



### BOOKS FOR SUMMER READING

Shalom Chaverim,

We are entering the quiet summer months and I hope this is a time for physical and mental recovery, surrounded by friends and family.

I will be away to see my family in the United States and look forward to some precious moments with my children, my grandchildren, my cousins, my friends, my brother and my mother who will be 98½ years old on 5 August. She is still going strong, if physically weaker, but her mental state is as vibrant as ever. We are all so proud of her love of life.

Not only is this the time of year to reconnect with loved ones, it is also a time for walks, time to meditate, to think about the state of our lives and, for me, to read and read yet more. I hope you will take time this summer to read some Jewish content and I am always here to recommend my favourite books.

Among my chosen subjects would be Bible, rabbinics, liturgy, history, Zionism and Israel. For Bible interest I highly recommend *A History of the Bible* by theologist and Anglican priest John Barton, published earlier this year. It is a fascinating account of basic biblical scholarship in both Jewish and Christian Scriptures, with the most accurate and interesting chapters on how the biblical texts were canonised and edited in the forms that we are familiar with today.

For rabbinics, *There We Sat Down* by Jacob Neusner is still the standard classic on how rabbinic literature was written and what it is. Also anything written by Adin Steinsaltz.

For liturgy, I recommend my teacher Rabbi Reuven Hammer's excellent commentaries on Jewish liturgy. On Amazon there is a full selection of his commentaries on the High Holiday liturgy, the Siddur and much else.

For history, I recommend Martin Goodman's *History of Judaism*, an excellent overview of how Judaism evolved and achieved the forms that it embraces today.

On Zionism and Israel, David Gordis's *Israel* is a must-read, a stirring account of Israel's history which distinguishes between fact, fantasy and myth.

Of course, there are many other books to read and we should not be limited to just those with Jewish content. So enjoy the thrill of the intellectual journey and let me know what you think of the books you have read this summer!

Another thing we will be doing is to plan our calendar for the forthcoming year. Please share any suggestions for themes or topics for our Sunday morning study group.

And let me know what you think of these:

1. A study of the Siddur: an extensive conversation and examination of each part of our prayer book. Why? When? How?
2. From Moses to Ben Gurion: famous Jewish personalities through the ages from ancient to modern times.
3. Jewish Ethics.
4. Shoah: a detailed study of the worst catastrophe in world history.

On that note, I wish you all summer months of peace and blessing. Please come to shul, enjoy the quiet, and stay in touch.

Kol Tuv, only blessing and peace,

**Rabbi Altshuler**



**CHEVRAH KADISHA Annual Memorial Service**  
**Sunday 11 August, 11.30am**  
 at Liberal Jewish Cemetery, Pound Lane, NW10 2HP

**TISHA B'AV JOINT SERVICE**  
**Saturday 10 August at Belsize Square Synagogue**

7:30pm Mincha followed by Seudah Shlishit (Shabbat conclusion meal)  
 8:30pm Lecture on the Second Temple, Josephus and Philo by guest speaker Prof. Sarah Pearce  
 9:15pm Maariv followed by an introduction from Rabbi Jeremy Gordon, Kinnot and Eicha led by Cantors Cotsen and Heller



RSVP for catering purposes to: [office@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:office@synagogue.org.uk)

51 Belsize Square NW3 4HX

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## J-POD @ BSS CHEDER



***Clockwise from the top left:***

*Sarah Phillips brings in Shabbat*

*Adam Rynhold tells the children what the tallit is all about*

*Cantor Heller demonstrates how to handle tefillin*

*Tefillin success!*

*Justyn Trenner explains Torah etiquette*

*Only just reaching to peer into the Sefer Torah*

*A little drop of kiddush wine never did any harm*

*All set to plait the challah*

*Rabbi Altshuler talks to Cheder in the hall*

*John Alexander talks to kids about Torah Scrolls in the Ark*

*Adam Hurst gives a Havdalah demonstration*

*Tallit group wrap-around*



***Eve Hersov writes:*** The buzz of conversation at our post-Shavuot lunch on Tuesday 11 June filled the Kiddush room where 25 of our esteemed older members enjoyed a fabulous lunch cooked by our own Claire Walford. Attended by our Ministers and served by volunteers and staff, friends caught up with each other and celebrated life with a bit of singing and a lot of banter. Even the weather co-operated, making it an occasion to remember and treasure. (The rain came later.)



# JEWISH PRACTICAL OPEN DAY – A FIRST FOR CHEDER

## Caroline Loison explains

Sunday 28 April saw BSS Cheder's first ever J-POD (Jewish Practical Open Day), a new termly initiative by Cheder Head Teacher, Caroline Loison. The idea was to have six activities set up around the Shul for everyone who came, whether or not they attend Cheder, to "have a go" and perfect their practical Judaism skills.

Children, staff, parents and members of the congregation came together for a wonderful morning of learning and, more importantly, of "doing". We were very lucky to have Board Members to lead three of the activities.

**John Alexander** led the Gelilah (Torah wrapping) activity, demonstrating the wide variety of Yads (literally a hand, the pointers used by Torah readers to guide them along the lines) we have at Belsize Square, and explaining how to "dress" the Torah before it is put back inside the Ark after the Torah Service.

**Justyn Trenner** led the Brachot activity for before and after reading the Torah, giving all sorts of information about how to perform an Aliyah to the Torah and going through how to recite the brachot. **Adam Hurst** led the Havdalah activity, teaching everyone the meaning behind Havdalah and how to perform it, including singing *Shavuah Tov/Have A Good Week* in as many languages as possible!

Three of our Cheder Staff also led activities. **Cantor Paul Heller** led the Tefillin activity and explained and demonstrated how to lay Tefillin with everyone getting to have a go. **Sarah Phillips** led the Kabbalat Shabbat activity, demonstrating how to recite the three brachot over the candles, wine and challah. Everybody could eat some challah and see how to plait one.

Last, but by no means least, **Adam Rynhold** led the Tallit activity,

explaining all the intricacies of such an important Jewish artefact and demonstrating how to recite the blessing whilst putting on a Tallit. Walking round throughout the morning, the buzz was palpable and the learning was evident. Our J-POD morning was rounded off perfectly by **Rabbi Stuart Altshuler**, who addressed us all together in the hall and explained how and why we recite the Shema and the Amidah.

Our first J-POD @ BSS Cheder was a huge success and definitely to be repeated. We are already in the process of planning the next one on 10 November, with people "booked" to lead the activities on topics including Chanukah and the Chumash. Please put this date in your diary and join us for what we hope will be another hugely successful morning of Practical Judaism where we will practise, perfect and learn together.

## Highlights from our Tikkun Leyl Shabbat on 8 June

### **Tessa Rajak on Israel-Diaspora**

**Relations:** The diaspora has existed since the Jewish Revolt against the Roman Empire and the destruction of the Second Temple in 70CE. But which is the better form of Jewish life; in Israel or outside? In biblical times, it was rare. Naomi's husband left because of famine. But with such a long period of exile, diaspora life has developed its own stability, even occasional golden ages. History teaches that return to homeland wins but diaspora-Israel relations can thrive.

### **Alasdair Nisbet on environmental**

**relationships:** As an agrarian society, ancient Israelites didn't think directly about the environment, except for the fallow year as maintenance. They saw it in social terms, like leaving gleanings for the poor and kindness to animals, such as not sacrificing a beast with its young on the same day. However, a thanksgiving sacrifice was a meat-eating day with no left-overs. In talmudic times, specific health and safety rules applied. Alasdair had some interesting things to say on plastics but they were not connected to the ancient world.

### **Idit Toresella on underlying themes in the Book of Ruth:** Why was it even

written? Idit (Francesca) said David was not easily accepted as king and his great-grandmother, Ruth, came from neighbouring Moab, seen as hostile to Israel. According to external commentaries, she was the daughter of the local king and though famously declaring "your God will be my God", this would never normally be accepted as formal conversion. According to this presentation, the book is a propaganda exercise to make David "kosher".

### **Michael Horowitz on 19th-century Polish rabbinic squabbles:** The

underlying problem facing Jewish communities was the loss of traditional livelihood caused by the introduction of railways around 1825. This destroyed their traditional role as the middleman, carting goods across the Continent. The local population had no need for Jews and imposed an economic boycott in 1893. Jews became impoverished and blood libels were seized on whenever a young girl was found murdered. Nationalism was rampant and only the Jews remained loyal subjects of the Habsburg Emperor. Rabbinic authorities had a hard time maintaining piety in the face of demands from their communities for secular education, girls' education and the draw of the new socialist and

Zionist movements.

### **Cantor Paul Heller: the relationship between nusach (liturgical music) and prayer:** Our Cantor explained the

chants used in Jewish services and how different they are from Western theory and practice. There are parallels with the major and minor keys but the underlying approach is different. Once you know the full range of separate musical phrases, there seems to be no limit to improvisation. But with Sulzer Lewandowski and a choir, you cannot enjoy that freedom. True *chazanut* is only for a soloist.

### **Rabbi Stuart Altshuler on the relationship between Torah and Rabbinic texts:** This set out to answer

who wrote the Torah, man or God? The rabbis took it as a co-operative effort, to stop the result from being too rigid or too flexible. But how are we to understand phrases like "the finger of God" and does "carve" and "write" mean two operations carried out by the same person or two agents? One of our number (nearly 30) seated round the table refused to be satisfied with ambiguity in any shape or form. Unfortunately, we had no answer from heaven.





## AGM: CELEBRATION AND CHALLENGE

With this year marking the end of Jackie Alexander's three-year term as chairman, the Annual General Meeting gave her the opportunity to thank the congregation for allowing her a further period in office, as well as the many people involved in keeping the synagogue running in every aspect.

The two major features of this year were the celebrations (in March) of our 80th anniversary as a congregation and the search for a new rabbi. As she said: "We have agreed with Rabbi Altshuler that he will be leaving us in the summer of 2022 after taking his Sabbatical. The discussions with Rabbi Altshuler took place over 12 months. The Synagogue leadership has an obligation to plan for succession and all our past Chairmen and the Executive and the Board were involved in the process at some point.

"Fixing a date now gives the Rabbi the opportunity to plan ahead and creates certainty for the Synagogue and ensures that he can assist us in finding the right successor. Both he and we are all so proud of what he has achieved for this community, growing our membership, adult education, open support for Israel, creating an inclusive community and building a positive momentum for our future. We have plenty of time to plan for a proper

farewell in 2022 and so I don't propose to say more at the moment. In terms of succession planning we are just at the start."

On education, the chairman noted a key recommendation of the Cheder Review (held in February) "in the face of falling numbers... to make our Cheder central to our community... We live in changing times and, as the pressures on young families are different from a few years ago, we need to respond to keep them involved."

She thanked the new Head of Cheder, Caroline Loison, for the new ideas she has implemented and echoed her call for volunteers to run sessions. She also noted youth leader Lucy Bergman's invitation to our children to bring a friend along to activities and the popularity of Kikar services for young children.

Her particular preference is for services with a special focus. She reminded us that in 2017 a service was held to celebrate babies and toddlers in the congregation and another for our recent B'nei Mitzvah. This year saw us participate again in Mental Health Shabbat with an external speaker and our first Inclusion Service with advice from Langdon. A national Green

Shabbat is to come this summer, following on from our involvement with the ECO synagogue initiative. Jackie thanked everyone involved in the preparation of these services.

In an update on building projects, Nick Viner said the decision was taken against a major redevelopment of the hall. But with Keren's Nursery in discussions about using the hall for increased child numbers, the hall could merit a new kitchen and general upgrade. New leases were announced for the Scout Hut and Keren's Nursery. Freddy Lehmann was thanked for the "relief" brought about by the tidying up of synagogue premises.

The chairman's speech was followed by a lively discussion on arrangements for the Rabbi's departure, with references to people's experience of the problems of "succession" in the absence of clear-cut guidelines and as we move forward into a new working environment. Warnings were also sounded about the need to keep costs under control as membership fees are already at the high end.

This was an AGM which saw a high concern for our future while maintaining our standards and much loved institutions. The Treasurer's Report will follow in the next issue.

## HIGH HOLYDAY TICKETS & INFORMATION

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

The pack includes application forms for non-members' tickets, prayer books and transport requirements/volunteer provision. Please keep for reference and **do not destroy**. Please contact the Synagogue Office if you have any concerns.



*Repentance & Forgiveness*



### DISCUSSION & SELICHOT CHORAL SERVICE

**Saturday 21 September at Belsize Square Synagogue**

Prepare heart, mind and soul for our High Holydays with our annual Selichot service, led by **Cantor Paul Heller** and accompanied by our professional choir directed by **Dr. Benjamin Wolf**. The programme includes:

- 9:00 pm Havdallah followed by **Rabbi Stuart Altshuler** discussion on "What do we Jews wish to perpetuate about ourselves?" refreshments will be served
- 10:00 pm Selichot Choral service

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

Email: [office@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:office@synagogue.org.uk)

## HIGH HOLYDAY SERVICES

### SELICHOT SERVICE

Saturday 21 September 10.00pm

### ROSH HASHANAH

1st Eve: Sunday 29 Sept at 6.45pm  
1st Day: Monday 30 Sept at 9.30am  
2nd Eve: Monday 30 Sept at 6.45pm  
2nd Day: Tuesday 1 October at 9.30am

### KOL NIDREI

Tuesday 8 October at 7.00pm - Fast starts 6.08pm)

### YOM KIPPUR

Wednesday 9 October at 10.00am  
(Fast ends at 7.11pm)

# HOLLYWOOD, BBC, EUROVISION & BDS

## Lord Grade at our Israel Dinner

Our Israel Dinner on 9 May did very well this year. As well as enthusiastic Israeli dancing and a tasty meal, plus a lively dialogue with our impressive guest speaker, 135 guests raised over £63,000 for our Israel charities.

Introducing the event, Rabbi Altshuler reminded us that the hope of returning to Israel and Jerusalem was never abandoned in the course of nearly 2,000 years. Now this has been won, we remember those who died fighting for it and know we will not lose it again.

After the formal toasts, our host Rob Nothman introduced us to Lord (Michael) Grade with his long string of achievements – chairman of film, radio and TV companies, impresario, agent to the stars and, since 2001, a life peer.

Rob's interview of Lord Grade began with the day he left school at 17 and asked his father (theatrical agent Leslie Grade) for "a sub(sidy)". He got the reply: "What are you going to do?" and said he wanted to be a sports writer. His father said he would see the editor of the Daily Mirror (circulation 5.25 million) next Monday morning at 10.30. He should wear a suit and not be late. He was taken in a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce, introduced to the sports editor and after a quick chat (no interview) told to start work next Monday. He went home in a Bentley.

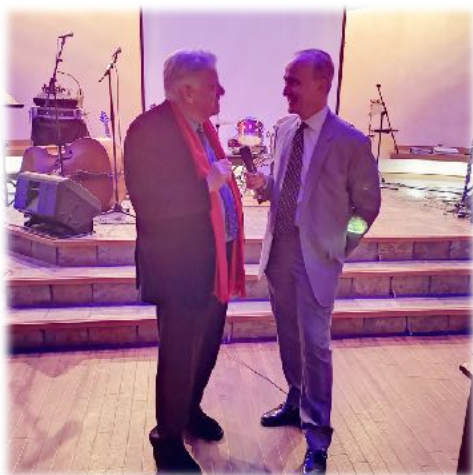
His pay, in 1960, was quite a contrast at £10 a week. He worked there till 1966 when his father had a stroke and he went into that world, having earlier turned it down. He was now ready to be an agent or rather, a talent scout, which he called instinctive. You absorb it, you can't learn it.

He joined London Weekend Television in 1973 and went to Hollywood in 1981, which he credited with "toughening me up" in a "school of hard knocks". But he wanted more than pure entertainment and was happy to take "the biggest pay cut in history" in 1984 when he gave up a salary of \$5,000 for the BBC's £27.50 per week and was "proud to do it". Responding to questions on the BBC, he said it will survive as long as the British public values it. Though easy to criticise, it is still well respected and a leading world brand. But things have changed. "Youngsters don't watch TV."

As chairman of the BBC from 2004-06, he told Rob that its Board does not deal with complaints of coverage of Israel. That is for editorial teams to sort out. He believes you can never be completely impartial, you can only try. While rebutting a corporate view on Israel, he said reporters do things as they see them and don't have the time for research. "Sloppy" reporting is the inevitable result of doing too much. He singled out two women as exceptions but neither covers the Middle East, and praised the coverage of antisemitism in the Labour Party as "exemplary".

When it came to Rob's question on BDS and attempts to boycott the imminent Eurovision Song Contest, Michael Grade did not hold back. "BDS is antisemitic. They never say anything about the Middle East's abuse and executions. The critics of Israel are very tolerant of repressive regimes like Saudi Arabia and Qatar. It is depressingly obvious." These were frank and forceful responses from a strong personality.

Then came the nub of the event, the charity appeal. Over the last 10 years, we have given £150,000 each to the Israel Sport Center for the Disabled, Jaffa Institute and Yemin Orde. The Israel Committee, under its chair Emma Brookes, has now decided to rotate the charities, while retaining the basic principle of helping levels of Israeli society that do not receive the support they need and deserve. So we have swapped Israel Sport Center for the Disabled for **ASSAF**, an aid organisation for refugees and asylum seekers in Israel, established in 2007.



*Rob Nothman interviews  
Lord (Michael) Grade*

As Paul Burger described to us, these people are concentrated in the old Tel Aviv Central Bus Station, which became a slum and centre of crime and drugs after its buildings were torn down in 2009. (It closed in 1993.) Today refugees, largely from Eritrea and Sudan, live crammed into one-bedroom flats, working unsocial hours in menial jobs.

Problems arise for their children when they leave school. They do not go into the army (the gateway for jobs) and cannot find jobs. ASSAF has created youth clubs for school pupils teaching social skills and coping strategies. Our project supports a new after-school club with activities for 16-18 year olds.

**Yemin Orde Youth Village**, founded by the British Friends of Youth Aliyah in 1953 on the Carmel for Holocaust orphans and immigrant children, was presented by Vivien Lewis. Today it has over 400 children aged 5-19 from Russia to East Africa, including Israel. Its new project is an "ecofarm". Children will work there after school hours, learning not only practical skills but social aspects like teamwork. We watched a short film of three girls enthusiastically tending a hedge.

As Allan Morgenthau said when he introduced our third charity, the **Jaffa Institute**, all our charities support young people. Tel Aviv is the most vibrant city in the Middle East but that does not stop it having poverty and severe social problems. The Israel Committee is supporting this charity's Jump Start programme, offered this year to 100 (up from 75) youngsters aged 12-16 at risk of dropping out because they feel they are failures.

In the charity's seven centres they find a quiet space for two hours a week. School hours in Israel are 8am-2pm, the centres run from 3-8pm. Kids can concentrate on their homework and be coached to pass exams in the core subjects of Hebrew, maths and English and other subjects. It makes all the difference to their prospects.

Good food, good music, good fun on the dance floor, good speaker, good appeals for good causes. An evening to appreciate.

**Ruth Rothenberg**





## PARADOXICAL PRAGUE

### Ruth Rothenberg reports on a packed six-day tour

Our week's trip with Rabbi Altshuler to Prague from 14-20 May was intensive and informative, exacting and uplifting, in beautiful surroundings in town and country and highly variable weather. Unbeknown to our indefatigable tour organiser Claire Walford, our boutique hotel, Leonardo, a stone's throw from the well trodden Charles Bridge, is Israeli owned. Jews have been an integral part of Czech history and, it seems, still are.

We wasted no time on arrival. At a brief post-lunch get-together, we were introduced to our guide, Chicago native Rabbi Ron Hoffberg, now the Czech Masorti rabbi, under his tour guide hat. Making a living in the Czech Republic is not so easy. We were whisked away by taxi up the steep winding road to Prague Castle, the city's natural high point for defence and control.

There we visited the 16th-century Lobkowicz Palace, the only privately owned part of this historic complex, exemplifying an unusual reaction to the end of Communism, compared to, say, Poland. Property taken by Nazis or Communists has been returned to the original owners, Jews and Gentiles alike. If no Jewish heirs exist, property goes to the Jewish Community, which is sustained by its rentals.

The audio guides welcomed us with the American-sounding voice of the grandson of the Lobkowicz prince who opposed the Nazis and fled to the USA. Interesting to hear from aristocratic non-Jewish refugees from Nazism! When their family seat was returned half a century later, they made it a museum (opened in 2007) rich in art and music treasures.

The family were highly qualified amateur musicians, sponsoring Mozart and Beethoven. One prince asked Mozart to rearrange violin parts for his daughters in the court orchestra and create a bass singing part for him in the now standard re-orchestration of Handel's Messiah. That score is on display together with Beethoven's manuscripts of his Third and Fourth Symphonies.

From there, it was downhill back to the city and Jewish Community

Centre in the old Jewish Town Hall. This building is distinguished not only by the Hebrew numerals on its external clock but by the two Magen David golden outlines traced on the front wall. No, this was not a proud affirmation of identity, as I fondly hoped, or even a forced badge like the mediaeval Jewish hat, but purely to tell the tax collector of old which door to knock on.

We were there for a talk by Monsignor Tomas Halik, professor of sociology at Charles University and in line to become a cardinal. His story embodied the national experience of the Communists' complete suppression of religion. The son of a literary historian and editor, he was born in 1948, when Communism took over and made Czechoslovakia the testing ground for "atheisation". (The Czech part was already secularised.) In 1950 churches, monasteries and convents were shut down and the monks and nuns sent to concentration camps.

He was drawn to Christianity through art, architecture and philosophy, possibly in reaction to Communism. Priests were tolerated as social workers for the poor but under conditions. They needed a licence, could not have a university degree or be activists. Monsignor Halik met priests who had spent decades in prison. "It was religion with a human voice. They had humour, were open-minded and accepted their suffering as God's purge of the church," he told us.

He had a sociology degree, so went to East Germany to be secretly ordained. Even his mother did not know. In the underground church, he worked with

alcohol addicts. The fall of the Berlin Wall and collapse of Communism in 1989 brought him into the open and he started his interfaith work, based on the "common roots" he recognised between Judaism and Christianity.

Reality set in when he discovered how "provocative" secular Jews can be and was "disappointed" that early meetings all finished up revolving round the Holocaust. But he realised that his reaction fell into the "unrealistic expectations" of the momentous events of 1989. He refused to let these setbacks "overshadow the richness of Judaism" and got on with helping the revival of the Jewish community, though few professing Jews were left, or even Jews aware of being Jewish.

Despite a turbulent spiritual environment, he retained his basic belief in faith and love – with meditation to fall back on when reality and frustration overwhelmed him. This was an interesting and honest account of a religious journey, which earned Tomas Halik the Templeton Prize in 2015 through his organisation, Common Voice, bringing together representatives of different religions including Islam and Buddhism.

He is also a papal advisor and believes like Pope Francis that the Vatican can "change you for the worse." One of the greatest embarrassments for him is the sheer amount of church property being returned. The process seems to have slowed down as the Vatican is suing for the return of yet more property. But there is general shock at how much the Catholic Church owned. At the same time religion has become politicised and right-wing populist attitudes are hardening. It was an enlightening talk with insights into local conditions, eliciting many questions from our party. And that was just Day One.

Day Two took us round the Jewish Quarter, which became known as the suburb of Josefov in 1850 in homage to the Habsburg Emperor Josef II, who had emancipated Jews 70 years earlier when he gave full civil rights to all minorities. By the mid 19th century most Jews had moved to better areas, leaving the poor and pious scattered among



*Monsignor Tomas Halik (centre) was introduced by our guide, Rabbi Ron Hoffberg, standing on the left with Rabbi Altshuler sitting on the right.*

the 70 synagogues. Most of these were demolished in the slum clearance and redevelopment at the end of the century, when Jews were down to a fifth of their former population.

What is left is an area full of charm and interest and, for us, within walking distance. We visited five of the six synagogues still standing, four of them from the 16th-century golden age of Prague Jewry. We first saw the oldest, the Altneuschul (originally the Neuschul), built in the 13th century, and the Pinkas Synagogue, built by the Horowitz family, ancestors of our group participant Michael Horowitz, as the equivalent of a private family chapel.

Today it serves as a Holocaust memorial, its walls covered by the names and date of death of some 78,000 Holocaust victims. Some of the children's artwork from Terezin, where we went on our last day, is also on display. Altogether, over 80,000 Czech Jews (covering Bohemia and Moravia) were killed. Out of 14,000 survivors, about half went to Israel between 1948 (the year of Israel's birth and the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia) and 1950, when emigration was stopped.

We also visited the adjacent old Jewish cemetery (15th to 18th centuries) with some 12,000 bodies buried 10 or 12 layers deep and a forest of stones sticking out from every conceivable point at odd angles and facing in all directions. A complete shambles but oddly sympathetic. This is where the creator of the mythical Golem, Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel (1525-1609), known as the Maharal, is buried. His Golem (forerunner of Frankenstein) is reputedly buried in his attic.

The other nearby synagogues now constitute the Jewish Museum: the Maisels and Klausen, plus the Pinkas shul and Spanish Synagogue which we visited two days later. The sixth synagogue, where we went for Shabbat service, is the youngest. Built in 1906 outside the former ghetto but still on the site of an earlier synagogue, the Jubilee Synagogue was officially named for the 50th anniversary of an earlier Austrian emperor (Franz Joseph I) but is also known as the Jerusalem Synagogue after its street address and the Great Synagogue for its size. Its colourful

facade and Art Nouveau trim make it an obvious tourist target.

From Rabbi Hoffberg we learned about the long history of Czech Jewry. Tax receipts in 904 and 906CE show their presence as money-makers. ("I am taxed, therefore I am.") They started with a few families on the castle side of the River Vltava, got moved to the other side, but stayed next to the river.

Although this made them permanently subject to flooding (including 2002), it helped both with water supply and economically. Jews were traders and the easiest method of long-distance travel in an age of forest, field and horse track was by boat. The Vltava/Volava (Moldau in German) ultimately joins the Elbe (Labe or Lava in Czech) flowing into the North Sea at Hamburg.

The political background was the dynasty of Czech kings (most familiar name, Wenceslas), followed by other local dynasties in this westernmost Slav outpost in Europe. Slavs arrived in the sixth century, following Germanic tribes, and settled in an area formerly inhabited by a Celtic group, the Boii, who gave their name to Bohemia. They also settled in the eastern highlands of Moravia, named after the river Morava which joins the Danube.

Moravia was earlier in consolidating its rule. It adopted Christianity in the 9th century but collapsed in 907 after a Hungarian invasion and ended up under Bohemian rule. When the last Slav king was killed in battle in 1526 leaving no son, both regions were absorbed by his son-in-law into the Habsburg family's Austrian Empire (marriage rather than conquest being their standard means of expansion).



*Part of the Holocaust memorial wall created in the 16th-century Pinkas Synagogue in Prague's Jewish Quarter*



*The famous anti-clockwise Hebrew clock on Prague's old Jewish Town Hall with a conventional clock above.*

From our co-leader Antony Polonsky we learned about the social background. The countryside belonged to nobles and serfs who were all tied to the land. The nobles hunted and put on cultural (i.e. indoor) entertainment. In towns, craft guilds excluded Jews, who were seen as competition. No one moved far from their place of birth. So Jews travelled both in a social sense as agents for the nobles with the peasants, and geographically, going vast distances to bring goods. The one exception to local immobility was the Crusades, which allowed peasants to travel to the Holy Land and kill Jews en route. Prague Jewry endured several pogroms, beginning in 1096.

A further religious element was the early Protestant movement led by Jan Hus to limit the power of the Catholic Church. Influenced by England's John Wycliffe, he wanted to make the Bible accessible to all by translating it into the vernacular. He was burned at the stake in 1415 but his movement continued until defeated at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620.

Catholicism then became the norm.

The mid 19th century saw the rise of Germany's cultural influence.

Against this background, Prague Jewry carved out its own distinctive and successful niche, despite setbacks like expulsions. These usually lasted three years when the shortfall in tax revenue showed the need for Jews after all. But a Hebrew press existed from the 15th century, producing the Haggadah in the form we know, and the 16th century became a "golden age" of Jewish culture.

*[To be continued in next issue]*





## U.S. HOLOCAUST EDUCATION AWARD

Congratulations to **Marianne and Peter Summerfield** on receiving the **Elie Wiesel Holocaust Memorial Medal** in April from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC for their international commitment to Holocaust education.

For the last 10 years the Summerfields have been speaking in England mostly to schools and colleges and even, recently, the University of the Third Age, under the auspices of the Holocaust Education Trust. In Germany they are invited to the Berlin Jewish Museum's annual programme, where they speak in German to young people brought in from all over Germany.

Naturally, they are regular participants in our own annual Holocaust Education month in February. They also spend

several months a year in Florida, where they have a flat, telling youngsters about the unimaginably horrific period of history they lived through. It was this that brought them to the attention of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Because they were not there in January and missed the awards ceremony, they received their medal by mail in Florida in April.

The Elie Wiesel Medal is the museum's highest honour. It was established in 2011 in the museum's name and then almost immediately changed to that of its inaugural recipient, Elie Wiesel, the renowned Holocaust survivor, writer and thinker about those experiences. He died in 2016. The award recognises "nationally prominent individuals whose actions have advanced the vision of the US Memorial Museum of a world

where people confront hatred, prevent genocide and promote human dignity."

Peter and Marianne both came to Britain as young children with their parents in 1939. In retirement (Peter was a solicitor and Marianne an entrepreneur running businesses ranging from a nursery school chain to English language school) they became active in teaching the next generation about the dangers and horrors of Hitler's war against the Jews.

"The German students want to know what I experienced as a child in Germany and a refugee in England," Peter said. "I saw our synagogue burn down in Berlin. We came to England with just the clothes we wore and lived off charity for our first year. It is an eye-opener for them."

## WILL WOMEN TAKE OVER IN RELIGIOUS MINISTRY?

### Alex Antscherl enjoys an Interfaith Session

A fascinating series of classes ran throughout March, given by Rabbi Altschuler, Reverend Nicholson (from our neighbours, St Peter's Church) and Imam Stublla (of the British Albanian Muslim Community). All four sessions addressed aspects of the topic of identity. Being held at different places of worship across the month meant that participants had an opportunity to see a variety of faith venues.

I found the session on the role of women in the three monotheistic faiths of particular interest. In all three traditions, we learnt, women have been teachers of religion and have been given protection under the law. In all the faiths, where they have suffered subjugation it has often been as a

result of custom, not religious law.

Reverend Nicholson spoke about how Mary Magdalene is looked up to as a leader and foremost among the disciples by many, despite attempts (often by the Church itself) to tarnish her reputation as a "fallen woman". Aisha, the second wife of Mohammed, was an important teacher of Islam. And our rabbi had many interesting examples of female teachers in early Judaism such as Bruria, the wife of Rabbi Meir in the second century CE, a renowned teacher of Mishnah.

The very different treatment of women compared to men in all three religions over centuries has often arisen from custom, not religious law. For example,

Islamic law enshrines the right of women to own businesses, despite the flouting of this law in many Islamic nations. There is nothing in halachah to decree that men and women should sit separately and no archaeological evidence to suggest that this was the case in ancient synagogues. It is only visible from medieval times onward and is thought to arise from a decision made by a rabbi during Succot, to protect women from drunken men!

Women now outnumber men in Reform rabbinical colleges and in ministry training for the Church of England, and there are Muslim women challenging the tradition that imams and prayer leaders have to be male. So, it looks as if the future is increasingly female!

## THE HEALING POWER OF BOOKS

### Community Care Co-Ordinator Eve Hersov seeks book recommendations

For many of us, information is key to helping us cope with illness or death. Knowing more about a subject gives us a sense of mastery or control and provides a context. We learn and grow when we explore what other people have thought and felt when going through a similar experience. We are informed and often inspired by knowledge and narrative about how people cope and develop personal strategies to manage life differently.

This has been a time of intense political volatility, and it has been a time within our congregation when many families have been touched by sudden and dramatic loss. Over the years I have often had people request information about a particular illness, divorce, miscarriage, death, and grief.

But recently when a congregant told me about a book that was helpful during a complicated grief, it made me

realise that I wanted to develop a book list, and possibly a shelf in the synagogue library of recommended resources.

Many websites have a publications list, but I prefer to hear directly from our membership about the books for adults and children that you have read and found useful. Please let me know your thoughts and recommendations. Thank you very much.

## Dear Fellow Members

Mrs Klopstick was so very taken with David Edinburgh's *Blue Earth* series she is now on a cause in the Orkneys for deep see diving. She did buy her own wet suit und flappers, but the diving schul will provide her with all the necessary equipment, aqua long, masque und so wider. I am a little worried that at her age she might be going in above her hat, but as always I can say nothing.

Now with sommer in our midst many of you will be travelling abroad to exotic locations in order to become browned off. For me my travelling days are long in the passed. My suitcase is collecting dust on top of the wartrobe und I don't even now where my passport is lying. I am happy just to wonder about in the communal gardens oder just sit on my balcon watching the passers buy wondering up und down Finchley Road. Some of my fellow inmates hear at Abernein Mansions are worried about becoming polluted from the fuming traffic. Frankly if I am not polluted yet why should I now worry over such things? I don't want to seam selfish, but I would not mind at least a little bit from global warming. I am very much feel for the cold nowadays. Dr Frisch says that with age won becomes a blood sinner.

Nearly in the end of Mai I celebrated yet another burseday. I am now in a race with the Duke of Attenborough to see who will be the first to click his clocks. While I mention the subject of clocks, I wonder if any of you took the time to watch the rubbish that was the Euroversion Song Contest in Israel? It is



not exactly putting the countries best food forward. The spectacles of the seeing the protestant Hasids demonstating on Shabbat about this non-Jewish advent being held on the Shabbat was ridiculous in my opinion. Better they should protest over this being staged their at all. It is so below the brow it is hardly above the angles und socks.

I am now facing a big dial Emma. My doctor has told me that I am on the crisp of becoming a type too diobeatnic und should cut out sugar und sweat stuffs. Then I read in *News From The Square* that our Rabbi Altschuler has ridden that we should honour Shavuos by eating lots of cheesecake. The solution Mrs Klopstick has up come with is for her to make a cheesecake with no sugar und using camenbert in place of creamed cheese. This sort alone is enough to make me diobeatnic won, too, three und for.

Und so the mensching of Shavuos brings me to the Ten Commandments. I have und my wife have always wandered why there are so phew. There is nothing about household duties und so Mrs K has made her own up. Nummer 11: A women shall not ever be responsible for washing up. Nummer 12: A women shall not ever be responsible for ironing my shirts, und No.13: A women is not ever be responsible for pigging up my clothes when they accidentally fall on the floor. There are more of cause, but in the warts of Frank Sinatra, to more too mention.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick

## HONORARY OFFICERS & BOARD OF THE BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE 2019-20

### HONORARY OFFICERS

**Chairman:** Jackie Alexander

**Hon Secretary:** Annette Nathan

**Asst Hon Secretary:** Rob Nothman

**Hon Treasurer:** Jimmy Strauss

**Asst Hon Treasurer:** Adam Hurst

### EXECUTIVE

All Honorary Officers plus the following Board Members:

Adam Davis  
Francis Joseph  
Justyn Trenner  
Nick Viner

### BOARD OF THE BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

All Honorary Officers except the Chairman and all members of the Executive plus:

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| John Abramson     | Pat Hirschovits |
| John Alexander    | Freddy Lehmann  |
| Joe Brookes       | Adam Nathan     |
| Paul Burger       | Marion Nathan   |
| Carol Cohen       | Sarah Percival  |
| Deborah Cohen     | David Pollins   |
| Keith Conway      | Richard Pollins |
| Simon Cutner      | Anthony Stadlen |
| Suzanne Goldstein | Dilys Tausz     |
| Joe Hacker        | Claire Walford  |
| Michael Horowitz  |                 |

## Shabbat Candle Lighting



|                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| Friday 5 July    | Joan Arton    |
| Friday 12 July   | Mira Trenner  |
| Friday 19 July   | Lara Rothman  |
| Friday 26 July   | Helen Kissen  |
| Friday 2 August  | Gill Solnick  |
| Friday 9 August  | Hazel Kay     |
| Friday 16 August | Sharon Barron |
| Friday 23 August | Leora Hacker  |
| Friday 30 August | Anna Brown    |

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





# Community News

## NEW MEMBERS

*We extend a cordial welcome to:*

Daniel Rothman  
Joanna Yass  
Helena Roberts  
Jacqueline Dobrin & Neil Gershinson with daughter Leni  
Dalia Cohen & Andrew Bendel  
Joshua Smith  
Anne & Brian Lapping with daughter Ella

## BIRTHS

*Congratulations and best wishes to:*

Marina & Simon Cohen on the birth of their daughter Ariela  
Michelle & Anthony Kayser on the birth of their daughter Robyn

## BAR MITZVAH

*Congratulations and best wishes to:*

Beau, son of Michelle Beckwith - 11 May  
Ellis, son of Jessica & Simon Wantman - 22 June  
Henry, son of Elizabetta & Laurence Winston - 29 June  
Freddy, son of Victoria & Oliver Jerome - 6 July

## ENGAGEMENT

*Congratulations and best wishes to:*

Joe Hacker & Shelly Masters on their engagement  
Sarah Nerva & Lizzy Allen on their engagement

## WEDDING

*Congratulations and best wishes to:*

Natalya Dorfman & David Kendall who married on 26 May  
Garnet Fischer & Sam Cohen who married on 1 June

## BIRTHDAYS

*Congratulations and best wishes to:*

Mr G Summerfield (86) on 3 June  
Mr P Summerfield (86) on 3 June  
Mrs V Kovacs (83) on 9 June  
Mrs I Feldstein (93) on 22 June  
Lord Peter Eden (98) on 27 June  
Mr P Koppel (86) on 29 June  
Mr G Hellman (94) on 1 July  
Mr F Antscherl (89) on 5 July  
Mrs L Krieger (976) on 6 July  
Mrs G Burns (96) on 8 July  
Mr C Northway (81) on 9 July  
Mrs M Summerfield (81) on 9 July  
Mrs H Wilson (87) on 11 July  
Mr B Lachmann (95) on 12 July

## DEATHS

*We regret to announce the passing of:*

Michael Streat on 25 April  
Pamela Goldhill on 29 April  
Sybil Raccach on 20 May  
Monica Rosenbaum on 4 June

## STONESETTING

The stonesetting of Helen Lewis will take place on Sunday 28 July, 12.30pm at Edgwarebury Lane

## NW3 LUNCHEON GROUP

Giacomo, 428 Finchley Road, London, NW2 2HY  
**1.00pm on Wednesday 17 July & 14 August**  
Please call Judy Field (020 8455 0614) if you wish to attend

The copy deadline for the next issue of Our Congregation is Sunday 11 August

## REGULAR SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm & Saturday mornings at 10.00am

## Kikar Kids

**Saturday 6 July, 3 August, 7 September**

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

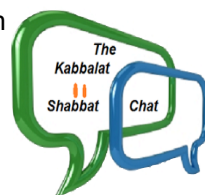
**Term ends: 7 July**

**Next term begins: 8 September**

## 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: 13 September**



## SUNDAY MORNING ADULT DISCUSSION

### 30 June

10.00-11.15 Rabbi Altshuler on Biblical Ethics & Theology  
11.15-12.30 (Change of programme) Cantor Paul Heller on: The return of the anusim (forced converts) in Colombia

### 7 July

10.00-11.15 Rabbi Altshuler on Aspects of Biblical Religion, Case Studies: Concepts of Forgiveness & Teshuvah (Repentance), Vertical Retribution, Priests  
11.15-12.30 Pulpit Exchange: Rabbi Altshuler's sermon at St Peters Church  
12.340 onwards: End of Year Pot Luck Lunch, Chez Claire

## MITZVAH DAY 2019

Do you have unused small bottles of toiletries "borrowed" from a hotel or airline?

Holidays are fast approaching and, as last year, one project we will support on Mitzvah Day is the "Homeless in Barnet".

Bring them to the Synagogue by Sunday 17 November and we will ensure they are packaged and given to a shelter for the homeless where they are badly needed.

## SPONSOR A KIDDUSH

**Have you got a Family Simcha coming up?**

Significant Birthday? Wedding Anniversary? Aufruf?  
New Baby? Engagement?

Why not sponsor a Kiddush on a Shabbat Morning?  
Sponsors will be named in News From The Square and their contribution is greatly appreciated by the community.

Everything is ordered directly by the shul and sponsors are not required to do the shopping but will need to set out and host the Kiddush. Please contact Jennifer Saul in the office.

# PICTURES FROM PRAGUE

Photos by



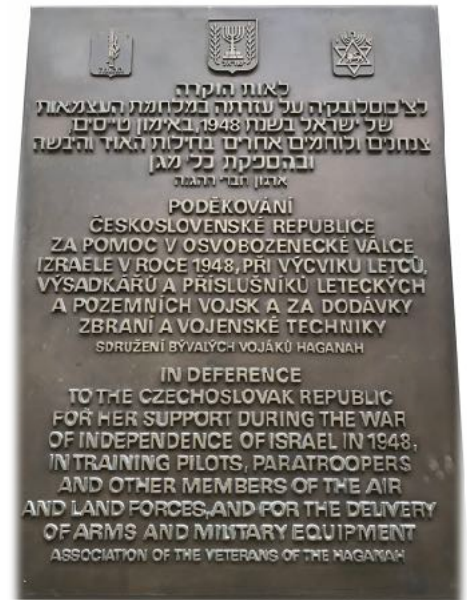
Our group in the rain in the Prague Castle complex with our guide, Rabbi Ron Hoffberg (centre, back to camera)



Monument to the Maharaal of Prague, Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel (c1525-1609), chief Rabbi of Prague and legendary creator of the Golem, buried in the Jewish Quarter's old cemetery



The Altneuschul



Plaque on exterior of Jewish Community Centre from veterans of Israel's pre-State Haganah thanking the Czechoslovak Republic for its support in Israel's 1948 War of Independence



Our group in the Altneuschul

COMING UP

## TEFILLIN CLUB

SUNDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> SEPT

9.30-10AM

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

Course in Jewish liturgy

### LEARN TO LEAD A SERVICE

**What is Nusach?**

1. Learn the basics
2. Practical workshop

**Cantor Paul Heller will lead this course enabling you to lead a service as a Shaliach Tzibbur (community envoy)**

If you are interested please send an email to [cantor@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:cantor@synagogue.org.uk)

from Peter Freudenthal's Shmoneh Esreh

**Starts Monday 4 November 7-8pm, then fortnightly**

Belsize Square Synagogue  
51 Belsize Square NW3 4HX

## TO RENT

A two double-bedroom, two bathroom apartment, arranged over first and second floors of purpose-built block approx 800sq feet, conveniently situated within walking distance of Golders Green tube station and Heath Extension. Comprising communal entrance with entry phone to hallway, stairs to first floor, door to apartment, wooden flooring, doors to both bedrooms, both with fitted wardrobes, refitted bath and shower rooms. Stairs rising to upper floor landing, door to main reception with large built-in cupboard and refitted kitchen with integrated appliances. Outside are extensive well kept grounds and secure underground parking.

Available from September 2019 £1700 pcm. Please contact Leah Hurst ([leahhurst@mac.com](mailto:leahhurst@mac.com)) for further details.





## YOUTH ACTIVITIES

### Summer Holiday Outings

**Thursday 25 July**

**CHESSINGTON WORLD OF ADVENTURES**

Cost: £18 (11-15 yrs) / £23.50 (16+)

**Wednesday 28 August**

**THORPE PARK**

Cost: £22 per child



**Friday 20-Sunday 22 September**  
**SKEET WEEKEND**

**Activities include:**

Swimming, Arts & Crafts,  
Outdoor Activities, Tennis,  
Obstacle Course, Skeet's  
Got Talent, Leadership  
Opportunities, Make new  
friends (Friends from  
outside welcome, too!)



Book early and secure your place! (Estimated cost £140)

Contact Youth Leader Lucy Bergman for more info and/or to  
book your places.

# LEXINGTONS



**JAPANESE AND AMERICAN**  
**Corporate Tenants**

## Urgently Require

**1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 bedroom properties to rent in Hampstead,  
Belsize Park, St Johns Wood, West Hampstead, Camden &  
Surrounding areas.**

**For more information contact Lexingtons on 0207 435 7775  
info@lexingtons.com**

## ALL TYPES OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

Including:

Studio flats, 1 bed flats, 2 bed flats, 3 bed flats/houses, 4 bed  
flats/houses and larger properties

Urgently required for our growing list of registered buyers.

In the areas of:

- Hampstead
- Belsize Park
- St Johns Wood
- West Hampstead
- Camden
- Swiss Cottage
- Surrounding areas

For more information contact Lexingtons on 0207 435 7775 or  
info@lexingtons.com

## SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

### THE BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square, London, NW3 4HX

Tel: 020 7794 3949

Email: office@synagogue.org.uk

Website: www.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

#### FUNERALS

During Synagogue Office hours phone 020 7794 3949.

Evenings/weekends phone Calo's (Undertakers)

020 8958 2112

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

#### PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Chairperson: Frank Joseph - 020 7482 2555

#### YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Lucy Bergman

Email: youth@synagogue.org.uk

#### EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO *OUR CONGREGATION*

Emails to: office@synagogue.org.uk

or to the Editor: ruth@famrothenberg.com

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#### CANTOR

Cantor Dr Paul Heller

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Company Number 7831243

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