

Our Congregation



News and views from Belsize Square Synagogue

CAMPAIGNING FOR DIGNITY, TRUTH, ACTION AND STUDY

Shalom Chaverim,

I was moved by the speakers at the Campaign Against Antisemitism demonstrations in March and April. (See pages 6 and 7.)

Some of the most moving words were delivered by a survivor of the Shoah, Agnes Grunwald-Spier. Born in Budapest in 1944, she survived and has been a witness in writing and speaking of the horrors of the Holocaust. She quoted Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the noted Christian theologian and scholar and one of the few church leaders to speak out against Nazi antisemitism in Germany during the 1930s. He was eventually arrested and sent to a concentration camp, where he was hanged in April 1945, a month before the end of war.

Bonhoeffer said: "Not to speak is to speak; not to act is to act." In other words, silence and apathy, "the bystanders", as Elie Wiesel labelled those who let the forces of evil overwhelm Germany and Europe, bear the greatest responsibility for the unfolding of the greatest murder of a people, the Jewish people, in the history of civilisation.

Not only do these words ring true in so many ways in the historical and political

realms, they also resonate in our daily lives. Without the commitment of action, of standing by what we believe in, our ideals fade, our principles wither, our lives stand for little.

The lesson to us is not only to stand up and react to the virulent antisemitism spreading in many sections of the Labour Party but also to support those in the Labour Party who are working hard to protect the dignity of both party and country in combatting this grotesque antisemitism and hatred.

It is now May and this is the point when we, too, can make a stand. The secular date of Israel's 70th anniversary is 14 May. Be proud of your Jewish state, even with its imperfections. It is ours and, had there been a Jewish state in 1938, six million Jews would probably not have been murdered before the eyes of a silent, apathetic world, the bystanders who let this catastrophe happen.

We are going to Warsaw and Vilnius from 10 to 15 May, when the celebration of Israel's 70th anniversary will take place around the world. We are going to Poland and Lithuania at a most interesting time, when we read almost daily comments such as those from Poland's Deputy Prime Minister, who said that "Jews were worse than

resided for centuries. The Shelabovs of Pinsk, then in south Poland, all disappeared off the planet because of the silence of the world, immobilised by the sadism and violence of Nazi Germany reaching across the whole of Europe.

Their story is now mine. I can never be silent, I can never let what happened during World War Two ever happen again to our people or to any other people. But as our member and tour leader, Professor Antony Polonsky, an expert on Polish-Jewish history, told us at an advance meeting, East European antisemitism has moved Jewish guilt on from capitalist exploitation to Communist oppression.

Shavuot, the celebration of *Matan Torateinu*, the Giving of the Torah at Sinai, begins Saturday night 19 May. Stand up and be counted by coming to our annual *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot* which begins after our 6.45pm service. Sitting on the sidelines of the adventure of Jewish learning, feeling that the evening belongs to "them" and not to "me", is not the way to perpetuate Jewish life. Not to study is to study – but study nothing.

The theme of our sessions this year is "War and Peace" and we will look at different aspects of this topic in five sessions led by Antony Polonsky who will examine the role of Jews in the First World War, while Cantor Paul Heller will look at the *Sim Shalom* (Make Peace) prayer in the Amidah.

(Continued on page 9)

SHAVUOT SERVICES & STUDY

- 1st Eve:** Saturday 19 May at 6.45pm
followed by study session, *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot*, 7.30pm
1st Day: Sunday 20 May at 10.00am
2nd Eve: Sunday 20 May at 6.45pm
2nd Day: Monday 21 May at 10.00am including Mazkir

Tikkun Theme: War and Peace

Professor Antony Polonsky:

East European Jews in war and peace 1914-1921

Jonathan Paris:

The ethics of diplomacy & foreign policy and their role on the battlefield

Cantor Paul Heller:

The blessing of peace and its place in our daily prayers

Susan Storning & Claire Walford:

Jewish women fighters, partisans and spies

Rabbi Dr Stuart Altshuler:

Justifying war

This is Poland, where my father's maternal family

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SPIELING FOR PURIM

Fun was had by all at our delightful Purim celebration. Despite snowy weather and slippery roads, over 100 people flocked to Belsize Square for an early Purim feast – Falafel Feast, that is – followed by delicious ice cream. There was a fancy dress parade, a Purim themed table mat to occupy young and old, and Purim music playing to brighten a dark snowy evening.

Following our feast we went into the Synagogue to listen to the Megillah read beautifully by our young post bnei-mitzvah students mainly in year 10 (aged around 15). As each chapter was read, the Belsize Purim Puppeteers recounted what had happened in that chapter. Our performers included members as well as guests and some children there for moral support. Thank you to all who braved the snow to make this Purim a warm and welcoming celebration for young and old.

Jeanie Horowitz

Clockwise from top right:

Pirate from unknown seas absorbed in activity mat

The Purim Puppeteers

Cantor Paul Heller wearing Trump wig and Superhero David Inwald in improbable attempt to save the world

Year 6 girls Zoe, Nina, Celia and Alice enjoy their falafel

A visiting Fairy and mini-King Ahasuerus



OPERA IN (OR DESPITE) THE SNOW

People who were understandably deterred by the late snows of winter missed a treat when BSS hosted its first operatic performance, Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (*All Women Are Like That*) on 18 March. It was a neat and sparkling performance with the added enjoyment of being able to understand the words, which were sung in English and came over clearly articulated.

The young singers were completely believable as conventional well dressed young couples registering their marital intentions in front of a large cloth draped over the Ark, bearing a glittery silver inscription: "Mr & Mrs". Don Alfonso, the world-weary philosopher, here becomes a somewhat dodgy but masterly registrar. The voices were simply wonderful and the acting delightful. How often do you sit right close up to both stage and orchestra – who were equally young and talented?

Thank you, Philip Keller and the Music Committee, for your bold initiative.

The line-up (from left): Guy Withers (Ferrando), Milly Forrest (Fiordiligi), Klaudia Korzeniewska (Despina), Sarah Anna Champion (Dorabella), Arthur Bruce (Guglielmo), Oskar McCarthy (Don Alfonso), Bertie Baigent (conductor of the London Young Sinfonia). Remember, when these names become famous in their field, you heard them first here!



*The London
Young Sinfonia*



HOLOCAUST STUDIES FOR SCHOOLS: HOW OUR PROGRAMME BEGAN

Henny Lehmann and Sue Leon tell the story of our unique Synagogue Education Project

We have now completed our 13th year of Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) sessions for students in Year 9 (13-14 year-olds). One thousand students from eight schools came through our doors in February this year.

For the first time since we started the programme, one young teenager, Gabriella from La Sainte Union School, Highgate, mentioned during our Holocaust survivor's talk on being a hidden child, that her grandfather had hidden a Jewish boy in his home in Holland during the war. We gave Gabriella the special honour of lighting the sixth candle at our closing ceremony in honour of her grandfather and all the other Righteous Gentiles.

Last year our HMD article described what we do during these 12 three-hour sessions, so this year we would like to tell you how it all started.

For decades the Holocaust was a taboo subject. Nobody wanted to talk or hear about the terrible traumas of survivors and refugees. The breakthrough public event was the 1988 "Remembering for the Future" conference in Oxford, the brain-child of Elizabeth Maxwell, the French Protestant wife of Hungarian-born (and controversial) Jewish publisher and newspaper proprietor Robert Maxwell. Suddenly the silence fell away and an avalanche of repressed experiences began to tumble out.

Out of this was born the Holocaust Education Trust under Greville Janner MP and Merlyn Rees, a Labour minister in the Wilson and Callaghan governments. Through their lobbying, combined with public horror at new war atrocities, the first Holocaust Memorial Day was held on 27 January 2001 under the premiership of Tony Blair. It was a national commemoration dedicated to the remembrance of those who suffered in the Holocaust under Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and the Sudanese province of Darfur.

The calendar date was chosen to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army in 1945. Gradually, the country woke up to acknowledge the reality of these horrors. Schools started teaching the history of the Second World War (school history books stop decades before their publication date) and

Jewish organisations took the opportunity to create suitable school programmes.

As a Holocaust community, we felt this was the right time for us to introduce such a programme, so in 2003 we invited ourselves to Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue (NPLS) to see how it was set up. They already had an excellent reputation in this field. Some 200 students at a time listened to a survivor tell their story. It was very moving and the students gained an understanding of the horrors of war.

We came back determined to launch a similar project. It was not easy, starting from scratch. How does one find and contact the right teachers? Will our own survivors be willing to talk about their experiences? Can we find enough volunteers to help organise this kind of event? How many sessions should we plan for? When was the best time to hold it? With a mixed inner-city population, how would students and teachers of so many different faiths react? These were all questions to be addressed.

And so, in 2004 we launched our first event, based on the NPLS programme. Initially, it worked but during the third year we had a shock. We had complete year-groups from two local schools attending each session, totalling 200 students. We were aware that some at the back of the synagogue were not taking much notice of our survivor, telling his or her story from the Bimah, but we hoped that the more attentive students would gain insight from the session.

But as the students left, we heard a commotion in the front car park. A "turf war" had broken out between a small group from each school. We could not handle this situation alone and called the police. They came quickly and broke up the fight.

This incident was particularly difficult for us to comprehend and we felt we could not continue the sessions in the original format. Obviously, the message was not getting through to everyone – in fact, quite the opposite.

The next year saw major changes. No longer one survivor to 200 students but a maximum of 100 per session, divided into four groups so that they could sit in a circle, be really close to the survivor and feel the emotion.

We also introduced anti-bullying sessions, recalling the Nazi period and bringing it right up to today's problems, using the story of Anne Frank. Why her? Because she wrote her diary between the age of 13 and 15, the same age as these students, and we hoped they could empathise with her predicament.

Many of these students had never been inside a synagogue or seen a Jew. Our packed "symbolism" tables, displaying a collection of items such as a Haggadah, shofar, chanukiah, kiddush cup and Torah mantle, among many other things, would give them the opportunity to hear about Jewish ritual and show them that we don't have horns.

With the rise of extremism around the world today, we now explain that what was supposed to "never happen again" is happening right now and that these students, as individuals, could make a difference through words and deeds.

Over the years we have refined the programme, adapting as necessary. We strongly feel that through our efforts these young people gain a greater understanding of today's world and some of the tragedies that befall so many peoples through no fault of their own.



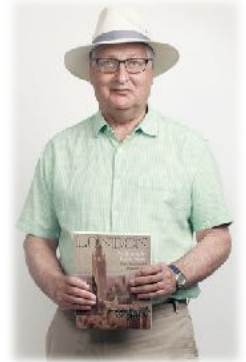
Gabriella lights the 6th candle of our unique Six Million Candlestick, which represents many of the forebears of the families in this community, who perished in the Holocaust. Each candle represents one million Jews. They are lit at the closing ceremony by school pupils and survivors.



BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE A TOURIST ATTRACTION!

A guided tour visits our premises

In addition to the 1,000 school pupils who came to our synagogue throughout February to learn first-hand about the Holocaust, as described on the previous page, we also had a purely tourist visit from a group led by Stanley Harris, managing partner of Bloomsbury solicitors' firm Lyndales in his professional life and enthusiastic local London guide when off-duty. He is also active in community training and development opportunities, which earned him an OBE in 2007. Here he tells us how he brought a group to BSS as part of his "Jewish Camden" walk on 18 February.



The Camden Tour Guides Association was asked by the Mayor of Camden, Richard Cotton, to lead a walk celebrating Jewish culture in Camden. Two vital Jewish institutions, JW3 and the Jewish Museum, immediately popped into my mind. My modest family walking company, *London Personally*, has undertaken many Jewish-based walks for several years. I still work full time but love leading the walks, putting them together and doing the research.

How to construct a walk around these two Jewish London icons, a few miles apart, was going to be a challenge. It was vital to have a place of Jewish interest somewhere in between and thus came about my contact with the Synagogue in Belsize Square. It was not only the location that mattered but the shul was central to the story I was telling. This was the story of the numerous central European Jewish émigrés and refugees who so enriched not just London culture but the world – impacting on both arts and science.

At first, our projected date of 18 February seemed doomed as the most inconvenient date, with so much going on at the synagogue that day. But with

Lee Taylor's enthusiastic and flexible support, as well as the willingness of both JW3 and the Jewish Museum, the walk took shape. Twenty four of us schlepped up the hills of Hampstead, of whom 23 had to endure me droning on about Jacqueline du Pré (the cellist wife of pianist Daniel Barenboim), Mark Gertler (artist), Erno Goldfinger (architect), both the psychoanalytical Freuds (Sigmund and Anna) and the Cosmo Restaurant.

Arriving at the shul, we were welcomed by deputy caretaker Paul, who could not have done more for us. My wife and daughter had laid out a splendid salmon bagel lunch in the Kiddush room, with tea and coffee for all. Our whole group embraced the warmth of the shul's welcome and demonstration of Jewish hospitality, which harks back to the time of Abraham.

We assembled within the shul, around a series of tables laden with symbols of our faith. One was a Shabbat table with wine, candles and a challah. On another stood a fine silver Menorah and on another a Shofar. This made my 10-minute talk about Judaism and the history of your shul more engaging and understandable. Paul then opened

the Ark to reveal the various Sifrei Torah, including the precious Alexander Scroll, which enabled me to tell the story of Hanns Alexander and the book, *Hanns and Rudolf*.

I had a number of positive responses from the walkers but the most pleasing was a hand-written card from Camden Mayor Richard Cotton. He said it was "a wonderful walk" and "a great day out and we learned a lot about the great contribution of Camden's Jewish community."

The shul visit was not only an integral part of the walk but without doubt the highlight of the whole day. So thank you for your hospitality and for being so much part of this important walk, where we were able to celebrate the very strong Jewish connection to Camden. It is visits to historic and special places of Jewish heritage, like Belsize Square Synagogue, that make it easy for me to be a proud member of our Jewish community and fortunate to be able to help others to learn more about and celebrate our great heritage and place in London.

A VERY PERSONAL VISIT – FROM A FRANCISCAN



Among the many visitors to our synagogue, one of the most unexpected must be Fra Francesco Alfieri, a Franciscan monk and Professor of Phenomenology of Religion in the Vatican and guest of our member, psychotherapist Anthony Stadlen, on Friday evening 22 September (Shabbat Shuvah).

Fra Alfieri came to London as a guest speaker at one of Anthony's seminars on the *Black Notebooks* of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the great philosopher who from 1933-4 committed what he later called "the greatest *Dummheit* (stupidity) of my life" by becoming Nazi Rector of Freiburg University. He had enjoyed a warm friendship with colleague Martin Buber and passionate love affair with student Hannah Arendt. In his *Notebooks* he denounces antisemitism, especially the Nazi "scientific" kind.

Fra Alfieri wrote to Anthony that he wished to kneel in our synagogue "because I feel very affectionate to the Hebrew community that had to suffer such atrocity during history" and "to ask for pardon also in the name of those who cause suffering by blackening Heidegger's person". Anthony points out: "Indeed, those who signal virtue by attacking Heidegger distract from real antisemitism and thus perpetuate it."

Rabbi Altshuler welcomed Fra Alfieri from the bimah and, after the service, our chairman Jackie Alexander spoke in German to the stranger who stood out for not wearing "the usual Friday night outfit, albeit respectfully dressed". "He was charming, knowledgeable and followed the service well," she said. Her husband, John, showed him the scrolls in the Ark and told him some of our Belsize history.

This was his first experience of a synagogue and Kiddush at home. In an email to Anthony he wrote: "Your words have moved me and I'll always keep a dear memory of the unforgettable moments experienced in London...Thank you very much for having welcomed me into your home as a son."

BERNARD KISSEN 1930-2017

Labour councillor and Zionist activist

Bernard Kissen, who died on 14 November 2017, aged 87, was typical of a generation of British Jews whose parents or grandparents fled from Russian pogroms at the end of the 19th and start of the 20th century. The main influences on this rising generation of young Jews, largely freed from old restrictions but still struggling to establish a place in British society, were Zionism and socialism. Born in Glasgow on 19 May 1930, Bernard eagerly embraced both.

He came from a family involved in communal and civic life. His great-uncle, Dayan Harris Lazarus, was acting Chief Rabbi after the death of Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz in 1946. A cousin became the first Jewish High Court judge in Scotland. His father, Myer Kisseniski, represented the family's synagogue (Langside) at the Board of Deputies and worked as secretary for a Birmingham MP, Commander Oliver Locker Lampson, a Conservative involved in helping Jewish scientists get out of Nazi Germany.

Glasgow was not a healthy environment. Bernard and his sister suffered from rickets, which caused trouble with his legs in his final years as well as being ultimately responsible for his rejection from National Service. When he was six, the family moved to Southport, a seaside resort in Merseyside with a well established Jewish community. Like most Jewish boys there, he attended King George V Grammar School.

In his teens he joined the recently created Zionist socialist youth movement, Habonim. At 15 he joined the Labour League of Youth and at 16 joined the Labour Party, following in the footsteps of our member, Eric Moonman, one year his senior. The Moonman family had moved to Southport after being bombed out of Liverpool. Eric's obituary appeared in our last issue.

After taking a law degree at the London School of Economics, where he studied under the famed Harold Laski, Bernard shortened his name to Kissen and took articles at the London firm of yet another Conservative MP, Sir Graham Page, who represented Crosby, Liverpool.

In 1955 he attended an anti-apartheid



Bernard Kissen with pipe-smoking Harold Wilson in Hastings during the 1970 election campaign

rally in Trafalgar Square, where he joined up with a girl he was friendly with. She had brought along a friend of hers from Worthing, 18-year-old Helen Weissberg. Bernard and Helen married in 1958 at Hampstead Garden Suburb (United) Synagogue. Their son Nicolas was born in 1961 and Mark followed in 1962.

His busy political life meant that he did not pass his finals and qualify as a solicitor till the year after his wedding but he set up on his own a year later. The couple bought their first house in Edgware, then moved to Radlett in Hertfordshire, where Helen was among the founding members of the local League of Jewish Women. Bernard was active in the Labour Friends of Israel parliamentary group and Poalei Zion, forerunner of the Jewish Labour Movement, while Helen worked in Na'amat, its women's counterpart. He also chaired the local Oxfam group in its early non-controversial days.

With his political ambition, he set his sights on becoming an MP and stood as Labour candidate in general elections for the New Forest in 1964 and Hastings in 1966 and 1970. Although unsuccessful, he reduced the Conservative majority in Hastings to 2,000 and shocked the complacent Tories into completely revising their attitude and strategy.

He then turned his energies to local government, serving on Hillingdon Council – he had an office in the area – from 1974-78. His involvement in local politics brought him lifelong friends and clients. With his combination of old-school upbringing and socialist principles, he was always courteous to his political opponents.

In the 1970s he was involved in the Soviet Jewry campaign and visited Russia, where he met the high-profile "refusenik" Boris Chernobilsky, who was harassed for 15 years, including a spell in the Gulag, before being allowed to leave for Israel with his family in 1980. The case of the electronics engineer was taken up by many British politicians, not only Jewish, and was analysed by none other than our own Rabbi, Stuart Altshuler, in his 2005 book, *From Exodus to Freedom* (which also looks at Israel's ultra-cautious relationship with the USSR over Jewish emigration).

In 1982, aged 52, Bernard completely changed course and put his youthful ideals into practice by moving to Israel, where his son Mark was spending a year studying at the Hebrew University and working on a kibbutz. But the difficulties of bureaucracy and finding suitable work proved insurmountable and the couple returned to England, where their other son Nicolas had just qualified in law. They still kept their flat in Rishon LeZion, which they visited frequently.

Settling into their final home in Kentish Town, Bernard resumed his former practice and clients and was asked to stand for his local ward. He was elected onto Camden Council in 1990 and served three terms up to 2002. He loved the cut and thrust of political debate and preferred to chair committees rather than serve as mayor, despite several invitations.

Although he came from a deeply religious family, his wife did not, and she had some difficulty adjusting to his family's expectations. On their return from Israel they joined a succession of Reform synagogues but did not feel at home in any of them. They discovered Belsize Square Synagogue in 2005 through attending a funeral and felt they had finally made the right choice of a community.

Bernard's final years were marked by illness but he retained his interest in local issues and love of cricket. He appreciated his earlier enjoyment of perks of office such as attending Buckingham Palace garden parties and invitations to Downing Street.

He is survived by his wife, Helen, and their two sons.





RALLY AGAINST LEFT-WING ANTISEMITISM

Susan Storning listens to the speakers and experiences the determination

There must have been about 1,000 Jews and non-Jews packed together on the pavement in the rain outside the Labour Party headquarters in Victoria on Sunday afternoon, 8 April. [*The general estimate of numbers was put at 2,000.*] We came to hold Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn to account for the antisemitism being freely expressed in the Labour Party.

There was a feeling of determination in the crowd. After all, people had come from all over the country – from Glasgow, Manchester, Norwich, Leeds, Liverpool, Brighton and Bristol, as well as London itself. From our own synagogue, apart from my husband, Patrick, and myself, I saw the Rabbi, Claire Walford, Robert Sacks and Michael Brod. There may have been others whom we did not spot.

Patrick and I also attended the previous *Dayenu* (Enough Is Enough) demonstration in Parliament Square a fortnight earlier, following the publication of an open letter of complaint to Jeremy Corbyn from the Board of Deputies of British Jews in conjunction with the Jewish Leadership Council. We saw the same committed BSS members and they were not the only ones. There were at least six others.

The speakers were terrific, especially the young chairman of CAA (Campaign Against Antisemitism, founded August 2014), Gideon Falter. As a law student at Warwick University, he built up the Jewish Society, despite opposition within the student body, and was elected anti-racism officer for the student union. He quoted the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the anti-Nazi German pastor who said: "Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

In this context and by way of contrast, he told us of the immense pressure put upon the CAA to cancel this rally, in other words, do nothing. The CAA had been warned that the Jewish community could hold only one demonstration. It was not clear whether

this was intended to imply that only one public protest would be allowed or whether it was an assumption that Jews would not attend more than one such rally. Either way, the strength of feeling in the crowd showed that the warning was an error of judgement.

He also railed against calling the problem an "antisemitism row. Rows just go away and nothing happens," he said. "This is an antisemitism crisis." The issue is not which party has a problem with antisemitism, it is that antisemitism is unacceptable in any political party. If a party lacks procedures for dealing with it, he said CAA would press for an Act of Parliament to ensure that antisemitism within political parties is addressed by an independent process. "The CAA will make sure that antisemitism has no place in British politics."

Next up was former Labour donor David Abrahams, braving the crowd when he asked people to give the Labour Party a chance. The strength of feeling was immediately apparent. He was drowned out with boos and he eventually had to abandon his speech.

Then came our national treasure, actress Maureen Lipman, who didn't mince her words, calling Corbyn's attendance at the Jewdas Seder on the third night of Pesach "the absolute cherry on the top of his behaviour". Any mention of Corbyn brought calls of "shame!" or boos, as if Haman was being named. "Corbyn made me a Tory," she declared, describing her reaction which has been shared by so many previously loyal Labour supporters.

Holocaust survivor Agnes Grunwald-Spier spoke next, noting the irony that this was the one country in Europe which had been considered a safe haven for Jews, in stark contrast to current fears. For her the greatest threat was not hatred or rage but indifference, as she repeated Bonhoeffer's axiom: "Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

She told the crowd how Labour MP John Mann responded to the question why he felt so strongly about antisemitism, when there can't be many Jews in his Nottinghamshire constituency of Bassetlaw. He replied that he knew tales of Jews who fled Russia at the turn of the last century and gave their pennies towards establishing the Labour Party, adding that the Labour Party is nothing if it is not anti-racist.

Rabbi Joseph Dweck, senior rabbi of Britain's Sephardi community, was strong and inspirational. He spoke about Bevis Marks Synagogue, in continuous use since it was built 300 years ago, its doors never closed; how this is the one country in Europe that fought Hitler; and that this day, Sunday, was the first day after Pesach. "We are a free people," he said. "We, the people; the three words we must remember. It is not a government that gives us our freedom, but ourselves. Now is the time to fight."

Gideon Falter closed the demonstration with strength and determination, telling us that if there is insufficient progress in the coming weeks, we will be back again on Sunday 13 May. "Don't make us come back!", he warned.

A church member interviewed at the rally said there was more antisemitism in the Labour Party now than in the right-wing British National Party. "We have to take a stand. We need Old Labour back. We can't have an anti-Semite at the head of the Labour Party. Antisemitism is coming from the leadership down." Another man from Norwich recalled that his father, who fought in the Second World War, had been posted to Germany to hunt down Nazis. "Jeremy should do the same," he said.

From the despondency about antisemitism in Britain with which the rally began, we left inspired and encouraged at the real leadership we had seen.

WHAT THEY SAID

Gideon Falter: "Antisemitism in the Labour party is a problem at the heart of the British life. As a nation, it drags us down a dark path. When British Jews fear antisemitism from a mainstream British political party, it is not just a Jewish problem, it is a British problem."

Maureen Lipman: "Corbyn made me a Tory. We have an antisemite at the head of the British Labour Party. That is what we have and that is what he is doing by standing with elements that are against everything we stand for – hard working, decent, Jewish people of whom I am incredibly proud."

Rabbi Joseph Dweck: "This is not the time to be silent, to say that someone else will take care. No one else will take care, if we do not take care, we the people."



Clockwise, from top left:

Rabbi Joseph Dweck, addressing the rally

Susan Storing holding the CAA placard

Claire Walford, bareheaded at a moment without rain

Maureen Lipman addressing the rally

Gideon Falter, CAA chairman, addressing the rally

The Haggadah's most prescient passage

Robert Sacks with Union Jack and CAA placard



HELPING ASYLUM SEEKERS

When Lee Taylor, our chief executive, received an email from New London Synagogue requesting clothing donations for asylum seekers, there was a good response from BSS. In addition, our member Valerie Sussman went to help at their monthly volunteer-run drop-in centre at a Finchley school on 4 February and was impressed.

"The huge room was transformed into a clothing area at one end, a children's crèche in the middle and a restaurant at the other end," she said. Some 30 volunteers brought food, huge pots and dishes of ready prepared salads, rice and vegetables. There were also hard boiled eggs and biscuits, as well as fruit juice, tea and coffee.

Valerie made up take-home food packs for the 120 selected recipients, who were admitted in batches to choose clothing and sit down for a meal. Children did not have to wait but went straight to the creche, where they were looked after and entertained by four very attentive young volunteers.

Some of the UK's thousands of asylum seekers have been in this country for years, awaiting a decision on whether they may stay. They are not allowed to work while they are in this state of limbo and so are very dependent on gifts of clothing, nappies and food.

Despite this, Valerie said that "the atmosphere at all times was cheerful, warm and friendly. I have to say I found it a most heart-warming experience and I shall go whenever I can."

The drop-in centre operates on the first or second Sunday of each month. If you are interested in helping, email Sam at thenlsdropin@gmail.com.



HANS AND STEFI COHN: IMPROVING LIFE FOR THE BLIND



Working as a team with his wife, Stefi, from their Willesden home, Berlin-born Hans Cohn organised and led chess competitions for the blind, including Olympiads, and produced chess publications for over 50 years. His multi-faceted work to ease life for the blind earned him an MBE in 1997 for "changing the environment for blind people".

Hans joined his local Willesden Chess Club in 1942 and the Braille Chess Association in 1945, when the BCA's postal games enjoyed a free post service. In 1965 he became its secretary, then president from 1988-92. From 1980-2000 he edited a chess magazine. He wrote manuals on chess games and made notation easier by inventing names, now in common use, for each chessboard square, as some of the official A-H letters are easily misheard. Tribute was paid to him at the BCA's 70th anniversary in 2002.

Stefi (also Berlin-born) took minutes, read and sent out cassettes of chess publications for 22 years. She learned Braille, accompanied Hans on trips and finished up as de facto tour operator for teams of blind chess players and conference delegates.

Stefi Steinhart died on 17 January 2017 aged 89. (She was born 12 January 1928). Hans died on 28 January 2018 aged 94. They met and married at our synagogue, then known as the New Liberal Jewish Congregation, in 1961. Their collaboration was a labour of love for each other and chess, which Hans took up under the inspiration of a keen maths teacher while at Worcester

College, a boarding school for the blind, from 1938-1942.

Hans, born 6 May 1923, lost the sight of his left eye by accident at 11 and both eyes by 13. His eye caught a blow from one boy, the son of a Nazi official, aimed at the Jewish boy sitting next to him in his Berlin school. German specialists did not dare to treat him, and there were complications of detached retina and internal haemorrhage. A top Dutch surgeon performed two operations but it was too late. He also left the injured eye in place and an infection spread to the good eye.

The principled headmaster kept him on at school, despite his handicaps of blindness and Jewishness, but Hans needed training for an independent life. His strong-minded mother, Lucie, was taking English lessons from a blind Englishman educated at Worcester College, founded in 1866 and taken over in 1936 by the Royal National Institute for the Blind. She already had her "domestic" visa for Britain and took a course in running a kosher home, being herself of a *liberale* background, in preparation for placement with an Orthodox family.

She visited Worcester College and approved it. Hans arrived in May 1938, aged 15, the first of a handful of Jewish boys. At prize-giving in July, he interpreted for the visiting head of Vienna's institute for the blind and the distinguished school patron, newly retired Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who lived in the county and had a link with the RNIB through a former secretary who went on to run the RNIB. Baldwin's intercession saved him from internment in 1940.

He went home for summer but, after Kristallnacht, his mother told him not to come back. He stayed with school friends at Christmas and Easter holidays. His mother arrived in February 1939. Although sorry to leave the Jewish family she had been placed with, she answered an advertisement for a cook-matron at a Jewish hostel in Willesden Lane, bought by members of the United Synagogue's Cricklewood shul (now closed) in nearby Walm Lane.

The post allowed her to provide a home for her son in the holidays and get her husband out of Germany. But by the end of August, with the closing

of Germany's borders, it was too late. A vet during the First World War, who requalified to become a successful solicitor, Georg Cohn stayed on to work and pay his son's fees. He also believed that Nazism would pass. In 1941 he was sent to Theresienstadt, where he died the following year from a medical condition requiring surgery.

Responsibility for Hans' education and further training was accepted by the Jewish Blind Society. In 1942, aged 19, he left school, having caught measles in his last year. It affected his hearing, giving him a double disability, but with ever-improving hearing aids, he just kept going. He took a three-year RNIB physiotherapy course in London. Still officially an enemy alien – he was not naturalised till 1947 – he was the first non-British citizen trained under the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists. The profession was in great demand for post-war rehabilitation. After 20 years in clinics and hospital, he took over a retiring colleague's practice in Dollis Hill. He retired in 2008, aged 85.

His first marriage in 1946, aged 23, was to a Viennese-born refugee, Martha Roesler, an actress and fashion buyer, but they split after 10 years. There were no children, owing to an irrational but strongly held belief that all blindness, including that caused by injury, was inheritable. But his impulse to help others showed in the October 1947 "great pea-soup" fog, when over 30 people died in train crashes. Hans took people home in the fog, becoming a hero to transport staff, who let him through never asking to see a ticket.

With his love of chess, he played from the first Blind Chess Olympiad in West Germany in 1951 until 1980. He ran its international association from 1964 and became president some 25 years later. Yugoslavia won the first two Olympiads but could not afford to host the next one. However, 1968 was the centenary of the RNIB, which gave £1,000 towards staging the event in Weymouth in April.

Hans raised funds from business and charities, including a donation from Sir Isaiah Berlin, but his great coup was to bring in the USSR and Israel. He persuaded Marks & Spencer boss Simon Marks to pay the Israeli team's fares by saying that the Russians would be playing, then told the Soviet ambassador that the Israeli team was on its way. Russia, in its USSR

incarnation, won the first of its long unbroken run of triumphs until the last couple of years.

Stefi handled the players' requirements. She treasured a token of thanks, a beautifully designed chess tie from Belgian-born blindfold chess grandmaster, George Koltanowski. An equally strong and independent character, she worked for many years for the George Cohen 600 Group metal company at White City. But after operations for back problems, she worked just up the road from her home as secretary at the Grosvenor Rooms, now a block of flats but our High Holy Days venue from 1984-98.

Hans also inspired the formation of the British Ski Club for the Disabled. Having learned to ski at 10, he took it up again in 1968 at an ex-TB sanatorium near Gstaad, converted into a hotel for the blind. For three years he took its German-language guided ski course. In 1978 he switched to less "hair-raising" cross-country skiing. He only stopped in January 2013, aged 89, after breaking his hip. A picture of him on skis in a skiing magazine was seen by a ski-teaching couple. They studied the Swiss school in action and in 1974 initiated guided skiing on artificial slopes in Britain.

Both Hans and Stefi loved music. Hans learned piano at Worcester College and Stefi "almost lived at the Royal Festival Hall". Hans also loved drama and wanted to know what the characters on stage and television, especially *Coronation Street* and *Eastenders*, were wearing and doing and in what environment. Through the consumer organisation, The Voice of the Listener and Viewer, he successfully demonstrated audio description via headphones to the House of Lords during the 1990 BBC

Charter revision. The idea of a separately recorded script was also adopted by theatres, increasing audiences for both screen and stage.

The VLV was one of 22 committees Hans sat on, including the RNIB and JBS, which he represented from 1960 until its 1990 merger with the Jewish Welfare Board to form Jewish Care. His mother (who died in 1971 aged 70) was offered the post of matron at the JBS home in Rokefield, near Dorking, when she first visited England to inspect Worcester College. But she thought she would be too far away from her son.

Hans also imported from Germany the idea of a free theatre ticket for a guide. This has been widened to free entrance for carers covering all disabilities. He sat on a quango in Margaret Thatcher's government reviewing protection for the blind and elderly. This resulted in innovations such as audible pedestrian crossings and bus messages ("The next stop is ...").

He was helped by his guide dogs, five black Labradors: Cherry, Bella, Peter, Remus and Gibson. He started in 1965, when he found "getting about in London on my own was becoming more stressful." He gave up when the last one, who was with him for 13 years, died in 2008. "We had slowed down and there is too much traffic here [in Willesden]."

Ironically, Stefi suffered from hereditary sight failure, which affected



the last 15 years of her life and forced her to stop going to the Festival Hall. Listening to their huge classical record collection became their main hobby and pleasure.

Stefi was buried at our Edgwarebury Lane cemetery. Hans, who gave up his synagogue membership out of disappointment that our new Siddur, published in 1990, would not be available in Braille, donated his body to science.



SCROLLING THROUGH FRAGMENTS

If you like puzzling over gaps in stories and figuring out which version is the right one, then Professor Noam Mizrahi had you scratching your head over the tattered remains of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

We may think now that we have a fixed and authorised text but back in the 2nd century CE it was a slightly different story, as the Professor of Biblical Studies at Tel Aviv University explained to us in a lecture on 26 March. Scribes inserted letters as guides to pronunciation because, yes, they also struggled with lack of vowels in Hebrew, especially as people's first language was no longer Hebrew but Aramaic. And if someone realised he had left out a verse, he went back to fill it in, in tiny letters down the side. It was just like adding a PS down the side of a postcard in pre-smartphone days, for those of us who reached adolescence in the last century.

We were introduced to fragments of Jeremiah, Isaiah and Psalms – maybe not earth-shattering in itself but making us realise how Jewish fixation with text has preserved our history and culture.

(Continued from Page 1)

Jonathan Paris, academic researcher and specialist on regional political, security and development issues, will talk about Jewish ethics in international relations. He is our only outside speaker.

Susan Storry and Claire Walford will concentrate on heroines in battle, and I will wind up with Jewish law and ethics when it comes to making war and peace.

There will be plenty of cheesecake, coffee, tea and excellent company. Don't stand on the sidelines. Engage in the journey of Jewish learning, one of the greatest journeys you will ever make. It will change your life.

My wishes to all of you for a Chag Shavuot Sameach and for lives that make a difference to the rest of the world.

Rabbi Altshuler





Dear Fellow Members

Those of you who are advocaats for my kolumn will already know that Mrs Klopstick's middle name is Esther. So in her use she was many times expected to play the roll of Esther in the Megilla. This gave her a passion for the perfuming arts. So when she came into these shores as a teenage she soon joined a group of amature show players. Unfortunately she at this time spoke not good English und was line sided much of the time. This is when she decided to throw herself onto sport and she has never looked backwards since then.

As Mrs K hat booked a trip to go mountain biking, I was to accompany myself alone to see Cosy Van Tootsie at Belsize Square in March. I have never seen this opera in the flash, so I was looking very foreword to being there. Who could no that winter was not yet finished. Und so that evening this Priest from the East stopped me from leaving Abernein Mansions. I blame this Mister Putin

Apart from her biking trip, Mrs Klopstick spendend much of the winter month in the jim. So now she is bursting a blood whistle to be out of the door in the frisch air again. Und here we are on the outskirts of Mai with all the pleasantries of Sommer to wash over us. For my part I have wowed to be more in attendance at Belsize Square. I was ashamed by one of the inmates here in Abernein Mansions who asked me if my tallis was in moss balls. I had nothing to reply, because he was write.

Of course with the longer daylight und the warmer weather this makes travelling from und to Finchley Road to the synagogue much easier for us elderly members. I endure



much pleasure greating people who I know as they pass away on the street.

In a few days there comes the local consular elections. For the first time in my live I don't know who to vote for. I can't vote for the Conservatoires on principal of their breaksit situation und with Jermamy Corbin's Labourers not dealing with antisemitmus probably, I have nowhere to go. Mrs K will be turning Green again, but I don't want to waist my cross on those who can't win. I will save it up for next time.

I just hope there is a next time. With the Russians using the nervous gas Novak Djokovic on there own people living here und with now more murders in London then in New York, I wander how long we can go on like this. At the moment it is a dark time, but I think light is on the way. We have a Royal wedding to shears us all up und with it being a mixed up marriage the mould has been broken. Perhaps one day their will even be a Jewish prince oder princelet on the throne.

Recently I met someone who is a member of a Maserati synagogue somewhere out from London. He asked me why we were not part from this commune. I exclaimed we were like no other congregation in England, independent und completely antique. We are the soul survivors of the Liberale movement from before the war in Germany. This is something for witch we should always be proud und we should forever conserve our heritage so that it can be past on to our ancestors in the future.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick



Remember Belsize Square Synagogue in your Will
and help secure the future of your community



Although the community continues to grow and attract new members, we cannot flourish on membership fees alone.

We depend on the generosity of you, our members, to provide the inspiring religious services, a wide variety of education for adults and children, social events, burials and pastoral care for all members of our community and also to preserve our unique musical heritage.

Any legacy, large or small, will make a difference!

Any questions? For a confidential discussion please call Lee Taylor on 020 7794 3949

Shabbat Candle Lighting



Friday 4 May	Heather Goldstein
Friday 11 May	Tamara Somer
Friday 18 May	Denise Israel
Saturday 19 May	Arlene Polonsky
Sunday 20 May	Lucia Salmon
Friday 25 May	Janet Kentridge
Friday 1 June	Eve Harris
Friday 8 June	Eleanor Brookes
Friday 15 June	Annabel Sher
Friday 22 June	Talia Antscherl
Friday 29 June	Penny Isaacs

CHEVRA KADISHAH ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE

The annual Chevra Kadishah Service
The Liberal Jewish Cemetery, Pound Lane,
Willesden, NW10 2HP
Tisha B'Av, Sunday 22 July, 11.30am

The Service will be conducted by Cantor Heller and gives members of the congregation and friends an opportunity to observe the yahrzeit of dear ones who died during the Holocaust and whose date of death is unknown. It is hoped that all who wish to pay tribute to the martyrs of their family will avail themselves of this Service.

There will be a chance to visit the graves of family members buried at the Cemetery after the Service.

Community News

The copy deadline for the next issue of
Our Congregation is Friday 8 June 2018

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:

Emma Pollins	Zachary Capper
Hannah Viner	Alice Fuller
Tim Churchill	Natalya Doffman
Christine & Dennis Anthony	David Loewi and son,
Laura & Michael Taylor	Abraham
Lilly Glucksmann-Cheslaw	Lucy Bergman

WEDDING

Mazel Tov to:

Suzanne O'Connor & Marcus Seaton, whose wedding took place on 12 March

BIRTH

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Emma & David Pollins on the birth of their daughter, Mila Marli

BIRTHDAYS

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Mrs O Herman (87) on 12 May
Mr I Rynhold (89) on 16 May
Mrs C Fraylich (91) on 25 May
Mr G Summerfield (85) on 3 June
Mr P Summerfield (85) on 3 June
Mrs I Feldstein (92) on 22 June
Lord P Eden (97) on 27 June
Mr P Koppel (85) on 29 June

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:

Lucie Weinreb who died on 15 February
Walter Frank who died on 16 February
Josephine Bacon-Carr who died on 26 February
Barbara Sieratzki who died on 23 March
Hella Heinemann who died on 3 April

STONESETTINGS

Marion Fisher - Sunday 17 June, 12.30pm (Edgwarebury)
Lilli Oppenheim - Sunday 24 June, 12.30pm (Pound Lane)
Marion Smith - Sunday 1 July, 1.30pm at (Edgwarebury)
David Tauber - Sunday 1 July, 2.30pm at (Edgwarebury)
Bernard Kissen - Sunday 15 July, 1.30pm at (Edgwarebury)

Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE will be held in the Synagogue Hall, 51 Belsize Square, London NW3 on Monday 4 JUNE 2018 at 8.00pm (followed by refreshments)

AGENDA

1. Introduction and Report by the Chairman
2. Financial Report
3. Appointment of Auditors
4. Election of members to the Board
5. Election of three Board of Deputies Representatives
6. Discussion on Annual Reports
7. Short GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) presentation by Lee Taylor
8. Any Other Business

Candidates for Election to the Board

Joe Brookes, Paul Burger, Simon Cutner, Adam Hurst, Annette Nathan, Nick Viner, (current members) Michael Horowitz, Marion Nathan, Michelle Wayne (co-opted 2017-18)

Resignations from the Board

Sam Sanders, Dalia Lichfield

Election of Representatives to The Board of Deputies

Carol Cohen, Deborah Cohen, Robert Sacks, Susan Storrington

Under clause 17(c) of the Constitution, every member of the Synagogue not being in arrears with more than one year's subscription shall be entitled to attend and vote at the Annual General Meeting. Voting is by secret ballot of those present at the AGM and entitled to vote.

REGULAR SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm & Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Kikar Kids

Saturdays 5 May, 2 June, 7 July at 11.00am

Under-5s Service in the Crèche (Crèche opens 10am)

Junior Service for 5-9 year-olds 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

Half Term – Sundays 27 May & 3 June

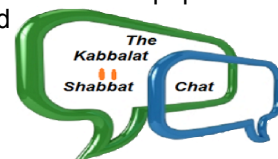
CANTOR HELLER'S KABBALAT SHABBAT CHAT

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: 11 May



LOCAL LUNCHEON GROUP

The NW3 Group

Giacomo, 428 Finchley Road, London, NW2 2HY

1.00pm on Wednesdays 9 May & 6 June

Please phone Judy Field on 020 8455 0614

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT DISCUSSION

6 May

10.0-11.15 David Ruderman lecture (via DVD): Cultural transformation in the Italian Ghetto

11.15-12.30 Luke Akehurst, Director of We Believe In Israel: How did the Labour Party get into such a mess regarding Israel, Jews and Antisemitism?

Wednesday 9 May

7.30-9.00pm Lecture in collaboration with Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society - Professor Jodi Magness, Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism, Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina: Ossuaries and the Burials of Jesus and James

13 May - NO adult discussion - Warsaw/Vilnius trip

Saturday 19 May

6.45pm Erev Shavuot service followed by Tikkun Leyl Shavuot on theme of War and Peace (Details on Page 1)

20 May - NO Adult Discussion - 10.00 Shavuot service

27 May & 3 June - NO adult discussion - Half term

10 June

10.00-11.15 Rabbi Altshuler on Practical Zionism: Chaim Weizmann

11.15-12.30 TBC

17 June

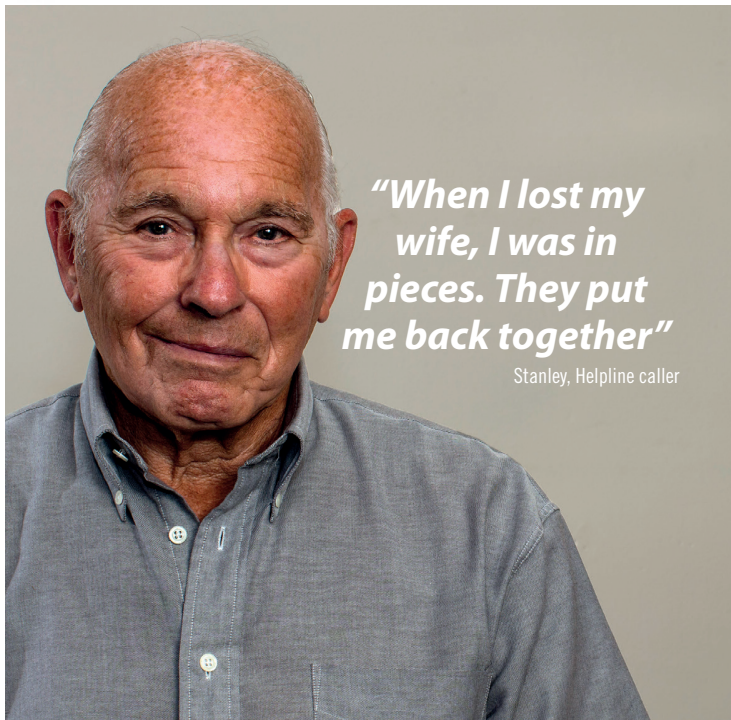
10.00-12.30 Film morning (title TBC) and discussion (Rabbi conducting wedding out of town)

24 June

10.00-11.15 Rabbi Altshuler on David Ben-Gurion: The Vision and the Power

11.15-12.30 TBC





"When I lost my wife, I was in pieces. They put me back together"

Stanley, Helpline caller

Our Helpline can help you find the answers to the most challenging problems. We're here for the whole Jewish community in London and the South East, so if you have a question, please ask Jewish Care.

**WHEN YOU NEED HELP, CALL 020 8922 2222
OR VISIT JEWISHCARE.ORG**

Charity Reg No. 802559

JEWISH CARE

**SAVE
THE
DATE**



**ARMISTICE CENTENARY
REMEMBRANCE COMMEMORATION**
THE CENOTAPH, WHITEHALL - 18TH NOVEMBER 2018



**SALUTE OUR
JEWISH
BRITISH
HEROES**



Join us on 18th November 2018 as we salute those Jewish British heroes who paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms we are so privileged to have today.



IN PROUD ASSOCIATION WITH



LONDON JEWS IN
THE FIRST WORLD WAR
We Were There Too

Photo: 4th Volunteer Battalion Royal Fusiliers, Cycle Corps, led by Lt BMC Tyler. Courtesy of the Tyler Family

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: Frank Joseph - 020 7482 2555

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Email the Youth Workers, Melanie Nathan & Zoe Cowan
youth@synagogue.org.uk

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or to the Editor: ruth@famrothenberg.com

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Company Number 7831243

The Belsize Square Synagogue