



Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots

Interview with James Richard Hasley

Interviewer: Margaret Conkey

Interviewer 00:00:12

Right, my name is Margaret Conkey, and I'm here with Richard, in his home in West Devon, on the 13th of March 2020. Richard, thank you for agreeing to be part of the oral history project. We're very pleased that you've agreed to do that. And what I'd like to start with if I may, is to ask you to state your, your full name, and your date of birth. And then I'll just give a little out surface to the things that we'd like to run through and the things that you're happy to talk to us about today. So can you tell us your name and your [date of birth?]

Richard 00:00:55

[Yes,] I'm Richard Halsey, or more precisely, I'm James Richard Halsey. I was born in July 1946. In Hartfordshire.

Interviewer 00:01:09

Okay, thank you very much. And can you just tell us, because you have a particular role in the the synagogue in Exeter, can you just give us the title that you have? And perhaps then, you'd like to expand a bit about the role that you play within that?

Richard 00:01:28

I am president of Exeter Synagogue - Exeter Hebrew Congregation, to be more precise. I am the president. Normally a president does three years. I'm currently in my fourth year. So I'm either doing something right or something wrong. The President has to oversee more or less everything that carries on in the synagogue from social functions, services, the use of our library, our small library, and personal contact with people. Either through personal physical contact, because they come to the synagogue, or because they phone and wish to discuss something, sometimes it may be something very difficult for them. It may be a matter of life, it may be a matter of death, it may be a matter of background, of their own difficulties within their life. So there is to a certain extent, one has to be something to all men as it were. Because you never know what question you're going to get asked. It can be a stupid one like, where's the local kosher supermarket, in Exeter? No, there isn't one. Well, where's the nearest the nearest? Oh it's up in Bournemouth or it could be -- At the other end of the scale, it could be I'm phoning from a care home. My father, my mother has just died. What do I have to do? They were Jewish, but I don't I've never followed the faith. And I need help. Can you can you help me?



Interviewer 00:03:37

Right. And did you did you come to that, that role as as president and all the many things that you're describing that you get involved in? How did you come to be in that position?

Richard 00:03:53

I joined the synagogue after my mother died. I didn't join it during her lifetime because she was frightened by what had happened in the past. And I felt she didn't need any more worry. However, after some years, I was asked would I help with giving talks to schools? I was - my reaction at first was schoolchildren? Oh, horrifying objects. I couldn't do that. Yes, you could. I did. I enjoyed it. Then well, do you think you would come on the committee? Yes. You only get out of an organisation what you put into it in any community or organisation. So I went on the committee. I ended up organising all school and all adult visits to the synagogue. Do you think you could take a service? Me? Take a service? Oh, I'm not so sure. But I was assured by two far more knowledgeable people than myself that I could. I was told, when you get on the bimah, that is the platform from which we lead our services. I was told, there'll be times when your knees will knock. But you'll get through it. I stood on that platform, I shared a service with somebody else to break me in as it were.

And now, about nine or 10 years later, I probably take about 35 to 40% of the services. I enjoy doing it. It's - I'm not a biblical scholar. I'm not a liturgical scholar. But I obviously - it was realised that I obviously knew sufficient to take that role. I enjoy doing, I enjoy doing so, I enjoy leading services. I do tend to link them when I can. The reading from the Torah, the Bible for the week, I do tend to link them as much as I can to today's life. Because no religion must be a penance. And religion must not be a dead subject. It has to be part of who we are today. What we're doing today, how we're leading our lives today. And it must have some connection to today. Not just a history from the past.

Interviewer 00:07:13

Yeah I can understand that, yes. And do you physically have to attend the the synagogue on a very regular basis? I mean, during the week time and for obviously for particular festivals, of course, but in your your work as well as being the leader as it were? Do you find that a lot of your time is spent actually physically there? Or do you speak a lot on the phone? Do you have access to emails and all of that sort of thing?

Richard 00:07:47

I have access to emails, although I am a technophobe. I'm not very good at replying. I usually do a one liner, telling people to phone me. Obviously the synagogue has its own website and has its own telephone number. So people can contact me. So far as services go, we have a Friday night service and a Saturday morning service. Because Judaism - there's, in Judaism, the Sabbath starts at sunset on a Friday and continues through until after sunset on the Saturday. So we have an Erev Shabbat service, that is evening of Sabbath, on Friday evening, and the Shabbat morning service on a Saturday morning. Sometimes I go in for both. But I never take or I try never to take both Friday and Saturday,



the same weekend. Because it's very tiring. You have to put an awful lot of yourself into it in many ways.

I, in the week, I may need to go in, as indeed this coming Sunday, for a committee meeting. Which is perhaps three to three and a half hours. The committee have so much more to do than people perhaps realise, to keep a building running as a synagogue, particularly when that building is a historic building of very considerable age and therefore needing constant maintenance and overseeing. Also I may need to go in to meet visitors from other parts of the country. I may need to go in to talk to a family perhaps about a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, about somebody's wedding, or somebody's death. All these things come to it and one has to be able to help people in whichever way they need it. The most pleasant way, often, is when people come as visitors, and they are so very surprised by Exeter Synagogue.

Interviewer 00:10:36

Why do you, why do you say that [it surprises them]?

Richard 00:10:38

[Oh], it's small, it's historic. It's beautiful. And it has feeling. Exeter Synagogue is inclusive. We are not affiliated to any specific strand of Judaism. Judaism is like Christianity. There are various strands as in Christianity. You may have C of E, Catholic Baptist, Methodist, and so many others. So in Judaism, we have different strands, Orthodoxy, Reform, Liberal Judaism - nothing to do with... any particular Parliamentary party - Masorti, Habad, Hasidic. We -- as we are the only synagogue within about 40 miles, we have to cater for all types of Jewish people. As my last president before me used to say, we're the only game in town, so we have to be something to everybody.

Exeter Synagogue was built in 1763. We know there were Jewish people living in Exeter by the 1730s. We had indeed been invited back to come to England, in the time of Oliver Cromwell in 1656. Because although there was a mediaeval Jewish community - a very busy, mediaeval community - we were expelled from England in 1290. This is why, because this happened, not only in England, similar expulsions happened in other countries, which is why Jewish people and Jewish communities exist in all parts of the world today, because this is what is known as the diaspora.

Interviewer 00:13:17

Okay, well that's, well that's amazing, isn't it? When you think of that building, I've been to see the building and it is [Richard laughs] it is really lovely.

Richard 00:13:24

Oh, it is it is very special. And because.. because you see, if I go back to services. Both myself and Tony Reese - he lives in Somerset - between us we lead - one or other of us leads probably 70, 75% of our services during the year. We have one gentleman who takes Orthodox services, a lady who takes Liberal Jewish services. Tony and I, as I said, we both use the Reform Liberal - the Reform Jewish book for our services. But we also invite visiting rabbis from time to time and this helps to give a roundness to the community. Because people come to the services, whatever their background,



whatever their minhag, to coin a Hebrew word. The minhag is the manner in which you are brought up, the manner in which your service is held. But because we're so scattered, and so such a small community, we have to make everybody welcome at every service. This is why the community is a very close-knit community. And, very much, the feeling of an extended family.

Our membership covers people from four different counties, Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. On the committee alone, out of 10 people, we have one member who lives in Cornwall, two who live in Somerset. Only one member of the committee actually lives in Exeter. Some people have to travel as much as 75 miles to come to our services. So we don't get large communities - large communities at every service. We are so scattered. But when we have a special event, then of course, we get many more people. And we also get a lot of visitors. We also get a lot of visitors who are not Jewish, people who say, can they come to a service? Can they come and be part of it? And we even have some people who aren't even Jewish, but who like what we do, they like the ethos and ethics of our community. And so they eventually become people who come quite often.

We never, ever try to get people to convert. Yes, people do convert to Judaism, but it has to come from them, not from us. They have to learn. And it takes a minimum of two years of study, even for a Reform or Liberal conversion. It's made very, very difficult. Eventually, they have to go before the Beth Din, a rabbinic court, who will talk to them after they've done the study, after they've gone through the course of learning. And if the rabbinic court are happy that they are sufficiently... serious and sufficiently aware of the serious step they're taking, then they will be accepted as Jewish. Once that is done, the fact that they have converted from another [Richard clears his throat] from another religion is never mentioned again.

Interviewer 00:18:06

Right, that's really interesting, isn't it?

Richard 00:18:10

[laughter] I hope I'm not going on too much.

Interviewer 00:18:12

No, no, no, no, it's fascinating. Absolutely. Yes. And what comes to mind, particularly, I think, is when you're talking about people who are living in Somerset, people who are in Dorset, for example. If a Jewish family comes to live in either of those two counties, for example, and they make contact with you - I mean, do they make contact with you? And is it not unusual for you to have people that are moving into the South West of the country, who perhaps had a very different sort of experience of their, their Jewish religion elsewhere?

Richard 00:18:58

Yes, we get people moving in. We also get people who are down here on holiday or just working down here and they wish to come along. Mostly they will contact us because, today, everybody looks on the internet. So they find us on the internet. Sometimes they are very, very surprised to find that there is a



synagogue in Exeter. Only recently, I actually had a phone call from a couple living within 8 miles of me, who have lived in the area for 20 years and did not realise there was a synagogue in Exeter. They knew of Plymouth, but they weren't comfortable with Plymouth because Plymouth is totally Orthodox. They've wasted 18 years and not been to us. So, yes. Sorry, I've lost it for a minute.

Interviewer 00:20:06

No, don't worry. Don't worry. That's fine. We were just talking about when people come in [to the area].

Richard 00:20:10

[Oh, yes.] Yes. So people will then either email me. As recently happened, a lady who has moved from Israel back to England, and is living in East Devon. Literally on Sunday, we will be discussing at committee her application to become a member. And it will be passed. But we do, when we accept members, we do ask fairly difficult questions because we like to know where they come from, who they are, we ask their parents' names we ask, where they have been to shul, where - synagogue sorry -- shul is another word for synagogue. It's Yiddish. It's a word that fortunately, or unfortunately, one tends to use because it's a shorter word. We ask, we have to for two reasons, one for security. And secondly, so that we know what they may expect of us. And we can then tell them where our manner of running the services and our life goes.

We have all sorts of parts of the community. Because, obviously, we have to have a treasurer to run the finances. We have to have a secretary to run the paperwork. We have to have a subcommittee called the Rites and Practices, that's R-I-T-E-S, and Practices, who discuss any liturgical questions and organise the services. And we have to have people who are able to organise food for functions, for, be it a Bar Mitzvah, or a wedding or whatever, if it is to be held in the shul. And, if it's an outside event, then our ladies will cope with it, will produce kosher food for it. Because kosher food is very important. At the synagogue, meat is not permitted, because there is not a kosher butcher's locally. So food in the synagogue is either vegetarian, or in some cases, some of it will be vegan. So all this sort of thing has to be organised.

We have a small library. Well, that seems to be my job. Partly because books have always been part of my business in the past. And the library is a library of Jewish life, Jewish beliefs and the faith both historically and now, and of the artefacts that come into a Jewish life.

A Jewish couple getting married will be married under the chuppah. That is the canopy which is held in front of the ark for the wedding. Today, it's quite use - quite often, ladies will have a sort of a contract, I forget what they call them now, modern ones. A marriage, sort of a marriage contract. Prenup agreement, that's what I'm thinking of. Jews have had something like this for probably millennia. It's called a ketubah. And it states on it, that the husband will be a good husband to her, that he will provide for her. And it even covers the fact that he must provide for her should, sadly, he die. But the - on the reverse side is a much shorter document saying that the wife will be a good wife to him. As a wife should be. Often, historically they were illuminated manuscripts - now, today, mostly they tend to be plain, but not always. But they are very important. They are part of Judaism, in, in many synagogues, if you wish to be married in a synagogue, you would need to provide the - you would need to provide the



rabbi with sight of your parents' ketubah, and even your grandparents' ketubah, in order to prove that you have the right to be married in a synagogue. So it's quite serious, quite serious, quite complicated. But today, many of us do not have a Jewish partner, husband, wife. We may have married out, as it's called. My wife is not Jewish, but she's still very much part of the synagogue. But she'll never convert. I wouldn't ask her to. It's not part of her mindset.

To do a conversion to Judaism, I always say it has to come from both the head and the heart. I've already said how difficult it is. But perhaps that makes it more understandable. We have probably - we well, we have members that means people who are 100% Jewish, who pay a membership, an annual membership. But we do not have a collection, unlike a Christian Church. Because if we are very orthodox, we wouldn't be carrying money on Shabbat. We would not be dealing with money in any way on Shabbat. Okay, if you live in Devon, you don't have the luxury of looking at life like that. We don't have kosher shops. We don't have kosher kosher delicatessens, butchers or anything. We have to do things our own way. Some people will order their food and have it delivered from upcountry. Others will make regular visits to buy what they need, and only buy the things like vegetables and so on locally. In a place like Exeter, you cannot be Orthodox. You have to just take [coughs] you have to just, sorry, you have to just take an overview of what you can and can't do. And you have to you have to use your own decision, according to the kosher food rules.

The kosher food rules will be found in the Torah. That is to say, the Hebrew Bible - or to others, we'll call it the Old Testament. Because remember, we only have the Old Testament. We don't have the New Testament. So Strictly speaking, we can't have the Old. We have what we call the Hebrew Bible. But it's your Old Testament. In one of the chapters in it, it tells you the kosher food rules. You have 10 commandments, if you are a Christian, we have 631 of them all in Torah -- about I'm speaking from memory, but something like 375 that we must not do. And the remainder that we should do. I can't remember them all. I don't know anybody who could recite them all. But among them would be the rules governing food. We do not eat pork, we do not eat meat other than that which comes from an animal which chews the cud and has a cloven hoof. We can eat fowls, we can eat chicken, duck and so on. But you do not eat a bird, which has been - a bird of prey, they are not allowed. We do not eat shellfish in any shape or form. You do not mix meat and milk within your diet in a same meal. It says in Torah, that you shall not seethe the kid in its mother's milk. So we take it that we do not eat, for instance cheese or milk in the same meal as meat. Bloods, blood is anathema in Jewish cookery. So, when you break an egg, you break it into a glass. If it has a blood spot in it, it is treif. That is to say it's not kosher, so you don't use it.

When Maureen and I were first married, when my wife and I were first married, she found that quite difficult to cope with. I think it still drives her nuts at times, especially since I have always done quite a lot of cooking, because it's always been a hobby. So, you know, you want an egg for a recipe, you break three before you get one that is okay, that doesn't have a bloodspot. Mind you, our dogs and cats had very shiny coats [Interviewer laughs]. They never refused the eggs.

So being Jewish, isn't easy. You have to, I would say in a way, you have to work at it. But again, I say living in the West Country, you have to accommodate what you can within your beliefs. I originally come from the Home Counties. I've lived in this part of the world for 50 years. If you live in somewhere like



North London, everything is on your doorstep. It's easy, much easier. If you live in big centres like Birmingham, Manchester, it's easy. But living in Devon, you have to decide that you cannot live an Orthodox life. But you can mitigate the manner in which you live with ways in which you can cope with living a Jewish life. One of the main ethics of Judaism is gemilut hasadim, loving kindness. So you visit those who are sick, you welcome the stranger. You attend a funeral. When a member of our community dies, as sadly happened recently, a member who was the only person born and brought up in Exeter, who had been a member of the synagogue all his life, for the larger part of 100 years. But people came - members came to his funeral, some of whom had never met him. But it is tradition. And I always say, the the heart of Judaism is like the opening song of Fiddler on the Roof. Tradition. Tradition.

Interviewer 00:35:15

Very well put. Thank you, Richard.

Richard 00:35:16

Sorry, I know I go on [a bit -]

Interviewer 00:35:18

[No, no,] no, no, that's fine. Absolutely fine. I think you've given us a really good feel, I think, you know, for the dispersed community that you're you're serving. And, just, I wanted to just go back to one thing, just thinking about, particularly perhaps the, the new, the new member to be from East Devon, who's come from - who's been living in Israel. But I guess over the years, you must have found people, perhaps, who were really quite shocked at having moved to the this part of the country [Richard laughs] and found that life was going to be very different for them. And I just wonder, you know, you're the the role of, not least your position, but also the the role of the membership of the synagogue must be really quite crucial in those situations.

Richard 00:36:16

Yes, I recently had a phone call, which went on for quite a long time from a gentleman in the Watford area, who's thinking that he and his wife would relocate to Devon. They wanted to know every ins and out of the community, of how it was made up, where we all came from, what our ethnicity within Judaism was. How many people would attend this service? How many attend that service? What about food? Where could we buy the food? Where can we get the right candles and so on. I gave them a very full description, and told them come and see us. Meet us. That's the best way. Not heard any more of them.

Interviewer 00:37:18

No.

Richard 00:37:19



But on the other hand, we do because you see our community not only has people from all parts of England, including Scotland. But and we have one couple who recently, who were married in the synagogue a few years ago, they now live in Ireland. But we have members who are Israeli, American, Canadian, whose background comes from Germany, Holland, Poland, Russia. We even have members who were born and bought up - Jewish members bought and bought up in Jamaica and Cuba. So we are, oh, we one, one, one of our very well known families, they are a Iranian Jewish. They came to England to escape when the Iranian Revolution occurred. We have one gentleman who I believe is Albanian. So we are a very, very, very mixed group of people.

But this is the case with many Jewish communities, that you will get people from all over the world. We we have people who have lived in many, many countries, people whose life's work has taken them to working in all sorts of far flung areas of the world. They still kept their Judaism, they still come back to it. They're still part of it. Their difficulties must have been greater, even, than ours are to keep Jewish in Exeter. [Interviewer hums] But they've succeeded. They've wanted to succeed. To an extent it's it's born in you.

For various reasons, I was not bought up in the faith. I was bought up in no faith whatsoever. Until, a member - till somebody said to me when I was 11, you are [throat clearing] Jew. We don't want you. I didn't know what they meant. Didn't tell my parents. Because they if I knew that if this person said it, it must be something bad. But of course, I gradually learnt. And when I left school, I set up myself to study and to find out what it meant to be Jewish. And I did. My mother was frightened that what happened in the past could happen again.

A very distant cousin came from Europe, after the war. Born in 1908, as was my mother. And she was the only member of her family who survived the Holocaust. Her husband, her parents, her children, all perished. She came to England to recuperate. To stay with my mother's grandmother, who was, as I said, a distant, very, very distant relative. But she couldn't talk of what happened. It was never talked about. After the war, these subjects were never discussed. One of my mother's aunts used to say that poor girl, we don't know what she's seen. I never knew what she meant. And only when I was 15, did I learn the truth. I was in her kitchen one day. She was the most wonderful cook. She had her sleeves rolled up. And I saw the number tattooed on her arm. She said yes, now you know, but I can't talk to you about it.

Among my friends, we have close friends who had to escape Germany or who, sorry, whose parents escaped Germany, literally days before the war broke out. People. We have another friend who came on a Kindertransport. She's now in her 80s. But she and her sister were got out of Holland. They were never told they were Jewish. They never knew it until they were teenagers, because their parents kept the secret from them because of what was happening. [Interviewer hums] But this lady is very much a part of our community.

Judaism -- the world is small, they say. But the world of Judaism is even smaller. In 1962, I went to work in North London, in a totally Jewish environment. Because I wanted to find out what it meant to be Jewish. I became friendly with various people. And I worked with a chap who lived in North London, Victor. And - oh, little over 20 years ago, Maureen and I were on holiday. And the first couple we got to



speak to turned out to be Victor's parents. I must have met quite possibly them in 1962 or 3, but a small world to meet them again, so far on.

And a member of our current community in Exeter, when Victor's parents died in 2007, a very close friend of mine in the community now, who at that point lived in North London, actually took the service at their funerals. So, although we may live separate lives, miles and miles apart, it is amazing the coincidences that can occur. On another holiday, during a Friday night Jewish get-together, spoke to a couple from Toronto, in Canada. And the lady said, Oh, well, of course, I lived in North London till I was 16. And I said, Oh, yes, What part? Oh, she said, Pinner. And I said, Oh, we have two members from Pinner. It turned out that, when she was a teenager, she went to Jewish youth club with them. So again, it shows how, in a way, there is a certain close-knittedness within Judaism. But I have to say, like all communities, like all religions, we have, in some cases, difficulties.

There is an old saying, where there are two Jews, there are three opinions. My wife's answer to that is only three? You can have three each without any difficulty. I think that's true. Because we do tend to look at things from every angle. And thus you will end up thinking it and perhaps arguing a subject from several angles at different times. Some people will have a synagogue they love, but they'll have another one they don't like if they live in an area where there are quite a few. And again, there is a joke. This guy's - he ends up on a desert island. He's marooned. And he thinks, well, I've got to I've got to I've got to pray. So he builds himself a synagogue. And eventually, a ship comes along. And they take him off the island and they say, Well, what are the two buildings? And he says, oh, they're synagogues. But you're on your own. Why have you got two synagogues? The one I pray in, the other one I wouldn't be seen dead in.

Jewish humour is great, but it's never cruel. We can laugh at ourselves. We don't mind people laughing with us. Providing they're not cruel. Because humour should never be cruel. When I give talks at the synagogue to adult groups, I sometimes get asked I've got two groups at the moment. One group of trainee ministers of the church and only recently I spoke to a number of members from a local deanery. But I always when I talk to adult groups finish up with Jewish jokes, because it gives some it can give a little feeling of our attitude. I've been married to the same woman for 49 years. I've been in love with a woman for 51 years. If my wife finds out she'll kill me. Sadie to her husband. Abie, close the window. It's cold out there. Abie back to his wife, I closed the window it will be warmer out there.

Interviewer 00:49:27

[Laughter] That's very good. Richard, thank you. [I just - No, no, no, no, no, no]

Richard 00:49:32

[I'm sorry. Awful, but trying to sort of] give - I'm just trying to give a rounded view of what we are, who we are.

Interviewer 00:49:42

I think you're doing a very good job. Thank you. Can I just perhaps in sort of coming to some sort of conclusion, if you like of the interview, but do you have any thoughts about the role of the synagogue in



future years? And do you have any thoughts about how the world is at the moment and how much of a [need there will be?]

Richard 00:50:12

[Our synagogue or] synagogues generally?

Interviewer 00:50:15

No, I think I think particularly for your synagogue and where we are in this part of the world at the moment.

Richard 00:50:22

The trouble we have is that - a friend of mine has a habit of saying, Well, you know, dear boy, we're all getting older. I don't feel any better when he says it to me. Because I'm 73. And he's 58. The problem is, today, people move a lot. My wife and I've moved a lot. I mean, people over the years, I've said, you're moving again? I've said, well, what do you think the wondering Jew. But we moved for business reasons. Today that is becoming even more a point. The world is small now, because of the internet technology. And under normal circumstances, perhaps not this week, under air transport. As a result, a lot of people now don't put down the same roots.

We have a number of young families who are members. But being scattered, I instituted just over 12 months ago, a monthly family service on a Saturday morning, fourth Saturday of each month. It's much shorter than our normal Saturday service. Because with small children up to seven or eight, an hour and a half - hour and three quarter service - in some cases, even two hours - is too much. So this is perhaps 45 minutes. We do some of the prayers. But we have very accomplished young members, who are good at music. Normally, music is not part of our services. But for children it is. We make it fun for them. And they even, every year now, have a weekend camp away on the coast. But again, one of the whole things of Judaism is that children are very important. But of course, as you can appreciate during a service that goes on a long time, for very small for very small children. It can be quite trying. And for people of grandparent age, the noise of small children can be trying. So I instituted these services, which so far, have been a great success.

Bar and Bat Mitzvahs once you are a mitzvah - a boy at 13, a girl at 12 and a half is bat mitzvah - you're an adult. You are expected to behave as one. You have the rights to do in the synagogue what any other adult does. So we actually, a few years ago - they've sadly moved away because of work - we had a young man who at 15 started taking the occasional service. He's now at a yeshiva, which in other words, is a sort of seminary to learn to be a rabbi. And I think his younger brother will follow the same route. So, indeed, when I take a service, if we have any of our younger members who've had a bar mitzvah, then I often encourage them to read a prayer or to take part in it, because it's important. That is the future of our synagogue.

People tell me, children of the future of our synagogue, they are and they are not. It needs those in their 30s, 40s and 50s, to take over from us poor old souls in our 70s in order to carry it on, so that it is there for them in the future. This is our difficulty in the 1930s to 50s, the synagogue was a very, very quiet



place. They only had occasional services, because there weren't enough people, other than in the war, when people escaped, but they weren't going to escape to Exeter because that was bombed. So therefore, you only got people coming who were local. And so it was a very low point.

The synagogue hasn't had a resident Rabbi for over 100 years. We can't afford one. Which is why we are a lay led community. Even within our community, one of the ladies who take services is actually married to a vicar of another - of a church. So we are very, very inclusive. But she was brought up in an Orthodox Jewish background.

However, we for going forward - to coin a modern phrase that I dislike intensely- going forward, we need to look to people who hopefully, young retirees, people in their 50s and 60s, to carry on what we do. We probably have 80 Jewish members, and 25 who are not Jewish. They are referred to as friends, they can pay a membership as a friend, a small fee, but they cannot vote at the AGM. And they cannot actually, if they're not Jewish, they cannot actually take -- they can attend a service, but they cannot actually take any part of it. Again, when I'm taking a service, if there are friends present, I will ask them, if I if I'm happy with their knowledge, I will ask them to read a prayer. I'm quite happy to. It's the way a small community has to work. Not everybody likes that idea. Indeed, some definitely don't like it. But on the other hand, people who don't like things, but don't come anyway, it's a very good reason for taking an overview of the situation.

It is important, the services are -- it's important that the services have a feeling. If they have a feeling, they are working. We have members who, sadly, are very ill. At every service, we pray for them. We are currently praying for a member who, we we are praying a special prayer for a member who we know is not going to last many more days. But it's important we do that. At every service. We say the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. It's said in Aramaic, not Hebrew. It is one of only two prayers we say in Aramaic. Aramaic is a more ancient language than Hebrew and is indeed the language that Jesus of Nazareth would have spoken. Rabbi means teacher. It is not the same meaning, as a vicar, or a reverend, of a church, or a father of a church. It means teacher. And if you read your New Testament, you will find Jesus of Nazareth is referred to in it as Rabbi. Doesn't mean that he's that he'd actually been to a theological college, a yeshiva in order to do so. Not in those days. But when we say Kaddish, we use the prayer in Aramaic. Nowhere in it, does it mention death. The Kaddish is a paying of praise to God. What - after a person has been buried, we may mention their name for Kaddish. After they have died, but before they are buried, we do not mention them. They are kept on our list for a year. And mentioned at every service. They will be mentioned using their Hebrew name, because we all have a Hebrew name, as well as the name for instance, that you heard me introduced as my Hebrew name is Yakob Shlomo Ben Avraham. When I'm called up to say, the blessings, or anything like that, I am called up using my Hebrew name. This is our practice. Both Ladies and gentlemen, will be given a Hebrew name.

Every year on the anniversary of a close loved one's death, perhaps a parent - hopefully, not of a child - you may request their name is said for a yahrtzeit, a memorial. And again, on those anniversaries, their names will be mentioned at a synagogue service. This way, we keep people's memories of their loved ones alive. They are never forgotten. I, when I come to say Kaddish, I always also say another prayer. A prayer which refers to people we remember and people we don't, who have no one to remember



them. Because, again, thinking of history, I see that as very important. I remember Hedy, who came to England after the war. But I don't remember. I don't even know the names of her family. Because it was never talked about when I was young, one learned nothing about it. And now, even with modern technology, I cannot trace them. Because I don't even know exactly where they came from. Only where they were living, when war broke out. And when the Nazis came. So yes, it is important to say something for those who have no one to remember them. El Malei Rachamim is the name of that prayer.

Interviewer 01:04:14

Hmm. And I can understand how important it is for the the the community, the Jewish community to know that that's a very, very strong part of their everyday lives and the heritage that they -- and I can - Yeah, I [can go -]

[SECTION REDACTED BETWEEN 01:04:35 AND 01:08:11]

Interviewer 01:08:11

No, no, I was I was just going to say to really that I really appreciate all that you've spoken about this afternoon. I mean, I've I've found it absolutely illuminating and and learned a great deal myself. But just to say thank you so much for sharing that and particularly your, as we've asked you to do, to talk about your role within the synagogue and to really emphasise how important that role is within that that community. And I think you've given us a really good indication [and I'm -]

Richard 01:08:46

[Well I hope so.] I hope so.

Interviewer 01:08:47

Yeah. Thank you very much indeed.

Richard 01:08:49

That's okay. [laughter]

Interviewer 01:08:50

Thank you.