

My name is Rabbi David Mason—although I wasn't called that all my life! I was born in Edinburgh, Scotland to English parents. This caused some interesting debates over British history, and of course over long past Scotland versus England football matches. I was educated at George Watson's College up in Edinburgh and was involved in various Jewish Youth Groups. After completing my Scottish Highers and Sixth Year Studies (to be said in a Scottish accent) I came down to London to study Econometrics and Mathematical Economics at the London School of Economics (known in my day as the London Shul of Economics). My friends thought I was slightly mad choosing this course, but I did well and came out with a good enough result to be accepted to the MSc course at LSE in the same subject...more punishment! The MSc was a fascinating experience and allowed me access to some of the great minds on the teaching staff at the LSE. I was always interested in social issues and particularly was interested in mapping the mobility that exists within the income distribution, which was a developing area in the mid 1990s.

I had not been to yeshiva after school, so, following University, I decided to go to Shappell's College in Jerusalem for two years. This opened up within me a desire to study as a Jewish educator or Rabbi. This desire was achieved by five years of study at Yeshivat HaMivtar in Efrat, including Rabbinic ordination, or 'semicha'. I put it in inverted commas because the real semicha was originally given by G-d to Moses and passed down until it finally ceased after our dispersal by the

Romans. But that is another story.

Let me take a step back. After my first term or 'zman' at Yeshivat HaMivtar, I was offered the chance to go and help out and teach in Poland for the Ronald Lauder Foundation (son of the late Estée Lauder), initially for a three week period before returning for my second term. My first stop was Lodz, where my wife Elisheva and her family were running a Jewish centre. Elisheva had been in Israel for two years after school learning Hebrew and studying at a seminary in Jerusalem called Shearim. We met in Poland on erev Yom Kippur 5759 and were married two days after Yom Kippur the following year...in Jerusalem. We continued living in Israel during our respective studies, returning to Poland at Pesach time to run the Seder and at Succot time to help with the festivities. My connection to Poland has been so enlightening that I have already run two trips there from my community in Kingston. If you would like to come to Poland, just let me know!

More about Elisheva. She, as you already know, was born in Poland in the town of Lodz in the centre of the country. Her parents moved there from the South of Poland after their marriage. During her High School years, Elisheva became involved in the Jewish community and attended leadership programmes run by various Jewish organizations. After finishing High School and music school, Elisheva went to seminary in Jerusalem to study for two years, returning to work for the Lauder Foundation on a number of projects for the Jewish community in Poland. That is the point at which we met!

Elisheva made aliyah in late 1998 and studied in a pre-

University programme at Bar-Ilan. This meant much travelling for me while dating Elisheva between Jerusalem and Bar-Ilan (near Tel-Aviv) a few times a week, returning to Efrat the same evening. Successful completion of the Bar Ilan programme led to Elisheva being accepted to study Nursing in Sha'arei Zedek hospital for the next three years, successfully completing her studies there and then working as a nurse. We lived together in Efrat for four years while I was studying for my Rabbinic ordination before moving to Kingston, where I took up my first position as Rabbi.

While in Kingston, our family unit more than doubled! We have three beautiful children. Hodaya was born just four weeks after we came to Kingston. 'Great planning' I hear you say. Yes it was quite a tumultuous time for us, to be honest. Hodaya is now nearly five and will start school in September. Netanel was born next, in June 2005, and has just turned three. He was born with Down's Syndrome, which, of course, was extremely difficult at first. We see now how blessed we are to have Netanel and I hope you will have a chance to get to know him. I hope also to use the pages of this magazine to increase awareness surrounding what Down's Syndrome actually is.

And then there were three! Just nine weeks ago we were blessed with our third child, Akiva. He is doing well thank G-d and keeping us busy.

What about our interests? Well, I love to read books on politics, history and philosophy when I have time! I also love following football and with that am extremely happy that I will be nearer a certain stadium near Finsbury Park...of course only

weekday games. I also like a good single malt and have a nice collection at home which I look forward to sharing with you. Eliseva enjoys a good novel and loves to spend time with the family.

We both share a love for our Jewish heritage and for the values of Torah, and have been lucky to have had wonderful teachers instilling in us a view of Torah that is connected and engaged with the modern world.

So that is something about our family. We hope to meet you all at Muswell Hill Synagogue, whether at Shul, at our home or at an event.