



THE VICAR OF BAGHDAD TO SPEAK TO US and more treats in store

Dear Friends of Belsize Square Synagogue

Let me take this opportunity to tell you about our exciting programme ahead.

At our Shabbat evening service on **11 January**, we will have a very special guest speaker, Canon Andrew White, a highly esteemed Anglican Church leader. My thanks to Susan Storrington for making the connection.

Canon White is a seminal figure and true friend of our people and State of Israel. As Vicar of St George's Church in Baghdad, he led the local Christian community at the height of Iraq's conflict with ISIS. The turmoil required him to have 35 bodyguards. To those who have met him – virtually every leading world leader, political and religious – he is a larger-than-life figure. He left for Britain in 2014 because of the risk to his and his family's lives.

Andrew White is a supporter of Israel, navigating the extraordinary hostility to our Jewish State. He will tell us the story of his connection with Judaism and Israel. Fluent in Hebrew, he has studied at an Orthodox Yeshiva and the Hebrew University, knows Talmud and sacred texts, keeps Shabbat, loves Israel and was even *kashrut mashgiach* (supervisor) for Cambridge undergraduate Jewish Society.

He and his wife adopted five Iraqi

children, two of them named Yossi and Jacob. He wrote his thesis on "The Role of Israel in Christian Theology" for his Cambridge doctorate and has written an incredible history of Christian anti-Semitism. His multiple sclerosis has not stopped him engaging with world leaders and promoting Judaism and its people. You must hear this extraordinary man!

The next morning, **12 January**, Belsize Square Synagogue will join other congregations to increase awareness of mental health needs. We must always be sensitive to mental health issues and those suffering from them, including in our community.

For those who would like to (finally!) learn to read Hebrew and enjoy participating in our services, I am holding a Monday evening 4-week crash course, 7.00-8.15pm on 14, 21, 28 January & 11 February. If you plan to join my regular students let me know and I will prepare extra texts for you.

Stay tuned for our annual Interfaith Class with St Peter's Church and Reverend Paul Nicholson, along with Imam Mehmed Stubbla. Last year's class was a real treat. Further details to come but this series takes place in March-April, before Pesach.

On **1 March** we usher in our 80th

anniversary festivities with a special Shabbat service and dinner, joined by the children's choir of the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue from Berlin, along with their parents, and listen to their minister, Rabbi Jonah Sievers. The date coincides with Shabbat UK (see below).

My final announcement is really exciting! Our trip this year (Wed 15 to Mon 20 May) will take us to Prague with its Jewish history from the Middle Ages till today. We will see the Jewish Quarter and Museum with the leading guide, my colleague Rabbi Ronald Hoffberg, and visit Kafka's House and the 16th-century Jewish cemetery.

We will spend Shabbat in Prague and listen to concerts and talks from, among others, Dr Tomas Halik, Professor of Religion and Jewish Studies at University Karlovy, and Helga Weiss, survivor and preserver of the art created by the children of Terezin (Theresienstadt).

If you are interested, please contact Claire Walford by sending her an email to: claire.walford@yahoo.com. I do hope these opportunities inspire your enthusiasm and interest in exciting Jewish experiences I aim to provide.

In shalom

Rabbi Altshuler

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Community Shabbat Dinner Friday 1 March 2019

Belsize Square Synagogue celebrates its
80th Anniversary in March 2019

Festivities launch with a Communal Shabbat Dinner
following Evening Service on Friday 1 March

Enjoy a delicious three-course family-style meal for all
age groups enhanced by the Youth Choirs of Belsize
Square and Pestalozzistrasse Synagogues

Adults: £20 / Under 12s: £12.50

Limited spaces so book early via the synagogue office





Clockwise from top left:

Cheder boys try their hand at a cake mix

Pat Hirschovits

Josh Hurst on clarinet, Rudy Brass on trumpet

Harry Kornhauser and Dr Freda Fleischer at Mitzvah Day lunch

Joachim Schiamma sings "If I were a rich man"

Sue Arnold helps at lunch for young and old

Helen Grunberg with helpers, Alice & Maya

Marion Nathan

Annette Nathan

Eve Hersov and Jeanie Horowitz

Cheder boys showing off home-made Chanukah cards

Miles D'Cruz conducts the Youth Choir

Photos by Peter Strauss



Mitzvah Day entered its 10th year on Sunday 18 November with a host of activities co-ordinated by Pat Hirschovits and Adam Hurst. Adults and children participated both in the synagogue and outside but the synagogue was the hub of events.

OUTSTANDING MITZVAH DAY ACTIVITIES

Pat Hirschovits reports:

The whole synagogue was a particularly busy place. Packers were upstairs in the library unpacking, sorting and wrapping small toiletries for the homeless, tables were set for the brunch in the Kiddush Room for our Belsize seniors, youth choir final rehearsals for the concert took place in the choir loft, and the Cheder was full steam ahead in the hall and kitchen preparing brunch, wrapping up going-home presents and generally being busy.

Cheder children and parents organised food parcels for the Camden homeless as well as clothing for teenagers. For the first time, our seniors' brunch was joined by Cheder years 7 and 8 (ages 11-13). This was a new development and great success. The kids were much appreciated – surely a novelty for them!

Following brunch, everyone went into the synagogue itself for a wonderful midday concert put on by our Cheder kids and youth choir. After the opening number – *Havdalah* sung by Cantor Paul Heller – we had songs from the youth choir and pieces played by solo instrumentalists: Max Charles on violin, Ben Hurst on viola, his big brother Josh on clarinet playing with Rudy Brass on trumpet, Isaac Adni at the organ, plus a father, Patrick Sciamma, on flute accompanied by his friend Guillaume Bioche on piano.

Solo singers came from the youth choir: Joachim Sciamma singing *If I were A Rich Man* and his younger brother, Chaim, with an amazing rendition of *Hallelujah*, while Saul Zur-Szpiro sang a rendering of the *Shema*. We truly have fantastic youth talent in our shul and will see yet more at the forthcoming *Belsize Has Talent* on Sunday 13 January. Parents were excellent, too.

Thanks must go to Jeanie Horowitz, our retiring head of Cheder (*see page 8*) for not only producing this outstanding concert, in which all our music professionals played their part,

but also in organising the children's multiple activities throughout the day.

Adam Hurst reports:

Meanwhile at Camden's Wellesley Road Care Home in Gospel Oak, our toddlers from Kikar Kids spent the morning wowing the residents with renditions of their favourite nursery rhymes and even had the audience joining in with some of the actions (especially the "wheels on the bus"). The children then created a make-believe Teddy Bears' Picnic, serving up tea and cakes.

In the afternoon our Community Choir performed a selection of old time classics from *We'll Meet Again* to *New York, New York*, ably led by keyboard supremo Stephen "fingers" Wiener (apologies for mis-spelling his name in our last issue), while their songs were interspersed with awful jokes from Robert "Oh no, he didn't" Nothman. The choir then spent some time chatting to the residents.

This is the second year we have visited Wellesley Road for Mitzvah Day. Staff and residents are extremely appreciative and hoping to see us again next year, if not before!

Other things also went on. Our Adult Education class (the Sunday Morning Discussion Group), in conjunction with Hampstead United Synagogue, Dennington Park Road, cleaned the Keats Library in Hampstead Village.

Eve Hersov reports:

People went out of their way to help others. For instance, one of our members who had booked for the Mitzvah Day brunch, Helen Kissen, emailed me to say that she was unwell and unable to make it to Belsize Square. I immediately arranged with Jeanie to have a Cheder family drop off a gift basket at her home. This was Helen's delighted response:

Dear Eve,

I am so overwhelmed. The door bell rang and three children and their mum and dad delivered this wonderful basket of goodies. Not only did they deliver it but stayed. The children are delightful and Paula and Al are such nice people.

We definitely bonded and there were big hugs all round, including the children, and they offered to take me to shul when they go. She put her number on my pad and I gave her my number. Al even offered to change the batteries on my fire alarm. That is the true meaning of mitzvah.

Eve, thank you for making my day a real mitzvah day.

Incidentally, Helen Kissen was the poster girl for two NHS conferences in London this year, in July and October, for Allied Health Professionals (nurses, therapists, podiatrists etc, who are specifically not doctors). Helen's head appeared on a conference poster headed "Podiatry Improving Lives" with the caption: *"I owe the quality of life I lead now solely to the care of the podiatrists. I am 81 years of age. I love my life."*

A second caption read: *"While I may not be able to climb Everest, I am able to enjoy a pleasant walk each day."* She is now looking forward to developing her new friendship with her "Mitzvah Day" family.

THANK YOU

The Belsize Mitzvah Day Team would like to thank all the organisers and volunteers for creating a wonderful day both in and out of the shul for members and non-members alike. We would also like to thank those who did volunteer but for whom, regrettably, we ran out of activities for them to participate in. We will do our best to make sure this is addressed next year. Watch this space for Mitzvah Day 2019!

THE ANNUAL HENRY KUTTNER CHOIR SHABBAT Friday 18 January at 6.45pm

Each year we will honour the professional choir of Belsize Square Synagogue in memory of Henry Kuttner z"l. Please join us in thanking the choristers who make our choir so special and unique.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SHABBAT Friday 25 January at 6.45pm

A Service to commemorate the anniversary of the end of the Holocaust. Mazkir will be recited for all those who died at Kiddush HaShem (sanctifying God's name).





The second half of November saw a series of extraordinary commemorations of events 80 years ago leading up to the Second World War, which flanked the national centenary of the end of the First World War. A solemn atmosphere prevailed as people remembered the carnage of two different European wars.

KRISTALLNACHT REMEMBERED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

A Service of Solemn Remembrance and Hope on the 80th Anniversary of Kristallnacht was held at Westminster Abbey on Thursday 8 November, conducted by the Very Rev Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.

The packed congregation was made up of members of three synagogues – West London, New North London and Belsize Square – with their ministers and choirs plus the Zemel Choir. After some initial uncertainty on entering, without a word being said, Jewish heads were covered with a sea of kippot.

The hour-long service was introduced by the Dean of Westminster, who noted that it followed the groundbreaking 75th anniversary service held in 2013. He said that praying together was itself a sign of hope. At the end of the service, he concluded with the familiar priestly blessing.

Interspersed with the musical offerings, arranged and conducted by our Music Director Dr Benjamin Wolf from the

rich Jewish liturgical treasury (but also including two standard Church of England hymns), we had Bible readings and prayer recitals led by rabbis and Abbey clergy. Rabbi Stuart Altshuler undertook the first reading with a psalm.

The six candles of our synagogue's Memorial Candelabrum were lit by Michael Newman, chief executive of the Association of Jewish Refugees; our members Lilian Levy, survivor, together with her daughter Hilary Solomon; Rolf Penzias, survivor; Anthony Ball, Canon in Residence; Julia Gross, representing the German Ambassador; and Israel Ambassador Mark Regev. Each candle represented one million of the six million Jews slaughtered in the Shoah.

We listened to the memories of three survivors, now in their 90s; a tribute to the British Consul-General in Frankfurt, Robert Smallbones, from Baroness Julia Neuberger, senior rabbi of WLS, whose parents were among the thousands saved by his granting of

temporary British visas; and a moving address from Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg of New North London Synagogue. His grandfather, Dr Georg Salzberger, rabbi of Frankfurt's West End Synagogue for 28 years, was also rescued by Robert Smallbones and became the founding rabbi of the New Liberal Jewish Congregation, today's Belsize Square Synagogue. During the destruction of the Frankfurt synagogue on Kristallnacht, the *Ner Tamid* stayed alight – a sign taken by the family as a miracle and spur to keep Judaism alive.

The memorial prayers were sung by the combined choirs and *El Malei Rachamim* recited by our Cantor Paul Heller. Kaddish was led by Rabbi Helen Freeman, principal rabbi of WLS, who co-chairs the Council of Christians and Jews (Central London Branch) with Rev Anthony Ball. We were played out to organ music composed by Ernest Bloch. A solemn and reflective evening.

Ruth Rothenberg

A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE from Susan Zur-Spiro

It was deeply moving to be at Westminster Abbey for this remembrance service. It was particularly special for us, due to the amazing experience of seeing our beloved son Saul sing *Oseh Shalom* with our Youth Choir.

I was so proud to see Saul singing beautifully with his fellow choristers and needing very little extra support. He is always treated very normally by Ben (Wolf), Miles (D'Cruz) and all of the kids. He's one of the group! Miles, though young and still relatively new to his role as youth choir conductor, has been amazing in the way he has taken Saul under his wing. He manages to seamlessly balance leading the choir while giving additional guidance to Saul when needed.

Seeing Saul with the choir in front of an audience of some 700 people, it was amazing to reflect that, being both Jewish and disabled, he would have been an early target for extermination by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Yet there he was, the grandchild of Holocaust survivors, being socially

included, focussing on his ability rather than his significant disabilities, and being valued as a member of our community and for being a unique, lovely and inspiring person.

As a member of the Felsenstein and Stiebel families on my father's side, who were among the founder members of our synagogue, I feel honoured to be part of the Belsize Square Synagogue community, as well as the proud parent of four children (plus granddaughter) all active members of our community, particularly my special son Saul who loves everyone and everything about being part of our synagogue, especially to do with music. This includes his passion for his other major music concern as a drummer in his rock band, *The AutistiX*.

The service was beautiful in the amazing setting of the awe-inspiring and sacred environment of Westminster Abbey. I thought it was particularly wonderful that a Jewish service was held in Westminster Abbey, with its long iconic history. The

clergy were so welcoming and spoke with reverence and respect about our Jewish people, the tragedy that we have suffered and the universal relevance to life today, with the need to address persistent racism, nationalism and bigotry in our own generation.

I noted that the survivor testimonies came from now elderly people who had been young children during the Nazi period. I was enthralled listening to their stories. They spoke about their fear and disbelief at the horrifying events of Kristallnacht, and how it signified the destruction of all that they knew and cherished in their lives, and as a portent of what was to come.

I was also struck by the role the British played in fighting the Nazis and setting up the Kindertransport that facilitated the survival of so many Jewish children, including members of my own family, by bringing them to Britain and enabling them to settle and make their lives here. It was a sad and sombre occasion, yet beautiful and moving, and the people who spoke were so inspiring.

Kristallnacht commemoration takes place annually at Belsize Square Synagogue but this 80th anniversary year was special. On Friday 9 November Lilian Levy addressed the congregation on her experiences. Lilian lit one of the six memorial candles during the previous evening's Remembrance Service at Westminster Abbey. The weekend also marked the Bar Mitzvah of Theo Brass, who is unlikely to forget its special circumstances.

STOLPERSTEINE FOR LILIAN LEVY'S FAMILY

We commemorate today the so-called "spontaneous" outburst of violence and hatred in Nazi Germany, known as Kristallnacht. It was, in fact, a pogrom carefully organised by the Nazi government and it took place on the night of Friday 9 to Saturday 10 November 1938 – 80 years ago to this very day and hour. It was a culmination of antisemitic rhetoric and also a precursor of far worse to come. My late husband, Herbert, born in Berlin, was a boy of nine at the time and remembered its horrors well. But I did not witness it as I was not yet born.

My parents lived in Frankfurt. On Kristallnacht the police arrested my father and he was taken to Dachau. I have been told that when he was released two weeks later he was a shattered, trembling man, weighed down by what had been done to him and what he had witnessed. My parents were able to flee to Holland, which had been neutral in WW1 and pledged to remain neutral.

I was born in London in August 1939 when my mother was visiting her sister in Wembley Park, and my mother flew back with me to neutral Holland when I was three weeks old. In May 1940, Hitler violated that neutrality, overran Holland and enacted the anti-Jewish decrees just as in Germany. We were sent to Bergen-Belsen where my parents starved to death. I survived, aged five and a half at liberation.

Herbert told me that in the years leading up to Kristallnacht he had witnessed great poverty and unemployment in Berlin. He remembered seeing dozens of men sitting on park benches all day long and playing cards. But suddenly they had work and were gone: all drafted into Hitler's preparations for war.

Can we draw parallels today with the awful events leading up to Kristallnacht and all that followed? Today there is also great inequality between the haves and the have-nots. There is today much malign rhetoric and incivility of language, there is xenophobia and fake news. But before I depress myself too much with the hopelessness of it all, let us consider whether anything positive is happening in our harsh world.

As a result of our family histories, Herbert and I were unwilling, unable, to come to terms with Germany or the German people. It was not until the 1990s, when he was working with the Anne Frank Trust and going round Britain with its travelling exhibition, that we came into contact with the young German volunteers of Action Reconciliation.

They brought home to us that this new generation of German youngsters can bear no responsibility for the actions of their predecessors. We made friends with some of these young people and I am happy to be able to call them my friends still. One of them, Immanuel Bartz, became a theatre director and gave Herbert the great honour and pleasure of choosing him for a voice-over part in a play he produced. Herbert's voice lives on.

My family originated in Frankfurt but I had never been there until the city invited me two years ago to be their guest, as part of a scheme to forge reconciliation with its former citizens. We were looked after by volunteers and I again realised how decent-minded people can reach out to each other in harmony. I am pleased now to be friends with the lady who was allocated to help me in Frankfurt, Till Lieberz-Gross.

From this developed another initiative in which she was instrumental: the laying of *Stolpersteine* in memory of murdered members of my family. *Stolpersteine* [literally stumbling stones, a project initiated by German artist Gunter Demnig in 1992] are metal plaques bearing the names of deported Jews, situated at their former place of residence.

As elsewhere, the plaques were paid for by voluntary contributions from the people of Frankfurt. Both my parents and three of my grandparents were murdered in the war, so Till organised five *Stolpersteine* in their names, two of which she paid for herself.

When it came to laying them, my family and I went to Frankfurt for what proved to be an emotional and well-attended ceremony at the place where my parents had lived and where I had been conceived. One young man



approached us after the laying and told us he had donated money towards the stones. As we did not know him, had never met him before, we asked him what had motivated him and he replied that two years ago, when Donald Trump was elected US President, he was so appalled that he wanted to counteract the negative event with a positive gesture and alighted on the idea of financing *Stolpersteine*. His name is Rouven Schellenberg, he is of the same generation as my children and I am delighted to say that he and they have become good friends, meeting whenever they can.

Also present was Anne-Katrin Scheffbuch whom we knew through the Action Reconciliation programme. She had been the organiser in Britain of the programme's volunteers from Germany and has likewise become a good friend for many years, together with her husband, Matthias, and their teenage children. I have told my young German friends that I am speaking at the synagogue today and have given them the link to our LiveStream. So hello to Anne and Matthias, to Till, to Immanuel and to Rouven! I send you all my fond greetings.

So, you see, I feel that there are positive steps one can take in what appears to be a fractured world. Instead of the supposedly "spontaneous" outburst of hatred of Kristallnacht, let us work towards forging spontaneous friendships with people who have similar values of peace and harmony to our own.



KINDERTRANSPORT 1938 – HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE

Another deeply significant event was the re-enactment on Wednesday evening 21 November of the impassioned parliamentary debate 80 years ago to the day to allow unaccompanied Jewish children from Germany (and later Austria and Czechoslovakia) into Britain.

Six MPs spoke at the original debate, 12 days after Kristallnacht, the opening salvo in Hitler's anti-Jewish campaign. They were led by Philip Noel-Baker, a remarkable character – a Quaker and pacifist who won military medals for his work in the Ambulance Unit in the First World War, co-founded the League of Nations after the First World War and United Nations after the Second, and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1959.

His outrage focussed on children and patients dragged out of Jewish hospitals and orphanages. He was scathing about Goebbels' assertion that the nationwide simultaneous attacks were "spontaneous outbursts", comparing them rather to the St Bartholomew's Day massacre.

His fervent speech set the tone for the rest of that night's historic debate. The speech was read out in sections by a series of today's MPs at a reception for the Kindertransport Group of the Association of Jewish Refugees, held in the State Rooms of the Speaker's House in the Palace of Westminster. The parliamentary readers were James Brokenshire, Luciana Berger, Ian Austin, Ruth Smeeth and our Synagogue's local MP, Tulip Siddiq.

Other speakers at the original debate – MPs Herbert Butcher, David Logan, Archibald Southby, Home Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare and David Grenfell – were represented by MPs Louise Ellman, Oliver Dowden, Matt Offord, Yvette Cooper, John Mann, Jo Roundell Green and, from the House of Lords, Baroness Deech and Lord Livingston. While sympathising with the plight of German-Jewish children, the earlier generation of MPs pointed to problems of large-scale numbers, absorption and funding plus the need for tolerance and support from other communities – all familiar issues today.

But MPs were impressed by the funds raised by the Anglo-Jewish community to deal with the emergency. They also sympathised with parents forced to give up their children for safety and recalled the shelter warmly given to thousands of Belgian children in the First World War. The debate concluded with a historic resolution, read out at the reception by Lord (Eric) Pickles, Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues. It stated:

"Resolved: that this House notes with profound concern the deplorable treatment suffered by certain racial and political minorities in Europe and, in view of the growing gravity of the refugee problem, would welcome the immediate concerted effort amongst the nations, including the USA, to secure a common policy."

As a result, the first Kindertransport train left Berlin on 1 December 1938

with 196 children, mostly from a Jewish orphanage burnt down on Kristallnacht. They sailed on the overnight ferry from the Hook of Holland, arrived in Harwich next day and continued by train to the London terminus at Liverpool Street Station.

The original debate started at 7.33pm. This re-enactment got going an hour earlier but stopped at 7.33 for a minute's silence. Then Sir Eric Reich, chairman of the Kindertransport Group, read out a letter from Prime Minister Teresa May in which she said: "The miracle of Kindertransport shines out."

Among the many guests was our former treasurer David Rothenberg (1999-2006), in his capacity as AJR vice-chairman. The previous day saw him at a Kindertransport reception at Clarence House, hosted by the Prince of Wales, who spoke to these now elderly people about their experiences.

At the end of the following week (while the rest of us enjoyed the Chanukah Market) David attended the lighting of the first Chanukah candle by Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, organised by World Jewish Relief at Liverpool Street Station, next to Frank Meisler's statue of child refugees, along with German Ambassador Peter Wittig, also present at these events. The only one David missed was the Liberal Jewish Synagogue's Memorial Concert but Helen Grunberg and Sue Arnold's report will appear in our next issue.

Ruth Rothenberg



40K for £40K

Question: how is Belsize Square's very own Richard Pollins going to complete a 40K walk at the age of 40 to try to raise £40K for Motor Neurone Disease?

and his colleagues, including some well-known names, have been very supportive, as has Sir Cliff Richard who recorded a message for Richard's Facebook page. So far he's had donations from over 200 people.

The 40K walk to raise £40K is Richard's response to his mother Vera's MND diagnosis. "It's a condition which has taken us all by surprise, how quickly and how much impact it's had. This is a fundraising project to almost fight back. It can't help Mum because the research isn't at that stage yet. But this is to help other people and that's rather apt, because that's what Mum has done all her life."

Routing has been "outsourced" to a former colleague, now an experienced tour guide. "I do want one of the walks to take in King's College Hospital in

Denmark Hill (South London) where major research into MND is taking place. And I would like to end up at my parents' house in Woodside Park. Landmarks like Westminster and Trafalgar Square would be nice but mainly she needs to find flat areas."

And what of his family? "My wife Sara is worried about my back. I would like to involve my kids (Joseph, 5, and Maggie, 2). I worry a little about Joseph's overall fitness. He was the only kid at the school fireworks display asking why there weren't any seats."

And if you're wondering how Richard might feel after four days walking on crutches and artificial legs, so is he. "It will be interesting to see the effects on my body. Will I start each day anew or feel the effects of the day before? I might take Monday off work."

The four-day walk will start on 14 March, covering 10k each day. For someone born without legs, Richard doesn't seem too concerned, but he started training last summer: "I normally drive to work but decided occasionally to get the Tube instead, get off at Euston and walk the almost 2k into ITN HQ in Grays Inn Road. That took me around half an hour."

Richard is a Programme Editor at ITN,

A QUARTET OF CANTORS

Ruth Rothenberg enjoys a festive concert



*A quartet of cantors (from left)
Gedalya Alexander, Yohel Heller,
Paul Heller, Robert Brody*

Our Music Committee's most recent offering was a Gala Cantorial Concert featuring our own Cantor Paul Heller with his son Yohel, and two homegrown chazanim, Londoner Robert Brody and Mancunian Gedalya Alexander. Together with our Belsize Square Music Director Dr Benjamin Wolf (to give Ben his formal status), organist Michael Cayton and a number of our professional choristers, they gave a heart-warming and powerful demonstration of the extraordinary range and effect of the human voice – a musical voice, that is.

One of the things that came over clearly, as Cantor Heller pointed out, is the difference in eastern and western musical styles. Eastern Europe produced the plaintive, insistent and deeply emotional vocal outpouring that is intended to catch God's ear and make Him attentive to our needs. Gedalya Alexander, a product of both Cambridge and Gateshead, was the exemplar of the passionate pleader with the trembling notes and greatest frequency of the vowel sound "oy".

It was Lewandowski (1821-1894) who

revolutionised Jewish liturgical music, bringing in harmonies and choirs and weaving patterns of sound that characterise the western musical style. One of our stalwarts, Naomi Stadlen, told the audience how her paternal grandfather, Cantor Alfred Jacoby, (who died three weeks before Kristallnacht) attended Oranienburger Strasse Synagogue as a young child. He imbibed and was inspired by its Music Director, Lewandowski. After the First World War he was appointed cantor to the Fasanenstrasse Synagogue with a colleague, Magnus Davidsohn, who fled Germany in 1939 with Louis Lewandowski's scores and became our first cantor.

It was also interesting to hear the different pronunciations of Hebrew, depending on the date of the composition. Robert Brody, an old hand at *chazanut* and still in fine voice, started with psalm 92 (*It is good to give thanks*) as composed by Lewandowski. The title in English spelling comes out as *Tow* (or *Tov*) */Hodoss*, indicating the old Ashkenazi pronunciation (and remembering that the German pronunciation of "o" comes out as "ow" rather than "oi").

But his next song, Chonon Lewis's *Atah Zocher*, from the Rosh Hashanah musaf service, reflected modern spoken Hebrew. Dr Lewis is a living, if elderly, Anglo-Jewish composer, former violinist, with a wide range of liturgical and Hebrew literary settings. And there were a couple of toe-tapping Yiddish songs plus the encore, *My Yiddishe Mama*. In fact, though we have long since changed to modern Hebrew based on Sephardi pronunciation, practically all this music was written for Ashkenazi speakers. Incidentally, Robert Brody, like Paul Heller, started in dentistry. Is this coincidence or is there a hidden connection between examining the mouth and producing sound from it?

Perhaps the most interesting of the array of singers was Paul's son Yohel, at the start of his career. Well trained and controlled, his lyrical tenor voice has a sweet tone, full of promise and in the western tradition, thanks to his classical style teachers and 11 years' exposure to Stockholm's Great Synagogue, where his father worked from 2000. The family returned to their native Colombia for two years before coming to Belsize Square Synagogue in 2013.

Father and son sang duets with the choir and Yohel sang his own liturgical passages. He has now completed his first year as chazan at the historic New West End Synagogue in Bayswater (United Synagogue and Orthodox) and is learning the eastern style from Gedalya Alexander (now freelance but formerly at Finchley Synagogue, also part of the United Synagogue). The years ahead will be worth following as his voice matures.

This was an enthralling concert with both depth and breadth in a specialised field. Many thanks to all who took part – and to the Music Committee under its new chairman Judith Sciamma, who introduced the pleasurable evening. We look forward to future events.

Judith Sciamma adds:

This cantorial concert took us through a journey from eastern to western European tradition. We heard a wide range of tonalities, each cantor having a particular timbre. The concert displayed the broad spectrum of emotions contained in cantorial music, from sadness to joy, and even comedy! Through a mix of solos and duets, the participants shared with us their passion, authenticity and tremendous generosity in their singing. Our Music Committee would like to thank the cantors, Music Director and musicians for this wonderful event.

GOLDEN DAGGER AWARD FOR TRUE-LIFE MYSTERY

Congratulations to Thomas Harding, son of our longstanding members, Frank and Belinda Harding, who won the 2018 Crime Writers' Association Non-Fiction Golden Dagger Award in October. His book, *Blood On The Page*, delves into a real-life murder mystery that took place in 2006 only a couple of streets away from his parents' home and involves the strong possibility that the suspect who was convicted suffered a miscarriage of justice.

Thomas writes about real-life events that have affected him. His first book, *Hanns and Rudolf* (2013), described how his great-uncle Hanns Alexander, one of our synagogue's founding members, tracked down and arrested Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz. His second book, *The House By The Lake* (2015), used his great-grandparents' lakeside holiday home outside Berlin as a linchpin for the last hundred years' history of the area. *Kadian's Diary* (2014) is the poignant diary he kept after the tragic death of his teenage son in a cycling accident.





OUR CHEDER HEAD RETIRES

After 16 years as our first official Head of Religion School (to give our Cheder its formal title), Jeanie Horowitz is retiring, having remodelled the curriculum in several aspects.

Jeanie has a background in Jewish education. Brought up in New York and educated at Jewish schools, she is fluent in Hebrew, having lived in Israel for three months when she was 13 and for a year at the Hebrew University before doing her Master's in education at Penn University. She worked as a teacher and counsellor at various American Jewish summer camps, youth movements and schools, before coming to Britain in 1994 on marriage.

When she started taking her older daughter to Belsize nursery and chatted to office staff, our then synagogue Co-Ordinator, Henny Levin, realised that here was an opportunity not to be missed. She asked Jeanie if she would like to teach our kids.

Three years later the decision was made to lighten Henny's burden, which included responsibility for Religion School, by appointing an official Head Teacher. Jeanie applied and got the job. She had in the meantime taken a Leo Baeck College advanced diploma in Jewish Education and was active in the New Israel Fund while working for the Zionist Federation. She started as our first Head in September 2002.

The Cheder was probably at its peak then with up to 140 children in 10 classes for an age range of 5 to 15. The teaching staff included three Israelis. In addition to the basics of teaching children to read and understand Hebrew, if not necessarily speak it, Jeanie's aim was to enable

them to "engage with Jewish tradition and text, language and culture, in a meaningful and creative way."

This has played out in making decorations to illustrate festivals, acting out Bible stories or the debates of Hillel and Shammai, making up gift parcels for our elderly, winning an international art competition, helping the Separated Child charity (today's equivalent of the Kindertransport unaccompanied children), visiting museums and joining up with other groups to visit Amsterdam and Prague. No child can complain of Cheder boredom!

A couple of years into the job, Jeanie took the major step of introducing GCSE in Jewish Studies. The two-year course gives post-Bar and Bat Mitzvah students a goal to aim for. There has been a small but steady take-up of the exam, which also enables them to work and gain experience as Cheder teaching assistants.

There was a problem in the school year 2016-17 when the national curriculum required exam boards to test knowledge of two religions. Several faith schools dropped the exam altogether as did Cheder. But last September one exam board, Edexcel, introduced the International GCSE (IGCSE), which allows for the study of a single religion. While it may be a good idea for schools to study the world's religions in this diverse age, it is not the reason one goes to Cheder.

The teacher for this public exam class for the last eight years has been our Education Committee Chair, Elizabeth Nisbet, who is also stepping down. Her high-achieving pupils gained a total of

22 A-starred grades, four As and two Bs, with nothing below that level.

Because of our congregation's unique origins, our children have had the opportunity to speak to Jewish refugees from the Continent, our now elderly members, and hear at first-hand about Kristallnacht and the Kindertransports, a real and rare history lesson. They interviewed a dozen members, sadly no longer with us, recording their conversations in two DVDs, first for our 70th and then our 75th anniversary. Their legacy lives on.

Jeanie's special memory is of the trips she made with teaching assistants, taking seven or eight 6th-formers to Israel. With sponsorship from a member, who wishes to remain anonymous, she did this three times – in 2004, 2007 and 2010 – taking groups during the October half-term. There is a DVD of these trips, too.

Her final activities this term included getting the kids to make Chanukah cards, which were sent to a Holocaust survivors centre in Israel. She says she is "sad to leave but it is time to move on and organisations need to rethink and refresh themselves." She is not retiring completely from the educational world. She will continue at Alma Primary School, a Jewish cross-communal school in Whetstone, Barnet, teaching three days a week. She welcomes her successor, Caroline Loison, a qualified teacher, and is looking forward to free weekends.

A Kiddush for Jeanie Horowitz will be held on 19 January. All pupils, past and present, are welcome. Parents, too.

BRAINSTORMING FOR OUR CHEDER'S FUTURE

Our Religion School, or Cheder, has been a great success over the years and is a vibrant environment for the synagogue's children. However, as the environment changes, so must our educational strategy.

We are presented with a challenge: how can we furnish our BSS kids with sufficient knowledge of synagogue services, religious traditions, and Jewish history, so that they can confidently visit any community in the world, follow the service and feel part of this special club called Judaism?

We've had some great input from the Ministers, Executive and Board, but

ultimately it is up to the community to declare its opinions and backing for any plan if it is to work. We would therefore like to invite you to an Action Brainstorming Morning at 10.00am on Sunday 3 February. This will form part of that day's Cheder programme so, if for nothing else, come and join us for tea and coffee and listen to the input!

While the morning will be a structured session, the more voices we hear, the more ideas we can generate. We know that whatever course of action is ultimately taken, there will be things that work for everyone, for some and for no one. We will all need patience as we cope with teething problems.

We have a responsibility towards our children and the future of our community, so please take a couple of hours out of your schedule so that we can make the most of our synagogue's brilliant minds!

Please RSVP if you would like to attend, so we can gauge numbers and run the morning as effectively as possible. We look forward to hearing from you.

The Strategic Working Group:
Dilys Tausz, Joe Hacker, Frank Joseph, Caroline Loison, Suzanne Goldstein, Mandy Brass, Sara Pollins

Dear Fellow Members

I hope that like both Mrs Klopstick und I, you have come threw the New Year to two southend und nineteen very much unscrapped. I am now almost fully recovered from the operation to remove a tumult from my bletter. My surgeon is very pleased with himself und said he found the hole process completely painless.

At the time when I am writing this kolumne, the Breaksit thing is still being debased in the House of Commons. Who noes if it will come threw oder knot? Knot me und knot Mrs K, und certainly knot Dr Grossatig from number 47 who thinks he can predick the outcome of everything. Whatever happens who in there rite mines wants Jeremy Putin up there in the drying seat? I listened the other day to Dame Shaggy Shagranasty being intervued on the television. She of cause was building her leader up out from all proportion. What more could we expect from her? I thinks she is the shadowy General Attorney.

Away from politiks, I see Belsize Square is about to lunge its first talent contest und we are all invited to parpissytake. I wanted very much to demon straight my button collection, but Mrs K says that this is not a talent und not at all entertaining. I find this hard to belief. She, on the other hand, wood like to show of her jimnastiks. I told her that I don't think there will be a big enuff space for her to run up for her floor exercises. Unfortunately like the Prime Minister, oder former Prime Minister, Mrs Mai, Mrs K is very single mindead. Now she wants to borrow a Pommel Hose from her jim und take it to this advent. How we should trainspot it to number fifty won I cannot imagine.

It is always helpful to Israel when there is not such good news coming from another country in the Middle East. At this



moment there is plenty to shoes from. The Saudi Arabs cannot put a foot in the right direction. If they are not murdering there own people they are bombing the Yemenites. Then there is the schtinkers in Iran consisterly being a thread sponsoring warfair und terrorism. Now we find that the Emurates are putting people in prison for live for doing nothing. I hope that with this fokus on these other places und there doings wrong, they will help to adverse the weave of auntie-semitismus creeping across Europe. Of cause as Rabbi Altschuler has pointed out just now, the United Nations continue to find revolutions to unter mein the Jewish homeland. Won of six different votes was to give bag the Golan Heights to Syria. What a good idea to intrust such a strategic place with the peace loving Mr Asshead.

Bag now on the home front. Over Chanukah we hat a bit of a nightmare here in Abernein Mansions. Mrs Bluhmenkohl, who organises the communal Seder decided that she was going to make her own kendles. Of all the many vexes she could shoes, she shows vex polish. It took longer then it took the Temple oil of the Maccabeans to run out for the smell of old boots to varnish from this building.

Quiet a number of our congregants are now starting to peck there backs und will be heading away to warmer climbs like South Africa und Israel. Mrs Klopstick will be going in the opposite direction. She wants to built up her sighs, so is learning to speed skate in the Norse of the Nesserlends. I wood rather be with sinner sighs in the son shine.

A heppy and preposterous new year to you all.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick

TEFILLIN CLUB LAUNCH

Sunday 4 November saw the launch of the Tefillin Club, primarily as part of our Bar Mitzvah course, but also giving others the opportunity to learn to lay tefillin. Led by Rabbi Altschuler and Cantor Heller, a dozen boys were shown how to do this properly, while the rest of the Cheder children and parents looked on. The 9.30am session finished with children returning to class and adults staying for bagels and conversation.

This is the start of a termly event. The Rabbi and Cantor look forward to inviting everybody again on the following dates:
20 January, 17 March, 19 May.



Shabbat Candle Lighting



Friday 4 January	Ruth Kersley
Friday 11 January	Izobel Abrahams
Friday 18 January	Helen Kuttner
Friday 25 January	Marilyn Glyn
Friday 1 February	Judith Van Vlymen
Friday 8 February	Sandra Burke
Friday 15 February	Jo Hopcraft
Friday 22 February	Victoria Woolfson

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

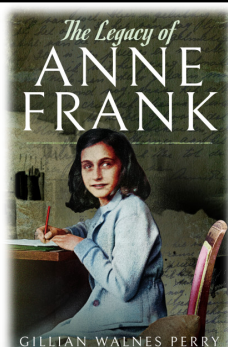


As the Jewish community continues to grow and attract new members, we cannot forget the importance of ensuring the future of our community.

We depend on the generosity of our members to provide the leadership, financial support, a wide variety of educational, social and cultural, sports and leisure activities for all members of our community and ensure the future of our unique Jewish heritage.

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

Any questions or for an confidential discussion please call Sue Taylor on 01773 811111



THE LEGACY OF ANNE FRANK

Sunday 13 January at 8pm

Entry free, refreshments provided

Gillian Walnes Perry, retired executive director of the Anne Frank Trust UK, will talk to us about the life and legacy of Anne Frank and her influence on young people's moral compass.





Community News

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:

Shelley Masters
Allan Rosenberg
Vanessa & Paul Crocker
Dianne & David Rose
Paul Reece

WEDDING

Mazal Tov to:

Lara Kendall & Dan Rothman, who were married on 15 December

BIRTHS

Mazal Tov to:

Katie & Adam Davis on the birth of their son Woolf
Alexa & Robert Jakobi on the birth of their son Arden
Martina Tafreshi & Adam Laderman on the birth of their daughter Olivia

BIRTHDAYS

Congratulations and best wishes to:

Mrs A Goodwin (95) on 2 December
Mr E Kaczynski (80) on 5 December
Mrs C Haar (97) on 29 December
Miss M Kinstead (92) on 3 January
Mrs R Eisenfeld (87) on 8 January
Mrs L Simmonds (95) on 18 January
Mrs I Wolffberg (99) on 20 January
Mrs G Oblath (94) on 27 January

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:

Rita Brent, who died on 1 November
Gerald Goodwin, who died on 4 November
Helen Lewis, who died on 6 November
Elli Schiffer Beutel who died on 15 December

STONE SETTING

Peter Batkin on Sunday 13 January at 1.45pm at Edgwarebury Lane Cemetery

CHANUKAH MARKET 2018 RAFFLE WINNERS

1st prize	£100	Mr Selby	11351
2nd prize	£50	Mr Selby	11358
3rd prize	£25	Ms P Tausz	00340
4th prize	£25	Mrs D Rynhold	11801
5th prize	£10	Mrs H Levin	10146
6th prize	£10	Mr M Glyn	01502

SECOND NIGHT SEDER

Saturday 20 April following the Service at 6.45pm

Come and join Rabbi Altshuler and Cantor Heller

Members £30, Non Members £35, Under 13s £15

If you wish to attend, please contact the Synagogue Office

The copy deadline for the next issue of
Our Congregation is Friday 8 February 2019

REGULAR SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm & Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Kikar Kids

Saturday 5 January, 2 February, 2 March

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

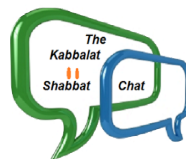
Term Starts: Sunday 13 January

Half Term: 17 & 24 February

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 sessions: 11 January, 8 February, 8 March



NW3 LUNCHEON GROUP

Giacomo, 428 Finchley Road, London, NW2 2HY

1.00pm on Wednesday 16 January and 20 February

Please call Judy Field (020 8455 0614) if you wish to attend

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT DISCUSSION

13 January

10.00-11.15 Rabbi Altshuler on History of Ancient Israel:

Exodus from Egypt

11.15-12.30 TBC

20 January

10.00 - 11.15 Rabbi Altshuler on History of Ancient Israel:

Revelation at Sinai

11.15-12.30 Angela Gluck - Hon Trustee of The Separated Child Foundation

27 January

10.00-11.15 Rabbi Altshuler on History of Ancient Israel:

Joshua and the Conquest

11.15-12.30 TBC

3 February

10.00-11.15 Rabbi Altshuler on History of Ancient Israel:

Constitution & Faith of Early Israel - Judges 1200-1050 BCE

11.15-12.30 Jonathan Paris, journalist and political analyst: Middle East update

10 February

10.00-11.15 Rabbi Altshuler on History of Ancient Israel: Rise and Development of Monarchy, Saul 1050-1000BCE

11.15-12.30 Cantor Paul Heller: The Use of the Temple Organ in the Synagogue

17 & 24 February: Half Term - No Adult Discussion

SAVE THE DATE

ISRAEL DINNER, THURSDAY 9 MAY

Celebrate Yom Ha'Atzma'ut, Israel's 71st Birthday, at Belsize Square Synagogue

- * A great evening of music and dancing
- * Guest speaker (details to be announced)
- * Superb dining by our own chef, Adam Nathan
- * Help support our chosen well-deserving chosen Israeli charities



SCENES FROM THE WESTMINSTER ABBEY SERVICE



Clockwise from top left:

Rabbi Altshuler reads a psalm at the start of the service while Cantor Heller looks on from the bench

In the evening gloom at Liverpool Street Station, David Rothenberg holds up the Chanukiah with its first candle to commemorate the Kindertransport rescue operation

Gemma Rosenfeld on cello and Ben Wolf conducting as combined synagogue choirs sing the last paragraph of the Amidah (Our female voices are in the front row)

Ben Wolf conducts our Youth Choir as they sing a German lullaby, one of Lewandowski's non-liturgical works

Lilian Levy lighting a memorial candle together with her daughter Hilary Solomon



LIGHTING UP FOR CHANUKAH



Aerial view of the Chanukah Market before opening showing Grocery Stall (right) Wrapping Paper (left) and Household Accessories (centre)



Cantor Heller and Rabbi Altshuler open the Chanukah Market on 1 December with Havdalah



The First Candle waits to be lit, watched by expectant Chanukah Market customers

Photo credits: Westminster Abbey website, Paul Heller, Susan Zur-Spiro, Tanya Freedman





BOWLING ALONG

Our Youth Leader, Lucy Bergman reports: In the month of November, two of our groups, years 3-6 (aged 7-11) and years 7 and above (11+) took part in our Bowling Tournament at the Hollywood Bowl North Finchley. Years 3-6 had a delicious pizza lunch after Cheder to fuel up before their game on Sunday afternoon, 11 November. Years 7 and above turned up for their game the following Saturday night, excited and ready to compete for the winning title.

Both groups played two sets of games, accompanied by lots of yummy food and drinks. Most of us were very competitive but still cheered on our other players when they took their turn. Our games saw quite a few strikes and lots of spares! Turns out we have some professional bowlers at Belsize! Overall, the tournament was a massive success and I'm very much looking forward to our next event. Watch this space!!

Big congratulations to our game winners: Hetty Cox, Abi Taub, Jack Loison and Benji Nathan.



The junior group hold tight onto their 10-pin bowling balls before unleashing them at North Finchley Hollywood Bowl.



BELSIZE HAS TALENT

Belsize Square Synagogue
Saturday 19 January at 7.30pm

Come and hear our talented youngsters sing and play an array of instruments. We will also have guests, including the amazing violinist, Miriam Kramer.

Please come to cheer and support our fellow members for a night of fun. Book through the website: Adults £20 Under 18s £10

You will vote for one player to perform at the Israel Dinner on Thursday 9 May.



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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

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, Caroline Loison, in the Synagogue Office, or email caroline@synagogue.org.uk

PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Chairperson: Frank Joseph - 020 7482 2555

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Email: lucy@synagogue.org.uk

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