



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

A pop-up choir drawn from the regular Members' Choir,

supplemented by other members of the LJS

community, travelled to Paris in January to sing with two Liberal Jewish communities, the *Communauté Juive Libérale* in the Marais and *Kehillat Gesher* in the 17th arrondissement.



The visitors received an enthusiastic reception from their French hosts and are looking forward to welcoming a return visit when the *Kehillat Gesher* choir come to The LJS for the *Shabbat* services on 2 and 3 March.

March 2018

Adar-Nisan
5778

Rabbi Hilton welcomed as LJS Scholar in Residence

The LJS is delighted to announce the appointment of our first Scholar in Residence. Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton has agreed to assume this role over the next few months.

As well as being Rabbi Emeritus of Kol Chai Hatch End Reform Jewish Community, Michael is a senior lecturer at Leo Baeck College and an Honorary Research Fellow of the Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Manchester. He is the author of *The Christian Effect*



on *Jewish Life*, *The Gospels and Rabbinic Judaism: A Study Guide* and, most recently, *Bar Mitzvah: A History*.

We are proud and honoured that he has agreed to become our Scholar in Residence,

continuing to be freelance and offer us *ad hoc* learning and other opportunities.

Michael will continue with his stimulating and patient teaching on Tuesday mornings; he will continue to lead occasional services; and will be an advisor to the co-ordinators of the discussion class that used to be Bernie Bulkin's class on *Shabbat* mornings. He will help to develop and offer a programme of occasional lectures, focusing particularly on Jewish-Christian dialogue.



Welcome

to these new Members and Friends and their families:

Adam Jacques

Rupert and Natasha Samuel

Leeor and Jessica Cohen

Sarah Roeder and Richard Wald

Sean Kane and Kimberly Webster

Coral and Ben Rosenblatt

Congratulations

to **Raymon Benedyk**, the former LJS Organising Secretary, on the birth of **Isabel Rose Benedyk**, his first great-grandchild

Bereavement

We extend our sympathy to those who mourn:

Enid Abbey, mother of the former LJS Community Care Co-ordinator, Liz Crossick

Ernest Hecht OBE: an obituary of the Managing Director of Souvenir Press and a great supporter of The LJS, will appear next month

המקום ינחם אתכם

בתוך שאר האבלים

May God comfort you
and all who mourn

Yom Ha-Shoah

Yom Ha-Shoah will be marked on **Shabbat 14 April** with a special service on the theme of **Rescue and Resistance**.

SHABBAT ATZMA'UT

Celebrating Israel's 70th birthday

Rabbi Gilad Kariv, Executive Director of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, will be guest speaker at a very special service, held in conjunction with Liberal Judaism, to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel at **11.00 on Shabbat 21 April** at The LJS.

Rabbi Kariv will also be the guest speaker at a special lunch and talk following the service – all are welcome.



Gilad Kariv was born and educated in Tel-Aviv. He served for five years in the IDF Intelligence Corps and then studied Law and Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He received his master's degree in Jewish Studies at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem in 2003, and in 2004 he was certified as a lawyer by the Israel Bar Association.

Between 2006 and 2009 Kariv took part in the Knesset's Judiciary committee discussions over the proposed writing of an Israeli constitution.

He was appointed executive director of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism in 2009 and since then he has worked to expand the work of the movement, improve its standing with the Israeli public and establish new Reform congregations around the country.

Volunteers wanted for Shabbat greeting

Join our friendly team of LJS Greeters and help us ensure that every *Shabbat* we are able to offer the famous LJS welcome. All we ask is one or two mornings of greeting per quarter (from 9.50 to 11.00) to welcome members and visitors. Please email membership@ljs.org or call Jemma or Laura on 020 7432 1296 if you can help.

Shabbat and festival services: March

Unless otherwise stated, Friday evening services start at 18.45 and Shabbat morning services at 11.00

DATE	RABBI/SPEAKER	NOTES
Wednesday 28 February Purim	17.30 19.45	<i>Megillah</i> reading for families with young children <i>Megillah</i> reading followed by 'Esther and the Sceptre of Fire'
Friday 2 March	Alexandra Wright	Co-led by Niamh Eisenberg <i>Bat Mitzvah</i> <i>Chavurah</i> supper for the visiting choir of <i>Kehillat Geshet</i> from Paris. Please come and welcome our French guests and please bring a vegetarian or sweet dish to share
Shabbat 3 March <i>Ki Tissa</i>	Alexandra Wright	Niamh Eisenberg <i>Bat Mitzvah</i>
Friday 9 March	Alexandra Wright	
Shabbat 10 March <i>Va-yakheil/ Pekudei/Parah</i>	Alexandra Wright Igor Zinkov	An Intergenerational Service in the Sanctuary led by the children and teenagers of Rimon <i>Shema Koleinu</i> service in the John Rayner Room
Friday 16 March	Alexandra Wright	Co-led by Tabitha Penn <i>Bat Mitzvah</i> Young Adults <i>Chavurah</i> supper following the service
Shabbat 17 March <i>Vayikra/Ha-Chodesh</i>	Alexandra Wright	Tabitha Penn <i>Bat Mitzvah</i>
Friday 23 March	Rachel Benjamin	Co-led by Romilly Blitz <i>Bat Mitzvah</i>
Shabbat 24 March <i>Tzav/Ha-Gadol</i>	Rachel Benjamin	Romilly Blitz <i>Bat Mitzvah</i> We will be joined by members of Reading Liberal Synagogue and their Religion School
Friday 30 March <i>Erev Pesach</i>	Please note: there is no service at the synagogue on <i>Erev Pesach</i>. If you know of anyone who would like to be invited to a home <i>Seder</i> , please contact Rabbi Alexandra Wright: a.wright@ljs.org or 020 7432 1283	
Shabbat 31 March 1st day <i>Pesach</i>	Igor Zinkov	
Saturday 31 March 18.30	Communal <i>Seder</i>	Members, Friends and guests all welcome: see more details on page 7
Thursday 5 April <i>Erev 7th day Pesach</i> 18.45	Alexandra Wright	An informal service to celebrate the eve of the 7th day of <i>Pesach</i> will be held in the John Rayner Room
Friday 6 April 7th day <i>Pesach</i> 11.00	Rachel Benjamin	Shabbat morning services are streamed live via the internet. If you would like to follow a service on your computer or tablet, please phone the LJS office to get your user name and password.
Friday 6 April 18.45	Alexandra Wright	

Search begins for new rabbi

You should by now have received my letter informing you that Rabbi Benjamin will be leaving her present role at The LJS in the summer. However, the positive thing is that Rachel very much enjoys being part of The LJS and working with Rabbi Wright and our community; the good news is that she hopes to continue taking some of our services and so will not be leaving us completely.

In the meantime, we are in the process of recruiting a new rabbi to work with Rabbi Wright. The advertisement has been published and we have begun to receive replies. We hope to shortlist and interview between the middle of March and the beginning of April and will keep you informed of progress.

Some news involving the Council itself: firstly, Chris Godbold has joined the Honorary Officer group. On Council, Chris takes the lead for matters to do with governance; this is such a fundamental issue that his being one of the Honorary Officers will bring an important perspective to discussions.

The second piece of Council news is that it was agreed that the Chair of the Young Adults Committee should have a place on Council. The Young Adults group is a key part of The LJS and their Chair, Steve Laughton, is keen to formalise

Voluntary care and support work faces increasing demand, says LJS Chairman Sue Head



the group and embed it into the fabric of the community. As he points out, they are the next generation of our lay leadership. We are pleased he is joining us on the Council because the young adults are vital for the future of The LJS.

At the February meeting, Council continued the discussions begun in January on the work of the '4Cs', the umbrella committee for the pastoral and caring work of The LJS. An astonishing 85 volunteers are involved in this, together with Aviva Shafritz, our part-time professional Community Care Co-ordinator and Naomi Kramer, the part-time Community Care Admin. There is a growing demand for the support that The LJS gives to people and we considered the problems connected with this: for example, the need for more professional and volunteer support and the money required to expand their work. The '4Cs' have been successful with annual

grant applications to continue what is already in place, but financing the expansion of what they do is something Council is going to examine. Alongside this goes ensuring that we are compliant with legislation concerning safeguarding, data protection and health and safety: this in itself is a big task to carry out.

Council received a report from the Ground Floor Vision Group whose remit is looking at the long-term project of renovating the downstairs area. As you all know, the toilets are a priority, and it was decided to incorporate the renovation of the first floor toilets into this scheme.

The group recommended that we undertake an examination of our existing plumbing and electricity services before designing and planning the new toilets. Council gave them the go-ahead to begin this research.

Sue Head

Should we celebrate Purim?

I was 24 years old before I ever heard of the festival of *Purim*. My childhood at The LJS and Wembley Liberal Synagogue had not included this festival. When I enquired, I was told that the celebration had been dropped because the story was fiction, because the idea that Jews should take revenge on their enemies was inappropriate to celebrate, and because the manner in which the celebration took place was irreverent and unseemly.

As my knowledge of Judaism grew, I felt that at least I should have been given the opportunity at a younger age to learn about the festival and to make up my own mind. And that led me to question whether these were the only reasons for cancelling *Purim*, or were there others? And if these reasons are still valid, how and when did *Purim* reappear on our calendar?

So a couple of years ago I spent a day at the LJS archives and discovered the fascinating story of the abolition and return of *Purim* in Liberal synagogues. I discovered that Claude Montefiore, Lily Montagu and Rabbi Israel Mattuck all disapproved. In *Outlines of Liberal Judaism* [1912] *Chanukkah* was listed as the only minor festival in the calendar. Claude Montefiore's views were influenced by liberal Protestants such as S.R. Driver, the Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, one of many who expressed

concern about 'the Jews engaging in unprovoked massacre.' Some earlier Christian scholars had expressed themselves in much stronger terms, most notably Martin Luther, who in *The Jews and*

their Lies [1543] wrote of how the Jews 'love the Book of Esther, which so well fits their bloodthirsty, vengeful, murderous greed and hope.' But by Montefiore's time such polemic had given way to a more benign dialogue between Jews and Christians.

Liberal Jewish concerns about *Purim* hinged also on the way some Orthodox congregations behaved during the reading. Attempts by synagogue authorities to restrain the loud noises made at the mention of Haman

included those of the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam in 1640 and Bevis Marks in London in 1783. The Jewish consistoire of the Kingdom of Westphalia [1810] outlawed making a noise during the reading of the *megillah* in their manifesto which is, in effect, the foundation document of the Jewish Reformation.

In 1960 Rabbi John Rayner devoted his *Shabbat Zachor* sermon at The LJS to explaining why there would be no *Purim* celebration. He explains the history of the abolition of the festival, but feels that it should at least be reconsidered, and that it would be 'wrong to feel for ever bound by the policies of those who founded our movement.' He points out that the book of Esther is a fictional short story. A much more serious difficulty is that it is the only book in the Bible which does not mention God, and this

omission appears to be deliberate. In the end, Rayner neither firmly accepts nor rejects the festival, but in a moving and powerful passage suggests that the book of Esther does not



PHOTO: Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith

◌ **There are many different ways of reading Esther. Problematic readings have been used by Liberals who have seen the book as vengeful, and by extreme fundamentalists who have seen the Jews turning on their enemies as a good example to follow ◌**

– Rabbi Michael Hilton

provide a fitting context for the tragedy of Jewish suffering, which 'demands for its consideration a religious context. The historic martyrdom of the Jewish people is utterly meaningless and senseless, and therefore unspeakably cruel, unless it be the price of a religious mission sacred beyond all earthly values, unless it represents the wounds sustained by a covenant people for God's sake in an unredeemed world. And just these ideas, which alone can lift the tragedy of Jewish suffering out of absurdity, are singularly absent in the book of Esther. This is the gravest cause for doubt about the value of *Purim*.'

🗨️ The book of Esther is the only book in the Bible which does not mention God 🗨️

But gradually, over many years, *Purim* slipped back in. With secular and social activities becoming an ever more important focus for synagogues, the objection that Esther is not a religious book lost its force. *Purim* is mentioned briefly in Rabbi Rayner's 1960 LJS religion school syllabus, but that does not mean it was actually taught.

By 1987, however, he felt able to argue that it is acceptable let our hair down occasionally and celebrate *Purim*, provided we treat it as 'harmless good fun'. He certainly believed in practising what he preached. That same year The LJS advertised an *Erev Purim* supper party aimed particularly at younger members, and John Rayner even wrote a spoof *megillah* for the occasion celebrating the arrival of their new young rabbi, Alexandra:

So it came to pass, when the chairman's decree was published, that many graduates came from Manor House to Maxwell House, and Alex obtained favour in the sight of all who interviewed her, and Maxwell set a small blue *kippah* on the crown of her head, and made her a rabbi with David and John.

The story goes on to describe the rebuilding of the synagogue, and 'in every postal district, withersoever the tidings came, the Liberal had gladness and joy, a feast and a good day; and

many from among the Jews became Liberals, for the admiration of the Liberals had fallen upon them.'

In Pam Fox's book, *A Place to Call my Jewish Home*, there is a quotation from another former LJS rabbi, Kathleen de-Magtige Middleton:

A question which I was asked at my initial interview really introduced me to The LJS as it was. That question was: 'What is your opinion about *Purim*?' As this was my first ever interview, I didn't know quite what questions to expect, but I definitely never expected a question like that! And I realised that at The LJS traditional Liberalism was not a thing of the past – that the 'Three Ms' and their ethos, their theology were not part of the historical development of The LJS, but still very much part of its outlook, its self-definition and even its praxis. Coming from a much more traditional background (albeit also called 'Liberal') I had to get used to the polite 'tut tut' when the name Haman was uttered, and it took a couple of years, a bit of hard work and, most importantly, a good bottle of vodka, until *Purim* at The LJS started to sound a bit more like *Purim* ought to sound.

Like other books of the Bible, there are many different ways of reading Esther. Problematic readings have been used both by those Liberals who have seen the book as vengeful, and by those extreme fundamentalists who have seen the Jews turning on their enemies as a good example to follow.

🗨️ Liberal Jewish concerns hinged also on the way some Orthodox congregations behaved during the reading 🗨️

I venture to suggest that both of them have been unduly influenced by Christian interpretations of the book, some of which have been motivated by anti-semitism. Personally, I enjoy *Purim*, but I know several rabbinic colleagues who still have their reservations about it.

Michael Hilton

Pesach 2018/5778: Communal Seder



Saturday 31 March
18.30 at The LJS
led by
the Rabbinic Team

Members:

- Adults: £36
- Children up to 12 years: £16
- Family of 2 adults and 2 or more children: £92

Non Members:

- Adults: £60
- Children up to 12 years: £28
- Family of 2 adults and 2 or more children: £150

Pre-booking is essential as tickets will not be available on the night.
Please book early using the enclosed form as places are strictly limited.

Financial assistance towards the cost may be available.

Please contact Joanne Beaumont on 020 7432 1283 or email: rabbispa@ljs.org

STUDENTS FROM THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC PRESENT

AN EVENING OF SONG AND OPERA

at The LJS

on Thursday 22 March at 19.30

A varied programme, from the much loved songs of Schubert and Schumann, to the operas of Mozart and Donizetti. All proceeds will go towards the LJS Community Care programme and towards brightening the lives of seriously ill children at Spread a Smile. This is an evening of vocal music not to miss.

£15 Adults £10 Concessions £5 Students/Under-25s

Book in advance at www.ljs-student-concert.eventbrite.co.uk
or tickets available on the door

For more information please contact Max Loble at LJSstudentconcert@aol.com

What to do when someone dies: Part 2

When someone dies, the emphasis in Jewish tradition is on *kibbud ha-meit* [respect for the dead]. It is this principle that governs the way we prepare for saying farewell to our dead. In Part 1 of this guide, in the February issue of *LJS News*, we looked at how Liberal Judaism can help us in the last stages of life, what happens between death and a funeral, and the funeral service itself.

After a funeral, the emphasis moves from *kibbud ha-meit* to the needs of mourners [*nichum aveilim* – comforting mourners]. Once a funeral has taken place – whether a burial or cremation [both permitted in Liberal Judaism] – many people choose to return home with close family. The tradition of lighting a memorial candle on returning home following a funeral can be comforting. Another tradition is the *se'udat havra'ah*, literally 'the meal of recuperation' or 'mourner's meal.' This is usually prepared by friends of the mourners and includes food that is round, such as a hard-boiled egg, to symbolise the eternal nature of the soul. This is not mandatory, but may be suggested by friends or neighbours.

Shivah (seven-day period of mourning)

The seven day period of mourning, known as *shivah*, begins as soon as one returns from the funeral and ends on the morning of the seventh day. Although there is some variance in progressive Jewish practice from the traditional mourning process, the *shivah* period and following stages of mourning can reflect the psychological journey a bereaved person makes in the months that follow.

The intensity of the initial mourning period before the funeral (*aninut*) moves

to a different stage of mourning (*aveilut*) which acknowledges the grief and loss experienced by the mourner, but helps them gradually to return to their daily routine and life.

The *shivah* period gives the mourner permission to stay at home, to be surrounded by friends, family and congregation, to be supported during a time of disorientation and grief. Prayers are recited in the home and members of



'Whether their personal practice is public or more private, it is important for mourners to feel that the customs they choose to practise have integrity and meaning for them'

the congregation are encouraged to join family and friends. Some mourners sit on low chairs or stools as a sign of the 'lowness' of their spirits and refrain from bathing, shaving, cutting hair and wearing leather – that is, the usual acts of daily life – as a way of expressing the reality that the mourners' usual routine has been interrupted by the death of their loved one. Chairs can be borrowed from the synagogue if required.

Liberal Judaism certainly encourages the practice of *shivah*, but leaves this decision and the number of days for prayers to the mourner. Many Liberal Jews choose to observe between one and three nights of prayers. It is important to add that Liberal Judaism does not apply any pressure to a

family to undertake any *mitzvah* with which they might feel uncomfortable. The purpose of *shivah* is to allow the mourner time to receive support, comfort and consolation, to help them with practical tasks such as shopping and cooking, and to give them time to grieve and mourn.

Shivah prayers in the home take the form of a daily evening service followed by the reading of Psalms and special memorial prayers. It is customary for a tribute to

the deceased to be made either by the person leading the prayers or a member of the family. Because these prayers take place in the home, the atmosphere is often a little more informal and it becomes possible for mourners and friends to hold a conversation and to share memories about the person who has died. The service is read from a special prayer book: *Seder Tefillot b'Vet Evel* (Prayers at a House of Mourning). The rabbi or service leader will bring the prayer books to the house.

Liberal Judaism acknowledges that these traditions may be hard for the solitary mourner – the widow or widower without any children or other mourners present – to observe. Then the congregation is

expected to take the place of family by being aware of the mourner's intense loneliness and by reaching out to offer companionship and comfort. Bringing food to prayers is another way of expressing care, love and concern for the bereaved person.

Sh'loshim (thirty-day period of mourning)

The next stage of mourning is known as *sh'loshim* – 'thirty' and refers to the thirty day period following the day of the funeral. It is during this time, following the *shivah* that a mourner begins to return to work, to household chores and to re-join society. There is an acknowledgment during this period, and indeed during the eleven months that follow, as mourners mark anniversaries and birthdays without their loved one, that the mourner is still vulnerable and that emotions remain unpredictable.

Jewish tradition forbids the mourner from taking part in any festivity or attending a place of entertainment. For Liberal Jews, however, the important thing is not necessarily the sense of obligation on account of prescribed tradition, but what individuals will find meaningful and supportive in these circumstances.

In this and other customs associated with the period of mourning, Liberal Jews must follow their own informed choice and conscience. Whether their personal practice is public or more private, it is important for mourners to feel that the customs they choose to practise have integrity and meaning for them.

Alexandra Wright

■ The final part of Rabbi Wright's series on death and mourning follows next month.

The Annual General Meeting of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue will be held on Wednesday 20 June from 19.30-21.00 in the Montefiore Hall.



Have you thought about contributing to the weekly *kiddush* following our *Shabbat* morning service to mark a special birthday or other big event? If you would like to take part in the service to mark the occasion, please contact Joanne Beaumont on 020 7432 1283 or email her at rabbispa@ljs.org



Congregants appreciate the warm welcome they receive at The LJS and the contribution of our many volunteers. In return, please support the synagogue by including The LJS in your will. Your legacy would help to ensure our community continues to thrive. To find out more, contact the rabbi or the Executive Director.



The next Drop-ins for asylum seeker families will be from 14.00-16.00 on Sundays 11 March and 8 April. We need volunteers from 12.00 to help prepare for our guests.

If you are interested in volunteering once a month or a few times a year, please contact Rabbi Alexandra Wright – a.wright@ljs.org – for more information. We are especially looking for younger members of the community to help us with some of the heavier work.



at the **LJS**

**Classes in Judaism and Hebrew
Purim/Shavuot terms 5778/2018**

Tuesdays 11.15-12.30

Until 27 March, then 24 April to 10 July

Tuesday Texts

This friendly group is led by our Rabbis, Dr Dov Softi and Susannah Alexander as we study biblical texts and commentaries and enjoy sessions on Jewish art. Our discussions are lively and relevant to contemporary issues. This year's topics will include sessions on Prayer and a four week course [6-27 March] on the story of Samson from the Book of Judges. **STOP PRESS:** Two sessions on 26 June and 3 July with Norbert Meyn [Royal College of Music and Ensemble Emigre]

Tuesdays 19.00-20.00

Until 27 March, then 24 April to 10 July

Classical Hebrew at all levels

Half term: 29 May

Beginners' Hebrew with Susannah Alexander

Are you learning to read Hebrew for the first time, or have you tried to get your head around the letters for years, and never quite achieved success? If so, join this fun and supportive class, open to all, where we will use a tried-and-tested method to get you reading faster than you ever thought possible. Beginning with Jonathan Romain's Primer 'Signs and Wonders' and moving on to a taste of grammar, liturgy and Bible, this class will equip you to take your first steps into the wonderful world of Hebrew with skill and confidence.

Next steps in biblical Hebrew with Sally Gold

This class is for those who would like to practise guided reading, at their own pace, of simple Hebrew from the *Siddur* and the Hebrew Bible. We will gradually build reading skills and knowledge of vocabulary and simple grammar at an unhurried and manageable pace. The class allows plenty of time to gain, revise and consolidate using texts from the *Siddur* and some simple exercises which help with progressive understanding and confidence.

Saul: an unsuitable case for a king; David: warrior and lover king with Rabbi Alexandra Wright

The Book of Samuel includes the stories of the first king of Israel, a complex character, not altogether suited for kingship, as well as the rise of King David from simple shepherd boy to conqueror of the Jebusite town that became Jerusalem. These stories are told in consummate narrative form. The Hebrew is not too difficult. The class aims to improve your reading, widen your vocabulary and build knowledge of various grammatical forms.

Tuesdays 20.00-21.00

Until 27 March, then from 24 April

Exploring Judaism with Rabbi Rachel Benjamin and Student Rabbi Igor Zinkov

Exploring Judaism is for people who wish they knew more about Judaism or would like to brush up their Jewish knowledge. It is for family members who are not Jewish, who would like to understand more about Judaism. It is also an essential programme for people choosing Judaism, by conversion. Class members are encouraged to read materials which will be made available online. The course is designed to offer knowledge about aspects of Judaism, to encourage practical experiences of Liberal Judaism and space for personal reflection within the group.

6 March	Education and coming of age
13 March	Conversion
20 March	Marriage and mixed faith blessings
27 March	<i>Pesach</i> workshops
24 April	<i>Pesach</i> and the Counting of the Omer
1 May	End of life, funeral and mourning
8 May	Life after death, Messiah and Messianic Age
15 May	Exploring <i>Shavuot</i>
22 May	Home rituals and prayers
29 May	Half term
5 June	Different forms of Judaism
12 June	17 <i>Tammuz</i> , 3 Weeks, <i>Tisha B'Av</i>
19 June	Who is a Jew?
26 June	Humankind in Jewish thought
3 July	Ask the rabbi
10 July	<i>Siyum</i> /Celebration End of the Year

Tuesdays 20.00-21.15

6 and 13 March

Jewish-Muslim relations – taught by Dr Jonathan Gorsky

The course will start with an overview of key historical and theological issues, and try to provide a model for understanding Jewish-Muslim relations, drawing on different disciplines.

We will examine the impact of Islam on medieval Judaism, including our understanding of *Torah*, Maimonidean philosophy, classical spiritual and ethical texts and Jewish Sufism. The course will also cover contemporary issues, focusing on the plurality of Islam today. We will look at the influence of Wahabism (an extreme Saudi Arabian Islamic ideology) on the Muslim world and by contrast we will introduce Liberal Islam, which has considerable common ground with modern Judaism.

We will also discuss current positive and hopeful developments in what can be a very fraught relationship between the two communities.

A fifth session will be offered on 20 March, introducing the group to Scriptural Reasoning.

Shabbat 9.45-10.45

Until 24 March, then 21 April to 7 July

Torah study and Jewish thought

Half term: 26 May and 2 June

This term we are studying the teachings of Moses Maimonides, the Rambam.

The class is sometimes self-led and sometimes has professional input. Rabbi Michael Hilton will introduce the Rambam and Rabbi Alex and Student Rabbi Igor Zinkov will also lead classes about him. We have a nucleus of regular members but we do welcome new students. No prior knowledge is necessary and you are welcome to just come and sit with us to determine whether you wish to continue. For further information contact Michael Romain at romain@netgates.co.uk or Harriett Goldenberg at hgoldenberg@btinternet.com

Shabbat 9.45-10.45

Until 24 March, then 21 April to 7 July

Beginners' Hebrew with Naomi Brightwell

Half term: 26 May and 2 June

Naomi Brightwell's class uses Jonathan Romain's Signs and Wonders to help complete beginners decode the squiggles and start tackling what they've always been afraid of. With a little bit of grammar, a sprinkling of vocabulary and plenty of off-topic conversations on Jewish food, the structure of the liturgy and anything else that helps us have fun while learning. No previous knowledge required. Previous students have even gone on to lead Shabbat morning services.

Moving up in Hebrew with David Strang

The aim of this class is to help students to understand the Hebrew prayers and songs in our services. New students will need basic reading skills but we will spend some time increasing reading fluency. We will also look at the basics of Hebrew grammar using the textbook *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* which will be available for purchase. We will build up your vocabulary too, and there will be five words a week to learn. We will also start learning how to write the Hebrew letters, using simplified versions of the block letters in the *siddur*.

Intermediate Hebrew with Nitza Spiro

The aim of these sessions is to explore the Hebrew texts which the learners will come across in synagogue services on *Shabbatot* and festivals.

Some of the texts which will be introduced and studied in preparation for each festival (like the Passover *Haggadah*, the Book of Esther, and the Book of Ruth with some verses from the Book of Proverbs) might even be sung at times. Hopefully this knowledge will also be shared with families at home. The class will be working on fluency in reading but at the same time will also be learning about the historical, ethical, philosophical, and ideological messages of the texts. Through such familiarity every student will gain a deeper understanding and sense of identity with our heritage as well as appreciation and love for the Hebrew language.



Hebrew and Yiddish lessons from the Spiro Ark

A variety of daytime and evening Hebrew and Yiddish classes are run at The LJS by the educational organisation Spiro Ark on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Levels range from 'Beginners' and 'Not quite beginners' to 'Intermediate/Advanced'. For full details of lesson times and charges, please visit www.spiroark.org/classes or phone 020 7289 6321.

Chemist with a genuine interest in people

Anthony Roe, who has died at the age of 88, had a life-long association with The LJS. He recalled attending the religion school at the age of seven or eight, and went on to become chair of the Younger Members group, a Council member and chair of the education committee.

Anthony was born in London and educated at Harrow and

Oxford, where he graduated with a First in Chemistry and Pharmacology. After National Service in the Intelligence Corps, Anthony got his first and only full-time job – as an organic chemist at Smith Kline and French, where he spent his entire career, retiring as Director of Chemistry in 1986.

At Smith Kline he was involved in the discovery and

development of the anti-ulcer drug Tagamet.

One of Anthony's greatest attributes was his interest in other people, says his son Adam. 'Most of us like talking about ourselves. Dad preferred listening to others, and showed genuine interest in everything they had to say.

'At The LJS he would thank the choir after every service.'

1920s high fashion lives again

Bryan Diamond relates the history of his late aunt's 1923 wedding dress, its decline and subsequent restoration

My parents were members of The LJS from around 1965; my mother, Anne, exhibited collage embroidered pictures in annual art exhibitions. After my father's sister, Flora Jacobs, died in 1972 my mother rescued her beautiful wedding dress, made by Aida Woolf, and donated it to the V&A Museum.

It was displayed in an exhibition of such dresses in the Bethnal Green branch some years ago, but later the delicate decoration deteriorated. The dress has recently been extensively repaired, with donations principally from myself and my brother, and as part of the periodical rotation of items has now been put on display in the V&A Fashion Gallery [Case No 9] for a year.

Flora Diamond, then living in Westcliff, Essex, was married



The Ada Woolf creation, now displayed at the V&A Museum.

PHOTO: © Victoria and Albert Museum

at the Bayswater Synagogue in June 1923 to Philip Jacobs. The reception was held at Caxton Hall.

Her wedding dress was made by the noted Jewish designer Ada Woolf who rose to be a West End couturier. It is

pictured and described in two V&A books on wedding dresses. Edwina Ehrman [2015] described it as 'silver lace with beaded silver lace overskirt train with appliqué pink silk flowers'. It is illustrated at <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O167102/wedding-dress-woolf-aida/>

The website also shows another Woolf dress, from 1914: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O167100/wedding-dress-woolf-aida/> with the information that the dressmaker was an extremely high-class and exclusive London couturier of the period and a rival of Reville and Rossiter, who made the Princess Royal's wedding dress. Woolf's clientèle, many of whom were renowned for their sense of fashion, insisted on absolute exclusivity of design, so this dress must be unique.

RESTAURANT TUESDAY

Restaurant Tuesday meets on the third Tuesday of every month and is an informal lunch club for the more elderly members of the congregation.

Please let the office know if you are coming for the

first time or if you are a regular and cannot come (020 7286 5181). Lunch starts at 12.45 and now costs £5.



YOUNG ADULTS' DINNERS

Are you between the ages of 25 and 35 – or thereabouts? Do you have children or grandchildren of a similar age?

Or friends whom you would like to introduce to The LJS? Friday evening dinners for Young Adults are held once a month. For more details contact a.wright@ljs.org



VIDEO AND TEA

From 13.30-16.30 on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Just come along – no need to book. Enjoy soup on arrival then a DVD (film classics, musicals,

Israel at 70

Hills • Valleys • Encounters

3-10 June 2018

LJS community trip to Israel with Rabbi Alexandra Wright

3 days in the North, 4 nights in Jerusalem, engaging with nature, political and spiritual issues through visits and talks

Limited availability: details from SueBolsom@gmail.com

etc) followed by a delicious tea including home-made coffee ice-cream. Donation of £2.

28 March: *Ethel and Ernest*

25 April: *Bugsy Malone*

23 May: *The Artist*

27 June: *Genevieve*

25 July: *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*

22 August: *Whisky Galore*

26 September: *Meet Me in St Louis*

24 October: *Brief Encounter*

28 November: *The Snowman and Father Christmas*



COMMUNITY CARE

Aviva Shafritz, our Community Care Co-ordinator, is ready to help with difficulties experienced, not only by our older members, such as illness and provision of care, but also across the spectrum of life. Aviva has access to social services, hospital social workers and many caring organisations, both local and Jewish. You can email her at a.shafritz@ljs.org or phone her on 020 7286 5181.



PAINT FOR PLEASURE

Both experienced artists and beginners are welcome to join this friendly, informal group to paint together. Bring pastels, water colours, acrylic, oils or other materials. The group meets at 11.00 every Monday (except on Jewish festivals and Bank Holidays). For more details, email Jocelyne Tobin at jocelynetobin@talktalk.net

ARCHIVE TUESDAYS

The Archive team works in the Assembly Hall on most Tuesdays. Activities include sorting historical papers, cataloguing and photo preservation. If you'd like to help with this important work, please contact Cinde Lee at cinde.lee@gmail.com



BRIDGE CLUB



The Bridge Club meets from 14.00 to 17.00 every Monday at The LJS. Anyone with any

knowledge of the game is most welcome. This is a social afternoon rather than a competitive one. There is a friendly atmosphere and helpful suggestions. The cost (including tea or coffee) is £2. New members are welcome: for more details leave a message for Neil Levitt or William Falk at 020 7286 5181.



SINGING FOR THE MIND

This is a popular weekly activity for people with memory problems who come with a family member, friend or carer. Music brings fun, confidence and a time to relax among new found friends. To apply, email sfm@ljs.org or phone 020 7286 5181. For further information pick up a leaflet or visit the LJS website.

Young LJS

We wish these young members of The LJS a very happy birthday in March:

Emma Armstrong
Romilly Blitz
George Blumenthal
Lily Chevallier
Isabel Dagtoglou
Angel Desmond
Amelia Dubin
Rebecca Forster
Kitt Frankel
Albie Gavshon
Rose Gilbert
Joshua Goodman
Gabriel Grade
Samuel Grainger

Fanny Mendelsohn
Benno Ratner
Max Roeder Wald
Ollie Roeder Wald
Steven Ross
Emily Roth
Jacob Rushbrook
Milo Rynehart
Katherine Sarfaty
Lily Sebag-Montefiore
Sasha Sebag-Montefiore
Oralee Sellar
Edan Silbiger
Olivia Sinclair
Cy Solomons
Georgina Woolf

TINY TOTS at the LJS

Do you have little ones aged between 0 and 4?

Please bring them to The LJS on *Shabbat* mornings

**3, 10, 17 and 24 March
21 and 28 April**

for a delightful session of songs, stories, drawing and *kiddush*.



Activities for tiny ones with their parents, grandparents and carers. The nursery will still be available every *Shabbat* for children to play or read.

Please email education@ljs.org to be added to the Tiny Tots mailing list.

The next LJS News will be for April 2018. Final copy date: 6 March 2018. Copy should be emailed to info@daviescomms.com or to the Editors at The LJS.

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The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

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Registered office:
28 St John's Wood Road
London NW8 7HA

Tel 020 7286 5181
Fax 020 7266 3591
Linked to Typetalk
E-mail ljs@ljs.org
Website www.ljs.org

Senior Rabbi

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Director of Music

Cathy Heller-Jones

Organist

Tim Farrell

In case of bereavement:

In office hours, ring 020 7432 1298
At other times, ring 020 8958 2112 (Calo's)

LJS News Team

Editor

Peter Singer

Artwork

Davies Communications
Tel 020 7586 0850

A shower of rain, a stroll in the park and an unexpected encounter



Above: A heron guard of honour welcomes the walkers to the park.



Right: A brief pause to admire the view from the York Bridge.

The LJS local walking group held its first outing on 1 February.

After completing the essential formalities – a medical questionnaire – the pioneer group set off at a sedate pace (and in a gentle shower of rain), bound for Regents Park.

The walk was interrupted only by an encounter with Michael Romain's extended family (who were unaccountably heading the other way).

The next walk will be on Thursday 8 March, starting from The LJS at 11.15.

Future walks are also planned for 5 April, 10 May, 14 June and 5 July. All LJS members and friends are welcome to join in.

The group has been officially approved by Westminster City Council and is affiliated to Walking for Health. For more details, please contact Jody Graham: awithj@gmail.com

Enjoy some food for the brain (and the body)

Don't miss Nosh 'n' Drosh – a chance to enjoy lunch after the Shabbat service (starting at around 13.00) in the company of a stimulating speaker.

Future meetings include:

Shabbat 10 March:
Beverley Mautner,
The Judaica collection
at the British Museum

Shabbat 21 April:
Rabbi Gilad Kariv, Executive Director of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism: the 70 years since the establishment of the State of Israel

Shabbat 2 June:
Dame Helen Hyde, Foundation for Jewish Heritage

Shabbat 14 July:
Carol Gould, 42 years in Britain

– 37 years in network television

If you would consider sponsoring a Nosh 'n' Drosh, please ask Rabbi Alexandra Wright for more information.

The LJS is a constituent synagogue of Liberal Judaism


liberal judaism