

Our Congregation



News and views from Belsize Square Synagogue

UP AND DOWN, IN AND OUT WHY WE NEED OUR JEWISH FAITH AND VALUES

Shalom Chaverim,

Some of the conversation surrounding the Brexit vote (shock) in the UK, followed by the Presidential vote (further shock) in the United States, has been quite startling. There's been a significant questioning of democracy, of stability, of our values with a not so subtle dose of uncertainty and anxiety about our collective future.

My own view is that we have not even come close to reaching catastrophic results in either country. However, this is as good a time as any to take stock and be aware that history can change dramatically, unexpectedly, and catch us all off guard.

We Jews know that reality more than any other people. Safe in Jerusalem in the 6th century BCE, suddenly there arose a Babylonian Empire to destroy the Temple and exile two thirds of our people.

A Jewish state, Judea, the last sovereign Jewish state until 1948, existed in strength and in peace until the expanding power of Rome in the west eroded Jewish independence, leading to the outbreak of the doomed Jewish revolt in 66CE and destruction of the Second Temple in 70CE.

Our entire history since those debacles, while living in *galut* (exile) or diaspora (dispersion), has been a story of "security and safe haven" one day, only to be eventually shocked into disarray.

Jews lived in Baghdad for centuries until they were caught up in its gradual decline and finally invasion by Mongol invaders in the 13th century.

The Jews of Spain, who lived in relative comfort for centuries, bouncing between Muslim and Christian overlords, found themselves cut off by the rise of fundamentalist Christianity, culminating in their expulsion from the entire Iberian peninsula, Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1497. Jewish havens in Poland and Ukraine also came to a sudden end.

In our own lifetime, Jews who had lived in Germany since the 9th century and by the 20th century had reached positions of influence, creativity and even power, became the centre of Nazi extermination designs. Then came the virtual end of Russian Jewry.

And that is a major reason why we should remember the lessons of the coming festival of Chanukah. Before Antiochus Epiphanes IV began his religious persecution, his Seleucid predecessor, Antiochus III, followed up his victory over the Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt in 198 BCE by giving the Jews freedom of worship and relief from heavy taxation.

Antiochus IV continued this policy for the first seven years of his reign. But in a complete reversal, in 167 he initiated the first major pagan persecution of any Jewish community, forbade the study of Torah, prohibited circumcision and forcibly imposed emperor-worship on the Temple in Jerusalem.

What happened in so short a period of time? There are all kinds of explanations – unrest in Egypt following his incursions, leading to fear of another war there; souring of the economy; and most importantly, a growing intolerance towards the "differing practices" of the Jews.

Hence, the first religious persecutions in history, the three-year Maccabean revolt and the subsequent cleansing of the Temple, leading to our holiday of Chanukah.

So, what does this all mean for us? To me, it means that there are no guarantees in history; that things can change rapidly; that we need to be ever alert and ready to check any emergence of anti-Semitism.

We must always be mindful that the countries we love so much and which have given us abundant freedom, hold no rock-solid guarantee that this will last forever.

What is forever is God, Torah and the people of Israel. We must never forget that reality. So light those Chanukah candles, cherish our current freedom, implant in our children the resolve to resist any onslaught on our people and faith. Let them know that our spiritual strength and vision will last for eternity.

My wishes to all of you for a festival of light and hope, of lots of oily food (*latkes, sufganiyot*) and the joy of freedom.

Chag Chanukah Sameach!

Rabbi Altshuler

Chanukah Market

3 December: 5-8pm

4 December: 9.30am-4pm

Following last year's success the Chanukah Market is back.



Introducing a street food court, spa, children's market and all your other favourites in a new, exciting layout.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SHABBAT Friday 27 January 6.45pm

A Service to commemorate the Anniversary of the end of the Holocaust to include Mazkir for all those who died *Al Kiddush HaShem*

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The Shabbat UK Challah Bake – Year 2

This year saw over 50 participants at our Thursday evening challah-baking session, a mixed crowd with enthusiastic children and males of all ages competing with seasoned housewives. The long interval, otherwise known as the dough rising, was joyously filled by a budding 25-year-old master (or mistress?) baker, Georgia Green, who specialises in cakes that look far too artistic to spoil by actually eating. Though the former JFS pupil, daughter of an architect, surprised all her family by abandoning the art world for cookery, she has obviously retained her artistic training and instincts to produce eye-watering confections at her Golders Green base. She delighted her audience with her verve and enthusiasm, not to mention the gingerbread biscuits she handed round, before we all returned to our stations to perfect the art of challah plaiting.

Pictures, clockwise from top right:

Brothers at work: Sam, 14 (on left), and Max Steiner, 17, nephews of our member Cheryl Davis. Max's verdict: "Last year I did a huge challah bake at Brent Cross. This has much more of a community spirit."

"Is my yeast rising?" Head chef Jennifer Saul assures Clive Goldstein that all is well while Jacqueline Goddard, who brought her own wholemeal flour, looks on.

Another fine dough you've got us into! Daisy, 9 (on left), and Bella, 7, display their kneading prowess to their mother, Karen Kidson.



A BUSY FOUR WEEKS

High Holydays 5777 Review

This year (2016/5777) the Belsize Square High Holyday Services were another resounding success and thanks are due to everyone involved. So many people in our community work so hard in preparing and presenting them that it is not possible to list them all but Rabbi Altshuler and Cantor Heller are to be thanked for leading such a splendid season.

Attendances were very good throughout with standing room only in our beautiful renovated shul for Kol Nidrei, Ne'ilah and 1st Day Rosh Hashanah. Our 2nd Day Rosh Hashanah Service is boosted by friends from other synagogues who can take advantage of our invitation to attend this service on producing their own synagogue ticket. Please remember this initiative and remind friends and family next year.

We were again blessed to have our Rosh Hashanah Shacharit Service led by younger members of the community,

who are also learning to lead Shabbat Morning Services. (Do ask at the office if you would like to participate and learn). Our Torah Readers, including those for Maftir and Haftarah, were excellent, again raising the bar for quality.

Over Kol Nidrei and Yom Kippur the talented younger members excelled, particularly in the expert way they led Minchah on Yom Kippur to a large and appreciative congregation. By the final Shofar blast on Yom Kippur, the Bimah was full of children eagerly waiting to join in Havdalah, which they had learnt at Cheder.

This year the Youth Services benefitted enormously from their new, colourful and updated Machzorim, which give more children the chance to participate. Services were largely filled to capacity – a tremendous reflection on their atmosphere or *ruach*.

Straight after Yom Kippur, work began

on our Succah, which was decorated with plenty of fruit, flowers and art work. The Bimah this year was bedecked with beautiful flowers in a change from our usual fruit.

There were plenty of Arba Minim (Lulav and Etrog). Thanks to our Rabbi and Cantor, every congregant was able to say the blessings and wave the Arba Minim before the start of Hallel.

We finally we reached the end of four busy weeks as the sadness of saying goodbye to the Succah and of Mazkir on Shemini Atzeret was replaced by the joy of Simchat Torah. Men and women danced round the centrally placed Bimah before all congregants were called up for group aliyot.

The round of services climaxed with Cantor Heller leading *Kaddish Titkabal*, skilfully weaving in all the beautiful melodies of the year, including *Maoz Tzur*, to signal the next festival on the horizon – Chanukah.

A VERY SPECIAL BIRTHDAY PARTY

A Simchat Torah Tale

*Those who attended the Simchat Torah Under-5s Service had a very special treat this year, a story written specially for them by **Victoria Slotover** and read out to them by **Caroline Loison**.*

Do you like stories? Then listen carefully because I'm going to tell you a story that's more than a thousand years old. It's a story about music and dancing and a little mouse who didn't want to go to sleep.

"Go back to bed, Little Mouse," said Mummy Mouse. "It isn't time to get up yet. I promise we'll wake you when it is."

"What if you forget?" said Little Mouse. "What if we miss the party?"

"I won't forget," said Mummy Mouse, kissing Little Mouse on the tip of his pink nose. "I'm as excited to go as you are but we won't be able to if you don't have a rest first."

So Little Mouse went back to bed but he couldn't sleep. It wasn't because the birds were singing outside his window and it wasn't because he could hear his Mummy and Daddy talking down the hall. Little Mouse couldn't sleep because he was too excited.

Tonight his parents were taking him to a very special birthday party with dancing and singing and flag waving

and lots and lots of chocolate. It wasn't a party for his friend Bruce Bear or Daisy Dog. And it wasn't a party for his Grandma or Grandpa Mouse who were both so old their fur was white and their teeth were yellow.

This birthday party was for the Torah, who was even older than both of his grandparents. In fact, it was a thousand years older than them, if Grandma Mouse was to be believed. She'd told Little Mouse that the Torah was actually five thousand years old and that the stories in it were so amazing, people were still reading them today.

But not just that. Grandma Mouse had said every year, when the Rabbi has finished reading the Torah in synagogue, there's a huge party to celebrate – and then the Rabbi starts reading it all over again.

Little Mouse closed his eyes. He didn't want to go to sleep but he did want to go to the Torah's birthday party.

"Wake up, Little Mouse," said Mummy Mouse, opening his curtains and handing him his smart going-to-synagogue clothes. "It's time to get

ready, the party's about to start."

Little Mouse dressed quickly and hurried to synagogue where all his friends were waiting. Some were waving flags they'd made. Others were holding balloons. Everyone was singing and eating sweets. Then the Rabbi and grown-up mice took the Torah scrolls out of the ark and all the children followed them round and round the synagogue dancing and waving their flags and balloons.

That night Little Mouse slept well. He dreamed about the Torah's next birthday party and about how very special this year's one had been.

*Six-year-old
Joey displays
his very own
illustration for
his mother's
story*



Over the summer I spent a fortnight leading a summer camp for 80 youngsters aged 5-9 in Karmiel, in the north of Israel. I did this through my involvement as a *madrich*, or leader, at RSY-Netzer, the youth movement of Reform Judaism.

I was one of four Brits, aged 18-20. On arrival we were shown to our home, a small flat close to our work base. Since we arrived on a Friday evening, we could only do one thing – have a big Friday Night Dinner. That meant all 10 of us, six Israelis and four Brits.

We spent the rest of Shabbat getting to know Karmiel, which sits high up in the

ISRAEL CAMP WITH A DIFFERENCE

Sam Percival gets an inside view

western Galilee, and bonding as a *tzevet*, or team, before starting at 7.30 on Sunday morning. The camp was at the Raymond Centre, built by the UJIA, who helped co-ordinate the entire trip, along with our educational programme.

Highlights of our visits around the region included the community centre in the neighbouring Arab town of Dir al-Assad and Kibbutz Eshbal, a kibbutz for troubled and at-risk youth.

Despite a fair amount of advance planning, nothing can really prepare you for leading 80 manic children with whom you cannot communicate directly, due to the minor inconvenience of a language barrier. I say minor as, in practice, the British leaders were let off tricky situations such as a recently converted (and circumcised) young Russian Jew who needed help with the toilet. After that incident, our esteem for Elad, the poor Israeli landed with the problem, shot up sky high.

Our varied programme was often broken up to take the kids to the local pool to cool off from activities like cooking or searching for every item on an "adventure day" list. At teatime the English *madrichim* attempted to teach the kids English songs. A special favourite was *Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*, where they were encouraged to sing along whilst learning the words for parts of the body.

Although the language barrier was initially frustrating, it was quickly overcome and it was a joy to help run the camp. Enormous credit must go to the Israeli *madrichim*, without whom this operation would not have been possible.

My two weeks in Israel were fun and incredibly rewarding. I cannot thank RSY and the UJIA enough for this fantastic opportunity to be a youth leader while learning about this fascinating country from the inside.





LOOKING BACK AT 95

Larry Miller interviews Peter Eden

He'd heard the glass breaking on Kristallnacht. He'd seen the synagogue go up in flames, and he experienced far more at the hands of the Nazis. But Peter Eden, a Belsize member since 1955, when it was the New Liberal Jewish Congregation, says he is not overly concerned by this latest rise in anti-Semitism in Britain and elsewhere – with the caveat, "as long as the economy doesn't get worse."



Peter (2nd from right) in "The Avengers" unit

Sitting in his home not far from the synagogue he helped develop, Peter, who was 95 in June, says: "Germany was different, we lived in cuckoo's paradise." His Jewish friends and family "had all the best, we were affluent." During Hitler's rise "we didn't want to know, we thought it would be alright." But for his family in Breslau (now Wroclaw in Poland), as for millions of other European Jews, it was not going to be "alright".

Much would change Peter's view very quickly. The family business was lost and, in 1938, the teenager born Werner Engel was interrogated by the Gestapo after being falsely accused of having an Aryan girlfriend. Not long after that, Peter came to England and safety. He was, he says, "lucky".

Not so his family. In 1941, trying to escape the horror, Peter's parents were sold dodgy visas for Mexico and China, before being herded on to the first Nazi transport train to Lithuania and shot the next day. By then Peter's sister was in Palestine. Eleven years later she would be killed by an Arab terrorist's bomb in Haifa.

After training to be a welder at the ORT school in Berlin, Peter came to the UK on a child's visa, sponsored by a north London gentile couple, who employed him in their factory. At 16 he had a small room in a house in Edgware for 7 shillings and 6 pence a week (37.5p). "I lived on 30 shillings a week (£1.50). Every day fish and chips for lunch and in the evening, pie. I was always hungry," adding with a wry smile "but had a better figure."

He drops his smile, though, when talking about the established Anglo-Jewish community of the time, whom he recalls did not want to have much to do with him and other refugees. "I went to synagogue nearly every Friday night, and only once in a whole year did someone ask me to come home with them and share a Sabbath meal."

Suddenly, in 1940, Peter and other foreign nationals were rounded up, taken to an internment camp on the Isle of Man, and then put on a ship (the infamous Dunera) for a brutal two-month voyage to Australia. All their belongings were stolen, and the "passengers" mistreated.

Yet, he insists he holds no animosity. "Churchill said 'Collar the Lot.' We were German, the British were fighting for their lives. How could I complain?" They would eventually receive an official apology.

After volunteering to join the British

Army, Peter was returned to the UK and ultimately transferred to the Royal Engineers Explosives Company. His change of name came when he was sent on service overseas. It was on a troop carrier heading to North Africa, Peter says, that "A guy from Liverpool said something nasty to me. I went for him and that was the first and only time I've experienced anti-Semitism since coming to Britain."

While British Jews distanced themselves, his experience as a soldier in Algiers was different: "On the first day a Jewish family took me home, but not here."

It was a long war for Peter. He wasn't demobbed until two years after fighting ended. Transferred to Intelligence, he was ordered to track down Nazis. "We were looking for 30,000 Nazis. We had to interview them. Most of the hundreds of thousands coming through were returning German soldiers, but we found plenty who weren't. We identified a woman, a terrible guard at Auschwitz, who was ultimately hanged."

Taking out a faded black and white photo of a group of young uniformed men, he explained: "My unit was made up of ten British soldiers, eight of us were Jewish. We were known as 'The Avengers.' One of our guys found William Joyce, Lord Haw-Haw, in the forest near Hamburg and when Joyce reached for his pocket, he was shot, wounded and captured." Joyce was later hanged for his traitorous Nazi radio broadcasts urging the British to surrender.

Peter also took part in the war crimes trial in Essen (the Essen Lynching Case, December 1945). "We had 22 Germans who captured British fliers, then shot them. We went by the book, they were all hanged. I hated the bloody lot, but I never felt it was revenge for what happened to my parents." The Imperial War Museum has in its files a two-hour recording of Peter reflecting on his military experiences.



Peter Eden today at 95

Taking off his uniform for the last time in 1947, Peter left his welding career behind. On his return to London, he applied for a job with a clothing manufacturer owned by Jewish family. With no "shmatta" experience, he was initially turned down, but it seems the sister took a liking to him and the job was his. In fact, Peter worked at three jobs. He was an office cleaner in the morning, then the day job, finally being a driver at night. It all added up to £12 a week.

He went on to become a "pretty good" travelling salesman, hawking women's wear on the south coast and developing the business acumen he'd later need. "Big fashion buyers, they were tough." The newly introduced bikini was a major line.

Then, Peter explains: "I had a friend who had a friend who wanted to open a restaurant. He'd been a waiter and I

knew nothing about restaurants. His £1,000 wasn't enough, but with my thousand we became partners and opened Bistro 17 on Moscow Road (Bayswater). Even with a three-course meal under £1, we still made money."

Enough money to ultimately have 14 London restaurants operating at the same time, including the Kabaret Night Club and Restaurant in New Bond Street. He is now only left with La Brasserie on Brompton Road. "At my age? I'm retired, but I still have an interest in it."

Peter puts nearly everything down to being "lucky." Lucky that he left Germany when he did and found British sponsors. Lucky that two torpedoes heading for his ship missed their target. Lucky that he survived a shrapnel wound in his groin. Lucky in business.

Yet he dismisses the notion that a

person makes his own luck. "I got by and I have to be grateful. Few of my friends are still around. The other day my company had a military reunion. Just three of us showed up. These days there are so few I know at the synagogue."

Some who have had Holocaust experience say they no longer believe in God. Peter Eden pauses when asked if after losing his parents, relatives and friends, the killing of his sister, and everything he's seen, he believes in God? "There is no answer. I had great luck because, without luck in life, you have nothing."

Then he recalls a High Holiday sermon years ago by Rabbi Kokotek, who said: "God gives you life but he doesn't tell you what to do with it. That always stayed with me. Do I believe? I believe God has not had one hand over me, but two hands."



Older readers will remember Ruth Young, a regular patron of our annual bazaar over the last 30 years in the company of our member, the late Rolf Weinberg, and surrounded by her family and friends, who all loved the food served at the bazaar.

Born in Ulm on 27 June 1921, Ruth's formal education was cut short when the Nazis came to power in 1933. A pro-Nazi teacher ordered her to dive into a half-empty swimming pool, causing her to hit her head. As a trainee nurse in Hamburg, she was witness to the events of Kristallnacht in 1938 when Nazi hordes stormed the Jewish hospital, pulling male patients in their beds out of the wards to be sent to concentration camps.

Ruth, an only child, and her mother, Rosa Laupheimer, a young widow whose husband had died of heart problems, were lucky in obtaining jobs as housekeeper/cook and housemaid

in Stirling. They had a passage booked to the USA, where they had found a sponsor, but the purser turned them away from the ship at Hamburg on the grounds that there were already enough Jews on board.

But they persuaded the skipper of an English fishing boat to take them. There were already 10 refugees on board. When they disembarked in Hull, the local Jewish Committee arranged for their jobs in Scotland.

Ruth had a busy social life in Stirling and at a Jewish refugee centre in Glasgow. There she met Heinz Weinberg (no relation to the aforementioned Rolf!), a fellow German refugee, whom she married in 1942. On joining the Pioneer Corps, he followed British Army policy in anglicising his name to Henry Young.

Ruth was a caring, loving mother and a supportive wife for 46 years. Their four children, Eva, John, Susan and Helen, grew up in the leafy suburb of Harrow and Pinner and, over the years, they gave their parents a steadily increasing number of grandchildren and, lately, great-grandchildren.

Ruth and Henry were founder members of the Harrow Humanist Association and were both politically active. They supported CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) right from the beginning. While Ruth did not go to every

Aldermaston March, she always packed a picnic for Henry and the children. (There were annual "Ban the Bomb" Easter marches from 1958-63.)

After Henry's death in 1988, Ruth rekindled her friendship with her teenage sweetheart, Rolf Weinberg. He accompanied her in 1999 on a visit to Ulm with her children and grandchildren. "It was a bittersweet experience", she later wrote in a family memoir when contrasting the enjoyment of spending time together against facing the Mayor and a former youth club organiser, who had insisted that as a Jew she had to leave the club.

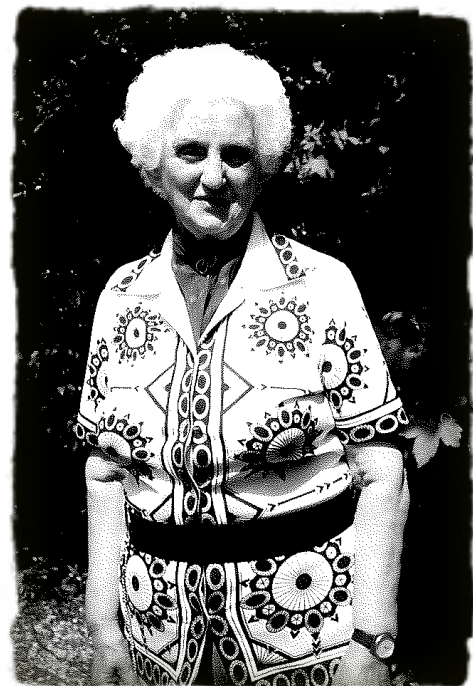
But she appreciated the fact that Ulm had gone to great lengths to address its past, inviting back previous residents. "I had been lucky to be able to start a new life here and I am grateful for it," she declared. "Home is definitely here in Britain!"

Ruth and Rolf lived in Wembley but moved 13 years ago to Sidcup, Kent, to be near Ruth's oldest daughter. Rolf, who joined General de Gaulle's Free French Forces and was awarded the Medaille Militaire (equivalent to the Victoria Cross) in 1945, received the highest level of the Legion d'Honneur (Chevalier) while in a hospital bed in his final years. Ruth was his loving companion at services and events at our synagogue until his death in 2011. Ruth died on 18 October.

RUTH YOUNG

An appreciation by Walter Goddard





IRENE WHITE

A full life

Germany. Her operational partner in Palestine was the better known Henrietta Szold, daughter of an American Reform rabbi and founder of Hadassah Hospital, which became the major supporter of Youth Aliyah.

Ilse went to kibbutz Ein Harod in early 1934. At 18 she trained as a children's nurse at the Wizo clinic in Jerusalem, under the patronage of British Zionists. Her work included home visits to impoverished families. Jewish medical services were dire under the Ottoman Empire despite hospitals built by the Rothschilds and Moses Montefiore. The dedicated British and American Zionist ladies sought to change primitive conditions and practices.

The following year Ilse left to work on a children's ward in a Jaffa hospital, then trained in a general hospital in Tel Aviv. Her parents had reached Palestine separately. Her mother, who brought Fredy, made a living by selling her good German baking – biscuits and stollen (yeast cake). After Georg's death in 1958, they moved to Ecuador.

One of Ilse's patients in Tel Aviv, suffering from a chest infection, was Colonel John Patterson who had been visiting an old friend, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, a hero of right-wing Zionism. Patterson, an Irish Protestant and Christian Zionist, was an equally colourful character, a First World War hero who had commanded the Zion Mule Corps and a Jewish Legion battalion.

He suggested she take her nursing diploma in England, where he would be her guardian since she was under 21. He also taught her English. Through his and his wife's efforts in writing to the Home Office and St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, Ilse sailed to England in spring 1938. She paid her passage by looking after the twin babies of a British diplomat's wife on board. She corresponded with the Pattersons until the Colonel's death in California in 1947, when he was 80.

Wartime disruption in London from the blitz and alien regulations sent her to different locations. She worked at a TB sanatorium in Hertfordshire, then returned to London to Hampstead General Hospital (since absorbed into the Royal Free Hospital).

Her training and experience were eventually recognised as equivalent to SEN (state enrolled nurse) since it had

not been possible to sit formal exams. Her £25 tuition fee had been covered by a grant from the Jewish Refugees Committee at Bloomsbury House.

The next stage of her life came in 1943 when she married a fellow-refugee, Adolf Weiss, three years her junior, whom she met at a dance. He was born in Berlin of Polish parents, which meant that in Britain he was a friendly alien, not an enemy alien. His father died when he was three and he grew up in a Jewish orphanage, which apprenticed him to a locksmith.

He left Germany in August 1939 on a youth permit through *hachsharah* and was sent to pick potatoes in the Cambridgeshire fens. In 1941 he moved to London and joined our synagogue, then called the New Liberal Jewish Congregation.

When called up to the army in 1944 – having been turned down earlier by the RAF and refusing to serve with the notoriously anti-Semitic Free Polish Army – his name was changed to Allan White. He was transferred from the Royal West Kent Regiment to No 10 Commandos, containing Jewish refugee volunteers, and fought in Italy.

In May 1945, he was sent to Hamburg as translator for interrogating German police. He discovered that his widowed mother and younger sister had perished in the camps but his other sister and her husband had survived.

The Whites had two children, Joan born in 1944 and named after the Colonel, and Peter in 1946, before Allan was demobilised in 1947. When she married (at Hampstead Town Hall), Ilse had to leave her hospital work, which was the rule then for women in institutions like medicine, teaching and civil service. But she carried on working for private doctors.

She also had her mother to help with child care in their rented house in Golders Green. Margaret Michelsohn came from Ecuador on a 12-month permit shortly before Peter's birth. Eventually she was allowed to stay permanently and lived with her daughter until her death in 1981.

In 1948, as their lease was running out, the Whites bought a substantial semi in Hendon for £3,000, borrowed from friends. To finance the purchase, Ilse opened a nursing home and took in

Irene White, one of our early members, who died at her home in Hendon on 22 July aged 99, did not engage in community life until retirement. She then burst on the scene, producing tape recordings for sight-impaired elderly refugees and enriching the Chanukah Bazaar with her stall of books and berets, which she respectively wrote and crocheted.

But this was just her last role in an eventful life which matched her resourcefulness with extraordinary opportunities and coincidences. Born in Dessau in eastern Germany on 8 June 1917, she moved at two to Berlin. Her father, Georg Michelsohn, had studied dentistry but preferred to be a poet. He and his wife separated and his parents finished up supporting the family.

But though impractical, her father was far-sighted and realised that Germany's instability after the First World War was dangerous for Jews. In 1926 he sent his oldest son, Gidon, to Palestine, recently placed under British mandate by the League of Nations. Gidon became a successful orange-grove owner and producer. The next son, Fredy, was sent to study in France.

Ilse, as she was originally known, was the youngest. After leaving school, she worked briefly as a window-dresser. She also belonged to a Jewish youth group preparing for kibbutz life in Israel through *hachsharah*, agricultural training, organised by *Jugend-Alijah* (Youth Aliyah).

This organisation was created in 1932 in Berlin by Recha Freier, a rabbi's wife, as a solution to Jewish youth unemployment in anti-Semitic

nine single Jewish refugee women, thereby also fulfilling government policy of occupying empty bedrooms in the post-war housing shortage.

While Allan was working in Hamburg as staff sergeant on the Control Commission of the Public Safety Board, Margaret wrote to ask if he could trace an old friend, Dr Weber, a Lutheran whose Jewish wife had died from TB before the war. While ill, she had been in the same Swiss sanatorium as Margaret, also suffering from TB, and the friendship between the families continued even after that death.

Allan found Dr Weber and he, in turn, asked Allan if he could trace the Jewish owner of the animal serum veterinary company he had worked for and been ordered to take over under Nazi rule. He wanted to return the company, still a going concern.

The owner was a Dr Hans Enoch who turned out to live opposite the Whites' new Hendon home. Dr Enoch promptly visited Hamburg to reclaim his business, the International Serum Company, and relaunched it from London. The serum was produced from horses kept in a paddock in Mill Hill. Dr Enoch offered Allan a job in the new company.

Allan had started work in a sheet metal factory but took the opportunity to become a rep. He used the car he had recently bought for £60, a 1934 Ford Model T. He had no medical or laboratory background but, driving all round Britain, he saw that customers' access to drugs and equipment was fractured and inefficient.

In 1952 he set up his own business, the Veterinary Drug Company (York). York was chosen as the midpoint between the north of Scotland and south of England, and he liked the place and its people. He stayed on good terms with his former employer and bought products from him as part of his one-stop supply and distribution hub.

With her mother looking after the home and children, Ilse took on a new role in York as hostess of the many social functions that helped cement the company's relations with suppliers and customers. She was fully occupied with this for 30 years until her husband's death in 1982 from leukaemia, a month before he was due to retire. Their son-in-law, the late Michael Arton, published his story in *One Day in York* (1989).



Irene and Allan White with baby Joan

This next stage in her life, as a widow, saw a transformation. Ilse now became Irene (her second name, pronounced with three syllables and followed by Felicitas Edna, with Bela, originally Bilha, as her Hebrew name). She wore trousers, a revolutionary step then for a woman in her mid-60s.

She had promised her husband that she would look after "our people" (*unsere*) and she always kept a promise and loved a challenge. She was fearless. When she had to stop driving, due to a crash, she rode a scooter. She once chased a burglar out of her house with a broomstick.

At Rabbi Rodney Mariner's suggestion, she visited The Bishop's Avenue homes near Kenwood (Heinrich Stahl House, Leo Baeck House, Osmond House and, in Hampstead, Otto Schiff House – now all sold and redeveloped) and spoke in German to residents who never received visitors.

Her visits revealed the hunger in the refugee circle for keeping up with events. It started with a wheelchair-bound lady bemoaning the fact she could no longer attend services. With the rabbi's and cantor's consent, Irene taped a service for her. The result was so popular she had to make a new recording every few months.

This led to her recording lectures and music to play to residents. Because so many of them could no longer see well enough to read, she collected a team of five volunteers to read and record the monthly publications of Belsize Square Synagogue and the Association of Jewish Refugees.

The postal service was in a healthier state then. Cassettes in special returnable black plastic wallets were sent out and returned as a free library service. During the course of

10 years, she recorded over 1,000 religious services, light and classical music concerts, cabaret and talks.

After attending an art course, she started art classes for the elderly and arranged a highly successful show of their work. She also organised several visits to York, and visited the bereaved and volunteered at the AJR Day Centre. On one occasion a man objected to the colour of his cloakroom ticket. It was yellow and reminded him too much of the yellow star he was forced to wear in Germany.

She recalled that poignant incident in her 1991 memoir, *I Came As A Stranger*, the first of her six self-published books. Reflecting her personality, it is a chronicle of short, clearly delineated incidents, each making a specific point. Her other books were fiction, based on her experiences.

After 23 years of volunteering she retired in 2005, aged 88, to be cared for by her daughter, Joan Arton, who followed her into nursing. Her son predeceased her in 2013. She is survived by Joan, five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

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THE SHYLOCK PROBLEM

News and reviews of anniversary productions and discussions

The Merchant of Venice has been the play of the year, thanks to the coincidence of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death (on April 16) with the 500th anniversary of the establishment of the first ever Jewish ghetto in Venice.

The forced concentration of Jews in the Ghetto Nuovo (New Foundry, which in time became the Ghetto Vecchio, Old Foundry), was soon copied around Europe. It was situated in Cannaregio (Royal Canal), the historic northernmost district of Venice. Jews had to return there every evening and the gates were locked from sunset to dawn. The gates were removed by Napoleon in 1797.

In the play, the actual merchant of Venice is Antonio, a Christian citizen. But its central character is Shylock the Jew, the outsider, and this is one of Shakespeare's more uncomfortable plays for modern times and sensibilities. England had no Jewish community at the time but people were still obsessed with Jews.

They had been expelled from England in 1290 by King Edward 1 and did not return until negotiations between Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, leader of the Amsterdam community, and Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, quietly paved the way in 1656, eight years after Holland shook off Spanish rule to become the Dutch Republic.

There were exceptions. Queen Elizabeth I had a Jewish doctor, Roderigo Lopez (Portuguese by birth, brought up as Catholic and converted to Protestantism but always considered an ancestral Jew), who was executed on a false charge of poisoning – another obsession of the day. There may also have been some Jewish court musicians.

But in practice, Jews were an unknown quantity, so anything went – and did, as in Christopher Marlowe's 1589 hit, *The Jew of Malta*. Shakespeare's play came out some eight years later, which was about four years after Lopez's death by hanging. Lopez's trial may have given Shakespeare the idea for staging a trial scene centred round a Jew.

The play weaves together various strands of old stories (Shakespeare was never concerned with originality of plot). But is it a comedy or tragedy? To



Phoebe and Jonathan Pryce in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare's Globe.

his audience, it was undoubtedly a comedy, clinched by the final scene where the newly-wed grooms, Bassanio and Gratiano, have to explain to their wives the loss of the rings their wives just gave them.

But this is a play with a serious and, indeed, savage heart. Is it really a comedy or, as lawyer and critic Anthony Julius has suggested, a revenge comedy, as opposed to the more common genre of revenge tragedy? This was one of the points made in an interesting and highly interactive talk at the Adult Discussion Group given in mid-October by Dr Joshua Edelman, lecturer in theatre studies at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Dr Edelman previously spent over 12 years as a theatre director in Dublin, where he put on *The Merchant*. He was struck by the sudden switch from Shylock's vague first proposal for the loan's collateral, or bond, to be "an equal pound of your fair flesh cut off and taken in what part of your body pleaseth me" to his curt demand in the trial scene for that location to be "nearest the merchant's heart".

Dr Edelman's point was that contemporary audiences would have immediately taken the first statement to mean castration. To complicate matters, he reckoned there was also a conflation of castration with circumcision (which people did not understand but, again, were fascinated by), together with the myth of ritual slaughter and the Christian belief in the redeeming power of Jesus' blood – a potent mix.

In any one else's hands, Shylock's character would have been a straightforward villain and played as a pantomime clown or semi-clown.

Indeed, he was probably first staged as the Pantalone character who, in the *commedia dell'arte* theatrical troupes which started in northern Italy in Shakespeare's time, was the archetypal stingy Venetian businessman.

But Shakespeare couldn't do cardboard characters. He had to round them out. That was his genius and that is what makes Shylock such an interesting, if embittered, personality. He has good reason for his hatred and vindictiveness.

And nobody is really nice in this play. If Jewish spectators are uncomfortable at the naked anti-Semitism, male viewers can feel surprisingly hurt by the two women's trickery after they have got the rings off their husbands, at least, according to Dr Edelman. People talk up gentleness and mercy but no one practises it. Hypocrisy rules, and there is a definite lack of fair play.

So, how to put on the play? Every generation has to remake its view and version of Shylock. Historically, Edmund Kean was the first actor to discard the standard wig and false nose in 1814 and play the character with a real range of emotion.

More recently there have been notable performances by Laurence Olivier as a respectable Victorian Anglo-Jewish gentleman (1970, director Jonathan Miller), Anthony Sher suffering trial by mob rule (1987, director Bill Alexander) and Henry Goodman under a 1930s fascist regime (1999, director Trevor Nunn).

This year Shakespeare's Globe Theatre near Southwark Bridge staged its impressive production under Jonathan Munby with Jonathan Pryce as Shylock and Phoebe Pryce as Jessica, father and daughter playing father and daughter. Like most post-war productions, it features genuine Jewish elements, like a tallit or kaddish, as opposed to the stereotypical and inaccurate representations that Kean rejected. This one also incorporates the Christian ritual of baptism.

But does this stage-business innovation add anything? I am not sure. With this production, the "Jewish element" took the form of (to me) an unintelligible Yiddish argument between

Shylock and Jessica. Perhaps being Welsh, as Jonathan Pryce is, has something to do with it.

As a child, I heard Welsh-Yiddish speakers and couldn't understand them in Yiddish or English (ditto Glaswegian Jews of my youth). And the Hebrew singing, which I am sure was correct, had no familiar cadences. Obviously, I

had the wrong Jewish education.

I also thought the director did not bring out the key facets of Jessica's character, although she came over as a strong and independent personality. She is so obviously itching to join the (Christian) party but what we got was the highly plausible, if not strictly Shakespearean, row with Daddy.

And in the final scene, sitting in the moonlight and still at the honeymoon stage, where was that lyricism and sheer delight in her new-found status? (I often wonder what happened later to that marriage, especially when the money ran out.) But this was still a Shylock, and Antonio, well worth seeing.

Ruth Rothenberg

THE MERCHANT IN VENICE

Philippa Strauss describes a "unique experience"

As mentioned in the last issue of *Our Congregation*, Philippa and Jimmy Strauss travelled to Venice to see a version of *The Merchant of Venice* put on in the ghetto itself.

Renamed *The Merchant in Venice*, it was staged in the main square of the ghetto with an international cast including Italians, Americans, French and British.

The director emphasised themes of alienation, intolerance and the power of the wealthy and well-connected, especially men. Shylock was played by five different actors (including one woman), each wearing a wide, yellow sash. He was presented not just as "the Jew" but as the symbolic outsider, distinct from Venetian society; an easy target for taunting and cruelty, due both to widespread ignorance of Jewish

culture and traditions and to his own low status.

It was clear that Shylock could not respond in kind and harboured deep grudges against his antagonists. At one point the five Shylocks were mocked and taunted by the Venetians to illustrate why he had no mercy left for Antonio later at the trial.

In contrast to the bitter divide between Jew and Gentile, the director used an international expert in *commedia dell'arte* (clowning and slapstick) to relieve the mood with humour and irreverence. This expert performer who played Lancelot Gobbo, here dubbed Lancilotto, came on at the opening to tell risqué jokes in Italian, the only language she used. Her slapstick removed the need for translation.

Her posture and movement personified the comic exaggeration and swagger typical of this very specific style. She also set the mood with a song not in the original text. Her Italian mixed well with the sprinkling of Ladino, French and Yiddish from other actors, lacing the piece with a highly Venetian flavour.

The play sold out well before the opening night in July with queues for returns. Starting at twilight, the open-air performances in the square (visible to people who actually live there) lasted two hours with no interval and the narrative thread was easy to follow, even for those new to the play.

Each performance was enthusiastically received, with prolonged applause and a standing ovation from many in the audience. The experience was unique, profoundly moving and an outstanding interpretation of Shakespeare's text in this historic venue, with clear resonances for us today.

The New York-based company, *Compagnia de' Colombari*, specialises in site-specific theatre and is highly recommended. It will reprise this production in and around New York in September 2017. If you would like details, news of dates and venues will be posted on their website, here: <http://www.themerchantinvenice.org/#the-show>.



Shakespeare's statue in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey

And Another View of Venetian and Jew

From Rebecca Nisbet

By way of preparation for studying the text for GCSE, I went last summer to see *The Merchant of*

Venice performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Considering this is a play about being an outsider, a play about Christian virtues pitted against Jewish morality, a play beloved by the Nazi regime, this was a surprisingly homely production.

Travelling to Stratford-upon-Avon, one is reassured by being in the familiar Warwickshire countryside and the beautiful modern theatre. The Assistant Director was Oscar Toeman, son of

BSS's own Helen and Peter Toeman, newly graduated from Cambridge and on his RSC debut. The programme notes were by Howard Jacobson and Jonathan Freedland, the community writers so often reeled out to comment on Jewish community matters. So far, all was familiar.

And yet this was a strangely alien production. Shylock was played by Makram Khoury, an Israeli Arab born in Jerusalem, who speaks English with an Israeli accent. Was that an attempt to universalise the play beyond its inherent anti-Semitic theme or was it yet another step on the road to suggest that the new prejudice of anti-Zionism is just the old prejudices recast?

What was meant by this role reversal? Someone who could be seen by British

audiences as a victim of Israeli might, taking the part of the Jew? I have heard it said that part of the message of the play is that, however much one thinks of Shylock as the victim and worthy of the audience's sympathy, by the end of the play, the inherent untrustworthiness arising from his Jewish birth comes to the fore. Certainly, with this in mind, the Israeli accent was disconcerting, as was seeing the Jew wearing a kippah throughout.

Overall, there was much to enjoy in this production. The relationship between Antonio and Bassanio was portrayed in a new light. The sets were simple and dramatic, with the three caskets dropping from the roof. And more importantly, I was able to read the text at school, with at least one dramatisation in my mind.





Dear Fellow Members

I am pleased to announce that my wife Mrs Klopstick has earlier this month been awarded a brown medal for coming third in the over eighties Jewish Ladies Gymnasium competition. She did especially well in the parallel bars and on the bima.

For my part I am very flattered to have been invited to make up a table to the BGM Super Quiz last month. I had to refuse this kind offer as I have never been able to make a good table and my hearing is not strong enough in these days for me to write the answers in time.

Of course at this time of year with the trees having shredded their leaves and the air full with frost we come to think of what used to be our traditional Bazaar but now is the Belsize Chanukah Weinachts Markt. In the olden days most from us were in business and we brought our own wares to sell. Unfortunately there was never enough room for my button collection. Mrs Klopstick used to give a free from charge message to anyone who was a stiff neck or had bag problems. There also was the bottle tumbler, Sargent Balzheimer's first aids stand and many different schmutter schtalls.

These days are gone long now and we have to brace the new ways. I am very much alongside my wife in welcoming change. Too many of my contemporaries like to live in the passed. They too easily forget that once there ideas were ejected by the old funny dummies of their time.

I am writing this column too days after the USA president



Klopstick's
Complaint

election when Donald Trump trumped on Hillary Clinton. For me the choice between this two was even more obvious that the choice between the Remains and Leave from the UE. I can't believe that the Americans also voted to the right just like here in little minded Briton. I heard for the first time in my life the warts 'Jew SA' come from some Trump supporters what was relative to this ridiculous conspiracy theorem.

I have a few weeks ago been shown an article from the Jewish Chronic ridden by a Morsati Rabbi, Neil Altschuler. He is claiming to be ours at Belsize Square. Of course no one of our members would be fooled by this proposter. Our Rabbi is Steward and has long in the years of time abandoned the 'c' in his name. I hope that as many from you will right to the JC and put the matter correctly. Imagine that someone would write in the Chronic as the Sheaf Rabbi, Egbert Mirvisch, there would be protestants mounted from every corner.

Soon it will be Chanuka itself and out will come Mrs K's recipe for donuts. This compromises of doe with nuts. My wife really is a Godsent to all local dentists and orthodoxies. From now you will not here from my column till the new year of 2017. For those from you who are going on a winter sport, please take care not to break any limbs and don't course an avalunch. I take this opportunity and on behalve of Mrs Klopstick two, to wish you all the best seasoned greetings possible and a very happy and preposterous New Jahr.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick

Scripture Readings

Candle Lighting	Date	Sidrah/Festival	Torah		Haftarah	
Friday 2 December Denise Jacobson	3 December Kislev 3	Tol'dot	Genesis	26:23-27:27 28:7-9	Malachi	1:1-2:7
Friday 9 December Annicka Terry	10 December Kislev 10	Vayeitzei	Genesis	30:14-31:16 32:1-3	Hosea	12:13-14:10
Friday 16 December Deborah Jay	17 December Kislev 17	Vayishlach	Genesis	34:1-35:15 36:40-43	Obadiah	Book
Friday 23 December Michelle Wayne	24 December Kislev 24	Vayeishev	Genesis	38:1-30 40:20-23	Amos	2:6-3:8
Friday 30 December Jackie Alexander	31 December Tevet 2	Mikeitz Shabbat Chanukah (7th)	Genesis Numbers	41:53-43:15 7:48-53	Zechariah	2:14 - 4:17
Friday 6 January Karen Green	7 January Tevet 9	Vayiggash	Genesis	45:28-46:27 47:25-27	Ezekiel	37:15-28
Friday 13 January Pat Hinson	14 January Tevet 16	Vay'chi	Genesis	49:1-26 50:23-26	I Kings	2:1-12
Friday 20 January Sara Collins	21 January Tevet 23	Sh'mot	Exodus	3:1-4:17 5:22-6:1	Isaiah	27:6-28:13 29:22-23
Friday 27 January Lucy Bergman	28 January Shevat 1	Va'eira Rosh Chodesh	Exodus Numbers	7:8-8:15 28:9-15	Isaiah	66:1-24

Community News

BIRTHS

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Lydia Goldblatt, on the birth of her daughter

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:

Jack Farkas

Eddie Sternberg

Daniel & Michelle Samson with daughter Lottie

Zippy Woolfson

Susan & Patrick Storing

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Eben, son of Annicka & James Terry who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 10 December

BIRTHDAYS

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Mrs A Goodwin (93) on 2 December

Mr G Goodwin (93) on 6 December

Mrs A Badian (105) on 11 December

Mrs A Balint (93) on 28 December

Mrs C Haar (95) on 29 December

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:

Randolph Mercer on 13 November

Sunday Morning Adult Discussion Group

4 December No session – Chanukah Market

11 December

10.00-11.15: Rabbi Altshuler on The Great Philosophers and the Jewish Response: Jewish Mysticism and Gershom Scholem, Part 1

11.15-12.30: Michelle Huberman, Creative Director of Harif (association for Eastern Jews) and businesswoman, on The French Jews in London: who are they, why are they here, and how will they be affected post-Brexit?

18 December - 1 January No sessions – Chanukah break

8 January

10.00-12.00: Rabbi Altshuler on The Great Philosophers and the Jewish Response: Jewish Mysticism and Gershom Scholem, Part 2

12.00-12.30: Open Forum discussion

15 January

10.00-11.15: Rabbi Altshuler on The Great Philosophers and the Jewish Response: German Jewish Reform – Abraham Geiger

11.15-12.30: Speaker TBC

22 January

10.00-11.15: Rabbi Altshuler - the Great Philosophers and the Jewish Response: Wissenschafts des Judentums — Leopold Zunz, Zechariah Frankel, Heinrich Graetz and the birth of Masorti Judaism

11.15-12.30: Mia Hasenson-Gross, Director, René Cassin (human rights organisation): The Jewish Voice in Human Rights – Slavery in Judaism

29 January

10.00-11.15: Rabbi Altshuler - the Great Philosophers and the Jewish Response - Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Neo-Orthodoxy

11.15-12.30: John Heyderman on Spinoza (TBC)

The copy deadline for the next issue of
Our Congregation is Friday 13 January 2017

REGULAR SERVICES

Saturday 3 December and 7 January at 11.00am

Kikar Kids

Saturday 5 November and 3 December 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

End of Term: 11 December 2016

Next Term Starts: 8 January 2017

LOCAL LUNCHEON GROUPS

Still running and happy to welcome new members

Please let us know if you plan to attend

The NW3 Group

Giacomo, 428 Finchley Road, London NW2 2HY

1.00pm on Wednesday 14 December & 11 January 2017

Please phone Irene Strauss on 020 7435 3538

The Edgware Group

Edgware & District Reform Synagogue (EDRS)

118 Stonegrove, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 8AB

1.30pm on Tuesday 13 December & 10 January 2017

Please phone Inge Strauss on 020 8958 9414

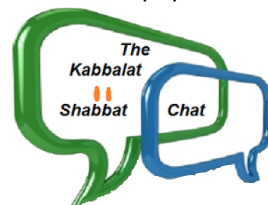
CANTOR HELLER'S KABBALAT SHABBAT CHAT

An invitation and opportunity for Bar Mitzvah class pupils to make Kiddush, sing Lecha Dodi and learn the lessons of the Parsha.

On the second Friday of the month,
5.30pm in the Library

Next session: 9 December 2016

No January Session



BELSIZE BOOK CLUB

Wednesday 14 December at 8.00pm

We will be discussing *The Paying Guest*
by Sarah Waters

Contact Paul Lindsey on 020 7435 5296

or email Dorothy White at dorothywhite99@gmail.com



Vital Meetings on our Synagogue's Future Shape DON'T JUST SAVE THE DATE – BE THERE!

Sunday 15 January at 11.00am

Tuesday 17 January at 8.00pm

Do you remember the exhibition of potential Synagogue development plans in September last year?

Following further work on this project from our highly committed team and a positive response in principle from the London Borough of Camden, we are ready to tackle the next stage – to finalise the design brief and develop a programme to turn it into reality.

There will be two Open Meetings at the Synagogue to meet the team and hear more detail about the project. This will also be an opportunity to put forward any ideas you may wish to be considered and possibly taken on board.





Meet Our New Youth Workers



After winding down over the summer, travelling to different corners of the earth and having lots of fun in the sun, it's time to bring our younger members of the congregation back to Belsize Square and introduce the new youth leaders, Melanie Nathan (left) and Zoe Cowan.

Having grown up in Belsize, taken part and lead numerous activities, the pair are delighted to be taking over the youth.

There are lots of fun activities planned for the forthcoming year including a Skeet Machaneh (15-17 September 2017), trampolining, quasar, climbing and lots more.

Look out for the upcoming events on the last Sunday of every month and join in the fun!!



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Wishing you a happy & healthy, sweet NEW YEAR!

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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

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During Synagogue Office hours phone 020 7794 3949.

Evenings/weekends phone Calo's (Undertakers)

020 8958 2112

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

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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 Workers, Melanie Nathan & Zoe Cowan
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



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