

## Kol Hakavod!

says Rabbi Jackson

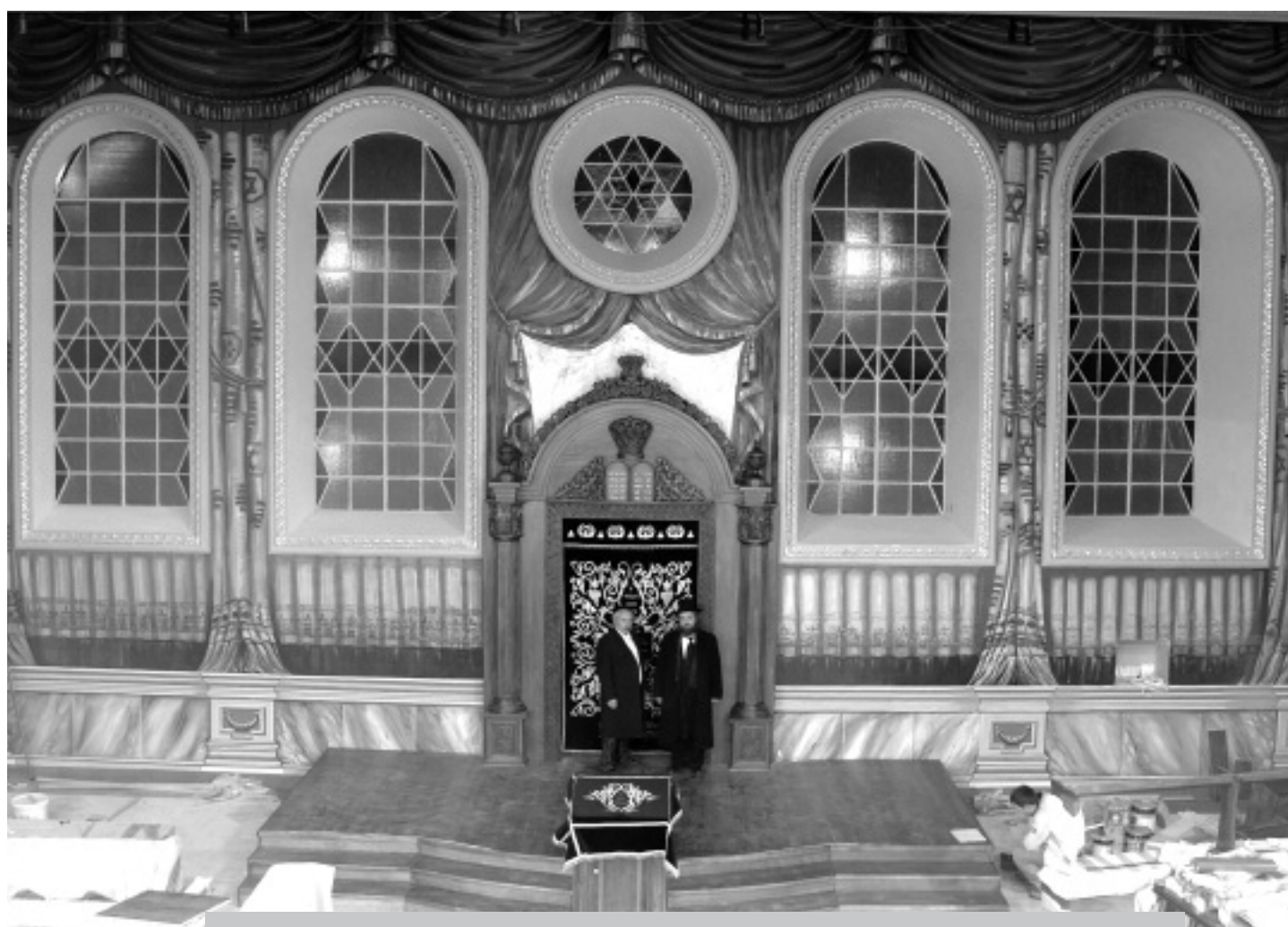
We were delighted to be invited to participate in the one-day pilgrimage to Lvov. We believe the word 'pilgrimage' to be very appropriate because it was a unique tribute to the remarkable mesirut nefesh of Rabbi and Rebbetzin Bald and to the amazing enthusiasm and dedication of Gillian and Jeremy Freedman. When we reflect on the beginning of the project, which started with our sending a shaliach to Lvov prior to the arrival of the Balds, we are amazed and full of admiration for the progress that has been made. At that time, a very important decision was made by the Board of Management – to impose a levy on the shul bill to support Lvov – a levy which, I believe, still exists today. This decision gave out a significant message to the community – that the community was making a real commitment to the Jews of Lvov.

The real turning point in the development of the endeavour was the moment, at a meeting of the Conference of European Rabbis, when Rabbi Bald and Chief Rabbi Bleich of Kiev approached me and begged me to bring a group of members for a Shabbat. The rest is history.

When we left the Suburb nine years ago we never dreamed that the Lvov project would develop the way that it has. In fact we worried that it might die a natural death. However, the most important decision that we made was to ask Jeremy and Gillian to take it over. Avromi's remarkable chazanut concerts have also made sure that the people of Lvov are never far from our minds and hearts.

The pilgrimage was a wonderful reminder of what has been achieved and the presence of so many youngsters was a clear indication that help and support will always be available in the future.

Below: Lighting the Chanukah are Micha Caspi (Project Manager), Rabbi Bald, Chazan Avromi Freilich, Keith Barnett and Aron Ostreicher (architect)



### In December 2004, The Norrice Leader published an article by Liliias Weisz in which she told the following story:

... Rebbetzin Sara Bald, who kindly agreed to be interviewed, conveyed her concern for the elderly people of the community. The level of need extends to this group of people who are bedridden and abandoned by their children who have gone to seek a better life in other countries. Home visits are then made by Rebbetzin Bald and her many volunteers and food parcels are delivered. When Rebbetzin Bald asked one of them, out of all the provisions that have been brought, items such as eggs and bread, which of the many did she treasure the most, and the woman said oil. Oil, considered to be a trivial basic item used by those who live sheltered in their homes of London, is a cherished prize for those in the Ukraine. Other stories abound, like the grown daughter who left her dying elderly mother in her own excrement for three days. Rebbetzin Bald, in one of her many acts of kindness and compassion, rescued her and finally transported her to a hospital. Unfortunately, the woman died shortly after but because of Rebbetzin Bald she was able to die with respect and more importantly, not alone. ...



## And the last word goes to Rebbetzin Sara Bald

Thank you for coming on the trip. Although it must have been tiring for all of you to make the trip, it was an inspiring day for all of us – the Lvov community and HGSS community. Most of all, the Jews of Lvov felt supported and backed up by meeting their dear brothers and sisters from the UK.

The synagogue was in serious need of reconstruction and preservation. The paintings were peeling off and in danger of being lost forever. The roof was caving in and the walls were being destroyed by damp and mould. This is the only synagogue in the whole Ukraine with such unique art and it is a miracle that it was not destroyed by, first, the Nazis and then, later, by the communists. Today's miracle is that the paintings are

restored to their former glory. Over the years I have heard comments like "The churches in Lvov are beautiful and restored, there is only one synagogue in Lvov and it looks so shameful and rundown". I tried to explain that to renovate such a synagogue we would need close to a million dollars and, first and foremost, it is important to save the Jews of Lvov from starvation and spiritual deprivation. Yes, over the years our organisation has saved the lives of many – from starvation, from cold and from illness. A school was opened to provide education for the children, lectures for the adults and Jewish education for university students. ... And the work is still far from over. With your help so much more is possible.

Thank G-d the Rohr family gave a grant to restore the prestige of the Jewish community of Lvov. We are grateful to Jeremy and Gill Freedman for taking on the running of this

## Lvov from the heart

Rabbi Livingstone reflects on the visit

With my family, I joined the group which visited Lvov over Chanukah in order to rededicate the beautifully refurbished shul. We were greeted so warmly by the incredible Rabbi and Rebbetzin Bald, saw the wonderful school, met our many friends old and new, affixed mezuzot to the renewed shul building, dedicated a Sefer Torah, and experienced a 'Chanukat Bayit' that will never be forgotten. It was a whirlwind and amazing trip. But beyond the celebration and joy there was also a palpable sense of how



critical our connection is to the very survival of that place. There may occasionally be generous benefactors for the big capital projects – but when it comes to the day-to-day needs, we are literally keeping everything afloat!

More than that, we are helping to continue Torah life in a place which was once a world centre of Jewish life and scholarship and which, exceptionally, never succumbed entirely to the terrible cold winds that destroyed myriad other great kehillot. So, in a sense we are, together with all the Lvovnikim past and present, part of a golden chain that stretches back a millennium and, please G-d, will continue to persevere proudly forward.

Of the many reports we heard whilst in the Ukraine, by far the most affecting were the follow-up stories around what had happened to many of the teenagers – graduates of the school and shul – that we had met on previous visits. This one is married and living

an observant life in Toronto; that one just graduated with a PhD in Physics from the Haifa Technion; another one is studying in Yeshiva – the list goes on. So the Yiddishkeit that burns brightly in Lvov also burns brightly in the hearts of its many sons and daughters – wherever they may now be. The word Lvov may mean 'Lion' in Russian but in Hebrew it means heart! Thank you Gill and Jeremy Freedman for continuing to be the shadchanim that hold it all together! But most of all, members of HGSS – thank you for playing your part!

Main picture: Since our visit, the new Aron HaKodesh has arrived. Pictured in front of the new arrival are Rabbi Bald with Simcha Palluch, the Israeli craftsman, its creator.

Below: Rabbi Bald with Gill and Jeremy

project and to all the other donors. Today we can, with pride, invite the Jews of Lvov and guests from all over the world and show them the honour that is given to a house of G-d. The first impression of most guests is, "We don't even have such a beautiful synagogue back home". There was a time when people actually put their life and soul into the building of a synagogue. You at the HGSS have brought this fantastic example back to life.



Rebbetzin Bald with one of her daughters