

Altrincham Interfaith Group's "Family Values" Dinner..... Report by Lucille Cohen



Despite cold conditions, 30 local Jewish people were among more than 150 people who participated in the Altrincham Interfaith Group's dinner on Saturday evening, February 26th at St Ambrose RC College, Hale Barns. More than £1000 was raised for charity. The event was attended by the Mayor of Trafford, Cllr Pamela Dixon, Cllr Higgins, Cllr Judith Lloyd and Lib-Dem parliamentary candidates Ian Chappell and Amar Ahmed.

Representatives of the different faiths delivered a grace before meals and blessings including two Hindu children and for the Christians, Rev Alan Morris.

The theme of the evening was Family Values and the topic was addressed by Prof Ram Gokal -Hindu, Mr Michael Sharp - Jewish, Rev Brian Jackson - Christian and Dr Sara Saigol - Muslim.



Strictly kosher food was organised by Hale delegate, Lucille Cohen, who was assisted on the night by Anne and Harvey Rosenfield and Sidney and Yonni Cohen. Sonia Lee and Carole Latter

participated in a ladies baking session 10 days in advance in the Bowdon shule kitchens, providing honey cake and apple strudel with the chairmen of the South Manchester Synagogue Ladies Guild, Gill Heron and Rose Glaskie. Among other Hale members attending was Loretta Davidson.

Michael Sharp of South Manchester Synagogue spoke on the importance of education of our children in maintaining Jewish family values, and of how education needs to be tailored to the age and needs of the child.

This education, he said, focuses on honouring Hashem through honouring our parents and those who came before, as well as loving our neighbour as ourselves.



He stressed the importance of maintaining Jewish family life at this particular time when we remember the six million martyrs of the Shoah who died al-kiddush Hashem in the face of those who wished to destroy all semblance of family values.

Prof of Nephrology, Ram Gokal, said 'Hinduism places great importance on family life and values - it is a building block of society and the nation. It is based on sharing, caring and love between members of the family where there is respect by the children for their parents, teachers and guests (equates to Godliness) and a responsibility of parents to bringing up the children under the Hindu traditions and customs based on Sanatan Dharma - a way of life on eternal truths. The extended family is the cornerstone of maintaining the culture'.

Rev Brian Jackson, emeritus minister of the Hale United Reformed Church explained how Christianity's roots in Jewish tradition contributed greatly to its understanding of the family and particularly in the way marriage was viewed as a covenant reflecting that of God with Israel.



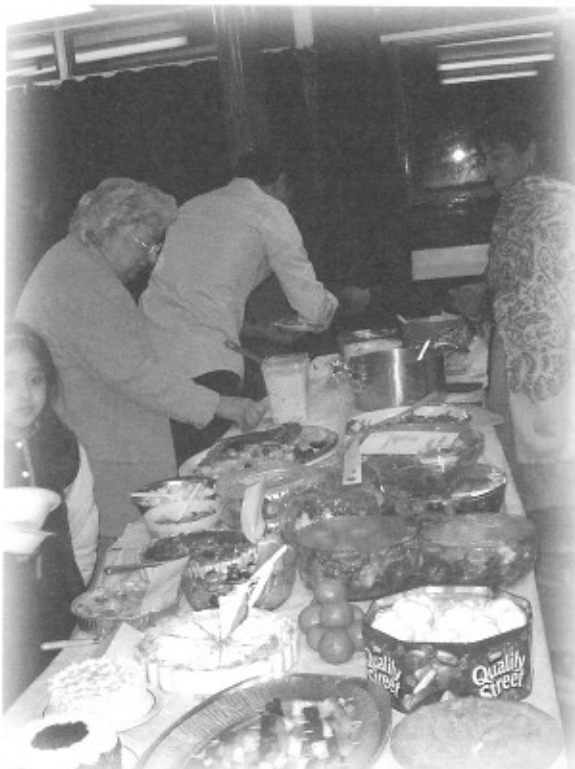
In addition he explained that marriage and begetting children were a vocation from God and that covenant and vocation were fundamental to marriage and family. (These concepts were borne out by the New Testament,



in which St Paul told the Galatians they had to obey and love each other as Christ loved his Church, while in his letter to the Corinthians, man and wife were portrayed as ministers of Christ to each other).



Dr Sara Saigol also emphasised the centrality of family in Islamic tradition and spoke of women from the Quran as role models. Bowdon, worked as a hospital doctor before having children, said, 'Our mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, our direct families are so important in realising our own sense of self, learning how to share how to listen and how to love. These lessons are the very ones that, when we shut the front door and go out in to our neighbourhoods, help us be better neighbours, better citizens, and a better part of humanity.'



Chairman for the evening was the AIG treasurer, Iftikhar Awan and the event planned by Azhar Rasul. Each faith group provided food for its own community and for others to try if wished.