

Our Congregation



News and views from Belsize Square Synagogue

SUMMER STOCKTAKING – RABBI'S END OF TERM REPORT

Shalom Chaverim

It is that time of year again, time to take stock, to enjoy the quiet of the summer months, to recharge our energies for the coming year, and, hopefully, find a new perspective in renewed faith. We may have no control over the turbulence around us but we can look back over the past year at our Synagogue and see cause for pride and gratitude.

I have said many times that I feel so privileged to be the rabbi of this unusual and gifted community. I am blessed with remarkable students, the best of friends and a congregation that believes in the best of our Jewish ideals and spirit. May God continue to give us that strength. So, here are a few reflections on what we have accomplished together and where we are headed.

We began the Jewish year with powerful High Holy Day services and attendance. I spoke on aspects of fear, the choir was magnificent, the Cantor never sounded better, everyone took part. We had a Bar or Bat Mitzvah virtually every week, where our gifted children affirmed their Jewish identity.

We took 30 members to Berlin on a trip beyond all expectation. We learned so much and were impressed by the local activists we met at the Alexander Haus, thanks to our co-host, Thomas Harding. A big thank you to Claire Walford for arranging it all.

We had classes: our Sunday morning Adult Discussion Class on Modern Western Philosophy and Jewish Responses from Hobbes to Moses Mendelssohn. We held our annual lecture with Rev Paul Nicholson on Religious Extremism in our respective faiths, and were joined by a leading

figure of the Shiite Muslim community.

Our Tikkun Leyl Shavuot was led by Alasdair Nisbet. Though small in number, we were mighty in the content of our educational endeavour. Maimonides was the glue and learning was all around us, as was the cheesecake. Our community second Seder attracted the largest attendance we have ever had. And we had a joyous Purim, a festive Succot.

Seven adults who have studied every week with me in the synagogue library were brought before the Bet Din and became part of the Jewish people. We also welcomed three children who followed their converted mothers. We had Hebrew "marathon reading" classes for the first time, to try to put those unfamiliar with Hebrew at ease with our services.

We are growing. Membership is up. Attendance is largely excellent. We are blessed with leadership, and this is a good moment to thank our outgoing Co-Chairs, Suzanne Goldstein and John Abramson, along with the Board and Executive, for their time and commitment.

Our office works hard and I personally am grateful that I work with such fine individuals as Jennifer Saul, Jagdish (bookkeeping), Adam Rynhold (my right arm), Gordon Larkin (our man who keeps us safe and organised!), and Lee Taylor, the very best Chief Executive, a man of incredible integrity and devotion to the community.

I also want to again note how blessed we are in our music, our professional choir, our youth choir director, Alyson Denza, our superb music director, Dr

Ben Wolf, and, finally, my partner on the bimah, Cantor Paul Heller.

Our music programme has been revolutionised by Philip Keller and the Music Committee. Concerts just get better and better. Our Israel Committee, led by Jeffrey Graham, arranged a memorable Dinner, raising funds for our regular charities in Israel.

Our talented Education Director, Jeanie Horowitz, enhances our children's knowledge of their Jewish heritage. Thank you, Jeanie, and thank you also, Eve Hersov, compassionate and caring, who visits our seniors and those who are ill and watches over mourners.

So, how can we do better next year? Well, we will certainly try! We will focus on Ideals, Aims and Goals at the High Holy Days. We will organise another trip, most likely to Israel.

Our Monday night Introduction to Judaism course has 12 new students. We will continue our Sunday morning study of modern philosophy and Jewish thought. There will be more Hebrew reading opportunities. Stay tuned!

Welcome to Jackie Alexander, our new Chairman, and the Board of this great community, to all our committee chairs and, most of all, to our entire membership. You continue to astound with your energy, compassion, devotion to the community and passionate interest in seeing Jewish life thrive.

Have a wonderful summer and may God bless us with renewed faith and most of all, shalom.

B'shalom,

Rabbi Altshuler

IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2	Gemma Rosefield
Page 3-4	John Abramson
Page 5	Suzanne Goldstein
Page 6	Jackie Alexander
Page 7	Prof Wertheimer's talk
Page 8	A Cantor in Berlin
Page 9	Edgware Lunch

KEVER AVOT

Visiting the Grounds

Edgwarebury Lane Cemetery
Edgware, HA8 8QP

**Sunday 25 September
11.00am**

Kever Avot Service at the Cemetery to remember family and friends who are buried there

Tisha B'Av Service

and the Annual Memorial Service
of the Chevra Kadishah

Sunday 14 August at 11.30am

Liberal Jewish Cemetery
Pound Lane, NW10 2HG

TISHA B'AV
A TIME TO MOURN





GEMMA ROSEFIELD WOWS STUDENTS AND AUDIENCE

Geraldine Auerbach on an intimate musical event

Our Music at Belsize programme always turns up something delightful that enhances this synagogue's remarkable dedication to music.

On 5 June we were treated to an engaging and uplifting double session featuring two superb musicians, our own multi-talented Benjamin Wolf on piano partnering his friend and colleague, renowned cellist Gemma Rosefield, 2007 winner of the prestigious Pierre Fournier Award.

First came the master class to four amazing young players aged 11-16, then a wonderful recital to a large and appreciative audience of synagogue members and visitors. It was so heart-warming to hear these young cellists play, then listen to Gemma's supportive and nurturing suggestions and see how much they learned under her caring tutelage.

Caitlin Whitnall, the youngest at 11, started the afternoon with an exciting rendering of William Squire's *Tarantella*. Her 13-year-old sister Ciára gave a beautifully moving performance of Bloch's *Prayer* – which Gemma

herself later performed as part of Bloch's *Three Scenes from Jewish Life*.

Kenji Luc, 14, performed a Schumann *Fantasy Piece*, op. 73, no. 1, and Gemma was able to inspire him to find the magical otherworldly nature of this work.

Our community cello star Mika Hyman, now 16, gave a spirited performance of the prelude from Bach's *Suite No. 3*.

They all said afterwards how much they had enjoyed and felt encouraged and stimulated by their session with Gemma.

Following a break, Gemma and Ben, with their palpable rapport, gave a stunning recital, explaining their choice of each piece of music for its association with Jewish life and the human voice.

They started with Beethoven's rarely performed *Andante con Variazioni* and ended with Paganini's exciting *Variations on a Theme* from Rossini's *Moses*. In between we were mesmerised by the Bloch

trilogy; a Mendelssohn *Song Without Words*; David Popper's *Hungarian Rhapsody*; one of Gemma's favourites, Janáček's *Pohádka (A Tale)*; and most appropriately, Max Bruch's *Kol Nidrei*. We hope soon to have a snatch of this last piece on the synagogue website.

After inaugurating Music at Belsize in February with a celebration of Alexander Knapp at 70, followed by a superb international Jewish choral concert in April, we look forward to the crowning event on 25 September, when we welcome back one of the world's finest violinists, Maxim Vengerov.



HANDING OVER TO A NEW CHAIRMAN – THE 2016 AGM

An exceptionally smooth Annual General Meeting saw our community's unprecedented constitutional situation finally revert to normal when our Co-Chairs, John Abramson and Suzanne Goldstein, handed over after their extended four-year term to Jackie Alexander, who stood unopposed.

Before turning to the achievements of the past four years, John Abramson thanked the new honorary officers: Jimmy Strauss, who stepped up to the role of Hon Treasurer at last year's AGM when Deborah Cohen's new role took her outside London; and Annette Nathan, who took over as Hon Secretary when Vera Pollins stepped down at that AGM. He also publicly announced Lee Taylor's promotion to Chief Executive, after having started as Director of Administration in 2013.

Suzanne Goldstein first thanked the many people, professional and amateur, paid and unpaid, who made their work possible – especially their spouses. Noting that they had been elected during "a difficult period of transition", she hoped that she had succeeded in introducing a collaborative approach, based on team work and caring.

Jimmy Strauss's Financial Report, detailing fundraising initiatives together with steps taken to reduce the Synagogue's deficit, will appear in the next issue of Our Congregation. Tribute was paid by Annette Nathan to David Rothenberg, who stepped down from the Board after 42 years and served as Hon Treasurer from 1999-2006, having previously served as Assistant Hon Treasurer to the late Max Kochmann and partnering Eric Moonman at the Board of Deputies.

Our new Chairman, Jackie Alexander, introduced herself as a longstanding and active BSS member, working in Human Resources. Thanking her predecessors for ensuring the smooth handover of a congregational entity "in good shape", she said she saw her role as taking the pulse of the community, while underlining the importance of listening to our youth, who are its future.

The first of two presentations came from Eric Moonman, our longstanding representative at the Board of Deputies and a former senior vice-president there. He explained the Board's importance and legitimacy in its broad community role through its democratic basis, even if this makes for slow progress.

The second, which concluded events, was the promotion of Israel Bonds by UK Sales Director, Alan Curtis. With the aim of reaching American levels of sales, Mr Curtis explained its origins in Israel's urgent need of finance in her early years and its continued role in helping her economy. Purchase of these bonds, which are financial instruments as opposed to charitable donations, are a riposte to the current BDS (Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions) anti-Israel movement, Mr Curtis stated.

FOUR HISTORIC AND ENRICHING YEARS

John Abramson's final speech as Co-Chair

It has been four years since I stood here in June 2012 and introduced myself to you as the incoming Co-Chair. During that time I have been privileged to be the Co-Chair of this wonderful, challenging, inspiring and sometimes downright frustrating community.

I can safely say that I have learned a huge amount: about our history, about the way in which this community works, about the huge variety of needs and impulses of its members.

Over the years there have been some amazing and enriching experiences. Also times when I wondered why I ever did stand up before you four years ago and accept this role.

Before I go any further, a word about my Co-Chair, Suzanne Goldstein. Over the last four years Suzanne has shown unwavering commitment to this community and to the role that she, like me, chose to accept. She has demonstrated time and time again an ability to get down and just do it. She has been absolutely constant, reliable and wise, and incredibly supportive.

Suzanne is an amazing credit to our community. I am proud to call Suzanne not only a fellow community member, a fellow ex-Chair, but also a good friend. Thank you, Suzanne, for everything that you've done for the community over the last years, and for me.

Ministers

One of the immediate challenges facing us four years ago was to continue the integration of our new Rabbi into our community. It has been a journey that has taken us to places we have enjoyed visiting, and others that we were pleased to leave.

However, I can say with some confidence that Rabbi Altshuler has made his mark on our community and our members. He is respectful of our history and traditions, but without losing the integrity of his Conservative heritage.

He has brought a new depth to our adult education programme. Some of his conversion students have quickly become very involved members of the community. I am always touched and proud when visitors to our services comment on his warmth and his welcoming approach.

One of our first tasks as Co-Chairs was to find a new chazan for the community. This was harder than we thought and involved much discussion as to whether we wanted a chazan at all and, if so, whether he should be full or part-time, or some other arrangement.

Ultimately, we decided to offer the role to Cantor Heller, and we have spent some time assisting Paul and his family settle into their new community, new country and new roles. The entire Heller family now contributes to the community and we are delighted to have them as a part of it.

Liturgical

I have always taken an interest in our liturgy. One of the issues facing us immediately on taking office was the participation of women in our services. The issue had been discussed for a significant period of time before we started and was the subject of debate around the community. We were left somewhat "holding the baby".

Early in our term we reached a consensus with the Board and the community that resulted in a phased approach to women's participation. This was a step in our evolution, and I remain grateful to the Ministers, the Board and the community for adopting an important change to our minhag with respect and dignity.

The Liturgical Committee has been active and we continued to support the Ministers in organising some of the more complicated festival services. Over the last few years we have enjoyed some hugely inspiring festival services and, in the case of Purim, great fun as well.

Governance and Administration

Our community is a complicated operation. Our income and expenditure is well over £1 million, we have five full time employees, four part-time employees and two contractors, plus more than 30 hourly-rate staff who teach in the Cheder, sing in the choir, look after our youth and facilities and provide security. We have three commercial tenants in our premises and we own our own cemetery. Then there are the nearly 1,300 members.

We looked carefully at how all of this is managed and decisions taken. After



Henny Levin's well-earned retirement from the administrator's role, we recruited Lee Taylor as Director of Administration. Lee's consummately professional approach has resulted in two things: firstly, bringing significant efficiency to the administration, and always in good humour.

Secondly, we recently took the decision, with the approval of the Board, to promote Lee to the newly created role of Chief Executive Officer. We stand down, knowing that our administration is in exceptionally good hands.

We have also looked at the governance of decisions, particularly those that involve spending the community's funds. Material spending decisions are now reviewed by the Hon Treasurer and the Finance Committee before being approved by the Board.

The Board is now the sole governing authority, with the Executive meeting to discuss issues and then make recommendations to the Board. Executive members are responsible for various areas of the community and assist the chairs of the relevant committees where appropriate. I hope we have laid the ground for many years of solid governance.

Finance and Fundraising

You will hear later from the Hon Treasurer about our finances. When I stood here at each of the last three AGMs, I referred to the fact that we still run at an annual deficit. We have tried to manage this by controlling expenses carefully, encouraging new members, and fundraising.

(Continued overleaf)



(Continued from previous page)

Some of our more successful initiatives over the last four years have been the Patrons Scheme, the Donor Tree, the annual Chanukah Market (formerly Bazaar) and the Auction of Promises. All of these initiatives rely on the creativity and sheer hard work of a few highly motivated and dedicated individuals. Fundraising remains the lifeblood of our finances and I will assist in every way that I can.

Building Project

Last year we announced that we had initiated a project to redevelop the hall into a slightly bigger but more flexible and modern multi-purpose space. This project will be funded by the development of a residential block in the middle of the square. As a result, there will be no recourse to the community's funds.

Last summer we held a public exhibition of the plans and received some feedback from the local community, as well as our own. We have developed a long list of potential developers and we hope shortly to be progressing this project.

When completed, it will achieve a variety of objectives: provide us with a state of the art multi-purpose space, increase synagogue capacity and also enhance the square itself. I am delighted to announce that Nick Viner, a Board member, has agreed to take on the leadership of the steering committee managing this project.

Music at Belsize

In 2012, I explained that I had initially been attracted to Belsize Square by the music. My love for our music is as strong now as ever. With a view to having more music at Belsize, we created a Music Committee in 2013 and asked Philip Keller to lead it.

The committee has produced or sponsored a variety of events, has partnered with other organisations such as the Zemel Choir and Wallace Ensemble, and ensured that we are well on the way to making Belsize Square Synagogue a serious hub for both liturgical and secular music. We have also had two highly successful jazz evenings, thanks to the hard work put in by my Co-Chair, Suzanne.

Thanks

And now, I need to record my personal thanks to so many people but will mention only a few.

Towards the end of our term of office, we were lucky that Jimmy Strauss agreed to take on the role of Hon Treasurer and Annette Nathan to take on that of Hon Secretary. They have both been an amazing support to us and to the community.

I need to thank all the Hon Officers for their wise counsel over the last four years and also the members of the Board and Executive, who all give up their time and energy for this community. I would also like to thank the small group of ex-Chairs (Steven

Bruck, Tom Nathan and Paul Burger) who were always willing to offer advice and support where needed (and it often was)!

My thanks also to Jackie Alexander, who has graciously agreed to be nominated for the role of Chair. I have seen some of Jackie's work for the community and am more than comfortable that for the next three years we are in good hands, operated by a level head. Thank you Jackie, for taking this on for your community.

My most special thanks however are reserved for the person who has lived this role with me for the last four years – my wife Paula. With an exceptional amount of good grace, Paula has shared me with the community, and has been tolerant and generous in doing so. Like the ex-Chairs, she has been willing to advise, but also to criticise in equal measure.

The last four years have produced some incredible personal highlights. One of these was the participation by two of our choirs at the Lewandowski Festival in Berlin in December 2013. And a second was the Civic Service commemorating our 75th anniversary in May 2014. Both events made me indescribably proud to be a part of this community, as they reflected its long and unique history and foresaw a long and successful future.

So finally, may I thank you, our members, for giving me the opportunity to have been a part of both that history and the future.

THE GERALDINE AUERBACH LECTURE

Recital Room at the Royal College of Music, next to the Royal Albert Hall
Sunday 3 July, from 3.00-6.00pm

No, our music mover and shaker, Geraldine Auerbach, is not giving a lecture. That is not her scene. But the founder of the Jewish Music Institute in 2000 – the culmination of her enterprise, which started 18 years earlier under B'nai B'rith auspices as the Jewish Music Heritage Trust – is being honoured with a lecture in her name.

The lecture, which is free, takes the form of a programme under the direction of the RCM's music researcher, Dr Terence Curran. It is a celebration of the Breslau-born composer and conductor Peter Gellhorn, who came to Britain in 1935 and, apart from internment on the Isle of Man and war work in an aircraft factory, spent his career in British musical companies: Sadlers Wells, Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne, Carl Rosa Opera and the BBC Singers, as well as teaching in music schools and coaching singers.

The programme includes a panel discussion and performance by students of Gellhorn's compositions for piano and for string quartet (he also composed film music). It forms part of a research project recording the lives and works of the many musicians forced into exile by Nazism, who found a home in the UK and went on to play pivotal roles in shaping Britain's post-war musical culture.



SUZANNE GOLDSTEIN ON "A PERIOD OF TRANSITION"

This is my final speech as Co-Chair and in it I would like to talk about the important people who have continued to make a difference to Belsize Square Synagogue.

Let's start with the office. Lee has been a true leader and stalwart of the office, and has in recognition of his skills been promoted to Chief Executive. It has been a pleasure to work with him, he has been a great asset to the running of Belsize, and I shall miss our time together. His team of Adam Rynhold, Jagdish Chandarana and Jennifer Saul continue to make the office a place which has been happy to work in, and I thank them all for being so helpful to me personally.

When I think of Belsize, I almost immediately think of Gordon, who is always the man to have on your team. His hard work, sunny nature, and wealth of knowledge of this neighbourhood is invaluable. We are so lucky to have him, and I thank him for all he does on our behalf.

Equally important is Eve Hersov in her role of Community Care Co-Ordinator. She has been working in this role for over a year and in that time has achieved a good relationship with our members and the agencies that she works with. Her volunteer group are much appreciated for their behind-the-scenes work to keep the members linked to our community.

Our Cheder continues to thrive under the headship of Jeanie and her staff. We know that our numbers fluctuate, and we have had to be aware of the pressure from Jewish schools, but having said that, the stability of the teaching staff and commitment of Elizabeth Nisbet as Chair of Education, have ensured that our Cheder is where there is learning as well as socialising and a place which continues to be important to the future of our congregation.

My work with both our Ministers has convinced me that they have the community's welfare at heart. As lay leaders, John and I have at times disagreed with how that has shown itself, but I am in no doubt that both Rabbi Altshuler and Cantor Heller have true affection for Belsize and, like parents, only want what is best for the community. In this office I have had the privilege of getting to know both of them and hope that we will keep in touch in the future.

Frank Joseph, Ruth Vered and Caroline Loison are working hard with Kikar Kids and by encouraging new people, they continue to build on the attendance at our Junior Services. I want to thank Adam Nathan for chairing the Youth Committee. This has never been an easy job and, together with Yohel and Michelle Heller, we know that they have worked hard to engage with this particular age group. We welcome Simon Cutner as the new Chair of Youth. Simon has been amazingly successful with our football teams, and has a vast experience with youth groups outside of Belsize.

The very successful Israel Dinner was due to Jeff Graham's team raising a substantial amount of money for our important charities in Israel. As some of you experienced, we had an equally successful fund-raising Auction of Promises last year, as well as the Chanukah Market and BMG events of this year. What links the success of these events are extremely dedicated people, planning for a worthwhile cause, namely, our Synagogue.

To all those people who gave up their valuable time on behalf of the community, we thank you as it is so important that we continue to raise funds to secure our future. With the creation of our Patron's scheme, we have tried to ensure a flow of fund raising, and we thank those who have been able to be Patrons.

Our Hon Officers, Executive and Board are all dedicated people who have this community's welfare at the heart of what they do. I have huge respect for how they conduct themselves, how they give of their time, and how we all benefit. This community's future is based on the work of these people and they are such role models for those members who will, in time, take over their jobs.

I now need to talk about my Co-Chair John Abramson. We did not know each other at all before taking on this office, and so it has been a really interesting way of getting to know someone. John is no different to the people that I have just mentioned previously in that he truly loves the community. His energy and sense of what is right has been the guiding principle in what he does. That doesn't mean we always agreed but I have never, ever, doubted his intentions. The best result has been a true friendship with both John and Paula for which I am truly grateful.



When we took this position on we faced a difficult period of transition, and I have tried to bring a different way of working, based on team work and collaboration. I have enjoyed speaking to members directly about the good and the not so good things that happen in their lives, and hopefully give a sense of being thought about. I hope this work will be something to take into the future as being part of a caring community, which is what Belsize is about.

Last year I described Clive as the Michelle Obama of the community only not as good looking! My husband has been amazingly patient and forgiving of the amount of time that this work has taken, but that is because he too believes in community and its importance. I wanted to thank him publicly as without his support it would have been impossible, especially in this final year.

As only the second female to have had this office, I am delighted that this is going to continue with our new Chair Lady. Jackie is a longstanding member who has worked in this community for many years. I have worked with Jackie over the years and always found her efficient, hard working, intelligent, caring and, essential for her sanity, she has a great sense of humour. I have told Jackie she has my total support and hope I will be of some use to her in her plans for the Synagogue's future.

This office has been a privilege, and has taught me what I already knew. This is a special community, one that has an important role to play in many people's lives, and I hope that even though some people may have disagreed with how things were done, they should know that what John and I did was done from the heart, and as Klopstick would say, "with the best of intentions".



STAYING INVOLVED AND KEEPING PACE WITH CHANGE

Jackie Alexander's opening address as new Chairman



opened the Ark. My other memories of this time are of helping serve food in the Bazaar restaurant and then attending the annual after-Bazaar Dinner when stall holders served us after we had served them. This was very exciting for a young teenager!

Fast forward a few years and Johnny and I were married in this Synagogue. As young marrieds, we were Co-chairs of the Association of Young Marrieds and Singles group, known as AYMS, the successor to the Phoenix youth group. We held informative talks and planned outings and also supported the homes for the elderly in The Bishop's Avenue and worked for Soviet Jewry.

Our two daughters, Josephine and Juliette, arrived and they were blessed in the Synagogue as babies and later attended Cheder and each had a Bat Mitzvah, too. I became a Committee member of the PTA and then I co-chaired the Bazaar with Harry Davies, our then Chairman.

I had been one of the Bazaar Cosmetic Stall holders with Sue and Peter Leon for many years, where donations were often weird and wonderful (too weird to say more!) but always welcome. I also joined the Women's Society Committee under the leadership of the late Cheryl Mariner and, when this eventually changed into the Belsize Members Group, I became co-chair with the late Garry Smith and then with Annette Nathan and finally Marion Nathan.

For a short while I chaired the Building Maintenance Committee and line-managed Gordon. At the time I was setting up new offices in my "day job" and so more or less knew what this entailed and, anyway, Gordon is a pleasure to work with, needs little management and was very tolerant of me. During this period I was asked to become a Governor of the Nitzanim Nursery (having been a Governor of South Hampstead High School), which I did for a number of years, bringing my HR expertise to the role.

Our World

For the last few years, I have been on the Cemetery Committee and initially learnt from Elizabeth Nisbet what was needed in this role, before taking over as Chair when she stepped down to concentrate on our Education

Committee. Steven Bruck is now taking over from me and I know we are in safe hands.

With all this history, I sit in synagogue and, during a service (but not the sermon of course), I often think about all the people who I have known, who are no longer with us but who have shaped where we have come from and who we are today. I also think about how far we have come in keeping pace with change, so that we remain a vibrant and living community that continues to attract new members.

Then I listen to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah speak and I think that they are our future and we must not only listen to what they say but must hear it and consider it. The world around us is changing and it is important for us to continue to consider and debate where we want to sit in that world. We are fortunate in that we have such a committed group of members and that we can have an open dialogue.

I believe that the role of Chairman is to listen to points of view and try to accommodate them where possible or to explain why they cannot be acted upon. I know I will be supported by a fantastic Secretary and Treasurer, their Deputies and the Executive, as well as the Board so I have many people to turn to for advice and help on all matters that come up.

I also have the office who will work with me and Lee who is taking on an expanded role with the new title of Chief Executive Officer. Lastly I have three Ministers on whom I can rely for sound counsel and who all have the wellbeing of our community close to their hearts.

Whilst talking of the Board and Executive, you may not be aware but it has always been accepted practice that husbands and wives cannot serve at the same time. As you will know, Johnny has been a member of both for many years. This means that one of the things I have not done is sit on the Board or attend a Board meeting, so I am going to have to learn fast in this new role!

My Aims

Johnny is stepping down from the Executive, but will continue on the

I find it hard to believe that I am Chairman of Belsize Square Synagogue and I am humbled and excited at the prospect. Of course I have to fill the shoes of two extraordinary people who have just completed their term of office. Suzanne and John were both involved in many aspects of the Synagogue before they became Co-Chairs and I hope will continue to be involved going forward.

They have worked tirelessly for the synagogue for the last four years, one year more than they signed up for originally. They have achieved so much for us and have done so with great grace and unfailing humour. I hope to be able to build on their achievements and my first thanks must go to both of them for the good shape that they leave us in as well as the time they have given to me to ensure a smooth handover.

My Background

In case you don't know me, I work as an independent Human Resources Consultant, Coach and Trainer and I have been involved with the Synagogue for most of my life. I first came to Belsize Square over 50 years ago when Rabbi Kokotek and Reverend Dollinger were our ministers. (I was Jacqueline Jacobus then.)

I have childhood memories of standing at the back of the Swiss Cottage Odeon on Rosh Hashanah whilst these tiny little Ministers (they were a long way away!) who were dressed in white,

Board, as the Chairman is not a Board member. He has agreed to Chair our Membership Committee, so I am not letting him off the hook! This is subject to Board approval, of course, as with all new Committee Chairmen.

We have a number of things that we need to continue to give attention to and make decisions about as a community and here are a few thoughts. Jimmy has already covered the financial challenges that we face.

- As we heard from John, many of you will have seen the consultation on the proposed rebuild of our Hall. We have a great group of people working on this and in due course, will need to consider their recommendations. As you also heard, Nick Viner has agreed to chair this Committee and brings enormous experience to the task.
- We need to continue to find new ways to engage our young people whilst

they are living at home and develop more to attract them back to our Synagogue after university or travel. As Suzanne has said, Simon Cutner will take over this Committee after his great success with football.

- We should think about developing what we can offer to those with very young families, beyond our Kikar Kids Service which, by the way, is a fantastic service.
- We need to find new ways to grow our membership and attract new members at a steady rate. We have everything going for us, we just need to work out how to get the message out there.
- We should strive to preserve music as a key part of our heritage and services and enhance it through the superb work done by our Music Committee.
- Lastly, I would also like to find ways

for members who do not come regularly to services to be involved in other activities on a regular basis.

As I draw to a close, my second thank you goes to all of you who sit on Committees or give your time to the Synagogue in a myriad ways. Without you we could not function as we do and be the warm community that we are. Thank you all.

In this role I will always be happy to hear from members, so please feel able to email me at any time. Lee is creating a new synagogue email address (*see page 11*). I am honoured to have had my nomination to this position accepted unopposed and hope that I can do everything that is needed.

Very lastly, I will continue to look for volunteers to help in all aspects of Synagogue life as, in the end, this speech is not about me but about all of us and our future together as a community.

TRENDS IN THE ORTHODOX WORLD

Claire Walford reports on our guest scholar's talk

Our guest scholar in April, Dr Jack Wertheimer, Professor of History at New York's Jewish Theological Seminary, spoke to us about contemporary Orthodox Judaism.

Interestingly, he said that today's movements are relatively new, starting in the late 18th to early 19th century in response to the Jewish Enlightenment movement of Moses Mendelssohn.

Since the second half of the last century, this has developed in the USA (and Britain) along two separate lines: Modern Orthodoxy, which seeks "to illumine and deepen Jewish commitments" through secular education, and Charedi Orthodoxy or ultra-Orthodoxy, which views the outside world not as an opportunity but as a threat.

The first group covers religiously observant Jews in the professions, such as doctors, lawyers accountants, university professors and those in managerial roles. The second seeks to preserve itself as a group, in which the individual counts for less. The Charedim (God-fearers, literally tremblers, like Quakers) divide into Chasidim (pious ones, a mid-18th century movement that was revolutionary at its start) and their historical opponents, the Mitnagdim.

The class looked at figures from the respected American Pew poll of 2013 for numbers of children under 18 living at home in Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jewish families. Surprise, surprise, the Charedim win hands down! We also looked at Israeli figures which show that Chilonim (the secular) make up a bigger share of older than of younger Jews.

We also talked about why movements such as Aish and

Lubavitch attract people and, conversely, why people leave them, and how Modern Orthodoxy is splintering into new subsets around today's controversial issues of women's participation, acceptance of homosexuality, transgender etc.

A further issue, discussed at other meetings that weekend, was the problem of retaining youth from Bar Mitzvah age to when they marry and have their own children and return to the community. This is not unique to our community nor to Judaism, as became apparent from a later Adult Group Discussion with another visitor, Rev. Craig Brown, a Methodist minister from San Diego, who observed that this applied to practically all Christian communities.

My own feeling is that this is where we need to really start to be innovative. Our congregation was built on the need for community, rather than religious ideology or commitment among the founder refugee members. But the congregation is changing, as that generation dies out, although the founding families prevail in the running of the shul.

People now join because of the way the services are run, the conversion classes, the Cheder and the Rabbi. Professor Wertheimer showed how other communities embrace change not for the sake of change but to keep Judaism and our synagogues alive for future generations.

As he, in my opinion, rightly noted, communities who do not embrace change because they like things just the way they are and have been for the last 75 years or so, eventually die out.

Time to wake up?





A CANTOR IN BERLIN

Naomi Stadlen traces a thread of our “pre-history” in Germany

After the First World War my grandfather, Alfred Aron Jacoby, was a cantor at the Fasanenstrasse Synagogue, Berlin. The chief cantor (Oberkantor) was Magnus Davidsohn (1877-1958), who was to become a founder of our synagogue at Belsize Square. It was Davidsohn who came to London with the precious scores of music by Lewandowski (1821-94), which form the basis of our liturgy.

I have only recently discovered that my grandfather had a direct link to Lewandowski. Davidsohn did not. Lewandowski had just died by the time Davidsohn first came to Berlin as a music student in 1894. So Alfred Jacoby may have a place in the “pre-history” of our congregation.

Davidsohn and Jacoby were both the youngest children of their large families. Davidsohn's parents must have provided a good preparation for his future profession. His father Hermann was himself an Orthodox cantor and musical scholar in Beuthen (now Bytom in Poland), Upper Silesia. His mother was a rabbi's daughter.

My grandfather was born on 25 March 1875 in Berlin where his father, Joseph Aron Jacoby, was, according to Davidsohn, a chairman of the Neue Synagoge (New Synagogue) in Oranienburgerstrasse. So, as a boy, my grandfather must have heard the compositions of Louis Lewandowski who was Director of Music there.

Unfortunately Alfred's mother died when he was only three, and his father died nine years later. Alfred and his

older sisters were sent to a Jewish orphanage in Berlin. He was unhappy there, but he loved the music of Jewish liturgy and decided at a young age to devote his life to singing it.

He married my grandmother, Regina Bradt, and became a cantor in Glogau (now Glogow in Poland) and then Danzig (now Gdansk in Poland) where their son, Erwin, was born in 1904. He then returned to Berlin where my father, Hans, was born in 1906. Alfred Jacoby worked as cantor and teacher at several synagogues, such as the one in Schulstrasse.

During the First World War, Jacoby was one of the first to volunteer for the German Army. He was very popular because he ate kosher, so he gave his meat rations to other soldiers. He was sent to Lithuania, where one Pesach he was invited, as a cantor, to an official Seder in Vilnius (or Vilna as it was known in the Jewish world), at which many dignitaries would be present.

He also received an invitation from a poor village tailor. He thought: "If I go to the official Seder, I shall be one among many. But if I go to the poor tailor, it will be special for him to have a cantor from Berlin at his table. There I can make a difference." So he went.

When he arrived, he found the Seder table overflowing with food. The tailor and his wife must have starved for weeks to honour the visiting cantor. They all had a wonderful evening.

After the war, he returned to Berlin where he was appointed as cantor with Davidsohn at the Fasanenstrasse Synagogue. He also taught children at its cheder. Davidsohn commented: "He was committed to his duties as a deeply religious prayer leader and inspired teacher."

The synagogue seated 1,720 people. My grandfather must have had a remarkable voice to fill the large space. He lived for singing. My father remembered his constant anxiety that he would get a sore throat and become hoarse. He remembered his father drinking a raw egg mixture (probably *goggl moggl*, an East European recipe for sore throats made of sweetened, whisked egg yolks), and then hurrying through the streets, his black robe flying behind him, to take a service.

In 1932, he had a major stroke and had



Alfred Jacoby in 1907 with his wife Regina, and their sons Erwin aged three, and Hans, the author's father, aged about eight months.

to retire. He died on 14 October 1938, barely four weeks before Kristallnacht. The total destruction of the Synagogue at Fasanenstrasse would have broken his heart. He is buried in Weissensee, Berlin's huge Jewish cemetery.

What did my grandfather contribute to Fasanenstrasse? Davidsohn's cantoral training had been Orthodox. When did he learn the Liberale liturgy? And who taught him? At least when my grandfather was appointed after the War, Davidsohn could have consulted a cantor who had experienced Lewandowski's music from boyhood.

It has been hard to find information about my grandfather. Most of it derives from conversations with my grandmother, uncle and mother; from the Archiv at the Neue Synagoge; and from an obituary written in 1938 by Magnus Davidsohn.

Alfred Jacoby emerged from his orphanage, determined, serious and musical, and he lit a spark which inspired my father and, through him, myself and my brother Ben. We are proud to be his grandchildren. He is on the Synagogue Yahrzeit list and I light a Yahrzeit candle for him every year.

Hans Jacoby fled to London in 1936 and in October married Marianne Goldschmidt, who had fled separately from Berlin. Their two children, Naomi and Ben, were born in London. Hans died in 1945 and Marianne in 2005.



Alfred Jacoby and his wife Regina, seated on the grass, in the 1920s. Standing behind them are Erwin and his first wife, Senta.

Our New Honorary Officers and Board Members

HONORARY OFFICERS

Chair: Jackie Alexander
Hon Secretary: Annette Nathan
Asst Hon Secretary: Rob Nothman
Hon Treasurer: Jimmy Strauss
Asst Hon Treasurer: Adam Hurst

BOARD OF THE BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

Board Members on the Executive

Suzanne Goldstein, Adam Hurst*, Annette Nathan*, Elizabeth Nisbet, Rob Nothman*, Jimmy Strauss*, Justyn Trenner, Nick Viner

**also serving as Hon Officer*

Board Members

John Abramson, John Alexander, Philip Brass, Joe Brookes, Steven Bruck, Paul Burger, Keith Conway, Simon Cutner, Adam Davis, Joe Hacker, Pat Hirschovits, Francis Joseph, Freddy Lehmann, Dalia Lichfield, Adam Nathan, Richard Pollins, Vera Pollins, Sam Sanders, Hilary Solomon, Anthony Stadlen, Dilys Tausz, Ruth Vered, Claire Walford

New Venue for Edgware Lunches



Picture shows Charli Fraylich, left, and her son Paul, right. Other members include Inge Strauss (to the right of Mrs Fraylich) and Brigitte Flynn (at the back, second from right). They are joined by members of EDRS.

After several months of hopping from one restaurant to another, the Edgware Local Luncheon Group has come to the end of its search by joining forces with Edgware and District Reform Synagogue (EDRS) to enjoy lunch on their premises, thanks to an initiative between Eve Hersov, our Community Care Co-ordinator, and Emma Roche, EDRS Director of Welfare. The first combined lunch took place on 14 June, attracting a total of 28 "warm and friendly" congregants.

One of our members, Charlotte (Charli) Fraylich said: "It was lovely to meet new people and also to see old friends from the AJR."

Next dates: Tuesday 12 July and 9 August.



AN EVENING WITH MAXIM VENGEROV

Sunday 25 September at 6.30pm at Belsize Square Synagogue

Music at Belsize is delighted to announce the return of Maxim Vengerov, acclaimed violinist, accompanied by his pianist, Roustem Saitkoulov

The programme will include a selection of well-known classics and the premiere of a piece specially written for him by Eilla Leya Altshuler

Enquiries to: info@musicatbelsize.com

GUEST MINISTERS

Rabbi Rodney Mariner will officiate on Shabbat 30 July

Our Cantor on Shabbat 13 August will be Rev Norman Falah Cohen

An opportunity to meet old friends





Dear Fellow Members

At the time from writing this kolumn my nerves are completely on the ledge for the outcoming of the referendum to shoes from which continent we should belong. I think I have impressed my views enough already from this madness, so this object is now clothed as far as this publication is concerned. I move onward to other matters, but still with my heart drumming on my breast.

We are now coming on to the holyday season. I just hope that those who want two will still be able to vacate themselves in Europe. So looking on the bride side, many of you will be sun bathing along the Mediterranean shaw. These days are gone long for us, with Mrs Klopstick preferring an activated holyday in the mountains. But for me this attitude is much to high where the air is to thin for me to breeze probably. For this reason we have decided to have separated holydays this sommer.

Mrs K will be in Switzerland on a Jewish Senior Ladies Guild mountain rescuing cause. So while she is descaling up the Eiger und Jungfrau, I will be respiring in the Grand Hotel in Eastbourne. Each day I will promenade up the front where I can be braised by the sea breethes. Also just a few phrases down the front there are daily concerts by the band from the Cold Scream Guards.

Earlier this week I was attending the Ennnual Genuine Meeting from the synagogue. Unlike the vote on 23rd June, here it was all a foregone confusion. There was only one standing on the chair und no contest for the members from the Board. Everyone was a winner. So without a single word of decent it all went through on the knob. Also, it was a very hot und humorous evening which made me feel very drawsy,



Klopstick's
Koplaint

but still I could not get any of my eye shut, because every time I tried dosing I was immediately waken with loud clapping.

It was an evening of thank use all round as one thanked the other und then the person who was thanked first, thanked the person who thanked them und then someone else thanked both who had thanked before. Und so it went on from thank to clap und thank und clap again. The two half shares John und Susanne are now a hole again in the frame of Yeke Alexander who has been evolved in Belsize Square for most of her live. She spoke with grave distinction und I have no doubt we are in saved hands there.

We also were given an account of the counts. This is not arena in which I have much expertness, but I think what the honourable treasurer Mr Strauss was saying was that the finances did so well this last year that we made a loss. We were also told that the plans for the admonishment of the old new hall to be replaced by a state of the ark unter ground venue, is going ahead probably. On top of it will be a small park und flats for the Belsize Square commune. All this will be done free from charge by someone who I have not personally heard of called Adelle Velopa.

Finally the item I was looking most forward to was the last on the angina. But Israel Bond turned out to be nothing at all to do with Ian Flaming und a Jewish spy, instead it was about investiture of money supporting the government in Israel. Unfortunately, I could do nothing as in our household Mrs Klopstick holds the purse springs und she was at her Jewish martial arts class, Hebrew-Jitsu.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick



Scripture Readings



Candle Lighting	Date	Sidrah/Festival	Torah		Haftarah	
Friday 1 July Agnes, Eleanor & Maude Fisher	2 July Sivan 26	Sh'lach L'cha	Numbers	13:1-14:7 15:37-41	Joshua	2:1-24
Friday 8 July Sophie Brown	9 July Tammuz 3	Korach	Numbers	16:1-17:15 18:30-32	Isaiah	66:1-24
Friday 15 July Galia Weiler- Ofek	16 July Tammuz 10	Chukkat	Numbers	19:1-20:13 21:34-22:1	Micah	5:6-6:8
Friday 22 July Susan Zur- Szpiro	23 July Tammuz 17	Balak	Numbers	5:1-6:3 4:12-15	Jeremiah	31:27-37
Friday 29 July Sue Hellman	30 July Tammuz 24	Pinchas	Numbers	25:10-26:51 29:35-30:1	Jeremiah	1:1-2:3
Friday 5 August Ruth Rothenberg	6 August Av 2	Mattot-Mas'ei	Numbers	30:2-31:54 36:10-13	Jeremiah	2:4-28, 3:4 & 4:1-2
Friday 12 August Georgia Green	13 August Av 9	D'varim	Deuteronomy	1:1-2:1 3:20-22	Isaiah	1:1-27
Friday 19 August Heather Goldstein	20 August Av 16	Va'etchanan	Deuteronomy	3:23-5:18 7:9-11	Isaiah	40:1-26
Friday 26 August Gillian Simmonds	27 August Av 23	Eikev	Deuteronomy	7:12-9:3 11:22-25	Isaiah	49:14-51:3

Community News

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:

Michelle Kayser
Peter Petzal
Gilly & George Gray with daughter Emily
Joby & Susie Blume with daughters Ellie-Noa & Kezia

BIRTH

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Debby Rothenberg and Simon Hill on the birth of Eloise on 12 May

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Agnes, Eleanor & Maude, daughters of Jennifer & Martyn Fisher, who celebrate their Bat Mitzvah on 2 July
Sophie, daughter of Maggie & Graham Brown, who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on 9 July
Ari, son of Galia & Assaf Weiler-Ofek, who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 16 July

WEDDING

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Amy Dudack and Elliott Rose, whose wedding took place on 29 May
Emma Shiffman and David Pollins, whose wedding took place on 5 June

BIRTHDAYS

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Mr G Hellman (91) on 1 July
Mrs L Krieger (94) on 6 July
Mrs G Burns (93) on 8 July
Mrs L Kenley (88) on 9 July
Mr R Mercer (97) on 11 July
Mrs H Wilson (84) on 11 July
Mr B Lachmann (92) on 12 July
Mrs L Oppenheim (96) on 27 July

Sunday Morning Adult Discussion Group

3 July

10.00am-12.00pm:

Rabbi Altshuler on The Great Philosophers – Schopenhauer, Mill, Darwin & Kierkegaard, part 2

12.00-12.30pm:

Review of past year, looking ahead to future programme

12.45pm:

Repair to Claire Walford's nearby home for end-of-year Pot Luck Lunch

Next term begins: 11 September

Special Kiddush Saturday 9 July

Together with Sophie Brown's Bat Mitzvah, we will also celebrate the 75th birthday of Rabbi Rodney Mariner and 70th birthday of Sue Mariner. Please join us in celebrating this happy shared event.

SAVE THE DATE

Shabbat UK will take place on November 11-12

The copy deadline for the next issue of
Our Congregation is Friday 12 August

REGULAR SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm & Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Kikar Kids

Saturday 2 July, 6 August and 3 September at 11.00am

Under-5s Service in the Crèche

5-9 year-olds Service in the Library

11.30am – Kids Kiddush

Often followed by a Pot Luck Lunch

Contact Frank Joseph on 020 7482 2555 to bring a dish

Religion School

Sunday mornings: 9.30am-12.30pm

Terms Starts: 11 September



KIKAR KIDS

Calling all Belsize Square children!

Come and join us this Shabbat morning, 2 July, for our Kikar Kids Services and a lovely Pot Luck Lunch at the Synagogue. And, of course, bring your Mums, Dads, brothers, sisters and any other family and friends.

11.00am: UNDER 5 SERVICE IN THE CRECHE

11.00am: 5-9 SERVICE IN THE LIBRARY

After the Service there will be Kiddush

For lunch, bring a non-meat dish to share. If possible, email Frank Joseph (francisxjoseph@yahoo.com) to confirm you are staying for lunch, with an idea of what you can bring.

Hope to see you there!

LOCAL LUNCHEON GROUPS

Still running and happy to welcome new members
Please let us know if you plan to attend

The NW3 and Wembley Group

Giacomo, 428 Finchley Road, NW2 2HY

1.00pm on Wednesdays 13 July & 10 August

Please phone Irene Strauss on 020 7435 3538

The Edgware Group

Edgware & District Reform Synagogue (EDRS)

118 Stonegrove, Edgware HA8 8AB

12.15pm on Tuesdays 12 July, 9 August

Please phone Inge Strauss on 020 8958 9414

CHAIRMAN'S EMAIL ADDRESS

Please note the new email address for our new Chairman, Jackie Alexander:
chairman@synagogue.org.uk

MUSIC AT BELSIZE EMAIL ADDRESS

Please note the new email address for all enquiries about music programmes under the auspices of the Music Committee:
music@musicatbelsize.com

Correction

Owing to a last-minute rearrangement of page design, last month's issue omitted to credit Phil Carter for the photo of award-winning folk singer Sam Lee on page 8. Apologies.





HIGH HOLYDAY SERVICES 2016/5777

TICKETS & INFORMATION

Members of the congregation will shortly receive in the post a pack with all the information required for our High Holyday Services. This will include tickets for each family member, which are sent out automatically. Application for tickets is now only required for non-members.

The pack also includes application forms for non-member tickets, prayer books and transport requirements/volunteering offers. Please do not destroy. Contact the Synagogue Office if you would like to discuss any aspect of these arrangements.

ROSH HASHANAH

1st Eve: Sunday 2 October at 6.45pm
1st Day: Monday 3 October at 9.30am

2nd Eve: Monday 3 October at 6.45pm
2nd Day: Tuesday 4 October at 9.30am

KOL NIDREI

Tuesday 11 October at 7.00pm
(Fast commences at 6.00pm)

YOM KIPPUR

Wednesday 12 October at 10.00am
(Fast ends at 7.03pm)

YOUTH SERVICES

These take place in the Hall

Rosh Hashanah (both days) at 11.00am
Yom Kippur at 11.30am

OFFICE SUNDAY OPENING

The Synagogue Office will be open for the collection of High Holyday Prayer Books and non-member tickets on Sunday 2 October from 10.00-12.00pm

SAVE THE DATE

BELSIZE SUPPER QUIZ

Sunday 13 November
For a fabulous fun-filled evening, put this date in your diary and invite your friends and family. Further details in next issue of *Our Congregation*

CHANUKAH MARKET

Saturday 3 December
Sunday 4 December

Selichot Service & Dinner

Saturday 24 September
7.45pm for 8pm

Selichot programme:

- Havdalah
- Fish & Chip Supper followed by dessert
- Discussion led by *Rabbi Altshuler*

Followed at 10pm by our traditional musical *Selichot Service* led by *Cantor Paul Heller*, together with *Ben Wolf* and *The Belsize Square Synagogue Choir*

SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

THE BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square, London, NW3 4HX
Tel: 020 7794 3949

Email: office@synagogue.org.uk

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

9.00am - 5.30pm

Fridays: 9.00am-2.00pm

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Lee Taylor - 020 7794 3949

BELSIZE MEMBERS' GROUP

Co-chairs: Marion Nathan - 020 8361 2443

and Dilys Tausz - 020 7435 5996

CHEVRA KADISHA

Chairman: Rabbi Stuart Altshuler

Joint Vice Chairs: Helen Grunberg - 020 8450 8533

Cantor Dr Paul Heller

COMMUNITY CARE CO-ORDINATOR &

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE

Contact Eve Hersov on 020 7435 7129

or email eve@synagogue.org.uk

or call the Synagogue Office for a leaflet

FUNERALS

During Synagogue Office hours phone 020 7794 3949.

Evenings/weekends phone Calo's (Undertakers)

020 8958 2112

JUDAICA SHOP

Open during office hours and on Sunday morning during term time only

KIDDUSH

Rota enquiries to Jennifer Saul in the Synagogue Office (not Thursdays or Fridays)

LIBRARY

Open Wednesdays 10am - 12 noon

At other times please check first with the office

CHEDER

Enquiries to the Head, Jeanie Horowitz, in the Synagogue

Office, or email jeanie@synagogue.org.uk

PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Chairperson: Mandy Brass - 020 8452 6936

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Email the Youth Worker, Michelle Heller

youth@synagogue.org.uk

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO *OUR CONGREGATION*

Emails to: office@synagogue.org.uk

or to the Editor: ruth@famrothenberg.com

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Philip Simon: www.philipsimon.co.uk

CHAIRMAN

Jackie Alexander

chairman@synagogue.org.uk

RABBI

Rabbi Dr Stuart Altshuler

rabbi@synagogue.org.uk

CANTOR

Cantor Dr Paul Heller

cantor@synagogue.org.uk

EMERITUS

Rabbi Rodney Mariner

rodmariner@aol.com / 020 8347 5306



Charity Number 1144866

Company Number 7831243

The Belsize Square Synagogue