

January/February 2023
Tevet/Sh'vat/Adar

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS NEWS

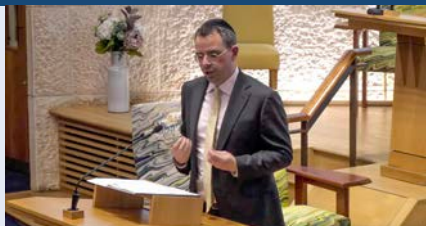


Photo: Mike Beral



Photo: Trevor Haynes



Photo: Andrew Hart

Looking back and looking ahead

In the last two months of 2022 we were most fortunate to have Dr Toby Simpson from the Wiener Holocaust Library (see page 2) as the guest speaker at our Kristallnacht commemoration. His address was both informative and sobering. Later in the month we were all in awe of Rabbi Dr Lawrence Hoffman who led an illuminating study session exploring the notion of what is 'holy'. His sermon, which demonstrated how the story of our own lives is told in the five books of the Torah, was truly engaging and fascinating.

The Evening of Magic and Mind Reading with Nick Einhorn (see page 11) was jaw-droppingly astounding, and could not have been more fun. In December we were delighted to welcome Dame Maureen Lipman to our annual Multi-Faith Chanukkah celebration. Dame Maureen lifted our spirits, and she and five other guests from a range of faiths spoke eloquently on the theme of light. It was a most moving and enjoyable occasion.

In the coming months, we look forward to an ecologically-focused Shabbaton marking Tu BiSh'vat as well as a celebration of Purim. The big event of the spring will be the concert on Sunday 26 March called *The Human Spirit* – see pages 9 and 11. This promises to be a very special occasion, and one which you will not want to miss.

*L-R top row: Dr Toby Simpson;
Dame Maureen Lipman
L-R bottom row: Nick Einhorn;
Dr Lawrence Hoffman*

Inside this issue

Announcements	2
Shabbat services	3
Membership Renewal	4
Council Report	5
Profiles of Caroline Villiers and Hannah Tickle	6
Rabbinic article on Ecocide	7
Visit to Physicians for Human Rights	8
'The Human Spirit' concert	9
Community	10-11
The Learning Circle	12-14
Rimon Corner	15
Meeting Kenneth Awele Okafor; Key festival dates for 2023	16

Congratulations

Mazal tov to Abigail Golban and Jonathan Pines who were married on 22 September 2022.

Mazal tov, too, to Izzy and Matthew Davies-Benjamin on the birth of their twins, Etta and Oriol, born 19 October 2022. Etta and Oriol have two big brothers – Ambrose (4) and Quincy (2).



The LJS Nursery School – ‘Outstanding’

We are delighted to announce that the LJS Nursery School has again received an ‘Outstanding’ rating from Ofsted. They said that ‘Children from all backgrounds are greeted with open arms into this warm and welcoming nursery’ and that the children get the best possible start.

This is a great achievement, and we send our congratulations to the Head Teacher, Caroline Villiers, and all the staff, as well as to Barbara Fidler and the other members of the Nursery Committee.

If you are interested in finding out more about the LJS Nursery, please go to: www.ljsnurseryschool.org and if you have a child or grandchild who might attend and you’d like to find out more, please email: nursery@ljs.org. There are currently some spaces, and LJS Members and Friends are given priority, and also charged a discounted fee.

Please see page 6 for a profile of Caroline Villiers.



Photo: Trevor Haynes

Visit to The Wiener Holocaust Library

29 Russell Square, London WC1 5DP

Monday 23 January at 11.00am

Following on from the talk given by Dr Toby Simpson to commemorate Kristallnacht, Members and Friends are invited to view the Wiener Library exhibition ‘The Vienna Model of Radicalisation: Austria and the Shoah’. Our guide is Dr Barbara Warnock, Senior Curator and Head of Education at the Library. We will meet in the Library’s reception area at 10.45am.

Please register via Shalom LJS.



Bereavements

We offer our sympathy to those who mourn:

Jane Cohen, mother of James, Charles and William

Harold Fineberg, husband of Leonida, and father of Eliot and David

Mavis James, aunt to Jonathan Joseph

Lady Elizabeth Lazarus, widow of the late Sir Peter Lazarus, former Chairman and President of the LJS, and mother of Richard, Stephen, and James, and sister of David Atwell

Bertie Leffman, father of Vicky, Suzanna, David and James

Sir Evelyn de Rothschild, husband of Lady de Rothschild, father of Jessica, Anthony and David, and stepfather to Ben and Jake Stein

Evelyn Weston, mother of Gail Lazarus and Penny Eisen

We also extend our sympathy to Kate Birk and her family on the death of Kate’s mother, **Toby Lawson**, and to Ann and Bob Kirk and their family on the death of Ann and Bob’s younger son, **Andy Kirk**.

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר האבלים
May God comfort you and all who mourn

Services: January and February (in person and online)

Unless otherwise stated, Friday evening services are at 6.45pm and Shabbat morning services are at 11.00am, and led by either Rabbi Alexandra Wright or Rabbi Igor Zinkov. At the end of each Friday evening or Saturday morning service congregants are invited to Kiddush either in person or via Zoom.

Friday 6 January	
Shabbat 7 January <i>Va-y'chi</i>	
Friday 13 January	
Shabbat 14 January <i>Shemot</i>	The service is followed by a Nosh 'n' Drosh with Searle Kochberg: 'Documenting London Jewish Life in Film' (see page 10)
Friday 20 January	
Shabbat 21 January <i>Va-era</i>	
Friday 27 January	
Shabbat 28 January <i>Bo</i>	Mental Health Shabbat
Friday 3 February	
Shabbat 4 February <i>B'Shallach/Shira</i>	The service is followed by a vegan chavurah lunch and afternoon sessions marking Tu BiSh'vat, the New Year of Trees (see Shalom LJS for details)
Friday 10 February	
Shabbat 11 February <i>Yitro</i>	Service led by Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton
Friday 17 February	
Shabbat 18 February <i>Mishpatim/Shekalim</i>	Service led by Rabbi Rachel Benjamin
Shabbat 18 February 2.30pm	Afternoon Bat Mitzvah Lilybella Ullmann
Friday 24 February	
Shabbat 25 February <i>Terumah</i>	Adult Bat Mitzvah Elisabeth Rochman
Friday 3 March	
Shabbat 4 March <i>T'tzavveh/Zachor</i>	Celebrating 25 years of the bimah chairs designed by Jane Finestone and embroidered by members of the LJS; the service is followed by a Nosh 'n' Drosh with the President of the Board of Deputies, Marie van der Zyl

Save the Dates for Purim and the Communal Seder

Monday 6 March: A service and event to celebrate Purim will be held at 6.45pm on Monday 6 March.

Thursday 6 April: The LJS Communal Seder

Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families

The next LJS Drop-Ins for asylum-seeker families are on Sunday 8 January and Sunday 12 February 2.00 – 4.00pm.

If you are interested in becoming a Drop-In volunteer, please email Hannah Tickle at: asylumproject@ljs.org

Membership Renewal 2023



Dear Members and Friends of the LJS,

Since my recent appointment as Honorary Treasurer, I have been astonished at the breadth of work undertaken both by our small team of staff and by our many volunteers;

they support our congregants, our youngsters, our community in its broadest sense, the needy and refugees.

I have personally had a wide range of Jewish experiences. Brought up by my semi-observant Ashkenazi parents, whose own parents came from Lithuania and Belarus in the 1880s, it was much later, around the time I started my career as a stockbroker, that I was invited to join the council of a synagogue in South Manchester. Later, I married someone from the Sephardi community, bringing me into a whole new world. Years passed, my younger daughter married outside the faith and was given a mixed faith marriage blessing by a female rabbi, the first I'd ever come across. I was very impressed, having been used to bearded, ageing male rabbis.

Later still I met my new wife-to-be on JDate – thus by algorithm rather than by fate – and she agreed to my proposal. It was then that we were introduced to the remarkable Alex Wright, who herself has reached a pinnacle of Liberal Judaism. Rabbi Alex agreed to marry us, not unreasonably requiring us to become members of the LJS. Although geographically the LJS was a bit far from where we live in South London, we were absolutely charmed by Rabbi Alex's desire to help, her warmth and her interest in our welfare.

Why is all this relevant? In writing to you about renewing your membership, I want to demonstrate just how diverse we are and, accordingly, how diverse our membership is. The Council assume nothing, so when you are asked to pay your membership fees, we recognise that some will find it difficult at times; we also want

you to know that the funds gathered support many different needs.

Like other communities, it is a constant and never-ending struggle to raise sufficient funds to meet those needs. We want to pay our Rabbis and staff a rate commensurate with their input and efforts in fields encompassing services and festivals, education and pastoral care. We need to maintain our beautiful building, its infrastructure, and also our cemetery in Willesden. Remember, please, that your membership fees, your donations, your legacies, your sponsoring of events, your attendance at LJS functions and services all contribute to the wellbeing and happiness of everyone involved.

Reflecting on the attitude of certain sections of the world to the attitude of non-Jews in past centuries and regretfully even today, Jews are always wealthy, Jews prefer gambling to drinking alcohol. As the comedian David Baddiel writes in his book, *Jews Don't Count*, there are many myths about Jews, and we need to counter those myths by showing that we are a good people, that we care; but that shouldn't mean that we don't care for ourselves. Your contribution both in cash and in kind helps us to do all that we want and need to do. It helps us to be outstanding in our own community and in the wider community.

We should be very proud of making our contribution by renewing our membership; and the way we can show such pride in a positive and valuable manner is to pay our way as best we can. Thank you for your contribution.

David Adams



Council Report



Photo: Trevor Haynes

The December Council meeting approved an updated strategy, 'Reaching Our Goals', and budget following consultation with all committees. The budget includes a pay rise for all staff, now with a common date

of 1 January each year. Concern was, however, expressed about the projected considerable shortfall in income as against expenditure in 2023, which would come on top of another loss in 2022. Such losses are not sustainable into the future, and Council will review the position later in 2023 to see what progress has been made towards closing the gap. The former Finance Committee is to be transformed into a committee known as FORG – Finance, Operations, Risk and Governance. This will ensure that all the main strategic issues facing the LJS are considered at the same meeting, which will report to the Council. The policy for the letting of meeting spaces for external organisations has been confirmed, with the aim of increasing lettings and thus generating additional income for the LJS.

Council was pleased to appoint Gaby Lazarus, our volunteering co-ordinator, as an Honorary Officer. She joins David Adams (Treasurer), Benita Hart (Communications & Marketing) and me. On the subject of volunteering, there remains a need for a member to co-ordinate stewarding for the High Holy Days and an offer to help is earnestly requested. Volunteers are also needed to help with the series of Nosh 'n' Drosh sessions which are taking place in early 2023 and with the improved kiddushim reported earlier for Shabbats when there is no simchah. Sue Head is to be appointed an additional Marriage Secretary. The teaching materials that formed the basis of a course in Hebrew studies undertaken at the LJS are to be incorporated in a book which will be available to members to purchase in due course. The first of a series of 'Meet the Rabbis' events has been held in East London and more will be organised.

The Nursery School has retained its Ofsted 'outstanding' ranking and congratulations were extended to Head Teacher Caroline Villiers and Committee Chair Barbara Fidler. A discussion took place about the future, including planned increases in the number of children. Council has devoted a good deal of time to reviewing its safeguarding processes, which apply not only to children and young people, but also to adults who could be at risk. A full discussion is to take place at the January meeting, when a revised policy statement will be considered. The February Council meeting will welcome the Chair of the Education Committee, Scott Dinwiddie, and Rimón Head Teacher Susannah Alexander and Rimón Rabbi Elana Dellal. Council is delighted with the numbers of Rimón and KT students and with their evident progress.

Members will have seen the stained-glass window installed a few years ago in the Rabbi John Rayner Prayer Room. It will be joined by another as part of a project to enhance the appearance of the room without creating a dark space. The cost of the additional window is being met by donations. Work at the cemetery to relay some of the paths is complete, and the improved appearance is remarkable, thanks to a very generous donation. The rebuilding of the external columbarium will be finished shortly. Further work to the paths will need to await the availability of more funds.

Council has agreed a new environmental policy and has formally committed to working towards becoming an EcoSynagogue. Mitzvah Day was well supported, and pleasure was expressed at the success of the Magic and Mind Reading Evening. Another of our Deputies attended to discuss the Board's work and especially the promulgation of progressive views. Planning is proceeding for *The Human Spirit* concert on Sunday 26 March, and members are asked to reserve the date for what should be a very special occasion, to be compered by none other than Dame Maureen Lipman.

Chris Godbold, Chair of Council

Staff profiles

We introduce you to Caroline Villiers, Head Teacher of The LJS Nursery School, and Hannah Tickle, Project Co-ordinator of the LJS's Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families.

Caroline Villiers



“ I could not have imagined, when I taught Rabbi Alex's children, Gabby and Ben, at Alyth Kindergarten, that one day I would be the headteacher of The LJS Nursery School; and that they would both work in the nursery during their gap years, and that

Gabby would be inspired to become a teacher. I am proud to be the founding headteacher of our nursery school, 18 years after Barbara Fidler, Jan Roseman and Ellen Schmidt first put forward the idea to Council. The nursery is highly valued by the children, parents, our amazing teachers and the whole community, as well as by Ofsted, who once again awarded us 'Outstanding', saying 'Children at this setting get the best possible start.'

I began my career after qualifying in hospitality management, working for Trusthouse Forte as a hotel manager in Birmingham, Cardiff and York; then in the City for BP in Moorgate. When I had my two sons, Rupert and Jack, I retrained in Jewish Early Years Education at the Institute of Education, UCL.

There are many transferable skills between my two working lives: operational management, high standards, attention to detail, sales, the personal touch, with 'the customer is always right'. Every day presents different challenges which I thrive on.

The biggest reward for me and our whole team is the long-term difference we have made to children and their families, by helping to support play, learning, separation, language acquisition, parenting challenges, being far from home, extra needs, behavioural issues and getting children into sought-after schools and the one which is right for them.

Friday is the best day for the children – they love celebrating Kabbalat Shabbat with their parents and grandparents. I much enjoy being a grandparent myself, and in my spare time, I also enjoy new cultural experiences. ”

Hannah Tickle



“ I started as the Project Co-ordinator for the Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families whilst still in Law School at the end of April. Prior to barrister training, I was working as an online teacher and had spent two years lecturing undergraduates

in the United States. I have also had experience in retail, hospitality, museums, and archival research. Long term, I hope to qualify as a barrister and help vulnerable people within my practice.

I have been volunteering since I was fifteen, and am passionate about the Third Sector. In the last two years I have undertaken work with Miles for Refugees, helped with SolidariTee (a charity fundraising for the refugee crisis), and was Student Director of my university Legal Advice Clinic. Therefore, the phenomenal volunteer opportunities offered at the LJS struck a chord with me and I became a member of the LJS earlier this year. Having received such a warm welcome in the synagogue, when I saw the advertisement for this job in Shalom LJS, I felt as though I had to apply.

My job involves supporting the Drop-In committee as they work to provide the best possible experience for our guests. We invite around 90 asylum-seeker families to the LJS one Sunday each month and provide them with a hot meal, toiletries, clothing, and some money for groceries. They are encouraged to bring their children, and we set up with crafts and toys in a section of the Montefiore Hall, so there is always a lively atmosphere. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the enormous effort of our volunteer team in running the Drop-In, and we are always looking for more helpers if anyone is interested!

In my free time, I enjoy running, travelling, and visiting all the amazing museums and galleries that London has to offer. ”

Ecocide

As we approach Tu BiSh'vat, celebrated as the New Year of Trees, Rabbi Alexandra Wright considers ecocide and the importance of caring for our planet.



In the last few years, one of the world's leading human rights lawyers, Phillipe Sands, whose 2016 memoir *East West Street* examined the origins of genocide, has been working on making the systematic destruction of nature – known as

ecocide – a recognised international crime. In 2021, a panel of legal experts, co-chaired by Sands, drew up a legal definition of ecocide. It defines ecocide as 'unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts'. This is the definition that could be used to prosecute the most heinous offences against the environment.

If adopted by members of the International Criminal Court (ICC), it would become the fifth offence the court prosecutes and the first new international crime since the Nuremberg Trials. While the other four all focus exclusively on the well-being of human beings, ecocide introduces a new non-anthropocentric approach. It puts the environment at the heart of international law, recognising that the well-being of individuals is dependent on the well-being of the planet.

Law has the capacity to change public consciousness. The law, along with political and diplomatic instruments, is one of the ways we can achieve protection of the environment.

Some potential examples of ecocide considered by the panel include transboundary nuclear accidents, major oil spills and Amazon deforestation and, on a smaller geographical scale, the unlawful killing of significant protected species such as the two remaining northern white rhinos.

Ecocide means destruction of our planetary home. If someone destroys or burns down the homes we live in, that person would be held criminally responsible and accountable. If ecocide becomes

an international crime, then conceivably there would be a deterrent and a penalty.

Of course, some might argue that law isn't always a deterrent. Corporations and individuals break laws all the time and live with or pay for the consequences because the advantages to them are greater than the penalties.

However, the movement to prevent ecocide is international. Countless organisations and individuals are right now seeking to amplify the global conversation about the environment; 21 countries and consortia of organisations have already declared their support for making ecocide an offence liable to be prosecuted, including the UK.

We have seen that rhetoric and non-violent demonstrations, such as that of Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain, while powerful, have become victims of proposed changes in the law regarding protest. From a Jewish point of view, adding ecocide to the statute book of the ICC would provide a significant instrument to change public consciousness and to make illegal the destruction of the world's forests and sea beds, its carefully conserved eco-systems that ensure the preservation of millions of species of animals, birds, insects and sea creatures. It is what Maimonides advocated in the 12th century when he prescribed a punishment for those who destroy the environment and violate the commandment 'You must not destroy' (*Deuteronomy 20:19*).

And it is what Deutero-Isaiah said two and a half thousand years ago in his vision of 'a new heaven and a new earth'. He recognised that the fulfilment of that vision is entirely dependent on the voices and leadership of those who are suffering the most. It takes imagination and determination to conceive of a world where the wolf and the lamb will lie down together, and the lion eat straw like the ox. It may not work in a literal sense, but perhaps it works as a metaphor for climate justice – the recognition that one group cannot endlessly consume and plunder at the expense of another.

Alexandra Wright

Visiting the Bella Kaufman Open Clinic in Jaffa

'Learn to do good, seek justice and correct oppression' (Isaiah 1:17)

Sue Head, who has taken on the role of chairing our High Holy Day Appeal Committee, describes her visit during a recent trip to Israel to the clinic which we supported in our 5783 appeal.



Each year, the LJS raises money through the Yom Kippur Appeal for three specific charities, one of which is Israeli. I have recently replaced Tim Simon in chairing the committee making the recommendations on which to support, and as part of my recent trip to Israel visited this year's Israeli charity, Physicians for Human Rights.

This organisation is amazing, as is clear by seeing first hand what they are undertaking. Their work epitomises the fundamental principle of Judaism, to bring social justice and care to those in need.

Physicians for Human Rights was set up by medical professionals volunteering their time. It is involved in medical treatment and the battle to improve the legal status of people who have no entitlement to the Israeli healthcare system. It is shocking to think that in a Jewish state not everyone has this legal right.

I visited the Bella Kaufman Open Clinic, the specific project which the Yom Kippur Appeal is supporting. It is situated not far from the Jaffa flea market and port. It runs five days a week, three days as a walk-in clinic, one day for specialist appointments and the fifth for women only.

The clinic was set up in 1998 because of an influx of 28,000 asylum seekers from Eritrea and Sudan who had migrated into Israel through Egypt and the Sinai desert. Living without residency placed them outside the country's national healthcare system. Many of these people are still in Israel, and to this group needing help have been added others: migrant workers from Sri Lanka, India and

the Philippines, Palestinians living in Israel because they have been persecuted at home for their sexual orientation, and most recently Ukrainians who were granted visas, but because they are not Jewish, do not have access to the healthcare system.

To see the clinic in operation is to realise how much they need our money. Only four members of staff are employed; the doctors, nurses and specialists are volunteers. All the equipment and medicines are donated and the need is great; much effort is given to acquiring enough supplies to meet the demand.

I visited on one of the walk-in days and saw the people queueing to come in, the beginning of the process to deal with their medical needs. On the staff is an Eritrean support worker who greets people as they arrive; his employment is an indication of the numbers of Eritreans requiring assistance.

The diversity of people living in Israel without state healthcare is apparent in visiting the clinic; people such as G., a Ghanaian migrant who lost his wife, whose child was put into foster care and who needed medication and psychiatric help; or S., an Eritrean asylum seeker who requires expensive ongoing medication to deal with recurring tumours.

These are two examples of the work we are supporting at this astonishing clinic. The Yom Kippur Appeal Committee has to make difficult decisions on which charities to recommend, but this visit confirmed that this was indeed the right one.

Sue Head

THE HUMAN SPIRIT – the story of our concert

An LJS Concert on 26 March 2023 at 5.00pm

Everyone is invited to what will be a very special concert taking place in the Sanctuary of the LJS and featuring repertoire by Schubert, Mahler, Janáček and Bernstein, as well as three new pieces specially commissioned by the LJS.

For booking details (from early/mid-January) please go to: www.ljs.org/event/the-human-spirit.html. You will also find there a film of the well-known journalist Hadley Freeman interviewing Roxanna Panufnik, Julian Marshall and Toby Young who composed the new works.

Here we explain the story behind the concert, the programme, and the performers.

On 26 March at 5.00pm, a very special concert, hosted by Dame Maureen Lipman, is being held at the LJS. It is called *The Human Spirit*.

The concert was originally conceived as a way of celebrating our community and musicians with a live music performance following the restrictions and suffering experienced during the Covid pandemic.

The concert also has an important objective in raising funds for charitable causes, and the two charities selected are the World Union of Progressive Judaism's Ukraine Crisis Fund, and the LJS's Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families. The concert will be fully funded by patrons from within the LJS community, and all proceeds from ticket sales will go to the two charities.

The title of the concert – *The Human Spirit* – was the idea of the LJS's Director of Music, Cathy Heller Jones, who is a key figure in producing this concert, commissioning the composers of the three new works, putting together the programme, and conducting the choral pieces. The title is a particularly inspired choice as it conveys the celebratory nature of the occasion whilst also giving recognition to the fortitude and resilience of the victims of the war in Ukraine, and of the families who attend our Drop-In for Asylum Seekers.

There is another aspect to the story behind *The Human Spirit*: the three specially commissioned new pieces were generously sponsored by LJS member Merula Frankel in loving memory of her

husband Richard and her granddaughter Tugela who were tragically lost in a car accident.

Much care was taken with the choice of texts for the new pieces. Psalm 100 was chosen in celebration of our wonderful choirs, the LJS Choir and Members' Music Ensemble, and serves as a celebration of coming back together after the trauma of the pandemic. It is composed by Julian Marshall for double choir and organ. The text of *Adonai mah adam* was specially chosen to remember the lives of Merula's family, and the music for this, for choir and organ, has been composed by Roxanna Panufnik. It received its first hearing during last year's Yom Kippur Memorial service. The motivation for a new setting of the Torah service, for which the composer Toby Young was selected, was to expand the liturgy for our services of worship and to include a piece which the Members' Music Ensemble would enjoy singing and with which a contemporary congregation would engage.

It is fitting that everyone performing in the concert has an LJS connection giving it a family feel. We are most fortunate in having a fabulous line-up of musicians who include the mezzo-soprano Stephanie Marshall, the cellist Gemma Rosefield, who regularly plays Bruch's *Kol Nidre* for us at the opening of our Kol Nidre service and who will be performing with Ensemble 360, and the pianist Julius Drake. The LJS Choirs and our organist are already well known to our community.

In addition to the new pieces, the concert will feature three songs from Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder*, the Andante from Schubert's string quartet *Death and the Maiden*, Janáček's *Pohádka* for cello and piano, Toby Young's setting of a Yiddish song, and Bernstein's choral work, *Chichester Psalms*, which is a setting of Hebrew texts in an arrangement for harp, organ and percussion. The concert will begin with Roxanna Panufnik's hauntingly beautiful and atmospheric *Lament for a Bulgarian Dancing Bear*.

We encourage you all to come to this concert, and to bring your friends and relatives. It will be an uplifting occasion which will raise funds for two deserving causes. We look forward to seeing you there.

Community

Nosh 'n' Drosh

Join us for our occasional series of talks and discussion over a bagel lunch following the Shabbat morning service. All welcome.



Saturday 14 January
1.15 – 2.15pm

'Documenting London Jewish Life in Film'
with Searle Kochberg

Film-maker and writer on film and other performing arts, LJS member Searle Kochberg will share his working methods of capturing aspects of London Jewish life on film, and how the results compare and contrast with mainstream documentaries on TV.

Searle has a PhD in documentary practice, and has written extensively on his subject, most recently co-writing a chapter based on his anthropological film practice in 'Locating Queer Histories' which deals with the forging of other Jewish identities in London suburban spaces.

Date for the diary:

The next Nosh 'n' Drosh is on Saturday 4 March

Our guest speaker will be **Marie van der Zyl**, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

Community Care

Aviva Shafritz, our Community Care Co-ordinator, is ready to help with difficulties experienced not only by our older members, such as with illness and provision of care, but also across the spectrum of life. You can contact Aviva by email: a.shafritz@ljs.org or by telephone on 020 7286 5181.

Bridge Club

The Bridge Club meets at 2.00pm every Monday (except Jewish and Bank Holidays) and continues till 5.00pm, with a break for refreshments. This is as much a social afternoon as a competitive one. Cost is £2.00 per members and £3.00 for non-members. We welcome new players. For more details, please contact the LJS on 020 7286 5181.

Video and Tea

You are warmly invited to this event which takes place on the fourth Wednesday of the month 1.30 – 4.30pm. There is no need to book – just come along. You will have soup on arrival, then a DVD followed by a delicious tea including ice-cream. The cost is just £2.00 per session.

Our next screenings:

25 January: *Bugsy Malone*

22 February: *Paddington*

Restaurant Tuesday

Everyone in our community is welcome to attend our informal lunch club at 12.45pm on the third Tuesday of the month for a chance to meet and chat and have a delicious meal, hosted by our delightful team of volunteers. We suggest a donation of £6.00.

Our next lunches are on **17 January** and **21 February**. Please call the office on 020 7286 5181 to let us know if you are coming.

Singing for the Mind

Singing for the Mind is open to anyone with memory problems or in the early stages of dementia. Tea and biscuits are served as people arrive to allow participants and their companions the chance to chat before we start singing. The hour-long singing session is led by a trained music leader, supported by volunteers. A dementia specialist is available for help and advice. For further details and advice on joining the group, please email sfm@ljs.org or phone the LJS on 020 7286 5181.

The LJS Book Group

All LJS Members and Friends are invited to join our friendly and informal book group. The sessions are on Zoom, start at 7.00pm and last between an hour and an hour and a half. Please note there is no January session.

The next session is Thursday 16 February. This will be a particularly interesting 'compare and contrast' between *David Copperfield* and *Demon Copperhead*. It is suggested participants either read *David Copperfield* or watch one of the

excellent films of the story or listen to a BBC or Audible reading; they will then read or listen to *Demon Copperhead*.

If you have any questions or would like to be sent a zoom link for the next Book Group, please email ljsreaders@hotmail.com

Chavurah monthly gatherings

Former members and friends of West Central Liberal Synagogue, as well as those from the wider Liberal Judaism community who wish to continue the legacy of Lily Montagu, are warmly invited to the monthly hybrid Chavurah meetings held in the Assembly Room at the LJS on the first Shabbat of the month. A talk or discussion at 2.00pm is followed by a service with Torah reading at 3.00pm, after which there is tea and coffee and some social time. For further information and Zoom links please contact Martina at: chavurah.emunah1@gmail.com

Save the date – Sunday 26 March!

Concert in aid of the Ukraine Crisis Fund (WUPJ) and the LJS's Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families

Hosted by Dame Maureen Lipman

**Sunday 26 March 2023 at 5.00pm
at The Liberal Jewish Synagogue**

THE HUMAN SPIRIT

This concert honours those we have lost and celebrates the strength and resilience of the human spirit.

Performers:

Stephanie Marshall, mezzo-soprano
Gemma Rosefield, cello, with Ensemble 360
Julius Drake, piano
The Choirs and Organist of the LJS

Programme to include:

Chichester Psalms by Leonard Bernstein
Death and the Maiden string quartet by Franz Schubert
Pohádka by Leoš Janáček for cello and piano
Rückert-Lieder by Gustav Mahler
New compositions commissioned by the LJS by Roxanna Panufnik, Toby Young and Julian Marshall
Ticket prices £10.00 – £40.00
For tickets (from early/mid-January) go to: www.ljs.org/event/the-human-spirit.html

An Evening of Magic and Mind Reading

The Montefiore Hall was packed on the evening of Saturday 26 November as LJS members and their friends and family, young and old alike, were treated to a fabulous evening of Magic and Mind Reading from the remarkable Nick Einhorn, member of the Inner Magic Circle.

Nick had the most engaging manner, and gave everyone a great night out. The first half of his show focused on those sleights of hand when you couldn't begin to work out how what he did was possible. After a delicious supper laid on by Penny Beral and her attentive team, Nick played some games with us which gave us an idea as to how the brain works. This was the closest he got to divulging his magicianship skills.

There were no clues for what then followed – for example, an audience member was asked to think of someone they hadn't thought about for years, and Nick somehow managed to say correctly the name of that person even though he couldn't possibly have seen it written down ...

The feats were many and varied, and we all were astonished throughout. The evening ended with Nick asking us all to get out our phones and do some calculations: someone was asked to say what their first house number was, and then we had to multiply that by someone else's shoe size. After a few more similar multiplications and additions, the number came to 2,611,947 which represented the date of the event, and the exact time we finished!

The combination of Nick's skills as a magician, the community spirit, the eating and drinking and the laughter made this an evening to remember. Moreover, nearly £800.00 was raised from the raffle for our High Holy Day Appeal charities. Many thanks to Peter Werth, whose idea it was to hold the evening, and to Gaby Lazarus for organising it so beautifully.



Photo: Mike Beral



The Learning Circle

Adult education classes at the LJS

For full details of all classes, please refer to The Learning Circle section on the LJS website:

www.ljs.org (click on 'Learning'). If you would like to sign up for a course, please click <https://www.ljs.org/form/adult-education-registration-spring-2023> for the registration form or contact Debi Penhey: education@ljs.org who can also answer questions and give advice.

Purim term Tuesday/Wednesday classes start on 10/11 January (half-term 14/15 February). Please note there is no class on Tuesday 7 or Wednesday 8 March so that we can celebrate Erev Purim together on Monday 6 March. Shabbat morning classes start on 14 January (half-term 11 and 18 February).

Courses are free for Members and Friends of the LJS. The Learning Circle brochure on the website outlines payment for Non-Members.

Purim term classes

Tuesday mornings 11.15am – 12.30pm

Tuesday Texts

This friendly group is led by our Rabbis and Dr Dov Softi. We study biblical and rabbinic texts, modern poetry and short stories, as well as Jewish history, and we enjoy sessions on Jewish art and music. The class is based around discussion on a variety of topics, the starting point being a text, painting or piece of music. New students are always welcome.

Tuesday evenings 5.45 – 6.45pm

Reading and Understanding the Book of Judges

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

The Book of Judges is the seventh book in the Tanach (canonical collection of Hebrew scriptures). It describes a period of social and political unrest among the Israelite tribes, a period before the Israelites' monarchy. The stories are interesting and intriguing to read and learn from.

This course is suitable for those who can read Hebrew and have a basic understanding of

Biblical Hebrew, grammatical structure and a basic knowledge of Biblical Hebrew words.

Tuesday evenings 7.00 – 8.00pm

Classical Hebrew for Not Quite Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

This is a fun and supportive class which is a continuation of the Absolute Beginners class which began in September 2022.

New students who would like practice in reading and understanding key prayers are also welcome.

Understanding Biblical Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

In this course we follow the book *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* (available for purchase from the LJS) which focuses on understanding Biblical and Siddur (prayerbook) Hebrew. Participants will also read key Torah portions to increase their understanding of the Bible as well as their Hebrew vocabulary. This course is suitable for those who can read basic Hebrew.

Gaining Confidence in Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Sally Gold

If you can read a little Hebrew, this supportive, informal class will help you to improve. We are reading the Abraham narrative in *Bereishit* (Genesis). Your reading is guided and at your own pace, with questions about the language and texts encouraged. Your confidence will grow with your skills and understanding, and you will be on the path towards greater enjoyment and participation in synagogue services, using the Siddur, Bible reading and lifecycle events.

Joseph: From Hebrew Slave to Egyptian Chancellor

Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright

New students are welcome to this class as we follow the story of Joseph, now chancellor of Egypt, taking control of the people's grain, so that

it can be a reserve for the land during the seven years of famine. We read of his marriage to the Egyptian Asenath, and the effect of the famine on Jacob and his family. The class reads in Hebrew, learns some grammar and vocabulary, and enjoys far-reaching discussion about this consummate literary novella.

Tuesday evenings 8.10 – 9.15pm

Exploring Judaism

Tutor: Rabbi Igor Zinkov

Exploring Judaism is for people, including non-Jewish family members, who wish to know more about Judaism, Jewish history and the Jewish people. It is also an essential programme of instruction for people choosing Judaism by conversion. Class members are encouraged to read materials which will be put online during the year. In addition to offering knowledge of Judaism, the course encourages practical experiences of Liberal Judaism and space for reflection within the group. The full syllabus is in The Learning Circle brochure, available on the LJS website: www.ljs.org

Continuing Our Jewish Journey

Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright

After three terms of study and preparation, students in this class are now preparing to take part in a special service on Shabbat 13 May 2023. Students meet with Dr Dov Softi and Rabbi Alexandra Wright individually to learn their Torah portions and other parts of the service, and are encouraged to attend Rabbi Anthony Lazarus Magrill's Talmud class (see page 14).

Wednesday Evenings 6.00 – 7.00pm

Classical Hebrew for Absolute Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

If you know absolutely nothing about reading Hebrew but want to learn, this class is for you. Using Jonathan Romain's *Signs and Wonders* (available for purchase from the LJS), this class will enable you to unlock the mystery of the Hebrew letters and start reading. Absolutely no previous experience is required, just regular attendance of this friendly and supportive class.

Shabbat mornings 9.45 – 10.45am

Women in the Bible

Tutor: Nitzza Spiro

In this course we examine key female figures in the Bible, analysing their characters and roles in the context of psychology, sociology, politics and literature, often making comparisons with ancient texts of other cultures in that area and era.

Our discussions are in English, with texts read in Hebrew, enriching participants' vocabulary and understanding of grammatical structure. Members of the group receive weekly guidance of words and topics to think about prior to each lesson, making the learning more effective. Should be of interest to men, too!

Learning with Texts

Facilitator: Michael Romain

In the first half of the term, we continue looking at Judaism in the first century of the Common Era. In the second half of the term, Bernie Bulkin, who started up our classes, is leading five sessions on the subject of 'Deuteronomy and Revolution'. Bernie will be giving his take on Moses' radical reinterpretation of what God intended and what God intends for the future.

We welcome new members to the class. If you are interested, please contact Michael Romain by email: romain@netgates.co.uk. No knowledge of Hebrew is required, and classes can be attended either in person at the LJS or online.

Understanding Biblical Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

Participants in this course will follow the book *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* (available for purchase from the LJS) which focuses on understanding Biblical and Siddur (prayerbook) Hebrew. Participants will also read key Torah portions to increase their understanding of the Bible as well as their Hebrew vocabulary. This course is suitable for those who can read basic Hebrew.

Please note this course commences at 10.00am to allow parents of Rimmon children to attend Tefillah.

Navigating the Sea of Talmud

Tuesday evenings 8.10pm – 9.15pm

Course starts 24 January

Tutor: Rabbi Anthony Lazarus Magrill

We are delighted to welcome Rabbi Anthony Lazarus Magrill to the LJS to lead six sessions on the Talmud.



The Talmud is perhaps the Jewish people's primary cultural storehouse. For two millennia, its study has been one of Judaism's key religious and intellectual experiences; but numerous barriers have restricted access to its treasures. Over six sessions, open to learners whatever their prior experience, we will grapple with some of the Talmud's iconic passages, working principally with texts in English translation. Expect wild stories, legal controversy, and insight into Judaism's rich cultural diversity.

Session 1: 24 January

Berakhot 2a – How do you start a Talmud? Just what is a Talmud? In our first class we learn about what the Talmud is, how the Talmud page works, and when we are supposed to recite the evening Shema.

Session 2: 31 January

Bava Kamma 2a-b – This week, we see the start of a very different tractate of the Talmud. What kinds of things are Rabbis supposed to be interested in? This week, approached rather obliquely, the laws of damages.

Session 3: 7 February

Sanhedrin 71a – The Stubborn and Rebellious Son. What are we supposed to do when the Torah says things which we find objectionable? Come and find out how the Rabbis of the Talmud navigated the issue.

Session 4: 21 February

Bava Metzia 59b – The Oven of Akhnai. Perhaps the Talmud's best-known narrative (*aggadah*); we dive deep into this tricky tale to learn how the Rabbis understood their role of mediating between God and the Jewish people.

Session 5: 28 February

Chullin 10b-11a – *Hazaka*, or 'It Seems Like a Good Bet ...' How does probability interact with the law? How sure can we be that things are what they seem to be? This week, see the Rabbis attempt to fit a perfect and certain law onto an imperfect and uncertain world.

Session 6: 7 March

Berakhot 27b-28a – What was it like to sit in the ancient academies? How did Jewish law happen? This week, we jump back into the sea of Talmudic narrative and learn about the rivalry between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabban Gamliel which threatened to tear Rabbinic Judaism apart.

The LJS Chavruta – Learning with Study Companions

Rabbi Igor Zinkov has adapted a traditional form of study called Chavruta (literally 'Companionship') specially for the LJS: groups of two or three people study specific texts together in search of their meaning, then discuss how to apply their findings to their own lives.

The programme allows for continuous enrolment, so you can register at any time, and as soon as there are enough people to form a new group, that group will open. You are assigned study partners and texts which are from both traditional and general cultural sources. The traditional sources are in both Hebrew and English, so knowledge of Hebrew is not a prerequisite.

Your Chavruta group meets for an hour-long session virtually or in person every month at a time agreed between participants.

To find out more, and/or to register, please contact Rabbi Igor Zinkov: i.zinkov@ljs.org or visit www.tinyurl.com/ljsch

Rimon Corner

On 19 November our Rimon community celebrated Mitzvah Day by engaging in various projects. Rimon families showed incredible generosity and kindness in contributing to several projects for Mitzvah Day.

On Mitzvah Day our Rimon participants:

- Packed around 45 bags of toiletries for local families in need
- Produced 42 cards for children from all around the world who are undergoing heart surgery at a specialist facility in Israel
- Made 25 dog toys for dogs at the Mayhew Animal Centre who are waiting for their forever homes
- Created 20 cards for sending to sick and bereaved LJS members
- Designed 7 art projects to brighten up residential homes for disabled children in Israel
- Collected 2 large sacks of rubbish from Regent's Canal

Rimon students were not only able to gain first-hand experience of the lesson from *Pirkei Avot* 'One mitzvah leads to another mitzvah ... to be righteous is good', but also to see how social action makes a tangible difference to the lives of others. We were delighted to hear that cards made by some of our pupils have already been sent to elderly and bereaved congregants, and to receive a letter of thanks for our dog toys from the Mayhew Animal Trust. They told us:

“Thank YOU to you and all the amazing pupils at Rimon for the lovely handmade toys that you've donated! These will really make a huge difference to our animals.

We really appreciate everything you've all done to make the lives of our dogs enriched and full of fun. Sensory toys are a fantastic addition to any dog's well-being, so please feel free to make some more!”

We look forward to continuing to make a positive difference through mitzvot and social action throughout the year.

Susannah Alexander and Rabbi Elana Dellal



We wish these young members of the LJS a very happy birthday in January and February.

January

James Blumenthal
Astrid Cohen
Quincy Davies-Benjamin
Oliver Dellal
Valentine Desmond
Zara Gale
Mark Gelfer
Samuel Johnson
Isaac Kane
Joel Langham McLellan
Layla Lewis
Theo Maller
Eleyna Mordehachvili
Bertie Morrison
Tabby Penn
Gidon Reeve
Sacha Rosenthal
Ellis Simons
Seve Solomons

February

Rebekah Allen
Theadora Bendel
Tomas Cowley
Arthur Dreyer
Layla Grant
Alan Lach Stein
Rafa Lewis
Ariana Malbon-Arvanitakis
Jeremy Mencer
Clinton Newman
Jake Phillips
Leo Potel
Hayden Salasky Buxton
Jacques Sellier
Gabrielle Sinclair
Hannah Spearman-Walters
Daniel Tahar
Elliot Tahar

Kenneth Awele Okafor

Our guest speaker on Zoom at the Shabbat morning service on 29 October was Kenneth Awele Okafor, who also joined us for a Q&A session after Kiddush.

Kenneth is a Black British Jew of Nigerian Igbo ethnicity who also has West African, North African, East African, and Middle Eastern ancestry. He works with Jewish communities in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa to promote their Jewish identity, which is often intermingled with African cultural traditions.

Kenneth's talk was fascinating in that it raised awareness among so many of us of the extraordinary diversity of Jewish communities from South America and the Caribbean, to Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

In the Q&A session, the discussion focused on how members of these diverse communities refer to themselves. Although the terms 'Black Jews' and 'Jews of Colour' signify a visual difference, this is potentially too limited. It was generally felt these descriptions put a large range of different communities all together in a single category, when the fact is, the common denominator is that everyone is Jewish.

Kenneth sees education as the key which will enable us all to gain an understanding that how Jews look varies hugely. We would be enriched by learning how all the many Jewish communities round the world observe Judaism and celebrate festivals. Such learning would also help combat the prejudices we may have – be they expressed or not – when we see people at synagogues in the UK, including our own, who have had a Jewish journey which is different from what we presume to be the norm.

We are very grateful to Kenneth for his insightful comments, and for the work he is doing in broadening our understanding of what it is to be Jewish.



The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

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At other times, call 020 8958 2112 (Calo's)

Dates of festivals in 2023

Purim: starts evening of Monday 6 March

Seder Night (start of Pesach):

Wednesday 5 April

Shavuot: starts evening of Thursday

25 May

Rosh Hashanah: starts evening of Friday

15 September; first day is Saturday 16

September

Kol Nidre: evening of Sunday 24

September

Yom Kippur: day of Monday 25

September

Sukkot: starts evening of Friday 29

September

Simchat Torah: starts evening of Friday

6 October

Chanukkah: first night is Thursday 7

December

Copy and ideas for the newsletter should be emailed to: newsletter@ljs.org

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