

## Kedoshim of York Remembered

The most comprehensive commemoration of the massacre of some 150 Jews, *Hy"d*, in York's Clifford Tower 822 years ago was held last week.

Among the victims of the massacre on 7 Nissan was Rabbeinu Yom Tov ben Yitzchak Hakadosh, a *talmid* of Rabbeinu Tam who is mentioned several times in *Tosafos* and is also the author of the *Amnam Ken piyut* recited in the *Maariv* of Yom Kippur.

The commemoration was the culmination of an academic project chronicling the York Massacre using advanced technology.

Clifford's Tower, also known as York Castle, is the most distinct landmark dominating the city's skyline and has served for centuries as York's symbol. First built as a Norman fort in 1068, it has been rebuilt many times and served as a military keep, prison and law court. Today it serves as a museum, but the only mention of the most bloody episode in its nine and a half centuries of history is a plaque at the foot of the tower unveiled in 1978 by then-Chief Rabbi Jacobowitz and the Lord Mayor of York.

The York Massacre was one of a wave of anti-Jewish riots that began eight months earlier at the coronation banquet of King Richard I, when a group of Jews who arrived to pay their

respects were forbidden entry.

Despite being under the king's protection, the Jews — who, being forbidden to own land, had prospered for over a century as moneylenders — became the target for attacks by local noblemen who were anxious to wipe out their large debts. Murderous attacks began in London and spread to other Jewish settlements throughout England.

Richard, who had initially humiliated the Jews at his coronation, was concerned that the attacks were a challenge to his own rule and had a number of the perpetrators executed, while issuing orders to protect the Jews. This, however, put him on a collision course with the church, which he was eager to appease, and in early 1190 the new king embarked on a Crusade to the Holy Land while not taking measures to enforce his order of protection.

The riots reached the northern towns of Norwich, Lincoln and Stamford in March; homes of Jews in York were attacked, forcing the 150 Jews of the town to take refuge in the royal castle. But as there was no force defending the tower and the local knights and clergy were leading the attack, the Jews preferred to kill themselves rather than accept forced baptism.

When the rioters entered the tower, they found the Jews lying

dead on the floor with tears in their eyes yet smiles on their faces, happy that they were able to die as Jews rather than be forced to become Christians.

The rioters next burned all the records of the Jews' financial affairs, thereby absolving themselves of their debts — which would have been payable to the king following the death of the Jews.

The king's representatives held an inquest and fined the city, but none of the murderers was ever brought to trial. In fact, many of them later joined Richard on his crusade.

No memory was left in the city of the killings, but archaeological digs have revealed burnt remnants of the original structure beneath the tower.

"When I first arrived in York in 2006," says Professor Helen Weinstein, "as a Jew, I was shocked to find that there was almost no public reference to the massacre."

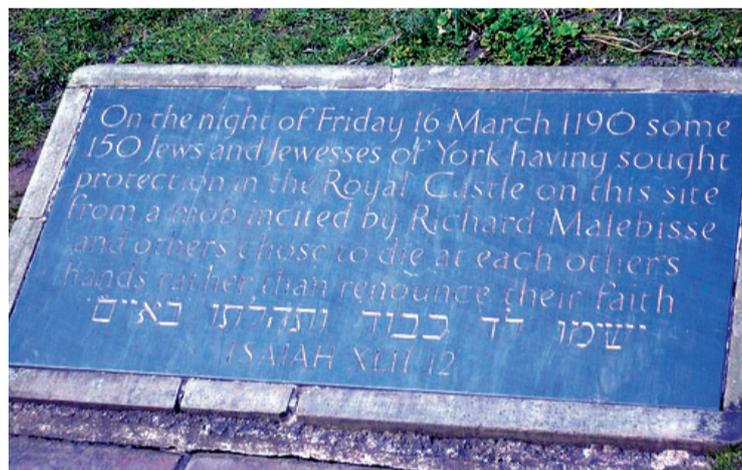
Weinstein, who had arrived at the University of York as the founding director of its Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past (IPUP), says that "the big challenge of the project [is] getting all this out of the ivory tower and making it available to the public."

As part of the project, she

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Clifford's Tower, also known as York Castle, where 150 Jews died at *Kiddush Hashem*.



A plaque at the site commemorating the deaths.

## ORAH, Inspiring Spiritual Development Among Women

One month after its launch, the new Orah programme is already making an impressive mark on Northwest London's Jewish community.

Following its inspirational opening with special guest speakers led by Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein of Ohr Naava, Orah has opened its doors to women of all ages. This has received very positive and enthusiastic response from every segment of the community. Its objective to promote ongoing spiritual development amongst women of all backgrounds has clearly filled a very real gap in the community.

Recent events include a pre-Purim evening of inspiration, featuring talks by Rabbi Yosef Grunfeld of Seed and Rabbi Yehoshua Hartman of the Hasmonean Beis Medrash programme; over 100 women attended. The wide varied programme runs two evenings a week, on Sundays and Wednesdays. Other *shiurim* in the few

weeks have included *shiurim* by Rabbi Dr. Akiva Tatz, Dayan Abraham, Rabbi Dovid Roberts, Rabbi Yehuda Levenson, and Rabbi Eliezer Zobin, to name but a few. Other initiatives include several charitable activities including food packaging with the Gift organisation and a card-making session, the products of which were distributed in hospitals and care homes on Purim.

Highly popular have been the first two lectures of a three-part series on the *Hagaddah* delivered by Rabbi Daniel Rowe of Aish UK. Rabbi Rowe provided a backdrop to *Seder* night as a whole, the objective of the *Hagaddah* being to jolt us out of our complacency and prod us to question — turning us into "searchers" for our Jewish heritage. We can then appreciate that the very existence of the Jewish nation is utterly dependent on sustaining an eternal relationship with Hashem which is encapsulated in the

selected verses the *Hagaddah* chooses to relate the redemption from Egypt.

In the third and final part of the series, due to take place on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March, Rabbi Rowe will delve into the key *mitzvos* of *Seder* night and demonstrate how these help us to achieve the ultimate purpose of the evening.

The variety of speakers and topics aims to provide for a range of interests and personal learning styles, and Orah's timetable for March likewise caters for everyone with a range of speakers including Rabbi Raphy Garson, Rabbi Dr. Harvey Belovski and Rabbi Jeremy Golker. The *shiurim* are scheduled for Sunday and Wednesday evenings from 8:15 p.m. and held at Hasmonean Girls School.

Orah, which is a communal project of Hasmonean, is open to suggestions and ideas from women in the community to expand this successful programme after Pesach.



Lawrence Purcell

The scene at the attempted garage robbery in Prestwich on Monday.

## Attempted Garage Robbery Thwarted

An unidentified gang of youths attempted to steal cash from a security van on the forecourt of the Texaco garage on Bury New Road, Prestwich, on Monday morning. The security van was transporting cash for the ATM cash dispenser outside the kiosk when the gang struck.

A Jewish lady who was standing nearby and who may have tried to prevent the crime was attacked. However, the security system in the van had alerted passing police

patrols, and the gang fled on foot as police approached, leaving the cash box on the ground.

An emergency ambulance was called to the scene to treat the woman, who was not seriously hurt.

A police helicopter was scrambled to help search for members of the gang, who have not yet been apprehended. Forensic experts checked the scene of the crime for further evidence that may help convict the criminals.