-Claude Bloch

* The usual number given is smaller, usually 10,000 to 20,000, still an abomination.
Israel or the Search for Meaning


“You know what, Reb Scholem Alei’hem, we should speak of something gay: what’s new of the war?”

-Scholem Rabinovitz

In the Holy Land [battle], the storm is to the death. Yet this time is the moment of Peace… and when Peace arrives… Socrates prevails: “Man begins to live when he begins to question everything that existed before him.”

The Israel-PLO agreement, beyond the objective conditions, despite some inevitable issues, marks the emergence of the “miraculously humane” in politics…

Peace is another form of combat, its “exchange” against the “territories”, marking the beginning of the only remaining practical route: negotiation. Speech that liberates is the Beginning. The only reasonable attitude in this area remains that of Dante: “Segui il tuo corso, e lascia dire le genti.” (Follow your path and let people talk.)

The retrocession of Gaza-Arriha-Jericho gives Palestinians the hope for the possibility of one day recovering all the territories occupied in 1967.

It allows the Israelis to disengage little by little from a political impasse as much a moral burden, increasingly unbearable by soldiers, engaged in the repression of the Intifada.

Jordan, signing on, immediately showed its desire to be associated with peace.

Syria seems to fear an Israeli financial domination in “normalization”.

Lebanon, itself ready for security and economic arrangements, finds itself trapped by its strong, traditional, very anti-Zionist Palestinian community that can act against the Arafat-Peres-Rabin line.
In addition, the PLO has serious difficulties maintaining the cohesion of the movements that compose it. Resignations from the Palestinian National Council are multiplying. The murders of PLO peace activists have not been solved (who are the ones responsible? Brothers, friends, enemies).

Perhaps more worrying, the Islamist circles represented by Hamas continue to regularly increase influence based on the economic crisis and on the cohorts of young unemployed without a future. Terrorism, it has a future.

At first look, everything is a problem in this challenge of the century, which some Israelis call “the reconsideration of the limits of the Holocaust”… an agonizing and terrible resonance that, like a tragic echo, seems to answer the fate of the refugees, the child martyrs of the Intifada, the position of Jerusalem, the six billion asked by the PLO to build, the Palestinian salaries five times lower than those of Israelis… and the cry of the stabbed Jewish women. The tears of any and all. In politics, correct solutions are not necessarily happy ones; solutions are temporary, they are equations in the making.

Navigate between two fears: fear of bombs for the Arabs, fear of an Arab population explosion for the Israelis. Navigate between two dreams: the dream of a secular Palestine for the PLO, the dream of a Jewish empire from the Nile to the Euphrates [for the Jews]. And yet this agreement should be defended for what it is: a painful step towards reality.

Ideological positioning died with the weakening of Russia. Israel knows that it is no longer this big American aircraft carrier defending market shares in the world game of Monopoly. The USA, which has only ever known the laws of profit, does not give a damn from one day to the next about the Tablets of the Law.
September 13, in the name of the “new world order,” the media-friendly signature of the agreement was done in Washington, while the 10th, the day of the official signature, [American] paratroopers killed 160 civilians in Mogadishu. Moral relativity.

Israel understood; it drew the consequences of this. The only good policy is geographically determined. Today, the basis of coexistence is economics, the relationship between global and regional economies, that is to say the interest of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples in a harmonious “ecological” development through an economically profitable cooperation that is mutually fair. It makes sense that the Palestinians go through a stage of autonomy vis-à-vis Israel before entering an era of interdependence. It again makes sense, reasoning in geopolitical terms, to admit once and for all that the USA is far, very far, from Palestine, whereas France and Europe are close to it. Israel, is it not the Middle-Eastern country that leads an eternal struggle against that which [Holocaust survivor author] Primo Levi calls “the anti-Sinai”, the universe of *kein warum*, without cause, without reason.

The actions of Israel are triumphs of law, the pursuit of our dreamlike journey: the respect of the Alliance [between Israel and God] for the people of the entire world. Israel is the key to dialogue from civilization to civilization, on both sides of the Mediterranean and the Bosphorus.

Israel is not the West; it is the soul of Europe. Let’s let the Americans disappear, pity their soldiers who die for nothing, or rather for unbridled capitalism, the oil tankers, the corrupt wrens.*

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* Very few Dijonnais Jews would have traded American support for that of mistrusted Europe, either in 1993 or in 2013.
Our civilization is a Judeo-Euro-Arab civilization. In its quest for meaning, Israel unveils what Péguy [Gentile Dreyfusard author/hero], whose name appears in the middle of the Victoire synagogue among the Jewish soldiers who died for France [in World War I], predicted:

“the deadly struggle exists between the world of money, of a total and absolute materiality, and all the other worlds together (the worlds of religions and philosophies) who are the worlds of some spirituality, and whose fates are linked, fortunes conjoined.”

The conscience of prophets, like that of philosophers, appeals to our desire to live.

Jean-Marc Desanti*

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* The author is not Jewish, but a leftist friend of the Jewish community.
Opinions: Israel


If peace became a complete reality, should Jewish enthusiasm, unity and responsibility towards Israel therefore vanish? Should we return to the half-heartedness and weakness regarding Israel, feelings that caused so much trouble before the tragic days of 1967?

Thanks to the creation of the State of Israel, we left the throes of exile - people scattered, persecuted, humiliated - to achieve a new dignity and a new and vigorous national life.

It is this dignity that must be defended and preserved today.

Love for Israel became the cause of the entire Jewish People, so solidarity is identified henceforth with Israel and never with Jewish life.

Therefore, it is essential that the Jewish people maintain themselves decidedly behind the State of Israel, that each of us continues today, tomorrow and the next day, to contribute to the annual campaigns of the United Jewish Appeal of France.

The declaration of independence of the State of Israel includes the following important phrases:

*The country of Israel is the birthplace of the Jewish people. There the Bible was written and gifted to the world.*

Henri Zrihen
We are in Israel, in Beit-El, in the Territories [West Bank], where our children and grandchildren live.

Beit-El is an establishment situated 20 km from Jerusalem. Look north of Jerusalem. You find El Bira, Ramallah and directly above, Beit El.

Beit El, or “The House of God,” is a small town made up of three neighborhoods. Beit El Aleph, Beit El Beth and, recently, Beit El Guimel. Seven hundred fifty families live in the Yishuv [settlement], that is to say around 6,000 people.

Everything blossoms quickly because spring is here: wild anemone, cyclamen, and a lot of other plants, especially almond trees.

The francophone colony is very well represented.

This religious Yishuv is large, as it is generally made up of individual houses for two or four families at most. The architecture is remarkable, much in the Herodian style….

There are four large, imposing synagogues, especially the last where the architect wanted to produce a representation of the Temple of Jerusalem.

Education is offered to girls and boys through high school. Each class is given five computers. In Beit El, the child population is very dense: the families have 4 or 5 children and more.

In the Yishuv, there is a small unpretentious industry: a printing office, joinery, etc. Most residents work in Jerusalem.
In Beit El, there are many ganim [kindergartens], playgrounds, small public gardens, and bicycles. The place is well connected: many buses, leaving many times a day for Jerusalem or Tel Aviv.

We have been there for three weeks. (Everywhere it is the Passover cleaning, shopping, but this year, with a clear sign of anxiety: the tragedy of Hebron\(^7 \) has made things worse! In short, worry and uncertainty.)

Since the Clinton – Arafat – Rabin meeting, the situation has become worse. Going out in a car, with stones thrown at you, is common. The windows are now at the mercy of these stones. Other times, it is more serious: four citizens of Beit El were murdered in the last 3 months.

Certainly, the Israelis are sorry for what happened at the Tomb of the Patriarchs. They are sorry because the Jews have never liked bloodshed. But they are bitter and disillusioned. Since September 13, the beginning of “peace” has had 33 civilian casualties. The newspapers are discussing this with only about two lines on the third page. In contrast, Hebron made the headlines in Europe for over a month. While their conduct was very moderate during six years of the Intifada, Israelis are living tense, worried lives. They do not know if they will be stoned or shot at the turn of a path. Never, to this day, have Jews thrown stones at Arabs.

If you go to Jerusalem, you walk among many tourists. Heavy traffic, construction sites are always rising everywhere. One can admire the last major work by Teddy Kolek [long-time mayor]: imposing, worthy of this wonderful city, including the new city hall of Jerusalem and the surrounding plaza.

As I said, spring is here, as is Passover. The Israelis will try to forget their worries and enjoy their holidays. Religious people are lining up to place their household utensils in huge vats

\(^7\) Dr. Baruch Goldstein, an Orthodox Jew and American immigrant, murdered 29 Muslims at prayer in a mosque in Hebron.
of boiling water placed in various parts of Jerusalem by young Hasidim. This is a very curious spectacle. The children will soon be on vacation.

And we wish you: good Passover festivals, good seders, and a lot of Simcha [joy] in the Community. Our worries matter less.

Mariette and Henri-Claude Bloch
Letters to the Editor: Amnesty International


I noticed this article in the Weekly No. 1436 of 2/14/94, under the heading “Madame Hebdo” ("Mrs. Weekly"):

“Amnesty International launches a new campaign against disappearances [kidnappings] and extrajudicial executions. It consists of harassing countries that “forget” thousands of people. (It’s obviously a euphemism). The committee of Dijon chose five of the countries where democracy is not always law: Rwanda, Colombia, Sri Lanka, Israel and the occupied territories, Turkey…”

I was shocked to see Rwanda, Colombia and Israel on the same plane! Can we do anything? She speaks here of Amnesty International. It is horrible that they put all these countries on the same plane. What do you think?

Bravo for all that you do. I go through the Lettre with a fine-tooth comb. So keep up the good work.

Fortuné Huli

Response:

Dear Ms.,

Thank you first for your compliments and encouragement: it is a very important to know that our work is appreciated and leaves you wanting more.

Regarding Amnesty International, this is not the first time people who know Israel are shocked by the biased and unjust positions of the association. I have spoken to a Christian friend who is both an adherent of Amnesty International and subscribes to The New Letter. (This friend visited Israel and has even offered an article on her trip to No. 7). She left Amnesty International precisely because of this anomaly and she is not the only one. I suppose that protests should be
sent to Amnesty International and Ms. Hebdo. Perhaps it is the responsibility of our friends in France-Israel?

*Cathie Bussidan*
Union of the Israeli People’s Voluntary Civil Service


Sar-El is a movement created in 1982, at the beginning of the Lebanon War, by a group of Israeli personalities of all political, religious and communal tendencies, in Israel, as well as in Diaspora. A nonprofit political organization, not dependent on any Zionist movement, Sar-El (at the service of Israel) is made up of volunteers.

Assuming that the Jewish communities of the Diaspora must fulfill their duties and responsibilities toward Israel, the founder, General Davidi, the former head of the Israeli paratroopers, thought to innovate by calling for the physical and moral volunteer service of the Diaspora. He proposes they become a useful and important labor force, for a minimum period of three weeks, supplying manual work, and substitute for the Israeli labor force called upon to perform other military duties.

The first call to the French communities dates back to 1983. That year, 308 volunteers participated. Since then, the number has continued to increase.

With this psychological and efficient support, the Jews of France could again create a bridge, but different from all the existing bridges connecting the Diaspora of France to the state of Israel.

Working at a military base, what is that? Rest assured, it’s not tiring! The soldiers know, depending on your age and energy, in what sector of the camp you belong. You do not have the right to touch a weapon. You are, to be sure, dressed in military attire, but there ends your right to play a little soldier. The work depends on the needs and the places. One time, we were in the oil and fat. Another time, we had to calibrate and clean up small materials or sort packages.
This year, in March, we were in Joulis, a very important base with imposing, modern tanks. The work consisted, for my wife and me, of dismantling and oiling the carburetors and other pieces of auto motors and jeeps, in a workshop directed by a Moroccan of French origin. In brief, a lot of work could be accomplished by volunteers even at 77 years of age.

After 1982, more than 20,000 volunteers came from many countries, but above all the United States. France takes third place with several thousand male and female volunteers.

During vacation, many hundreds of young people are dispersed in a number of bases across the country.

In fact, the state of Israel wants to offer its volunteers opportunities permitting them to discover and get to know the deeper economic, social and military aspects of Israel.

The voluntary service is open to all Jews, without distinctions of class or sex. It is equally accessible to Christian friends of Israel, offering all opportunities.

Mariette and I are on our sixth voluntary service. Each year, we discover new sectors of Israel. You see everything that one can do to serve. I can guarantee you that being a certain age is of no consequence and fatigue is non-existent. The ambiance is very good, the soldiers are kind, helpful, and appreciate our presence.

The evening activities are diverse, as the work day ends at 16:30. We participate in Hebrew courses, listen to presentations (in French, naturally). During the three weeks of service, the army offers three excursions, one to Jerusalem.

It is certainly much easier to volunteer when retired.

Working Hours are from 8 to 12:30 and from 13:30 to 16:30, with variations at each base. Shabbat: One is free from Friday at 12 to Sunday at 8. It is possible to spend rest time with family or Kibbutzim.
Cost: Simply the price of travel (reduced on EL AL).

Food:

- A copious breakfast
- a consistent lunch
- a dinner (at 17:00) of salads, white cheese, and a variety of fruit

Recommended Time: From February 15 to May 15, or from September 15 to December 15 (In order to avoid the hot and rainy seasons).

When is your first or next voluntary service going to be?

A volunteer,

Henri-Claude Bloch
Short Memoir


The biggest and most insane victory of Israel’s adversaries is that, today, and against the most glaring physical reality, the Jewish state represents the giant Goliath and the Arab and Muslim world the frail David.

Forgotten: the scanty and practically indefensible borders of a small state.

Forgotten: the radically unequal demographic situation

Forgotten: the fabulous riches of the Arab world...

Forgotten: the work to make Israel’s soil bear fruit

Forgotten: the pragmatic politics of the Western nations who prefer a market of more than a billion buyers to the micro-market of the Israeli state, notwithstanding all other considerations

Forgotten: the nation as a refuge state for Jewish survivors

Forgotten: Israeli democracy, the Arab dictators

Forgotten: the automatic majority of Arab nations and of their allies within the international assemblies, permitting the obtaining of resolutions that one takes henceforth very seriously and which ritually condemn the Jewish state

Forgotten: the meaning of the words Palestine and Palestinian according to which, little by little, the Israeli Jew is going to be definitively dispossessed.

All these elementary notions that a simple spectator had in mind before the Six Days War have slowly disappeared.

The objective of the Israeli army was never to bombard the civilian populations on purpose; it was to defend the country from enemy attacks.
On one side, it is the fight for survival, with a legitimate defense; on the other it is the will to kill….

When they declare war, when they want war, when they propagate war, the blame is placed on us. It is exactly this anti-Israeli propaganda that is orchestrated today.

But hope nevertheless exists even though a road littered with corpses does not lead to peace.

*Henri-Claude Bloch*
**Being Jewish in the Diaspora and in Israel**


In some way, it is difficult to use the word Jewish because it brings along meanings, such as not being “polite” or not having had a mixed marriage. Of course, we are Jews, but with respect to the young ones, I would hardly say that they are also Jews. Above all, they came from “Jacob’s semen” to constituting a magnificent people.

In the Diaspora, when there is a holiday, Jews get together, and then separate again. Certainly, there is a feeling of reuniting the family, but with no real roots. In Israel, all people come out and join together!

In the Diaspora, all these holidays had a semi-clandestine transitional character, so they were gradually suppressed, while here, in Israel, everything is permanent.

For the Jewish communities established in France long ago, like the one that I come from, the word “Jewish” has always had pejorative connotations; it meant implicitly “dirty Jew,” and that’s how everyone perceived it. People had to refrain from saying this word in public, on the street or in cafés, and if they heard it by accident, people felt tense and embarrassed, as if someone dehumanized you and called you a Jew.

At some point in history, being Jewish meant being Hitler’s victim, carrying the yellow star, and later on, being a victim that people should pity.

After World War II, with the creation of Israel, and the arrival of the *Pieds Noirs* [North African Jews], this concept has changed in all layers of the Jewish population in France.

We are in a process of assimilation now, being conscious of our value, while in the past the actions of the French Jews were fueled by shame and fear...
Israel is what matters, and not just being Jewish, which is no more than a transitional phase, one among many others in the history of descent from Jacob.

For me, it is extraordinary to hear of people who speak Hebrew, who are building a nation, who lead a life that will, in the future, bring them their identity.

We need to realize that in the 19th century, not long ago, Jews essentially saw the connection with the Holy Land as a religious obligation. Everyone felt satisfied with sending some money to Palestine – later Israel. This was no longer a retreat behind or in front of the Western Wall, but the shining and immediate dimension of this ‘new life’.

Henri-Claude Bloch
Jerusalem, Capital of Israel


On June 7, financed primarily by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Centre d’Accueil de la Presse Étrangère (CAPE) [Foreign Press Center] hosted a conference in Paris with the objective of starting a campaign under the name, “Jerusalem, an Occupied Capital.”

The name itself is a serious manipulation of social opinion in France, concealing a historical fact that has not been discussed:

Throughout the centuries, Jerusalem has never been the capital of a non-Jewish state, different from the Jewish state.

As André Monteil, the ex-minister, ex-president of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Senate and ex-president of the France-Israel Association, wrote: “In all of human history, there is nothing that can be compared to the fidelity of the Jewish people to Jerusalem.”

The France-Israel Association strongly protests against the fact that an institution, financed by French taxpayers, is promoting a false argument (which will engender feelings of hatred).

Daniel Lefebvre
Responses to Anti-Semitism

Perhaps the most salient feature presented in this selection is the obviously changed concerns from the 1990s Rightist LePen anti-Semitism to the Islamic-related anti-Jewish violence of post Intifada II and 9/11. Many in the community believe that expanding anti-Zionism and unbalanced criticism of Israeli policies in the French media are mainly the newest form of anti-Semitism. A variety of communal responses to these challenges are discussed, along with personal narratives.
A Word from the President


Well done…

During the organized demonstration against Le Pen’s* visit to Dijon, gathering close to 5,000 people, the community overwhelmingly attended the march. A motion concerning the National Front was signed by several people and key figures: notably, among politicians: congressmen Carraz and Patriat, advisors Esmonin and Schmitt, Council President Bodineau. Unfortunately, the senators, the presidents of the General and Regional Council, and the majority of congressmen refused to join in this motion.

We must express our sympathy to Mr. Bodineau, president of the Economic and Social Council of the region, who, having signed the manifesto, was violently attacked by Mr. Jaboulet-Verchère. The terms used showed the National Front’s true colors.

Dear friends, you know what danger such groups and those who lead them bring. To say: “I do not engage in politics,” is to accept the politics of those who do.

The regional elections are close. Think about it. To escape the trap of the National Front, we must vote.

Henri-Claude Bloch

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* Jean-Marie Le Pen is founder and former president of the National Front party, a right-wing, Nationalist group. He has been accused of historical revisionism, minimizing the Holocaust as a footnote to the Second World War.
NO TO LE PEN’S ARRIVAL IN DIJON


The arrival of Le Pen in Dijon provokes indignation, fright and disapproval of the Jewish community, deeply attached to the values of French democracy. This democracy only has meaning in its fidelity to human rights and to fundamental freedoms.

The Jewish community of Dijon invites Burgundians to show their deep disapproval by ignoring the visit of an anti-democrat who advocates exclusion, racism, and xenophobia.

The Jewish community does not forget the lessons of history and asks all democrats to fight against Le Pen and his ideas.

Jewish Community of Dijon
Letter to the Mayor


You will find below, and appreciate, the reactions of some political figures who refused to sign
with us. - Robert Poujade*

Mr. President:

I belong to a family of Gaullist thought that for half a century has led the fight against
racism and exclusion.

The Israelite community of Dijon knows that it can count on the mayor of the city to
understand and defend it. It has the right and even the duty to express its worry every time the
resurgences of an abominable past risk appearing.

I have much less consideration for the political groups that have done so well (the
Socialist left) over the last 10 years, the rise of an extremism that coincided with their arrival to
power and opened to the public media so complacently. This hypocrisy revolts me.

A few days ago, alongside Jacques Chirac, we reiterated that we are forever faithful to
ourselves, and what separates us from those who do not fully accept the spirit of our institutions
and declaration of human rights. Our values, you know them. We defend them without trickery
or compromise.

Please be assured, Mr. President, of my wholehearted and devoted intentions.

Henri-Claude Bloch

* Robert Poujade was mayor of Dijon from 1971 to 2001.
You will find below and appreciate the reactions of some political figures who refused to sign with us. - Robert Poujade

I carefully read the text you propose I co-sign. It combines a moral demand to which I subscribe and a completely legitimate political judgement that does not seem to me, for all that, appropriate to my position as Catholic Bishop. This is the reason I do not wish to sign it.

As shown in the diocesan newsletter (p. 10) that I attach to this card, I want at the same time to clearly recall the moral principal of respect for all men, notably the immigrant, and to not interfere in a political debate during an electoral period. It is in this way, I think, that I will serve best.

Michel Coloni, Bishop of Dijon

* Robert Poujade was mayor of Dijon from 1971 to 2001.
The Activist and Graffiti


My doctor, last May, advised me to swim to rehabilitate my broken wrist. I chose a semi-private pool in Nice where the water was 28°C (82°F).

Racist and anti-Semitic graffiti were sprawled on the walls of this establishment, shocking me greatly. I tried in vain to remove them with soap, which degraded the shower walls. A young girl did not understand my reasoning and we had an altercation.

The next day, armed with spray paint, I made these unbearable writings disappear. Then I took my bath, I showered and I went quietly to the locker room. In the hallways, two men pounced on me and squeezed my arms so strongly that I had bruises for days. I called my husband who was waiting for me.

The head of the pool staff intervened; I asked him to call the police. He refused but asked my husband to come the next day to clean the wall. That was out of the question! Things turned ugly. The youths from the pool left with those from the neighboring deck. I started to explain what racism and anti-Semitism are. I was furious!

In the head of staff’s office, my husband tried to calm me. But I finished by upsetting my partner: tears came to his eyes.

Not very reassured, on returning to my room, I called Alain David, President of the Côte D’Or LICRA [International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism]. He immediately called the Antibes branch of the LICRA, which got hold of the head of the pool staff. After a letter exchange, during which I categorically refused to apologize, this man pledged before the LICRA to clear the walls of all inscriptions and promised that it would not happen again.

*Jacqueline Develay-Ossia*
Swastikas at a Jewish Merchant’s [Store] in Dijon


One morning in May, Mr. S opened his shop, like every day. Suddenly, he could not believe his eyes: on his window, he saw a swastika and this inscription: “Hitler was right”. Horrified, he called the police straight away. Officers came and saw for themselves the presence of these hideous inscriptions. They helped him to clean the window and advised him to complain. Mr. S hesitated: he did not know what to do, whom to contact.

He should have contacted the LICRA [International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism] as soon as possible: it has the ability, in this type of situation, to help victims; its activists know what to do. It is authorized to file a complaint for the victims; it can support them in all of their steps.

The present situation leaves us unfortunately to assume that this type of incident will increase. If you are victims or witnesses of anti-Semitic or racist acts or words, contact [LICRA] before any other step. But don’t stand alone in this situation: join the LICRA today.

Cathie Bussidan
Press Communiqué

The National Bureau of Vigilance against Anti-Semitism and the Council of Jewish Communities of Seine-Saint-Denis salutes the police services of the department which, in patrolling the proximity of the synagogue of Rosny-sous-Bois, this November 8, 2004 at 6 p.m., certainly permitted an anti-Semitic drama to be avoided.

The young Arab-Muslim, who they surprised and tried to arrest, fled, leaving his bag behind. It contained a grenade ready for use, which was defused later by the service of the bomb disposal unit.

The Rosny-sous-Bois synagogue is located on the rue Lavoisier in a residential zone. The presence of a bitter Arab-Muslim and a grenade ready to explode does not make sense.

This is why we ask the Public Prosecutor and the police charged with the overall investigation to work to find the individual again and to verify:

1. If he did or did not have the intention to attack the synagogue, frequented at this hour by the faithful, or the house next door inhabited by the former rabbi of the community.
2. If his act was or was not inspired by the anti-Jewish sermons professed by Hassan Issouquien, an Islamist belonging to the domain of the UOIF official union of French Muslims and often invited to Rosny-sous-Bois.

3. If his act, fortunately, unsuccessful, was or was not inspired by the rumors of {Arafat’s} poisoning, spread by the wife of Yassar Arafat.

    Returning to the place, we could note the presence of competent police officers and of the Director of the Cabinet of the Prefect of Bobigny.

A Recent Development

November 7, 2004 Paris X: A young Jew was attacked by three men of North African descent, armed with iron bars and a pit-bull. The victim was hospitalized.

    P.S. The state of Israel is now accused of having poisoned Mr. Arafat. This is not neutral: formerly, people accused our people of poisoning well water and this was the catalyst for massacres.

    All these rumors, aggravated by the strongly compliant silence of our government, surely risk a surge of anti-Semitic acts in the coming days.

    *Michel Bussidan*
A Serious Incident in Dijon


A serious incident took place in Dijon this April. This incident is intolerable and offensive to everyone who considers himself a non-racist, no matter if he is Jewish or not. This incident makes us think and ponder. That is why it is necessary to distinguish between the facts on one hand (if we can describe them in an objective way) and our thoughts on the other hand, which are much more personal. This is what I would like to share with the critical and benevolent minds of Mazal Tov readers.

The Facts

As part of its program running from April 12-25, Eldorado Cinema published a review of the movie “Inside Man” by Spike Lee on the cinema’s website as well as on the brochure distributed in the city. Due to the film’s recent release, the review is on the first page of the paper version of the cinema’s program. The closing part of the review reads as follows:

“Thus is the state of things in a white America prejudiced against Blacks (even if they are great cops: Denzel Washington’s and Willem Dafoe’s first meeting is enlightening), to Hindus (even if they are a major component in financial capitalism, such as the Sikh in this story), and to Jews (whose fortune is only a fantasy of petty criminals…).”

This statement makes people react. Here one can clearly see the ancient ancestral anti-Semitic prejudice that stereotypes Jews as rich. One can also find a relatively explicit allusion to the recent assassination of Ilan Halimi by a group of “little thugs.” This phrase somehow even legitimizes the strategy of demanding ransom from a Jewish family.

That is why this phrase is anti-Semitic. This interpretation might be obvious for many people; but it is not obvious for everyone, as you will see from the next few paragraphs.

On April 28, when the movie was still up on Eldo’s posters, I read this paragraph. So, I immediately sent a letter to the address indicated on the website with the following notable
“If Spike Lee’s commitment against racism is that well known, I guess that, according to your last paragraph, he should criticize racism against black people, Hindus and Jews? But if the fortune of Jews is only a fantasy of petty thieves (according to Spike Lee? or according to Eldo?), where is the fight against racism? I have to admit that I am lost.”

This letter never received a response and I have since learned that it is one of many that went unanswered.

Dijon’s LICRA [International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism] secretary, Alain David, was finally notified. Determined to resolve this problem, he contacted Eldo’s director, first by phone. The day was May 19. This phrase has been circulating all over Dijon and on the website for more than six weeks. After this conversation on the phone, Eldo’s director apologized if his comments offended anyone. At the insistence of the LICRA secretary, he agrees to change the review on Eldo’s website:

“Since the previous text has offended some people, we decided to remove it. We want to apologize to the Internet users who have felt offended by reading it, and we would be grateful if they accept our apologies. Eldorado rejects all racism, including anti-Semitism.

In a letter to Eldo’s director, Alain expressed his reactions to this change, by explaining why it is not right: the anti-Semitic phrase is not offensive to “some” people, but to all. On the next day, May 20, Alain suggests substituting the first correction with a second one:

“The previously published text, which implies that the Jews are definable by their money, has an unsupportable anti-Semitic connotation: thus, we decided to remove it and we want to apologize for letting it appear on our bulletins and on our website where it does not belong. The text dishonored the values which Eldorado holds so dear.”

This second rectification is what finally appeared on Eldo’s website.

As seen above, this incident is now “resolved,” thanks to the effective intervention of the
LICRA secretary in Dijon.

Can they get out of this incident intact?

I think that no one can get out of this incident truly intact. Neither Eldo, nor the Jews, not even the people from Dijon and other places who have read the phrase. Eldo’s brochure is distributed at the universities and many other places in Dijon. So, the young people have come to the conclusion that the Jew is rich by definition.

Things could have been handled much better in this fight against racism. It is tragic that a cultural institution like Eldo, which plays an important role in the organization and programming of high quality films, those habitually absent from screens in cities the size of Dijon came to be at the center of this incident.

Some people say, “By all means, Eldo is well known for its pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli position.”

In my opinion, this is an auxiliary detail simplifying the case, but not really adding much substance to the debate. In effect, contrary to widespread opinion, I think that it is possible to criticize the policy that the Israeli government adopts with respect to Palestine, without necessarily being anti-Israeli.

Of course, some people, like the famous Dieudonné [Muslim anti-Semite comedian and lecturer], take advantage of their audience’s [ignorance] and defend the Palestinians by mocking the Jews. And this is just one example among many.

But if we allow ourselves to get caught up in this pro-Palestinian, anti-Semitic amalgam, we risk losing the most precious arguments in our fight against racism. One can criticize political opponents while remaining humane and respectful of all individuals, regardless of their origin, religion, skin color, etc…The fight against racism relies upon universal human arguments, which
are at a much higher level than political conflicts.

Flaying Eldo for its good relationships with leftist organizations like ATTAC [Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens] (“on the left of the Left” according to some) will not help resolve the problem. Putting the extreme left and extreme right movements in the same “bag” for being anti-Semitic is perhaps a better way to approach the situation. On my part, I have not measured the amount of anti-Semitism on each side. I strongly hope that the extreme left will not go so far and be as racist as the extreme right.

In reality, however, the problem lies elsewhere: by pointing a finger and accusing the militants who defend these radical positions, we are saying, “This is anti-Semitism. It is found among the extremes.” And this is somewhat reassuring. It’s like turning to the center to make sure you are in good company. But this means forgetting the stereotype of the wealthy Jew, which is quite widespread. This is a belief held by people, regardless of their political orientation. And this is a little less reassuring.

_Hélène Sultan_
Jewish-Christian Relations

The importance of Jewish-Christian encounters, despite the wider indifference or even occasional hostility of the public, cannot be overstated. Indeed, it is believed by many that these post World War II and post Vatican II developments will help re-define French Judaism and facilitate its maintenance and well-being for future generations. Ironically, however, the greatly improved institutional relationship between Jewish and Christian structures occurred at a time in which even Catholicism has ceased to play a dominant role in the life of most French citizens.
Biblical Art


Friday June 4th, 1993 at 8:30pm, the pastor of the reform Church of Dijon invited us to a broadcast conference given by Father Paul Baudiguey on the theme: “Biblical Art by Rembrandt and Chagall.”

Rembrandt Harmenszoom Van Rijn was born in Leyde in Holland in 1606. His paintings were for the most part exhibited at Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam: The Jewish Bride, Mother and Child and many more.

Chagall was born in 1887, in Vitebsk, in Russia, in a ghetto where anti-Semites torched his home while his mother gave birth to him.

His artworks, lithography, and etchings are sublime. If you pass through Nice, go see the museum devoted entirely to him.

Father Baudiguey explained and communicated to us his admiration and the sensibility of this genius in expanding on certain technical details of his paintings. In his paintings, the eyes of Jews, raised toward the sky, are sad and moving. Small doves, angels, and colors restore some hope.

Fortunately religions have not only inspired wars, but musicians, painters, philosophers, sculptors, temple builders, writers, and poets. Science and medicine slowly evolved, despite certain hesitations. Men have been inspired to develop laws (sometimes negative) and human rights. The Jewish religion is one of the primary inspirations.

Let’s hope that one day Israelis and Palestinians will speak like Christians and Jews do today, who hated each other so, and that they will meet to listen to such a man as Father Paul Baudiguey.                

Jacqueline Develay-Ossia
Letters to the Editor: From a Christian Friend


I write to thank you for your kind invitation to the feast of Purim; as Christians, my daughter and I have been very sensitive to your thoughtful attention towards us, by the welcome we received in your community (the warmth and dances reminding us of Algeria). Another big thank you.

Michèle Matarese
Speech for the European Day of Jewish Patrimony in Dijon


It is a great honor for the Jewish Religious Association of Dijon, associated with B’nai B’rith (the Sons of the Covenant) and with the Jewish Cultural Center of Dijon, to receive you for this first presentation in Dijon of the European Day of Jewish Patrimony.

With the exception of some official ceremonies and some rare liturgical concerts, this is the first great manifestation open to the public since the Centenary Celebration of the Synagogue in 1979 and the important Exposition on the 700 Years of the Jewish Presence in Dijon in 1997.

Indeed, alas, the current moment hardly inspires exuberance! So many massacres and wars thunder around us – the hope for their disappearance after the horror of World War II dashed. In this pessimistic, cynical atmosphere, it seemed important to us to recall today, by this exposition, the importance that has been invested since the Middle Ages in the existence of a Hebrew community for a city like Dijon.

The Jews were expelled from Bourgogne in 1395 and were not to reappear there until four centuries later, as a result of a decision by the Director of the District of Dijon on August 14, 1790, who invited five Hebrew families from Alsace, here to this day – our former President, Mr. Henri-Claude Bloch, a descendant.

It is interesting to recall the memory of Hugues Aubriot of Dijon, friend of Charles V, who became Provost of Paris, who courageously supported the Hebrew communities of Dijon and elsewhere.

The successive mayors of the 19th century generously aided the community to practice its religion by lending it various premises, including a room even within the Town Hall.
In 1869, it was decided, graciously, to give up the land on which we actually find ourselves, to build a temple worthy of its name. The synagogue was unveiled in September 1879, thanks to a subscription of the Dijon people, which closed in a week!

It is interesting to recapture what was noted at this occasion by the famous [author]

Clément Jeannin:

The hatred and the passions of the Middle Ages have only left a few traces in Dijon; one esteems here people for what they are worth and not for the religion they profess; also, for a long time, the Hebrews were welcomed among us. Now, thanks to the large sacrifices they have undergone, they have a magnificent temple, accessible to everyone, where the ceremonies of a character, of an antique beauty will be public. The last prejudices will disappear and the hour approaches where the Dijon Jews, intimately blended in the population, having the same aspirations, the same interests, the similar attachment to native soil, will be able to completely forget the bitter words of the Prophet: ‘The fathers eat sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge, for to only remember the beautiful motto engraved on the seal of their community, homeland and religion.’

A little time after, at the heart of the Dreyfus Affair, things changed for the worse for the community, especially with the appearance in Dijon of a journal entitled “The Anti-Jewish Bourguignon”.

The community then paid a heavy toll at the time of World War I.

An old Jewish cemetery dating back to the Middle Ages was situated on the rue Chancelier de l’Hôpital. After its destruction, certain tombstones, which were used like latrines or like construction material even within the Palais des Ducs or in the courtyard of a house on the rue du Vieux Collège, were stored at the Archaeological Museum. The old Jewish cemetery created during the French Revolution, which was situated at the start of the rue de Fontaine, on the corner of the boulevard Eugène Spuller, and which has been abandoned since the end of the 19th century, was replaced in 1922 by a Hebrew square in Pêjoces, where the remains exhumed
from the old cemetery were transferred (the community had at the time tried to oppose the transfer for religious reasons).

In the 1930s, we saw a flow of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria, in quest of refuge. We have here again among us Miss Franck whose father, treasurer of our association at the time, often took in these refugees.

In 1880, there were, in Dijon, 118 families registered in the community. On the eve of World War II, there were 130. This represented 400 souls, 150 of whom did not come back from deportation.

The rabbi at the period, Elie Cyper, was mobilized on September 1939 as a military chaplain; he was made a prisoner, evaded them and was recaptured at Périgueux on April 8, 1944. He was deported to Drancy on convoy 73, on May 15, 1944, to the destination of Kaunas in Lithuania where he died, murdered like the 877 Jews who accompanied him. By a strange irony of sorts, I myself was born at Kaunas 12 years later.

On February 26, 1944, a last roundup took place in Dijon, which involved the arrest of 92 Jews, of whom only two returned from deportation. One of these two people, an adolescent at the time, was with us at the Ceremony of July 16 in the courtyard of the Railroad station. During the war, the synagogue, which had been transformed into a warehouse of equipment for the occupying troops, was moreover attacked by a group of [Vichy] followers.

In the chapel, you can admire the unique pieces from the municipal and Departmental Archives – for which I would like to warmly thank those responsible for their invaluable aid in the preparation of this exposition – and which recount the history of the Jews of Dijon: the oldest among them dates back to 1196!
This day will also allow us to show the Dijonnais public, in addition to the sometimes tragic history of the Dijonnais Jews, the objects of ritual Judaic art (sometimes very old) which, we hope, make it possible to lift the mystery of certain practices which could appear as mysterious for the laymen….

I hope that you will be interested by this exhibition and that it will return in the years to come in an atmosphere tinged with more serenity - as much for the Jewish community as for the entire nation.

Before the close of my speech, I would like to thank all the people, besides Mr. Henri-Claude Bloch, introduced before – Miss Jocelyne Azancot, the one responsible for the committee organization, as well as Mrs. Thébault, Mrs. Ayache, and Mrs. Bussidan, who dispensed an uncommon energy so that this day can be a complete success!

I would like to thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your presence (today, a Sunday), which attests to your interest in the harmonious life of our community within the city.

Israël Cemachovic
The Christian-Jewish Partnership

EXTRACTS FROM THE A.C.J.F. [Catholic Association of French Youth]

ORIENTATION REPORT


If a theological reflection is taking place at the ACJF, then in all cases it is less of a dogmatic theology than a theology, described by the late Oratorien author, Fr. Louis Bouyer, as a “spiritual theology” which is meant to exist by means of prayers and liturgies, and which is not a logical speculation, but rather a description and an expression of the relationship between God and His people, His history with humanity, and with every one of us. It is through the anxieties of the ambient world, the comparison of practices, and the spiritual exchange that we truly meet with the religions of others and allow them to enlighten our own religion. It is mutual respect, listening and enlightening that unite us, not theological disputes.

I would like to group these reflections on the tasks of the ACJF with respect to what we have achieved with the cooperation of other local groups and what we hope to achieve with respect to the following three topics:

- The new anti-Semitism or anti-Judaism or Judeo-phobia…related to the question of Zionism;

- The difficulty of believers of other churches to recognize the importance of bringing Jews and Judaism together;

- The questions coming from secularization (seen by some people as the way out of religion, and the spiritual and moral crisis of our time.)

The Christian-Jewish partnership is not self-centered. If it is worth something, it needs to be significant for the world we live in together. We should feel the duty to show this partnership to our contemporaries, our co-citizens, and to a world in crisis. That is why it is important to
carry out Pastor Florence Taubmann’s [pastor of the Reformed Church of France, president of AJCF, author] idea, a week of Judeo-Christian friendship, which would be an occasion to get together and bear witness to the significance of our existence and experience, for us and for the rest of the world.

With respect to the themes of this manifestation, there are three:

- Resume and develop the things that we outlined during the Jewish and Christian moral meeting in 2003. The contemporary individualism manifested in Human Rights culture maintains that there is no higher ideal than freely choosing our orientations without fear of [Divine] punishment. Christianity and Judaism have another life principle in common: love your fellowman like yourself. Is this precept powerful enough to come out and change the modern world?

- Judaism and Christianity, together and alone, have a common characteristic in placing humanity in a historic destiny ranging from creation to the apocalypse, through a historical journey: the Exodus, the Babylonian Captivity, the Incarnation of God in Christ. This leads to a view of man not only as a political animal, but also as a historic animal. This has implications, in particular regarding the notion of the human being and relationships between generations. In a world where everything becomes manipulable, the preservation of the historic character of the human being could indeed be more relevant than the traditional idea of creationism, at least in Catholicism, of human nature.

- We should also together demonstrate that a prayer is not a childish demand, but a way of dealing with the world and taking charge with God close by.

This Semaine [weekly newsletter] would provide an opportunity to have several groups, movements and institutions collaborate and present our faiths differently than how many of our contemporaries represent themselves, either as historic vestiges whose work is behind them (Christianity’s case) or as a marginality worthless outside its walls (Judaism’s case) whose vitality is entirely due to a tragic history, unless they do not consider religion as a nest of fanaticism of which they hope, since they have the right to exist, they can neutralize their evil inclinations through dialogue. On the other hand, it is the current validity of our spiritual sources that we must illustrate.

Dominique Nicolas
The Church Accuses


An open letter to Mr. Pastor Arnold of Clermont
President of the Protestant Federation in France
28 May 2006

Mr. President,

In the May 23, 2006 issue of the periodical *Jerusalem Post* (a copy is attached below) the journal gives some information related to a declaration of the World Council of Churches. The Church Accuses (*Jerusalem Post* French edition - 23 May 2006):

Israel is responsible for the current crisis in the Middle East: this was agreed on by the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the meeting sessions of its executive committee that took place in Geneva from May 16 to 19. The WCC is composed of 340 member churches in 100 countries representing 550 million Orthodox Christians, Anglicans, and Protestants.

The organization declared that Israel’s actions towards Palestine “cannot be justified morally, legally or politically. Their failure to comply with international legislation has led to an escalation of the situation to the point of no-return.”

The WCC condemned the killing of innocent civilians “on both sides” and asked the Palestinians to respect the ceasefire and the Israelis to negotiate.

The WCC affirmed that the international community supports Israel and asked Europe and the U.S. to lift the sanctions taken against Hamas [terrorist organization that governs Gaza].

In writing this, I am presenting a serious protest with respect to this subject. Thus, I would be very thankful if you inform the public that French Protestantism objects to and does not at all support this initiative that is unfortunate, considering the current situation, and that it should therefore be changed, because it cannot possibly be seen as the representative position of
French Protestantism as a whole.

It is obvious that by choosing the title “The Church Accuses,” this periodical deliberately used a very powerful expression; and made a reference to the famous *J’accuse* [I accuse] by Zola that popularized the Dreyfus Affair. This purposeful choice shows how information like this can totally shock the public opinion of Israelis, leading them to the conclusion that, once again, the Christians—and here I mean mostly Protestant Christians—have moved to the opponents’ camp.

Of course, I am not saying that everyone who criticizes the politics of the Israeli government has to be categorized as an anti-Semite. But I firmly stand behind my claim that the Council of Churches does not have the right to take positions like this (or to make statements of this kind) in public, for which, as far as I know, it is not authorized by Church members.

Moreover, this position is notoriously opposed to the position of a large fraction of Protestant members, and the declaration cannot be truly understood by Israeli people and, consequently, by Jewish people as a whole, with whom we want to establish and develop a relationship based on friendship and mutual trust.

Therefore, I am hereby making this statement, not only as a Protestant member of a Church that is part of the Protestant Federation of France, but also as the president of an ecumenical association engaged in creating a new approach to Judaism.

Thus, I ask publicly that the Protestant Federation of France deny the declaration in question as quickly and clearly as possible.

Along with expressing my thanks for your attention, dear Mr. President, I would like to pay you my greatest respect.

*Henri Lefebvre*

Member of the Reformed Evangelical Church of Arles, President of the COEUR Association (Ecumenical Committee of Christian Unity for
Repentance towards the Jewish people)
Judeo-Christian Friendship

Sister Odile’s Conference: The Language of Anti-Semitism


I have been subjected to anti-Semitism since my birth. And not only me. My parents, my family, my friends, my cousins, people that I love, people that I don’t love, and even people in general, people that I have never met or I have simply come across by chance. This long list and the frequent cases of anti-Semitism have convinced me that anti-Semitism is feebleminded and to an extent even ridiculous.

I could not possibly take Hitler seriously.

Sister Odile gave a long, detailed overview of anti-Judaism throughout the ages, with all its different names: anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, negationism. She underlined the different connotations of these names from a religious and racial point of view and also as a means of denying responsibility.

Sister Odile demonstrated extraordinary erudition, comprehensive, profound, and extensive. Her expression consists of clear thoughts and simple language, which can inform everyone about an unbelievable number of events, all presented in a clear way.

I personally knew about most of those events, but their juxtaposition and arrangement presented a totally different picture of the puzzle, much more comprehensive than the one presented by the small separate pieces.

It captured the big picture in its totality!

I have realized that the anti-Semites are fooled into believing such things, but I’m far from thinking but I hardly thought that their foolishness and aberration could go to such an extent: the disdain and disavowal of the Jewish origins of Jesus, who was himself a Rabbi, are
really stupefying. The treatment that Marie has to endure is no better. Poor Mayane! Poor Myriam!

Moreover, she has to suffer a temporal distortion because some people call her “The daughter of Palestine” even though Palestine didn’t exist until a century later; instead it existed as a Roman province before becoming a Turkish province, under the name Division of Gaza (the name Palestine was revived by mistake by the English in the 20th century, as part of their imperialist acts.)

I was scandalized by the number of linguistic errors, completely ignorant of Judaism, and a pejorative tone used to multiply the textual mistranslations of the Torah and the Gospels:

- “Misery to the Philistines!” instead of “The Miserable Philistines!”
- Introduction of the adjective “perfidious.”
- Transformation of the word “keren” (loop, beam, crown) into “horn” so that horned Moses evokes a satanic figure.

Above all, I have learned that anti-Semitism was born the same moment as was monotheism. This helped me find the answer to the question that I have always asked: “Why anti-Semitism?”

If anti-Semitism came into being at the same time as monotheism, namely in the moment when the Alliance between God and the Jews was concluded, then it is the response of the Evil Forces to this Covenant.

Anti-Semitism is the response of Evil Forces to the Alliance between God and Man. Indeed it has all the characteristics of evil: stupidity, absurdity, and defeat!

The Forces of Evil use anti-Semitism in their attempt to destroy the Covenant between God and Man. 

Mark Karpeles
**Other Experiences**


As a “product of several origins,” thus not 100% kosher, I have to say that I also experienced very particular reactions and attitudes during this period. They even went so far as to present me with the following monumental foolishness: “Oh, you are singing in Hebrew! Horrendous! So you are supporting the Israelis who massacre every Palestinian and make them starve to death!”

What type of an individual could make such claims?

For me, Hebrew is a sacred language and I will continue to sing in Hebrew anywhere and anytime and no one can blame me for that. But the same ignorant people associate Hebrew, a language more than 5000 years old, with the bombs that have recently fallen on Gaza! How could I be a friend to them?

I do not regret anything… In 2009, I will also make a big change in the list of my “friends.” Those who have expressed their stupidity are already removed from the list. I do not have time for that!

One of my correspondents has been wholeheartedly supporting the Palestinians. However, I reminded him that in 1947 the United Nations separated a piece of territory in two parts; one piece of land for the Arabs and the other for the Jews, and that the Arabs responded by starting the war! I also reminded him that, even though the Arabs had all the right to live on that territory, which everybody has been tearing apart, the Jews had already been living there for centuries, well before the Mosque of Al Aqsa! Once I was done, this pro-Palestinian friend of mine responded by saying: “Well, yes...Well...I did not know!”
I had the desire to respond to him: “Well, if you do not know, then shut up!” His big mouth is always for this and against that, but he has not even made the effort to open a history book and read what happened beforehand! It does not matter to him and this aggravates me a lot.

Welcome to the club!

Frank Medina
France-Israel Dijon

Israel Seen Differently! …


This is what our group of 24 French people just discovered together in Israel in the context of Sar El France.

Our Dijon team, totaling only six girls, has naturally been noticed as much for its zeal as for its emphatic optimism! What horizons do we come from? Jews and non-Jews, France-Israel, secular, wife of a pastor, that is to say a very beautiful, colorful bouquet that smells of France and love for Israel! Solidarity, our respect and our unfailing love.

Our future: a military base, somewhere in the south of Beersheba, the desert in the middle of nowhere for us French, the Tsarfatis as they call us down there!

A truly exceptional experience for me, a dream realized after many years of waiting. I had in fact already heard from founder General Davidi; when one of my friends left for a voluntary period of service, she was the pastor’s daughter and one of the first non-Jewish French to be enlisted. The whole time, I encouraged my Christian contacts and friends, all those who were looking for a way to actually engage alongside Israel, and here my turn finally came with my new friends in Dijon.

Many tourists indeed dream of a real immersion: to live with the inhabitants, in a kibbutz or moshav, for a little time. However, they are many fewer people who do voluntary civil service in the context of Tsahal, Israel’s army. Still heavily overlooked in certain circles, these 15 day to three week commitments truly represent a practical and real authenticity of service for all those who wish to express their solidarity, their respect, and to give a clear indication in
standing alongside Israel, in these sensitive times where the smallest spark can provoke the worst.

Our days, starting at 5:57, were varied and infinitely rewarding. No pressure or any misconduct, good humor and good will turned out to be the perfect twin sisters for this kind of challenge!

Seven thirty a.m. breakfast, then the flag raising, and then the instruction for the day, diverse and varied. For some, storage and preparation of cans of water. For others, sorting and storage of wrenches, hammers, ratchets, etc., tightening of wheel-bolts for tractor-trailers for the sturdiest of the team. Don’t forget that the temperature fluctuates between 35 and 40° C [95-104° F]!

The days were also sprinkled with time for prayers for the practicing Jews in the military who found themselves in the tidy little synagogue on the base. There, with multiple and varied origins, ranks were erased by the desire to turn together towards God.

Vigils, in turn, were diverse and varied, sometimes serious, remembering some of those fallen in combat, sometimes very joyous and relaxed to better get to know each other. All this led to beating drums morning to night by our ranked leaders called “Madriot.” They also had the difficult task of finding a place to stay for each volunteer during the weekend.

Some among us had the privilege to visit the moshav (in France: GAEC [communal farming groups]) of Ein Tamar and Neot Hakikar. They are members of the choir “The Voice of the Desert,” which had come to perform at the Dijon synagogue. For others, it was Jerusalem, Tel Aviv or the happiness of dipping their feet in the Red Sea at Eilat and having a memorable Shabbat there! During our second week, we visited a very interesting museum in Arad with the army, then we made a stop at the Dead Sea, which is not so dead, just very salty! In fact, there
are crafty little corner moshavs that water their basil and melons with lightly salted water! A true
delight for the export of their products, without mentioning their extraordinary special dates!

At the start of our stay, some in the group asked themselves if our work would really be
useful. On the eve of our departure, the commander of the regiment saluted us and in his speech
affirmed the importance of the essential work of volunteers. Soldiers do not have the time or the
opportunity to accomplish many little tasks, however important in their time. The solidarity of
Israel’s friends is also revealed in this very practical way and particularly that of the much-
appreciated French in these domains. It seems that they are on time to work in the morning and
they simply drink water without moaning! The Tsarfatit are really devoted! Surprising, no?

So, let’s go down to help them again! It is more urgent than ever!

Suzanne Fauvel

November 2012
Jewish-Muslim Relations

There was a time in recent memory when Jewish-Muslim relations in Dijon were not a source of concern. Indeed, Moroccan-born, Arabic-speaking Rabbi Simon Sibony did extensive counseling of Muslims, including in prisons and hospitals, until the arrival of standoffish Imans in the 1990s. He still manages, however, to remain engaged and keep open lines of communication.

In recent years, unfortunately, members of the (suburban) ghettoized Muslim community of approximately 10,000 usually take part when national acts of group violence such as car burnings, and threats and harassment against Jews occur, including in public schools and educational institutions like the University of Bourgogne.

Articles in this limited section include differing attitudes among Jews toward Muslims, as well as one recent example of a communal interchange of ideas. Although many French Jews remain liberal, tolerant, and accepting, others have responded to hate with hate; and almost all French Jews share the generalized French fear of the demographic, economic, and societal challenges of rapid Muslim population growth amidst stagnant or declining Caucasian populations. More immediate, unemployment among French Muslim youth is about 40 percent, with little prospect of near-term improvement. Only imaginative political action and sustained economic growth hold the possibility of confronting a potentially catastrophic future situation in France. An Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty would also reduce Muslim-Jewish tensions in France.
Bitter Summer Reflections on an Astounding Remark


At the beginning of last summer, I chatted amicably with a “schmatologue” [Yiddish slang; one who works in the clothing business] of our Community, on the steps of his fashion store. We spoke about apprenticeship; we were in agreement on the difficulty of the current situation and the necessity to surround oneself with qualified and well-trained staff. He explained to me the difficulties he can run into with clients: one will prefer to be served by him, another by a woman, he needs something for everyone. Then, my merchant friend added: “It’s sad, but I would not hire an Arab salesgirl: there are clients who would not accept her.”

I was so stupefied that I did not react, my brain froze. We finished our conversation, I went on my way, and then I left for vacation. Somewhere in a corner of my conscience these words clinged and left me very uneasy.

On my vacation spot, I had the opportunity to be served in some stores by charming brunettes: later I told myself: “This salesgirl was without doubt an Arab, no one seemed bothered.” In a hotel where the service was quite deficient, the only friendly and effective person was without question a Magrebi [North African]; I realized this after my departure.

I thought for a long time about this friend’s remark. I find it scandalous and false. It concerns a prejudice without any basis. I also think that, if a Jewish merchant reacts like this, one can hardly hope for improvement in a France that has the tendency to give in to racism.

Lastly, I ask this friend a question: shouldn’t he entrust his shop to an Aryan administrator in order to not scare off a potential anti-Semitic customer?

Cathie Bussidan
Secretary of the Cote d’Or LICRA

[International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism]
Opinions: French or Jewish?


Ariel Sharon’s declaration demanded the French choose between France and Israel. It would appear that the whole Jewish community was offended by these remarks.

In reality, the Israeli Prime Minister raises a major issue which was more or less stirred up from fear rather than racism: the burden of the Jewish community facing the influence of the Muslims in France.

The majority [of Muslims] are Arab Muslims from North Africa who are historically and economically tied to France. In this country, there are six million Muslims, including several million Maghrebis, who represent approximately ten percent of the French population. The greater part arrived after the war, invited by the industrialists who were in need of work hands.

As time went by, they established themselves while conserving their lifestyle, their language and their religion.

In this way, nowadays, all French regions have seen a very strong progression of increase in these Maghrebi populations.

Moreover, one must not forget the millions of Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans who look to emigrate in France for political and economic reasons….

France is at the point, in the decades to come, of becoming the first Western Muslim country since the Maghrebi population is growing more rapidly than the Christian population.

It is also necessary to take into account that our society favors secularism at a time when these youths have an important attachment to Islam, as opposed to European Frenchmen who are more secular.
For these young Muslims of the suburbs, especially, it is necessary that there be a way to distinguish themselves from Europeans and affirm their particularity. Their existence rests on a powerful communal sentiment, or else on a so-called sentiment, and they will not integrate themselves in the dominant community but assert themselves as a community apart.

Fortunately, this is true of only a portion of the population. But, more and more of these fundamentalists are establishing themselves in these quarters.

There are in France more than 1,500 places of worship invested and surrounded by various movements. The most important are:

- the U.O.I.F., close to the Muslim Brothers of Egypt,
- the Grand Mosque of Paris, moderate but hardly influential,
- the Tabligh Missionary Movement of Islam,
- the Salafists’ Fundamentalist Movement that preaches for “a return to the real Islam” and refuses all integration.

Not all these movements are run by French Muslims. Furthermore, their financing comes principally from Morocco, Algeria and Saudi Arabia.

Are we heading toward two societies?

One can notice in France:

- the creation of commercial chains intended for these populations (Hallal butchers’ shops),
- shelves of dietary products on which the packaging is bilingual, specially reserved for the Muslims in supermarkets
- adjustment of hours and compliance for worship in the secular establishments
- Koranic schools
- Islamic universities
● television stations, which cover all of the French territory…

It is not necessary to reject this, but to really understand the evolution that French society has undergone. It is clear that French institutions do not correspond any longer to such a reality. Therefore, they are obliged to adapt themselves because one cannot ignore any longer this state of affairs. Moreover, they seem unmoved before such a situation. The “scarf/veil” controversy is nothing but a stopgap. It is necessary to recall that 67 million Muslim Turks are going to join the European Community [though this still seems unlikely].

Thus, one can understand the influence of this community on French foreign policy, openly pro-Arab since 1967. This does not excuse it.

● an anti-Zionism of the Left (a pretext for anti-Semitism) in French universities and in labor-union demonstrations whose leaders are not offended

● a definite Right – not only nationalist, but conservative and scornful, because it is proud of its principles

In the same way, in the conflict against Iraq, French authorities let an anti-Sharon sentiment develop, although Israel was not involved.

Moreover, let’s not forget declarations by a prominent French diplomat in the eighties: “Why trigger a third world war for a handful of people?”

The Jewish community of France is trapped. It is not necessary to be Zionist or not, nor to agree with all that is done and said by Israeli authorities. That being said, the danger comes from these Islamists, from these pro-Palestinian movements and from pro-Arab politics, which push these two communities [Jews and Muslims] to oppose one another.

All Muslim Maghrebis are not warlike fanatics; neither is the French population, for that matter.
Of course anti-Semitism is opposed and it does not reach the Jewish community. But the political media has a heavy hand in maintaining this atmosphere. It leads an anti-American campaign in implying that Israel is the armed branch of the United States. It accuses George Bush and Ariel Sharon of being bloodthirsty dictators.

It is not necessary to delude oneself; even if the Democrats had attained power in the United States and Sharon was replaced, this same sentiment would be maintained in this politicized media world.

Israel is not like any other state. It was created because, over hundreds of years, the Jewish community became ostracized. A lot of unpleasant terms originate from a single community: ghetto, Shoah, genocide, final solution, Holocaust, pogrom, yid [dirty Jew], circumcision….

Recent history denied the wish of the Jewish community to fight on the side of the French.

Pétain [Chief of the French State under Vichy rule] delivered thousands of French to the S.S. because they were Jewish. Two Jewish statutes and anti-Jewish laws were issued.

There are still survivors.

Today, facing an Arab policy frankly and openly hostile to Israel, backed by a weakened and divided Europe, can we abandon the millions of Israelis so that they become again the “wandering Jews”?

In this hostile environment, the French Jewish community cannot abandon this small state, but it cannot forget that it is French above all.
It is necessary to always remember the history of the Jews and the extreme difficulty of their perseverance, their difficulty of integrating in a state, in a nation. History compelled the Jews to form an organized and interdependent community.

What weight do 12 million Jews have facing more than two hundred million Muslim Arabs? Israel only represents 20 thousand square kilometers.

It is probable that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon flubbed some of his remarks.

But they call to mind how often Jews are targeted as scapegoats. They must continually fight to remind others that they too are citizens and human beings.

Charles Zarka
A Meeting with the Islam We Love


Empty barrels are the ones that make the most noise; the physical and verbal of the minority violence get the most attention; we believe them to be in the majority and this damages serenity of our society. So, imams for peace and other associations advocate against those who misrepresent Islam and who provoke harmful rejections for all the minorities of our country. The only solution is to safeguard secularism, educate, and prevent those spreading hatred from raging on.

Do you know Auxerre? It is a magnificent city next to the Yonne River, the homeland of Cadet Roussel [a bailiff with a children’s song named after him], and it was there that Rachid Birbach, President of the Burgundy region M.U.M. (Maison de l’Union de la Méditerranée [House of the Mediterranean Union]) and also a Member of the Delegation of Imams for Peace, had gathered a group of prominent figures to urge Muslims to remain faithful to normal Islam, as it was lived in North Africa, and non-Muslims to understand and prevent the dangers that Islamists impose on everyone, Muslim or not.

Even if all those invited were not there, the group was prestigious; the guest of honor was Zvi Tal, the plenipotentiary Minister at the Embassy of Israel. He explained to us that the biggest challenge in the Middle East is to see through the tangle of politics and religion when there is too much history and not enough geography. We can unite religious peoples together, though each in the East maintains its own specificities. Unfortunately, in the region, leaders are not always up to par; they become mouthpieces of a violent minority that is backed by theological support. The reality of the land in Israel is
complex; the country wants to be Jewish and democratic, meaning that it constantly works to improve conditions for all.

Richard Prasquier (President of the Representative Council of French Jews, CRIF) took the podium next; he brought up that all minorities arriving in France have struggled to be accepted and that the Jewish community mostly originates from Muslim countries. This uprooting is not easy and necessitates adaptations. To live together, only secularism offers a frame in which everyone can flourish in global harmony. Civil law must prevail. In all religions, there has been an abduction of the divine word that prohibits others from having any legitimacy. This is why we, the moderates of all religions, we must unite: together we will be much stronger.

Latifa Ibn Ziaten moved us all. She cries for Imad every day. You remember, she told us, that he was a soldier killed by Mohamed Merah: the killer ordered him to lie down, he refused, and he died standing. No law, even divine, can require that one hates his brother; “I fight so that there will be no more Mohamed Merahs, to help parents educate their children. Yes, parents need help too. God gives life, Islam is tolerance, “ she concludes. Then the room rose and gave her a standing ovation.

Imam Hassan Chalghoumi, from Drancy, President of the Conference of Imams of France, followed her. He is a big man, slightly stooped, swarthy, and possesses a true oratory talent. He appeared very worried. There are 400 Merahs in Syria! In France, not a week goes by without a mosque being tagged.

“In Tunisia, my home country, in Kairouan, in Djerba, there are centuries of tolerance. I went to Israel, brought back Israeli imams to France, and I took them to French mosques. These are strong steps to promote understanding and living together.”
No one has the right to kill in the name of God; Rachid Birbach points out that we need to clarify the language of Islam. We can no longer let empty heads speak in the name of religion; no one can speak in the name of God. If the Israelis are malicious, then why did God create them? Anti-Semitism is condemned by the Koran, is it not written: (Arabic phrases)… Oh, the children of Israel, remember the good deeds that I bestowed upon you and that I preferred (chose) you among the nations.

A participant in the room rose and briefly explained his genealogy to us: a Moroccan father, an Algerian mother, a grandfather and a passport from Saudi Arabia, he works in technology and built several relationships with Israelis. One day, he decided to go to Tel Aviv. “I can’t tell you about the welcome at the Ben Gourion airport… it was epic! But once I passed the barrier, I found a wonderful youthfulness in Tel Aviv; I saw no hate, but a thirst for life. The Israelis did not cut the cord with the Eastern world! We must cultivate our garden together.”

Guillaume Denoix de Saint Marc, Director of the French Association of Victims of Terrorism, complained that the media is only interested in negative events, when things go bad, and is singularly lacking in perspective. The violent acts for the most part concern people in a situation of failure. There were urban riots in 2005 and I’m willing to bet that Merah was there. But in France, no one studied this phenomenon; we don’t want to know why people become radicalized….However, it is precisely the impossibility of being recognized in civil society that provokes this desire to be recognized in a violent world, which is hostile to society. This is easier and more attractive. If we want to avoid these violent results, it is indispensable to invest in prevention.
Jean Maher, President of the Franco-Egyptian Organization for the Rights of Man, is French and a Coptic Christian (Coptic meaning Egyptian). I am happy, he tells us, to today hear people say more and more often: I am a Coptic Muslim. President Mubarak’s corruption was reproached, but I considered his biggest crime to be allowing an intolerant society to develop in Egypt. He delivered the country to the hands of fanatics who preached hatred. The rights of women were no longer respected and we witnessed a great number of public rapes. They even went so far as to ban listening to the singer Oum Kalsoum because she is a woman! (Right then, I saw a knowing glance exchanged between Zvi Tal and Richard Prasquier: was it an allusion to their own fanatics with them?)

Yet these fanatics who burden women, Copts, and moderate Muslims are not numerous, but they are very powerful. There was a big film in Egypt called Hassan, Morcos et Cohen, a comedy from the 1960s. In 2010, Omar Sharif directed another called Hassan et Morcos: Cohen had disappeared... We hope that Morcos won’t disappear too! However, the Egyptian people are peaceful and tolerant; remember, when Sadat returned to Jerusalem, he was welcomed triumphantly. We fight for the secularization of society and for peace.

Michael Lévy, from the Jewish community of Dijon, presented his community and his monumental synagogue, then his Judeo-Muslim relationships. “As a general rule, we rub shoulders without knowing it and everything goes off without a hitch. However, old memories of life together left traces, proximities, a sense of unfulfilled love. These ambivalent relationships are difficult to understand for someone who is not North African. The heart has its reasons that reason ignores. Between institutions, relationships are excellent. We have interreligious meetings where we see true bonds; for example, between ladies during the preparation of a round table on females in religions.”
Mohamed Lamine Gassama, of Senegalese origin and Deputy Mayor of the 20th arrondissement [neighborhood in Paris], uses his position to show the youths of the suburbs that neither name nor color are obstacles to fully enter the political arena and have an honorable position. Citizenship is an indispensable value to instill in our youth. “I lead my political fight as a progressive leftist, a humanist, with the means at hand.”

And the audience you ask? It was not large enough given the richness of the speakers, but the quality was there: several Muslim religious leaders, representatives of several associations, diverse figures from the Yonne, notably Nicole Messica de Merteuil, President of the association Friends of the Old Synagogue of Chablis. She is working on a project: a Judeo-Arab concert in the Yonne, an artisanal exposition with decorations and kitchen utensils, and, with the support of the Nobel Foundation, an exposition on all the recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize.

There was only confidence, but we have to meet again to encourage and to comfort ourselves. There were people of all origins and all religions who work so that France can remain a secular country in which life is enjoyable, a country where everyone respects each other and where everyone can benefit from the differences of others.

To enter the room, there was impressive security: a metal detector, police, a security service. This is the paradox. To promote the values of the Republic, secularism, tolerance, and peace, we consider it necessary to have robust protection, proving that these treasures attract much envy and jealousy.

We had the impression that this meeting was not supported by the public authorities. Was it the pressure of Islamist organizations? Indeed, we lamented the absence of an official representative from the town hall and the prefecture.
Michel Lévy