

An exciting year at the Ark

SPIROS SERVE UP A CORNUCOPIA OF CULTURE FOR 5770

BY NITZA SPIRO

THE FESTIVAL of Rosh Hashanah is a time for reflection and renewal, a transit period into a better and more meaningful chapter in one's life. For a Jew, renewal and self-improvement are associated with learning and self-enrichment.

We at the Spiro Ark are aware of this and for the last 30 years have provided programmes which are unique, original, stimulating and always of high quality. For this coming new academic year we have carefully crafted programmes and courses which will enrich and fill your lives with knowledge, inspiration and a deep sense of identity. Here are examples of our offerings, some have just been, and others will take place in the near future.

We opened this year with a lecture by the architect and renowned silver artist, John Weiss, who presented the history of Torah crowns and Rimmonim. These beautiful silver crowns atop of the Torah scrolls glitter festively when the Ark is opened and the ringing of the bells creates the vision of a royal procession. Even those who are three times a year shulgorns and those who are totally uninterested in rituals are fascinated by the artistic aspects of these magnificent objects of great beauty which have helped people feel uplifted throughout the ages.

The second programme was organised as part of the Bnei Brith Days of Jewish Culture. This included an exploration of Pesach haggadahs and an illustrated talk and screening of a film by Ammie Shapiro, an expert on the subject. Ammie demonstrated how this book of freedom, which has enjoyed a great number of editions (only less than the Bible and Shakespeare), has been the hallmark of every oppressed group; from Jews in concentration camps dreaming of liberation to black communities across the globe yearning for freedom. Kibbuz haggadahs, which totally ignored the religious and historical aspects of the Exodus, still emphasise the season and, of course, the aspiration of the workers to turn Israel from a barren land to a green paradise through their physical labour.

Towards the end of this interactive presentation, Ammie brought up the question of our yearning to return to Jerusalem – *l'shana habarabah bi-yerushalayim* - asking: "Whose Temple Mount?" At that moment he produced a sensational document which is apparently little known, even to experts on the history of ownership for Jerusalem by both Jews and Muslims. In 1925 the Supreme Muslim Council issued a pamphlet regarding King David's relationship to Jerusalem which clearly states the legality of the Jewish claim to the Mount which is beyond dispute. It is surely a great shame that such a document has not been exposed to the wider public.

Apart from regular courses and cultural events, our big activities this month revolve around our Bauhaus exhibition and many related activities.

There must be only few among you who have not set foot in the 100-year-old Tel Aviv, a city which never sleeps. It is the hub of Israel's art, dance, film, fashion, theatre and gastronomic delights, quite apart from its commercial and retail role. And, of course, it contains the gems of architecture as seen in this exhibition.

Tel Aviv, the first totally Jewish city, was built on the vast sand dunes north of Jaffa. The early settlers aspired to create a tranquil garden city for healthy living in total contrast to diaspora existence. The Spiro Ark has just opened a unique photographic exhibition of Bauhaus buildings in Tel Aviv designated as architecturally protected by UNESCO. During the exhibition there will be literary and musical events, a symposium and tours which will introduce you to Bauhaus inspired buildings in London.

Songs of those early days, also involving the audience, will be sung by Norman Cohen Falah. Here is one example:

*"We are two builders
Who have just arrived from Cairo
Give us only pita bread and an olive
And we will build the new city for you"*

*"Tel Aviv is growing
Look we have already 1000 inhabitants
In Herzl Street, two kiosks have just been opened!"*

*"One omnibus is already polluting the air
But Moshe, my Moshe, do not fear,
No time for beataches
We are building Tel Aviv!"*



Cantor Norman Falah



Colin Schindler



The venerable actor Robert Rietti

Could any number of lectures convey the atmosphere of the early settlers better than those few lines? Not only will you be exposed to a performance of such songs but you will also have a chance of joining in and gaining a better understanding of the period as the songs will be accompanied by a Power Point presentation, placing you visually in the Tel Aviv of those days.

Stories of early Tel Aviv will be told by our beloved actor and Italian Knight, Robert Rietti. These tales reveal the issues and solutions given by the settlers, which to us living in the 21st century seem quite incredible. Take for example, a debate on the issue of how wide the streets should be paved. Feeling grand and modern, the settlers proposed that it should be measured by the space of two donkeys walking next to each other loaded with full sacks on both sides. To some it seemed like a waste of space!

We have also organised exclusive guided tours, lectures and a short film, plus a chance to see the original interior decoration of 2 Willow Road in Hampstead, built by Erno Goldfinger himself, the Bauhaus architect who practised this style in England. There will also be the furniture designed by him with his invaluable collection of modern art (30 September).

The other visit in connection with our exhibition is to the architectural gem, Dorich House in Richmond, built in 1930. We will see a film and have a talk specially prepared for our group about Modernism, the title which Bauhaus works were given at the time (12 October).

You are also invited to join a lecture by Professor Joachim Schlor, Professor of Modern Jewish/Non-Jewish Relations at Southampton University. His book, Tel Aviv, From Dream to City, looks at Jews as "city dwellers par excellence". In addition to his lecture he will also be part of the round table exploration of Tel Aviv.

Other participants will be Israeli town planner Dalia Litchfield, who will concentrate on some of the socio-economic aspects of Tel Aviv, Professor Colin Schindler (Chair of Israel Studies, SOAS) will introduce you to the little known English involvement in the establishment of Tel Aviv. Multi-award winning journalist and novelist Linda Grant will talk about 'Tel Aviv from the perspective of a diaspora writer' and read excerpts from her book.

Apart from new courses offered by experts like a series of talks by art critic Charles Spencer, Diaghilev and The Jews (8, 15, 22 and 29 October) you have Bible classes by Flora Frank and myself, a film course exploring Israel film and TV, Hebrew, Yiddish and much, much more.

This is just the tip of the iceberg to what your appetite. Join, get inspired, and have interesting topics to discuss over dinner parties. We guarantee that you will be more than just satisfied.

Join us and have a most exciting New Year, Shana Tova to all of you from all of our team.

• For more information on all the events and programmes run by Spiro Ark, call 020 7723 9991 or visit www.spiroark.org

GET THE GOSS...



WITH LAUREN KROTOSKY

DJ AM now at peace

LINDSAY LOHAN and Samantha Ronson joined the family of DJ AM – real name Adam Goldstein – at his Los Angeles funeral service. In a reference to the recovering addict's drug use, the service was based on an addiction recovery programme.

The format of the evening will be in the style of an open 12-step meeting, the invite read, 'Adam's friends both from his life in recovery, as well as those from other areas of his life are welcome. We ask only that everyone adhere to the tradition of anonymity and let what they hear there, and who they see there, stay there.'

Mourners were led by Goldstein's mother Andrea, who arrived wearing one of her son's t-shirts. The DJ, 36, was laid to rest in a Jewish ceremony. He was found dead in his \$2million SoHo home two weeks ago. A year ago he was critically injured when a Learjet crashed on takeoff in Columbia, South Carolina, killing four others. Friends said he had been battling post-traumatic stress after the crash, and suffering from 'survivor's guilt'.

SOPHIE WINKLEMAN may have just got married to Lord Freddie Windsor, but she's already put paid to rumours that there'll soon be the pitter-patter of tiny feet by saying she does not want children 'for years'.

The successful actress, who stars in the Channel 4 comedy Peep Show, told society magazine *Zitler*: "I'm going to be Britain's oldest mother – the current one is 66. I can't even look after my Oyster card, let alone a child".

Sophie also confessed that she had little to do with the wedding arrangements, and said she was grateful for Princess Michael's help. Speaking before the wedding she said: "I think maybe I'm a man inside or something because I just haven't been very involved. It's a good job my future mother-in-law is very good at all that and I'm very grateful for her input. We'd end up doing it in Starbucks with two people if it was left to me."

Sophie has now jetted off to LA to film a new US comedy series, 100 Questions for Charlotte Payne.

Leanna X