

## Summary transcript of interview with Rabbi Ariel Friedlander, 24 June 2013

*Interviewed and transcribed by Ros Levenson*

### **RJ201306A**

00.00 to 00.40

#### Why she decided to take part in this interview

Rabbi Ariel Friedlander (AF) works with Surat who suggested that AF's story might be relevant to what Rainbow Jews is doing.

00.40 to 04.10

#### About herself

AF is the oldest of three girls and her late father was a Rabbi. Mother, who is still living was a child prodigy concert pianist – her family escaped from Germany in 1938 and came to this country so she was born during the Blitz and always lived and grew up here. AF's father's family was born in Berlin and escaped in 1939 on the last boat to Cuba. He and his twin brother and his sister were sent as foster children to Jewish families in Mississippi and they used to meet on Shabbat at the synagogue. Mother and Father met at a conference where she was with a boyfriend! (Her father eventually officiated at that man's wedding, so it all ended up ok!)

Her mother had one condition for marrying her father: at that time he was a Rabbi in a small coal mining town in Pennsylvania and she said she was not going to leave London and move to a small coal mining town, so her father went to do a PhD at Columbia University in New York City so that's how AF came to be an American. The first two children (including AF) were born in Manhattan, which was quite handy later on when she wanted to work in the USA but it meant she had to become British when she moved back about 3 years ago.

In the mid sixties ( the context was the politics in the USA (Kennedy assassinated, Nixon on the way etc) and at the same time her dad's mother died and her mother had 2 parents alive in London. And AF's father was a bit of a socialist and liked the idea of a Labour government, so they decided to move to London and they came to London in 1966 when AF was 2½.

### **RJ201306B**

00.00 – 03.53

#### Coming to London

Her father got a job at Wembley Liberal Synagogue, part time and at Leo Baeck College Not only did she grow up with her father as a Rabbi, but they lived at the end of the drive and everybody had to walk past the house to get to the shul. In 1971 when they moved to the Westminster synagogue they lived on the second floor and the sanctuary was on the first floor - they "lived over the shop". It was a beautiful house and her mother still lives in part of the apartments they grew up in. On the other hand, no neighbours, no garden. Hyde Park was across the street but you couldn't go without an adult as it was a dangerous road to cross. In the street was the Turkish consulate which the Armenians were constantly trying to attack. Most of the houses were owned by embassies, and there were many Arabs who were not happy about being across the way from the synagogue, and they were also near the army barracks which were bombed in the 1980s, and Harrods was nearby and there was a bomb there, so it was quite a dramatic place to live, with a lot of police presence. She remembers at her batmitzvah – there were always demonstrations up and down and it was a source of ironic entertainment, and whatever the demonstration, there were always anti-Israel posters – on the

afternoon of her batmitzvah there was a National Front Demonstration and the family were on the balcony watching all the people and all of a sudden, someone saw the sign on the street which said “synagogue” and a group made a dash and there was a row of police bodily trying to stop people from attacking the building – it was so surreal. In some ways like a film, but she realised that the crowd was coming for them.

#### Background in Liberal Judaism

Her father was trained in the United States as an American Reform Rabbi, which is close to a Liberal Rabbi, but the Westminster synagogue was independent and had broken away from West London Reform, but since her father was professor and later Dean of Leo Baeck College, which trains students from both movements, he had a foot in both camps. His heart was more Liberal as that was closer to what he grew up with.

Religion was important in their house. Not just Judaism as her parents were involved in interfaith dialogue, so there were lots of people from other religions around too: priests, and Jainists and Zoroastrians. Her father was part of the Council of Christian and Jews and World Council of Religions for Peace.

03.53 to 05.49

#### Attitude to sexuality

Her father was a close friend of Lionel Blue and the two of them together did a lot of interfaith work. Actually Lionel and his partner were dear friends of her parents and she grew up with them, which is relevant to the context of this interview.

She grew up with Lionel and his partner as two uncles and it never crossed her mind there was anything strange about it. Her mother went on holiday with the two of them, her father went running in the park with Lionel and they were just part of the world of her parents’ friends.

Someone once suggested that she might have internalised homophobia. She thought about it very carefully and realised that she actually didn’t have any homophobia at all because she grew up with people that her parents loved and there was never any question that it was a problem.

05.40 to 12.45

#### More about her background in Judaism

It wasn’t kosher. Her parents passed each other going in opposite directions. Mother’s parents were basically atheist, but she had neighbours who were orthodox and she went to orthodox day school when she was little, so she started off orthodox and became less and less so. Her father started out with nothing and became a little bit more. Just talking about food – the agreement in the house was that nothing was forbidden, but there was no question about meat and milk; her father said that was a Rabbinical thing, not a Torah thing. After he died, they were shocked to come home and open the fridge and see that her mother had ham in the fridge. Her mother said she wouldn’t do it while AF’s father was alive, but now it was her home and she could do what she wanted. And she was quite right, it was just strange to see it.

AF has always been convinced that progressive Judaism was the place for her. She had a previous career before becoming a Rabbi and part of that was to show she was not just becoming a Rabbi because of her father, because a lot of what she thinks is from her parents and she doesn’t have any desire to abandon most of the teaching she got from her parents.

What she learned from her parents in terms of being a Jew was that it is important to be a Mensch and Jewishly wanting to do that in the Rabbi's house, inviting people and sharing what you have, so Friday nights they used to have services before dinner and were taught that anyone who looked like they were alone, you asked them if they had somewhere to go for dinner and if they didn't to ask them to come upstairs and eat with the family. It drove her mother crazy as she was never sure... And they were taught that there is a level of learning and growing and also tolerance and openness to people who were interested in religious life as it supposed to help you to be a good person. So she was not brought up so much Jewishly observant but with the prophetic ideals, which is more the watchword for the Progressive movement.

Does faith come into this? She was discussing this with her community. Her father had a very strong faith and she often asked him about it. He felt there was a presence in his life always and AF feels that if she has that she doesn't know how to recognise it. She wouldn't say that that she definitely doesn't but she is struggling with that. She is optimistic and lives as if she does - whether that counts as faith? She wouldn't say she is an atheist. She thinks there is something, but what you call it and how you describe it and what your relationship with it is - it feels very personal to her. If you look at the prayer book, the Liberal prayer book for example, many of the beginning prayers (and as a Rabbi she often asks people to look at it before they say it, she wants people to take responsibility for what they are saying; the Rabbi has great power in a service and can make people stand up, sit down, do this, do that, but she really wants people to take responsibility themselves or it becomes meaningless). If you look at the early prayers it says God, you were there for our ancestors so be there for us. Accept our prayers and hear us as you heard them. In the past our ancestors had left a record that they had some kind of faith. We want to be part of that but we are not necessarily certain that we are. So if you're there and are listening, please help. So, on the one hand it is like a request, which is very prayer-like but it also reminds you that this is what you want. And however you find it, whether through a great revelation or through experience and time, or whether you don't, this is what you want.

Her teacher was very insistent the words are just a mantra. But AF wants reasons and proof and doesn't say words just because; they have to have a purpose. So the answer to the question about faith is that she is working on it.

12.45 to 16.19

#### Equalities – and specifically gender and sexual equalities

The Torah itself gives you more than one option as there are 2 creation stories. One of them is first a man is created and then a piece of him is taken and from that a woman is created to be his helpmeet. Then there's the other story where man and woman are created at the same time and equally in the image of God, the gender difference being there for procreation but otherwise them not having different roles. One of the jobs of a Rabbi is to reinterpret the ancient texts in a contemporary context and whether or not you believe in God, whether or not you have faith. If God exists, God exists independently of whether or not one believes and God is not the centre of religion; religion is what human beings made up in order to make sense of the world and give themselves some direction. For AF it is a great danger to revere the earlier creators so you can't change anything they did. That's not what is holy. If you believe in God, God is what is holy. That's why she does not kiss the scroll – it's a slippery slope. If you revere the things that stand for something, you get more and more distant. So for her, equality is there and human beings have much to learn and as we go through the ages we need to tweak our religious systems to suit and fit and work with the people that they are

supposed to serve. Equality that is important to us has to be part of what we do. She would not berate people in the middle ages for behaving in a prejudiced way; that was the best they could do at that time with what they knew. Scientists used to believe the world was flat. The more that we learn – and it is there in the Torah - it's a vital part of what we need to be working on now.

16.20 to 19.09

#### Where are other wings of Judaism in relation to sexual and gender equalities?

There is a spectrum and she can see it only from her point of view. She can say that she thinks orthodox Judaism is unfair to women but she might speak to an orthodox Jewish woman who says she chooses to do this, it has meaning for her. In that sense it is not right for AF to make a judgment in terms of gender. When it comes to sexuality, and whom you love and wish to spend your life with, there are parts of Judaism which still have some work to do to accept and adjust. We are, as it says in Genesis, made in God's image, so if I am gay, that is how God made me. There is nothing wrong or bad about that. What it says in the Torah is about how people treat one another in certain kinds of relationships and when it says a man shall not lie with a man as he would with a woman she can't say that she understands that in the way they understood that 5000 years ago. She is positive that does not mean a man is not allowed to love another man and have a home and a family. It is talking about cultic priestly practices and differentiating the people of Israel from what other nations around them do. To turn that into a rule that says you can treat people badly is wrong. But everyone with a heart can have compassion for people who are different to themselves and she hopes that eventually, across the spectrum, everyone will come to understand that there is a place in the community for people who are different.

19.09 to 21.36

#### More about herself and the rest of her family

Her sisters are not involved as she is. One of them had to go in the family business and AF got the short straw! When AF was 5 she told her father she wanted to be the first woman Rabbi and he said she was too late. Her father was an incredibly wonderful man – though not easy to live with and not a perfect husband or father, or even Rabbi, but the thing about him was he loved people and he loved everyone unconditionally. He never judged anybody. Her mother did his fighting for him and could be very tough. He had a very profound effect on the three siblings in terms of an ideal of what a person should be like, so they all had a very strong connection to Judaism but express it in different ways.

21.36 to 30.00

#### Becoming a Rabbi

Before becoming a Rabbi, AF was a professional sports photographer. Mostly freelance but she was the Queen's Park Rangers football club's official photographer for about 3 years. She is not sure what her father's proudest moment was. It was a toss up between blessing her on her ordination as a Rabbi or perhaps when he was sitting in the crowd at Stamford Bridge, Queen's Park Rangers, and at half time when she went round to the visitors' end the crowds sung her name. It's all tied up with Judaism. When they went to England they went to Wembley Synagogue and the Chairman there was a big QPR fan and took her father along and eventually he got a season ticket. When she was little she thought Jewish people went to shul Saturday morning and then they went to QPR! So the fact that she ended up working for QPR, which was her dad's favourite team, and the story of how she changed from one to the other [football to Judaism] is also a story: she wanted to prove she could succeed as a photographer. The way things worked was for home games she had access to QPR but for

away games they only had one pass for a photographer and there were two of them. The other guy – a man! – always got the pass and she never did. She got fed up and QPR were going to play Tottenham and she decided to make a big fuss and decided to fight for that one. They said, it was OK, she had got it. Then the game was postponed and rearranged for Rosh Hashanah! What was she going to do? She asked her father and he was not helpful. He said “no-one is going to judge you, it’s your conscience and you just have to do what you think is right”. So she figured out she could go to services then grab her stuff and still get there by 3 o’clock and that’s what she did. She got there at five to three, and not feeling good about this and it started to rain and QPR went a goal down and the weather got worse and she couldn’t take lots of pictures as it was dark, and she was thinking it was all her fault, and she was feeling more and more guilty and hysterical about this and all of a sudden the crowd started to sing “Does your Rabbi know you’re here?” At which point she was convinced God was speaking directly to her. She was screaming at the crowd, “yes I’ve talked to my Rabbi and he said it’s my conscience...” So people say “why did you become a Rabbi?” and she will generally tell that story as the turning point. This was when she was about 27. It made clear that there was something there and this Jewish thing was more important to her than she had thought.

So then she went to see her godmother, Julia Neuberger, who was also a Rabbi and she had recently stopped being a congregational Rabbi and AF thought JN would talk her out of it. And she said actually AF should try it. First of all, if you don’t it will always be hanging over your head, and you’d get a good Jewish education which won’t be wasted time, so try. Then she went to tell her mother, who hated being a Rabbi’s wife – the congregation were the enemy, they were always trying to attack her husband and her and her children. In a strange way it was like being in a little royal family. Everybody felt they had a right to know everything about you and to watch you and advise you. But her mother was so happy. The football part she was not happy about. In the 80s there were no women football photographers and AF got a lot of abuse from the crowds. Everybody seemed to be encouraging her so she applied and trained at the Hebrew Union College in the United States. She did not train here as her father was at Leo Baeck. She was like her father and everyone looked at her and thought they could see him. Also, she was born in the States but had not lived there and this was a way to go back and see what America was like and to be able to afford to do it, for as a US citizen she was entitled to scholarship and loan money, In the UK she was British and not eligible for support. The training was tortuous. It was difficult and she is not good at school. She talks quite well but has trouble writing essays. Also, this was the time she came out.

30.00 to 39.00

#### Coming out and relationships

She had not known about her sexual orientation until then. The general consensus among her friends is that she was the last person to know. Nobody was surprised. She fell in love with one of her classmates at Rabbinical school but did not realise that was what was happening. They were good friends and study partners and everybody else assumed they were in a relationship for months. Then one day she talked to a classmate and observed there was something weird going on and the classmate observed “You’re in love with her” but AF said she wasn’t – and then realised she was. She had assumed she was not dating anyone was because she was fat and ugly. She was smart and funny but didn’t go on dates. Plus being a Rabbi’s daughter. Nobody tells you gossip or rude jokes of you’re a Rabbi’s child!

The relationship was a turning point and all sorts of things made sense that had

not made sense before.

She immediately called her parents. Everyone remembers what happened differently. Her mother was always the very liberal, open person and she basically stopped communicating with AF for a long time. She found it very difficult. She wouldn't refuse to speak to AF but on the phone she'd say "here's your father". She was going to tell her parents personally – there was to be a conference that got cancelled at the last minute and she couldn't wait any longer - and maybe it would have been better if she had been able to speak in person. And when you're coming out, you don't realise that the people you're telling also have to come out and have to adjust to it. Her dad came to Jerusalem a month or two later (while AF was in Israel on her study year) and they went for a walk and he said very clearly that he had a certain picture in his head about how things were going to be and now they weren't and he needed to change the picture. And that was it. AF did not need to change who she was. He needed to change the picture. Then he said he was anxious as she always seemed to pick the most difficult roads in life and this was a path where people were going to be mean to her and he worried about that. He met her partner and they got on well. After they broke up it was somewhat acrimonious and when it came to their ordination he said "will you guys make up so I can go and congratulate her?" and in the end we did. So he just needed the time. It's hard to remember that when you're in the midst of the anxiety yourself.

Her mother came round in time too. Her mother's memory of how the story unfolded is different. Her memory was that AF's father was upset and she had to talk him round. But when AF and her partner were on the way back to New York from Israel, her mother said they could not stay with them as she didn't want her sister to get distracted by all this. Her mother does not remember this at all. But she too had to make the adjustments.

Her sisters didn't seem to have any trouble. Her younger sister is 10 years younger and it is just not a big thing for her generation. Her other sister, who is now estranged from the whole family, said "oh, for crying out loud, do you think I didn't know!" Her sister recalled the posters of female film stars AF used to have on her wall and all the schoolgirl crushes. But AF was indifferent to sexual identity. She had good friends and didn't feel lonely or abandoned. But eventually she came out and is very glad she did.

After her relationship with her first love broke up there was some dating but not long term relationships. And once you become a Rabbi it is a lot harder to find anyone to be in a relationship with.

39.00 to 43.00

#### Attitudes of others

Officially the Reform movement in the United States is completely welcoming but people in the congregations take time to get there. In the [Rabbinical] school itself, her year was the first year was the first year that anyone who was out was accepted as being out. There was rumour that your *semicha* certificate was not signed unless you came to him and told him you were not gay. He was a classmate of her father at Rabbinical school so when it came time for the signatures to be on the certificate, she went to him and said was this true. And he didn't actually say yes. He said there are certain things that he does not agree with and people know what they are so he asks students to bring their certificates to him if they feel he will be able to sign them. And AF asked why and he asked if she had read what he had written. AF had done so but said that he had written it 10 years ago and she thought he may have changed his opinion by now. He said it hadn't, he could be wrong but he thought he was right. He said he

could not sign her certificate. AF said she was a Rabbi anyway and he was one of the teachers who helped her on that journey so she thanked him for teaching her and he said good luck and could he give her a hug and sent her off. AF went back upstairs with the special pen to give to the registrar and she asked if he signed it. AF said no and the registrar said “the schmuck!”

One of her classmates, a heterosexual woman, said “oh is he there, give me the pen”. And that was the bit that was awful. She had asked her classmates not to ask him to sign as it was not fair – he should sign all or none. They said he is our teacher and AF said he was her teacher too. There was not solidarity in AF’s year but in later years there was and people stopped asking him. At the time others asking him to sign was more hurtful than him refusing as he was, at least, honest.

43.00 to 53.00

#### Getting a position

The way it used to work is there was a sort of fair and for two weeks all the congregations that are looking for a newly minted Rabbi have 2 weeks of interviews and they come to the campus and you can sign up if you want an interview, and they interview everybody and pick their top 3 and fly them back to the congregations to meet them and eventually there is a matching day where it is all sorted out. So AF did about 18 interviews and the night before matching day one of the professors phoned her and said he wanted to prepare her as she was probably not going to get any offers. AF asked why not and he said she was too “other” for the American Rabbinate. Actually a particular rabbi had called her up before the interviews and had said “you don’t have to come out in your interviews, it doesn’t have to be the first thing”. He was just giving friendly advice. AF did not take it. She couldn’t. She didn’t want to make it all about her and it’s nobody’s business and is against the law to ask but people can find out.

45.00

*“I figured out in a sort of moment of wry American humour that I was 4F for the American Rabbinate and 4F was the military classification for the draft in Vietnam and if you are classified 4F it means the army don’t want you under any circumstances ‘cos you have flat feet or you are gay or something. I figured 4Fs, where I was Foreign, Female, Fat and a Feigele. And that was the reason I was too other. It was too much.”*

Actually she got one offer but was second place and the person who was first took that position.

What happened next is that there was a Rabbi’s conference somewhere in the States where Dov Marmor and [inaudible] bumped into each other (Dov Marmor was a Rabbi in Toronto) and the people he had made offers to had all turned him down. He had only made offers to Rabbi’s daughters, one of whom was AF’s ex-partner. Marmor heard AF did not have a job and he telephoned and asked why she had not applied. It had never crossed her mind to move to Canada, and she had thought it was way too big a place and she would be too other for them. He encouraged her to apply and she did. Before the interview she thought she had to make sure and asked to talk to Dov Marmor, who didn’t have time but eventually after the interview she said she needed to tell him something – that she did not have a partner but if she did it was going to be a female and she needed to know if the congregation could handle that. He said he thought she might say something like that and she needed to know she would

be offered the job. So she was pleased as she thought that if he had been against it he would not have told her they were going to offer her the job.

48.00

*“Boy was I wrong. Well, I accepted the job and I had two years of being tortured by him.... Within a few weeks of my starting the job I was called into his office and he shut all the doors, to the secretary. And he sat me down and said ‘ news has reached me from the congregation that they are talking about your alternative lifestyle. ‘ When I checked what had actually happened, he and his wife had arranged for me to have dinner with a friend of theirs’ daughter who was a tax attorney to talk about Canadian taxes and I had asked if we could meet at a vegetarian restaurant because I am a vegetarian. So actually it was being a vegetarian that was the alternative lifestyle but by the time it got back to him it was ‘gay, gay, gay, gay, gay!’ And he was just paranoid about it. He would say to me, ‘you are free to do as you choose but you have to understand that actions have consequences. If you ever speak publicly on anything positively to do with LBGT issues, your contract will not be renewed, but you can choose to do as you wish. If you are seen at any events in the city... such as Pride, your contract will not be renewed but you are free to do as you choose’.”*

She had a 3 year contract at Toronto. Before the end of the first year he [Marmur] phoned and said if she did not resign he would fire her for incompetence. He didn't go to the board about this, he just spoke to the President and when the board found out they felt he had not behaved correctly and prepared to fight on her behalf. But there was no point and she felt she had to get out of there. She went to a lawyer who said that all Ontario labour laws had been broken and if it were true that she was incompetent there would have had to be warnings etc. When she asked what she had done she was told it was two things: on one occasion she had come to services with the wrong prayer book and had not found the right pages, and another time she had turned several pages and had missed something. But when she sat down with him, he said “you can't preach, you can't teach. You have no rapport with anyone from the youngest to the oldest in the congregation, your Hebrew is terrible and if I were you I'd quit the Rabbinate now and retrain in another profession while you are still young enough to do so”.

None of these things were true and it kept coming back to her personal life and what she was and was not allowed to do as being connected to the synagogue. It was always you can't be seen in gay places or talking to gay people.

She was one of only 4 women Rabbis in Canada so being a woman Rabbi was already something relatively new for them.

53.00 to 1.06:36

#### Moving on from that experience

They negotiated that she would give up one year of her 3 year contract a 2 years would look better on her CV and they agreed not to “badmouth her to anybody else”, which did not happen as he did talk to others when she went for jobs. The worst part was that he and her parents had been friends and her mother could not understand how he could have done this. He was the one who started the gay chavurah in Alyth Gardens. AF has since let go of it, but at the time she became incredibly depressed



and was on anti-depressants and saw a therapist to help her cope. But he bullied everyone, he was well known for that.

After a year and a bit she got out and found another job. She found two small congregations in Shenandoah Valley in Virginia who shared a Rabbi. That worked well. There was still a lot of prejudice and people who were very uncomfortable but she was lucky that in one of the congregations there was a couple who took her under their wing and taught her how to be a better Rabbi, but also protected her as they had a daughter who was lesbian and was in Rabbinical school. In the other congregation people were not comfortable and there was one time after about 3 years when somebody got together a group of people to try and throw her out, but they didn't and she stated. If she had had a family of her own, she would have been happy to stay there. But it was very lonely. She was the only Rabbi of any denomination for 60 miles in any direction. There were very few Jews, and gay Jews, none. And she hadn't given up hope of finding a partner and even becoming a parent.

[interruption – note passed under the door]

In Virginia at that time she considered adopting a child

55.59 [further interruption]

She quit her job and drove across America until she ran out of money then stayed with an aunt in Wisconsin to try to figure out what to do. She needed a job so went back to being a Rabbi in the States, first of all in the New York area but the senior Rabbi there decided after he had hired her that he did not like her and got rid of her, so then she applied to another congregation in [inaudible] and they hired her on a 3 year contract and that was where she experienced the greatest homophobia. With hindsight one can always say one could have done it better – she is not a bad Rabbi and works hard – and is considered to be a great teacher and gets on well with kids of all ages, is good with older people, preaches relatively well and can sing in tune and at least she would say she is inoffensive! But she did make a couple of big mistakes in that congregation because she did not understand their nature. She changed the bar/batmitzvah service. She thought rather than having the child parrot 40 verses not knowing what they were doing, let's do 20 verses and spend some of the time studying so they can understand it. And also she refused the previous Rabbi's tradition of during the bar mitzvah service quizzing the child in front of everybody. She felt if she did not change it immediately it would not be possible to change it. But the people in the congregation felt that at the other synagogue in town if their kids did 40 verses, their own kids would look stupid. But no-one told her that. So that was a mistake.

The prejudice thing came on her all of a sudden. In the interview process she was asked if she had any questions and she had said she hoped one day to have a partner and that partner was likely to be female and would they feel comfortable accepting her into the community? They still offered her the job but there was a group of people who were not on the committee who did not agree with this and did not think her fit to be their Rabbi and if she was not got rid of they would walk away and take their money with them. So they terminated her.

They broke the contract and she decided she never wanted to work in an American congregation again and therefore she could afford to sue them to pay off her contract. Because of the separation of church and state in the USA the court refused to take her case and she basically lost but she went to the supreme court and appealed and they refused to take it. Because of the separation of church and state the court cannot judge – only the congregation can judge. The congregation lied and said that in one year 19 members resigned as they thought she was terrible. But she happened to be present that day it was decided that anyone who had not paid dues for more than 5 years would be taken off the membership list and 19 people were taken off the list.

She was so depressed that she could not do anything but she could afford to live for a year without a job so she stayed in her flat and only went out once a week to get groceries and videos from the library. She watched every episode of *Six Feet Under* – each episode starts with a death. She ended up checking into hospital for a while. She was shattered by it as she lost the court case and there was no justice in it as they were able to lie but also these people who prided themselves on being Jews were full of prejudice and she was convinced that ultimately it was because she was gay.

Then in the March of that year a person from her year at school died in a stupid accident – she was skiing and hit her head and got a blood clot and died. They weren't best friends, but many of her friends were still from school and she realised she was a thousand miles from anyone who cared about her. Her mother said, just come home, and she said “stay with me and we'll figure it out”. And this was the mother she had never got on with when she was younger. so she came home and her mother looked after her and helped her get on her feet again.

1.06:36 to 1.10:52

#### What has happened since

It has been good to come back. She grew up here and fits in better here culturally – sense of humour, cultural references She was in America for 20 years or so and she has a connection. Her mother was here, her father had died and one of her sisters has a child - they live in Berlin. She has a wonderful aunt but she is 3000 miles away but the idea of being near to her niece so she could be a good aunt to her, and to be near her mother and her oldest friends was good – and even, though it may seem trivial, she is a fanatical football fan and to be able to come and see her team! And coming back to Liberal Judaism, her best friend from Toronto got married in Toronto. Rabbi Janet Burden was doing the wedding, and when AF came back to the UK Rabbi Burden said "come to the Liberal Rabbis' conference, come and meet Danny Rich". The reform Rabbis knew she was back and were not particularly interested and Danny said he would see if he could find her some work, and everyone was friendly and welcoming and so far she has not come across, in any of the places she has worked, any hint of prejudice. The biggest problem she had was there was a position available at LJS when she came back and she applied and didn't get an interview. They were not honest in the reasons they gave her and said she did not write a good letter. But from her mother's friends they found out that someone had Googled her and it was that court case, which had a lot of publicity as it was constitutionally important and what comes up is “Rabbi Ariel Friedlander was fired for bad behaviour.” People were put off by that, but she does not think that had anything to do with prejudice.

In terms of being an LGBT person, she thinks it has been more comfortable. She hasn't been full time in a congregation so does not know what that is like but her colleagues have never shown any sign that there is a problem and she does not anticipate that. In Liberal Judaism, the equality part is such an important part of what they do, so she is not worried about that now.

Thanks.

Ends at 1:10: 52.