



The **50th Anniversary** of the Reconsecration of the Central Synagogue

March 1958 – March 2008



and

The **60th Anniversary** of the Establishment of the State of Israel

29 March 2008 – 22 Adar II 5768





FROM **the Rabbi** Barry Marcus

Dear distinguished and honoured guests and friends

It is indeed a rare privilege to share this joyous occasion, the 50th Anniversary of the reconsecration of our impressive Synagogue on 23 March 1958 and the 60th Anniversary of the State of Israel.

I am both humbled and honoured to serve this remarkable community that continues to be blessed with such fine, active, accomplished and extraordinary members.

Today we pay tribute to the vision and efforts of those who faithfully occupied themselves with the rebuilding of our Synagogue as an act of faith in the future, after the original Synagogue was destroyed by a Nazi bomb on 10 May 1941.

What is also particularly heart warming is that so many of those families are still involved and take an active part in the life of our community and in many cases, occupying the seats of parents and grandparents.

It is equally fitting to acknowledge the selfless contributions of my predecessors, Rabbis, Cantors and lay leaders who served with distinction.

There can be no finer tribute to all those involved in our community over the years than to reaffirm our commitment to continue to maintain our beloved Central Synagogue for many years to come.

We are equally delighted to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Israel, especially in the presence of His Excellency, the Ambassador of Israel, Ron Prosor and our other distinguished dignitaries.

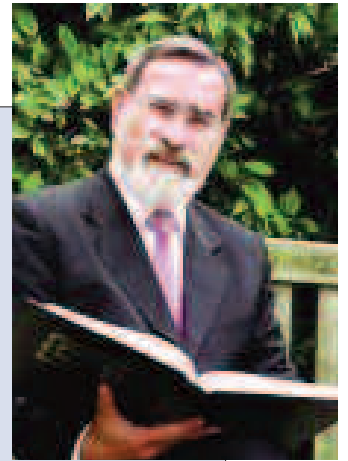
We salute the people of Israel for their remarkable accomplishments, their courage in the face of constant adversity, steadfastness and resilience in their quest for peace in the Middle East, which we hope and pray will be a reality in the not too distant future.

Warmest greetings

Rabbi Barry Marcus



Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, 1948



Message to the Central Synagogue **From Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks**

Blessings and best wishes on this wonderful anniversary in the life of your community, one of the most distinguished in Commonwealth Jewry.

It was back in 1855 that the Central was opened as a branch of the then Great Synagogue in Duke's Place, Anglo-Jewry's premier synagogue and the seat of the Chief Rabbi. Sadly, since it was destroyed during the Second World War, the Great Synagogue is no more, but the Central remains, still active, still vibrant, still at the heart of London.

The list of its members, past and present, reads like a roll-call of the great and good of Anglo-Jewry, and between them they have been responsible for many of its proudest achievements and most important institutions.

Fifty years ago, in March 1958, the new building was opened by the then Chief Rabbi, the late Sir Israel Brodie of blessed memory, and it is this anniversary we celebrate today.

It is a magnificent building, and it continues to house a lively and impressive community, superbly led by your Rabbi, Barry Marcus, your Chazzan, Steven Leas, and an outstanding team of lay leaders.

We have been reading in recent weeks the long sequence of chapters in the last third of the book of Shemot (Exodus) which describe the Mikdash (Sanctuary) constructed by the Israelites in the desert as the first collective House of God. Every synagogue recapitulates something of the character of that building. Set as it was in the midst of the camp, it defined the Jewish people as a nation under the sovereignty of God, of whose presence the Sanctuary was a visible reminder.

The Israelites constructed it out of voluntary donations on the part of all those whose spirit moved them to give – and it is this spirit of giving-to-others and to the community as a whole that continues to sustain the Jewish people and its faith.

That narrative inspired me to write my latest book, *The Home We Build Together*, and that is the best definition I can give of a Synagogue. May the blessing Moses gave to the builders of the Sanctuary continue to be true of you in the future as in the past: 'May it be God's will that the Shekhinah – the Divine presence – rests in the work of your hands.'

With congratulations and blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jonathan Sacks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

March 2008/Adar II 5768

50th Anniversary

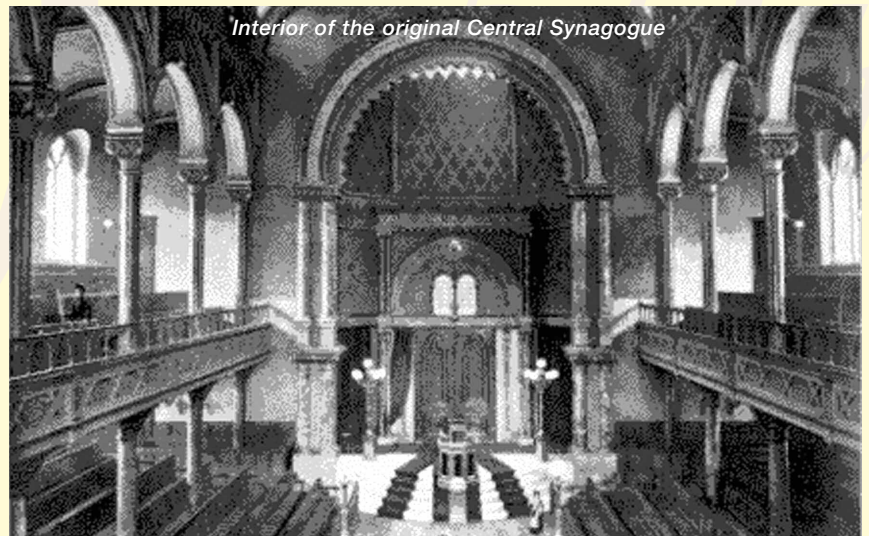
The History of The Central Synagogue

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Reconsecration of the new Synagogue after the original Synagogue built on the same site in 1870 was destroyed on 10 May 1941.

For fifteen years from 1855, a temporary Synagogue existed at another location in Great Portland Street. It was in name and practice a branch of the Great Synagogue, Duke's Place, in the City of London. The Great Synagogue was fully responsible for the administration and the supervision of religious services.

In 1870 The Central Synagogue was established as an independent congregation on its present site in Great Portland Street, London.

The history of the Central Synagogue, and its antecedents, is an integral part of the proud history of Anglo-Jewry. The Central Synagogue has played a noble part in the life and activities of the Jewish Community. The Synagogue's annals are replete with outstanding figures, who have contributed in no small measure to the welfare and prosperity of the Jewish and wider Community.



155 years in Great Portland Street

1848 Authorities at the Great Synagogue at Duke's Place in the City of London, decided to establish a branch Synagogue more conveniently located in the West End district to satisfy the religious requirements of many Jews who had begun to migrate there since the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria.

1853 Fifteen members of the Great Synagogue visited a warehouse at 120 Great Portland Street which was considered suitable to be converted into a Synagogue. It was agreed that this was to be the site of the West End branch of the Great Synagogue.

1855 The 'Branch Synagogue' was consecrated. The officiating clergy at the Consecration Ceremony were The Very Rev. Chief Rabbi, Dr. N. M. Adler, Rev. Simon Ascher, Chazan of the Great Synagogue and Rev. A. L. Green. The membership grew and the need for a permanent Synagogue became apparent.

1869 On 18 March the foundation stone of the first Synagogue to be built on the present site was laid by Baron Lionel de Rothschild, M.P. The name was to be 'The Central Synagogue'.

1870 On 7 April the completed Central Synagogue was Consecrated by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Adler. Construction of the ornate building was completed in a year. The Ark was opened by Sir Moses Montefiore, then eighty-five years of age.

1870 On 14 July the Act bringing into existence the United Synagogue received the Royal Assent and the Central Synagogue, now no longer under the aegis of the Great Synagogue, became one of the five original member Synagogues.

1905 A bronze and marble tablet to the memory of the 116 Jewish soldiers who died in the South African war was affixed to the Great Portland Street facade of the Synagogue. The Memorial Plaque was unveiled by Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, K.G.

1905 On 6 May the Golden Jubilee Service was held. The Chief Rabbi, Dr. Herman Adler, delivered the sermon and the service was conducted by Rev. Michael Adler and Rev. E. Spero.

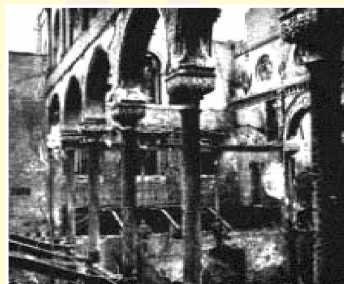
The First World War 1914 – 1918

1915 Leave of absence was granted to Rev. Michael Adler in order that he could serve in the Armed Forces. Rev. B. N. Michelson and Mr. M. Zeffert carried out his Synagogue duties. In 1917 the Synagogue basement was turned into an official air-raid shelter.

1920 On 19 September a special service was held to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Consecration of the Synagogue on its present site. The Very Rev. Dr. J. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi, preached the sermon. During the service, Sir Adolph Tuck lit 18 candles on the war Memorial Candelabrum in memory of the 18 fallen Members. A further candle was lit by the father of a departed officer.

1925 The Ladies' Guild was formed.

1934 Rev. M. Adler, D.S.O., B.A., retired after thirty-one years of service to the Central Synagogue and Rev. Philip Cohen, B.A., was appointed Minister.



Devastation caused by the enemy bomb on 10 May 1941

The Second World War 1939 – 1945

1941 On 10 May the Synagogue was destroyed by enemy bombing. A year earlier permission had been granted for the Synagogue to be used as an assembly centre for temporary refuge for those whose homes had been destroyed but fortunately no-one was in the building at the time of the bombing. During the war, Rev. Cohen was granted leave of absence in order to take up his duties as a Chaplain to H.M. Forces. Rev. E. Nemeth, B.A., was appointed temporary Minister. Sabbath and festival services continued at temporary premises at Woburn House.

1946 Rev. Simeon Isaacs, B.A., H.C.F., of the South-East London Synagogue, was appointed Minister. A temporary Synagogue with 550 seats was built.

1951 In February Rev. Simon Hass was appointed as Cantor. Rev. Hass' fine voice embellished the Synagogue services for many years, during which time his fame spread as one of the world's great cantors.

1954 In May the Community suffered the grievous loss of its beloved Minister, Rev. S. Isaacs, B.A. A Memorial Service was held, at which the Very Rev. Israel Brodie, the Chief Rabbi, paid tribute to his services to the Community.

1955 In May, after the abolition of licensing restrictions, it was decided to rebuild a fine permanent replacement Synagogue on its original present site. Two months later, Rev. Cyril I. Shine, B.A., of the North Finchley and Woodside Park District Synagogue was appointed Minister.

1956 On 4 February the rebuilding of the new Synagogue commenced. The foundation stone of the new Central Synagogue was laid by Sir Isaac Wolfson Bt. and consecrated by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Israel Brodie.

1958 The consecration of the new Central Synagogue took place on 23 March. The service was conducted by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Israel Brodie, who gave the address, as well as Rev. Cyril Shine and Rev. Simon Hass, in the presence of a large and distinguished gathering which included the Mayor of St. Marylebone, His Excellency The Ambassador of Israel,

50th Anniversary



The Rt. Hon. Reginald Maudling M.P. together with Rev. Simon Hass and Rabbi Cyril Shine z'l

Dr. Elihu Elath, the President of the United Synagogue, the Hon. Ewen Montagu, Q.C. and Sir William Wakefield, M.P. The Chairman of the Rebuilding Committee was Lord Wolfson of Marylebone.

The Communal Hall was dedicated by Mr. A. Wix in memory of his parents.

The dedication of the Children's Synagogue took place in the presence of a large gathering of member families. The Synagogue is built to scale for the use of the children, with a miniature Ark, Reading Desk and Scrolls, and permanent seating for seventy children.

1960 Sir Bernard Waley-Cohen was elected Lord Mayor of London, and Rev. Cyril Shine was appointed Domestic Chaplain to the Lord Mayor. This was the first occasion that a Jewish Chaplain had been appointed to the Lord Mayor of London since the inception of the Lord Mayoralty nearly 800 years ago. The Lord Mayor, accompanied by his Sheriffs, attended the Synagogue Service on the first Sabbath after his election.

1963 In September, for the first time in the history of the Synagogue, a midnight Selichot Service conducted by Rev. Simon Hass was held. This annual service to herald the Jewish New Year became a regular event in the calendar of the Central Synagogue.

In December 1963 Rev. Cyril Shine was awarded his Rabbinical Diploma by the Chief Rabbi and the Rabbinical Examination Board of Jews College. Sir Isaac Wolfson, Bt., and Dayan Swift paid tribute to the Rabbi's activities in the congregation at a reception in his honour.

1967 At the time of the Six Day War in June, the community gathered in the Wix Hall at a meeting called to show their solidarity with the people of Israel.

1970 On 22 November a Centenary Service was held. The service was conducted by the Emeritus Chief Rabbi, Sir Israel Brodie, K.B.E., Rabbi Cyril Shine and the Rev. Simon Hass. The Secretary of State for Home Affairs, the Rt. Hon. Reginald Maudling, M.P., was invited to unveil a commemorative plaque in the vestibule.

1973 The attack on Israel by Syria at the commencement of The Yom Kippur War was announced to the Community by Rabbi Shine during the Synagogue services on that day. Special prayers were intoned.

1988 Rabbi Cyril Shine retired after more than thirty years of dedicated service to the Community. He had been the religious leader of the Synagogue at the time of its physical reconstruction and he was instrumental in maintaining the communal unity of the families which remain the backbone of the Synagogue.

1988 Rabbi Silverman was appointed.

1993 Rev. Simon Hass retired as Chazan after more than forty years service to the Central Community.

1995 Rabbi Barry Marcus was appointed after the departure of Rabbi Silverman.

1998 Rabbi Marcus pioneered the concept of a one day educational visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Rabbi Marcus has continued to lead such visits which have educated a wide range of people from all denominations in Great Britain. Among those who participated was The Rt. Hon. Andrew Dismore M.P., who was then instrumental in the



Rabbi Marcus in discussion with Sir Elie Wiesel K.B.E. in December 2006

establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day in the U.K. Rabbi Marcus serves as a government appointed Trustee to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust as also a Trustee of Yad Vashem U.K.

2000 Central Synagogue was twinned with the Jewish Community in Belarus and instrumental in the building of a Jewish Boarding School in Pinsk.

2003 Rev. Steven Leas became the Cantor at Central Synagogue and assembled a new choir of fine young singers. Once again the Synagogue services became enriched by inspiring singing and intonation of prayers that are remembered from the days when Rev. Simon Hass was our Cantor.

2004 On 27 April The Memorial Service for our Emeritus Rabbi Cyril Shine took place at the Synagogue. The Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks K.B.E., Lord Wolfson of Marylebone and Rabbi Shine's daughter, Gabrielle, were among the eloquent speakers.

The restoration took place of the Memorial Candelabrum honouring the 19 members of the Central Synagogue who gave their lives in active service during the First World War. The broken Candelabrum was discovered in a store room by Rabbi Marcus and Mr. Leonard Fertleman and was completely restored through the efforts of Mr. Fertleman and Mr. Douglas O'Halloran our Caretaker. It is the only artefact to remain after the destruction of the Synagogue by enemy bombing in the Second World War and it now has a permanent place in the Synagogue. The 19 memorial candles are lit every year at the commencement of Yom Kippur and remind the congregation of sacrifice, survival and continuity.

2005 On Saturday 7 November at the invitation of Rabbi Marcus, the German Ambassador, His Excellency Thomas Matussek, attended the Sabbath service together with other officials of the German Embassy. After the service, the Ambassador addressed the community in the Wix Hall and spoke of the dignity of the Synagogue service and his commitment to better understanding.

Jewish Music Central, the brainchild of Rev. Steven Leas and Geraldine Auerbach M.B.E., of the Jewish Music Institute, organised their first major concert 'We Wrote the Songs', and this took place at the Queen Elizabeth Hall to a full house.

2006 Sir Elie Wiesel K.B.E. attended the Shabbat services at Central Synagogue in the same week that he became a Knight of the British Empire in recognition of his literary achievements and services to humanity.

2007 Rabbi Marcus was invited to speak at the Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide at City Hall and thereafter invited by the Survivors Organisation to visit Rwanda in October 2007 to offer support and guidance.

2008 On 29 March a special service will be held to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the reconsecration of the Central Synagogue. Rev. Steven Leas will lead the service accompanied by the Synagogue Choir. Rabbi Barry Marcus will deliver the sermon and officially welcome our distinguished visitors.



