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Sivan/Tammuz 5780

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS News



Sharing Memories of VE Day

(L-R) Jo Kessler, Valerie Gaynor and Joan Salter

The *Shabbat* morning service on 9 May marked the 75th anniversary of VE Day – the day when World War II came to an end in Europe.

A number of our members vividly recall that day, and three of them, Joan Salter, Valerie Gaynor and Jo Kessler, shared their memories as part of what was a most moving and poignant service.

In the prayer Rabbi Alexandra Wright wrote to mark this special anniversary, we remembered with solemnity and gratitude the sacrifices of all those who loyally served our country. We recalled with sorrow the loss of soldiers and airmen, sailors and civilians, as well as six million of our own people who perished in the death camps of Nazi Europe. And we gave thanks for seventy-five years of peace, and reflected on the long and hard years of rebuilding this country, together with the peace-building and reconciliation that has taken place over the decades that have followed.

For more on VE Day, including members' recollections, please turn to pages 9-11.

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Congratulations to the Lach Stein and Sternberg families!

We are delighted to announce the births of the two newest members of our community. Baby Dan, born 14 May, is pictured (*below, left*) with his parents, Mauricio and Liora Lach Stein, and his siblings Alan (7), Eric (5) and Sofia (3). Baby Isaac, born 16 May, is pictured (*below, right*) with his parents, Daniel and Lizzie Sternberg, and his sister Leora. Mazel tov to both families!



Update on the Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families

Since we last saw our guests in person at the beginning of March at a much reduced Drop-In, we have been urgently considering alternative ways of supporting them during lockdown. So we are delighted to announce that we are, successfully and securely, sending Tesco vouchers via mobile phone, each to the same value as they would have received in person.

Our guests are having an extremely difficult time as almost all 'extra' support like the Drop-In has ceased. With the added burden of home-schooling children in very cramped surroundings and providing the lunch which they would ordinarily have received as free school meals, food is genuinely running short.

We have received heart-breaking cries for help such as the following two messages, *'I have two young children and I don't have extra food'* and *'I am struggling in this time to feed myself'*, as well as heart-warming messages of appreciation for the support we are providing like *'Thanks a lot for looking after us in this stressful for everybody time'* and *'I am very touched that even in this strange outbreak you haven't forgotten us, as usual, and found a route to make kindness towards us.'*

If you have any questions about the work of the Drop-In during this time or would like to make a donation, please email: asylumproject@ljs.org

Benita Plax

Bereavements

We extend our sympathy to those who mourn:

Ronald Sulkin husband of Jose, father of Paul and Michael

Peggy Wyss mother of the late Suzanne, and aunt of Jane Rayner and Bill Heilbronn

We also extend our sympathy to:

David Davidson and his family on the death of David's brother **Stephen Davidson**

Amy Gelfer and her family on the death of Amy's grandmother **Betty Young**

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר האבלים

May God comfort you and all who mourn

Shabbat services: June to early July

Friday evening services are at 6.45pm. *Shabbat* morning services are at 11.00am unless otherwise stated. All our services are online and can be accessed via The Liberal Jewish Synagogue YouTube channel. At the end of each service on Friday evening and *Shabbat* morning, congregants are invited to join together for *Kiddush* via Zoom. The link is shown on the screen with clear instructions.

DATE	RABBI/SPEAKER AND NOTES	
Friday 5 June	Igor Zinkov	Admission Service Sandra Goodman
Shabbat 6 June <i>B'ha'a' lot'cha</i>	Alexandra Wright	We celebrate Ann and Bob Kirk's 70th wedding anniversary, and Bob's 95th birthday
Friday 12 June	Alexandra Wright	
Shabbat 13 June <i>Sh'lach L'cha</i>	Igor Zinkov	Rabbi Igor Zinkov's online Induction service Please join us for this somewhat overdue celebration of Rabbi Igor's arrival at the LJS
Friday 19 June	Alexandra Wright	
Shabbat 20 June <i>Korach</i>	Alexandra Wright Elana Dellal Igor Zinkov	There will be an online service led by Rabbi Alexandra Wright There will also be a <i>L'Dor va'Dor</i> service – a service via Zoom led by children from <i>Rimon</i> Religion School
Friday 26 June	Igor Zinkov	
Shabbat 27 June <i>Chukkat</i>	Alexandra Wright	
Friday 3 July	Alexandra Wright	
Shabbat 4 July <i>Balak</i>	Igor Zinkov	

The LJS 2020 AGM and Council Election

This year's AGM is being held online the evening of Wednesday 24 June. Details will be available in your *Shalom LJS* email. At the AGM the LJS membership will confirm the election of members standing for a second term and new members to the LJS Council.

Rabbi Alexandra Wright will give a rabbinic report, and our Honorary Treasurer, Peter Loble, will talk through our finances. You will hear about what the LJS has been doing since the lockdown, and about our plans and preparations for the rest of the year, including for the High Holy Days.

Please note that the talk scheduled to be given by our guest speaker, Gillian Merron, Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, has been postponed, and will take place on a future occasion.

The LJS YouTube Channel

During this period when our *Shabbat* and Festival services are online only, they can be viewed live via the LJS YouTube channel.

Although services remain on the channel in their entirety for no longer than two days for contractual reasons, the sermons and other readings are retained on this site, as are other events, such as the fascinating talk given by Gillian Walnes Perry who spoke on *Yom Ha-Shoah* on 'The Surprising Global Legacy of Anne Frank' (see page 16). Please click on 'Videos' on the LJS YouTube channel to see the complete list of uploads available. We hope members will benefit from being able to avail themselves of what is on offer, and either view something they missed, or re-visit something they found particularly meaningful.

Council Report

Gemilut Chasadim: acts of loving kindness



When we met as a Council in May, we reminded ourselves of one of our LJS value statements, *Gemilut Chasadim*, acts of loving kindness, which is explained in the LJS Vision with these words, 'The LJS nurtures meaningful relationships

through pastoral care and spiritual encounter and facilitates social networking'; these seem particularly apt at this time.

This was the second 'Zoom' Council meeting the Trustees had attended, and although the format is now becoming familiar, it is just not the same as being in the same physical space as one another. However, the important thing is that we can meet, we can exchange ideas and we can look forward together to the future.

We began by noting how sad we are that Rabbi Elana Dellal is leaving. Council was keen to record how grateful we are for her work with us, particularly with *Rimon* Religion School. She replied that she intends to continue her association and friendship with us.

Discussions have begun on recruiting a part-time rabbi to join Rabbi Wright and Rabbi Zinkov.

It continues to astonish us all how much is being achieved during these difficult times by members of the LJS, together with the rabbis and staff. Council reviewed the incredible things that the synagogue has been doing: our *shabbat* services, festival celebrations and commemorations. Special mention was made of the VE Day service with speakers Joan Salter, Valerie Gaynor and Jo Kessler, all contributing on Zoom. Community Care has now organised volunteers to make contact with the entire

community; where needed, members have been linked to people who can assist with shopping. Adult learning and *Rimon* offer exciting programmes, and participation in both has been good.

Last month, I spoke of the way in which the LJS has always looked outside the community to those who need help and I mentioned the Asylum Seekers Drop-In which has found ways to support those in need through a voucher scheme. One other example is 'Singing for the Mind' for people with memory problems, and their carers; this has become a regular weekly session, using Zoom, guided by experienced singing leaders.

Planning is beginning on how our community will be able to return safely to the building once the Government gives the go-ahead for places of worship to reopen. It is likely we will continue as a 'hybrid' community with some people physically in the building, while others access services and learning through internet technology. We have learnt a lot over the last few weeks on how to engage the community and we wish to build on the benefits of this into the future. Thus, online services and learning, for example, need to develop in a dynamic way for those at home. We are reviewing the technology to support this. Plans are also beginning for the High Holy Days, recognising that we will not be able to have everyone in the building.

We have some good news: we are hoping to reopen the Nursery School on 8 June. The Nursery has been running online since the closure of the building in March. Now they intend to be back in the synagogue. Caroline Villiers, the Head Teacher, has been working with her staff team to ensure all the appropriate safeguarding measures are in place. This is our first tentative step towards normality.

Sue Head, Chairman of Council

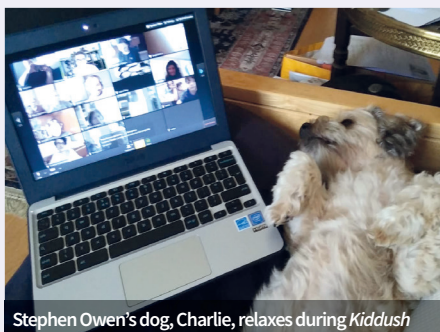
In celebration of our pets!

Having noticed all the pets who have of late been making an appearance during Zoom *Kiddushim*, our Rabbis came up with the idea of having a special focus on pets during the service on 25 April.

The special 'guest speaker', Zusya (pictured below, top centre), melted our hearts. In his younger days, Zusya would be taken to the North London Hospice where Rabbi Indigo worked as a chaplain. Zusya was aware of the importance of his contribution to this work, and loved all the cuddles.

Karen Newman read a compelling extract from Jonathan Wittenberg's wonderful book, *Things my Dog has Taught me about being a Better Human*. Rabbi Alex's Pets' Blessing acknowledged all God's creations, and she gave thanks to our animal companions for their insights and understanding, and for their furriness and friendship.

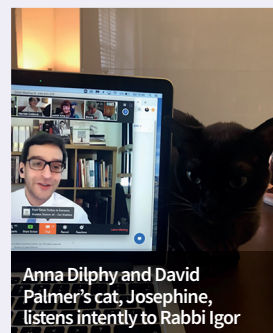
We then celebrated our many and various pets and cuddly toy animals in a glorious Pets' *Kiddush*!



Stephen Owen's dog, Charlie, relaxes during *Kiddush*



Our 'guest speaker', Zusya, with Rabbi Indigo and Ruthie Raphael



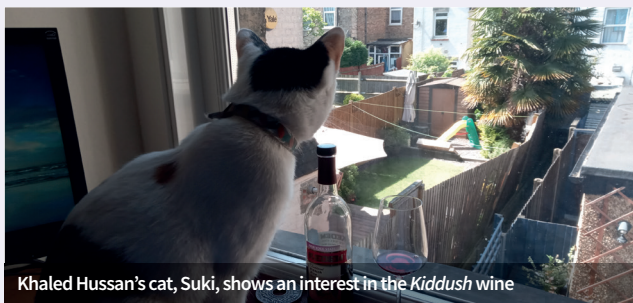
Anna Dilphy and David Palmer's cat, Josephine, listens intently to Rabbi Igor



Eliza and Alfred Davidson, with their father, Denzil, concentrate on Pets' *Kiddush* as they cuddle their guinea pigs, Waffle and Berry



Harriett Goldenberg with the family dogs, Fay (on Harriett's lap) and Laurie, watch Vivien Rose present her 58-year-old teddy bear, Daniel



Khaled Hussan's cat, Suki, shows an interest in the *Kiddush* wine



Judith King's peacock keeps a watchful eye on proceedings

How the LJS is adapting to our changed world



Following the closure of the LJS building on 23 March, steps were taken with great speed by our Rabbis, LJS Council, staff and volunteers to work out how

members could be offered services, events and classes online. It's been a steep learning curve for everyone, but what has been accomplished is truly impressive. The work is ongoing as we monitor procedures and respond to feedback.

Services moved to live streaming from the Sanctuary on 20 and 21 March, and were thereafter live-streamed via YouTube from the homes of the Rabbis and other participants, with each service followed by a Zoom *Kiddush* for everyone to get together. The *Kabbalat Torah* service along with *B'nei* and *B'not Mitzvah* ceremonies have been cancelled, but all families have been offered a choice of having an online ceremony, postponing the ceremony, or being part of the online service on the date of the original occasion. It has been of consolation for those who have been bereaved for friends and family to be able to participate in online *shiva* prayers.

In determining which platforms we should use for online delivery, the LJS team takes into account advantages such as no registration being required (YouTube) and the benefits of Facebook and Twitter, which encourage people to engage by leaving comments and sharing the streaming on their pages.

Many of us have been struck by the beautiful music which enhances services. The LJS musicians record their voices over an accompaniment in advance, the tracks are then overlaid by a sound engineer, and played during the live streaming. It has been noted that viewings of services continue after the live

streams. We are looking at the current contracts with our musicians (currently videos can only be kept online for up to two days); sermons and speeches have been uploaded so that these can be viewed with no time limit.

In terms of our learning programme, all *Rimon* and now Nursery classes, too, are taking place online. The children are enthusiastic and the parents supportive and involved. Our teachers have proved themselves to be truly committed, volunteering to work even during *Rimon* holidays. Because children are inundated with screen time work with their schools, we are looking at off-screen activities such as projects, writing and drawing to supplement class time. The Learning Circle programme of adult education has transferred successfully online.

LJS staff work from home, with everyone swiftly acclimatising to Zoom and abiding by agreed security practice. Direct telephone lines have been diverted to personal mobiles, and the main switchboard has a new message. Although the cemetery is closed except for burials, the staff continue to work there observing social distancing procedures.

Communication has been adjusted to shift the focus to *Shalom LJS* which we encourage members to subscribe to. *LJS News* is appearing in electronic form until further notice, though with possible plans for a limited number of copies to be printed retrospectively by request. The website is updated at least twice a week.

It is fascinating to see how many services, events and classes are attracting larger numbers than in pre-lockdown times, and we have been heartened to see that those with disabilities who cannot travel and indeed those living far from the LJS, even overseas, are participating in a way that till now hasn't been possible. And although we are all looking forward to meeting up again in person at the LJS and attending services in our beautiful Sanctuary, we are looking to see what we can learn from our current experience to take forward in the future.

Reaching out to our community

The pandemic in our midst has affected and is affecting everyone, albeit in different ways and to greatly varying degrees, and this is set to continue for the foreseeable future. *LJS News* caught up with Aviva Shafritz, our Community Care Co-ordinator, to find out how she and her team have been responding to this reality.



Aviva, who is a highly experienced professional social worker, took up her position at the LJS six years ago. She 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. She and her team of volunteers co-ordinate and run activities such as Restaurant Tuesday, Video and Tea, and the Out and About Club. In tandem with our Rabbis, Aviva recruits, trains and oversees our many volunteers, and works closely with those who serve as our lead volunteers. Aviva tells us she is hugely appreciative of each one of them, as well as of the vital administrative support from LJS staff member, Naomi Kramer.

With the arrival of coronavirus, there was an immediate need to expand the number of volunteers to address the very difficult issues facing our community. Following a call-out, 120 additional people offered to assist with making calls, going shopping and collecting prescriptions, etc. The Community Care Co-ordinating Committee, which had previously met up every two months, transformed itself into a crisis committee consisting of Aviva, the Rabbis, and four of the lead volunteers: Angela Camber, Judith Diamond, Jenny Nathan and Mary Rossiter. This group – called *Nechushtan*, the Hebrew for serpent, and analogous to our governmental COBRA meetings – now meets weekly.

One of the early outcomes of *Nechushtan* was for every single member of our community

to be contacted – initially the over 70s, then our younger members; and by now, everyone else. Each volunteer is given guidance notes and a list of questions to check on the well-being of the person being called or texted, and information is then uploaded onto a form which goes into a database. In this way, the LJS has a clear picture of any necessary follow-up, be it a regular call, practical help, or further assistance from Aviva or one of the Rabbis. Tribute must be paid to the Bereavement Support team for the challenging work which they, together with the Rabbis, are undertaking.

Although some of our regular group activities can no longer take place, volunteers keep in touch with all participants. Tremendous work has been undertaken to keep Singing for the Mind running online (see page 16).

Certain volunteers have been tasked with assessing the wealth of online resources available and making recommendations. These include resources specifically for the Jewish community – for example, the help JAMI offers for those with mental health issues, the financial advice from the Jewish Leadership Council, and advice from Jewish Women's Aid on domestic violence. Volunteers also help members access these resources as not everyone is tech-savvy; and those who aren't in a position to use the internet or receive emails are not forgotten.

Looking to the future, the experiences of everyone emerging from the lockdown will differ, and for some the isolation and struggles will continue for much longer than for others. We hope everyone in our community knows the LJS is here to offer support.

Aviva can be contacted by email: communitycare@ljs.org or by telephone on 020 7286 5181.

Max and Keira's Law

*The new **Organ Donation Act** received Royal Assent on 15 March 2020 and came into effect on 20 May 2020. Max and Keira's Law, named in honour of a boy who received a heart transplant and the girl who donated it, means that adults in England will be considered potential donors unless they choose to opt out or are excluded. Among those excluded are children under 18, people who lack the mental capacity to understand the changes for a significant period before their death, and people who have not lived in England for at least 12 months before their death. Here we consider a Liberal Jewish response to the question of organ donation.*

When Steven and Hannah's second daughter, Alys*, was born twelve years ago, doctors discovered she was suffering from biliary atresia, a serious and rare disease that causes damage to the liver. At her baby blessing, a few months after her birth, Steven handed her to me gently. She was a beautiful and alert baby, but thin and frail.

Only an operation could save Alys, and if the initial operation failed, then she would have to undergo a liver transplant. Doctors operated to correct the blockages that were preventing bile being drained from the liver, but the operation was unsuccessful. Without a liver transplant, Alys would die.

It is the story of children and adults like Alys and the principle of *pikkuach nefesh* – the saving of human life – which should encourage us to act in support of the law and not to opt out of organ donation.

Rabbi John Rayner z"l considered that progressive Judaism, with its open-mindedness and its particular emphasis on 'the social and public, over and above the individual and private, dimensions of God's moral demands', requires us to consider organ transplantation as consistent with Judaism's 'general life-affirming philosophy'.

There are three premises, says Rabbi Rayner, from which the Jewish approach proceeds. The first is that human beings are God's 'partners' in the work of creation and redemption and that

we have a duty 'to intervene responsibly in the processes of nature'. 'The healer is permitted to heal' is a mandate for the practice of medicine in Jewish law.

Secondly, Judaism regards human life as so precious that it is a positive obligation to preserve it and to prolong its duration for as long as possible. The saving of human life overrides all other commandments, including the commandment of the Sabbath and excluding only three 'cardinal prohibitions'. The Talmud states that 'all means of healing are acceptable, provided only that they do not involve idolatry, incest or murder'.

The third principle rests on the statement that 'when it comes to saving human life, we do not go by the majority', which means that it is not necessary that it should be certain that any proposed operation or therapy will be successful. The mere possibility that it may save the patient from dying is sufficient to justify it.

Liberal Judaism accepts the expert and careful decisions of doctors who have accepted brain stem death as the clear definition of death. However tragic it may be for a relative or family to switch off the means that are keeping a loved one alive artificially, their duty is, nevertheless, to help individuals to come to terms with the fact that the brain stem, which governs respiratory activity, has ceased all life.

It is for these reasons that Liberal Judaism, along with most other denominations of Jews in the world, including sections of the Orthodox community, positively endorses organ donation and the carrying of donor cards – indeed organ donation is regarded in progressive Judaism as a *mitzvah* (commandment).

Today, Alys is flourishing and healthy because of the decision of the parents of a young teenager who died suddenly, to allow their daughter's organs to be given as a gift of life to others. It is because a life was preserved, that Liberal Judaism endorses Max and Keira's Law.

Alexandra Wright

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the three individuals concerned.



75

VE DAY 8 MAY 2020

Marking the 75th Anniversary of VE Day

Here we share Rabbi Alexandra Wright's introductory words to the 75th anniversary of VE Day commemoration, spoken during the Shabbat morning service on 9 May 2020.

The date of 8 May 1945 marked the end of nearly six years of a war that had cost the lives of millions. It had destroyed homes, families and cities and had brought huge suffering and privation to populations of entire countries. Victory in Europe brought relief from the tension of war and an initial exuberant sense of joy and gratitude among many. There were street parties and dancing in the streets; there was singing and strutting up of bunting in every city and village.

Hitler was dead and his successor Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz negotiated an end to the war with the Allies. On 4 May, a German delegation arrived at the headquarters of British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery at Lüneburg Heath, east of Hamburg. There, Montgomery accepted the unconditional surrender of German forces in the Netherlands, North-West Germany and Denmark. On 7 May, at his headquarters in Reims, France, Supreme Allied Commander General Eisenhower accepted the unconditional surrender of all German forces. The document of surrender came into effect the following day.

For many, however, the war was not yet over. Victory in Japan was another few months' away, and for those who had survived the Shoah, where were they to return to, where could they live? And there was the unimaginable waiting for news of relatives and friends. Fascism had not yet been defeated – political violence, deportations and persecution were to continue under the Stalinist regime beyond the end of the Second World war.

Today, as we mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day, we call to mind the words of King George VI, spoken on VE Day in 1945: 'Let us remember those who will not come back... let us remember the men in all the services, and the women in all the services, who have laid down their lives. We have come to the end of our tribulation and they are not with us at the moment of our rejoicing.'

In this country and other parts of Europe, VE Day was a brief and joyous glimmer of hope before the toil took place of rebuilding decimated cities, economic confidence and international trust and friendship.

From our Archives

Some members will have been present for the VE Day service held at the LJS in 1975 to mark the 30th anniversary of VE Day. Here is one of the special readings, kindly supplied by Rita Adler, who was LJS Chairman at the time.

May it be Your will that war and bloodshed shall vanish from the earth, and that a great and glorious peace may reign in all the world. Let all who dwell on earth perceive and understand the basic truth, that we have not come into this world for strife and discord, hatred and envy, greed and bloodshed, but that we have come into this world only to know and understand You, who are to be praised for ever.

Recollections of VE Day

Here are some of the memories of members of our community who experienced this momentous day 75 years ago.

Jo Kessler had come to England on a Kindertransport in December 1938, having been sponsored, along with Ann Kirk and one other young girl, by the LJS. At the end of the war, Jo had been staying with her friend Valerie in Wiltshire but the two girls came to London to stay with Jo's father, who, having initially been interned as an enemy alien on arriving in the UK, then joined the Peace Corps.

On 8 May 1945 a 16-year-old Jo, Valerie and Jo's father all decided to join the crowd outside Buckingham Palace.

Jo recounts the occasion: *We took the Underground from West Hampstead to Trafalgar Square, and made our way up the crowded Mall to Buckingham Palace. It was very exciting. We were packed very close together. It got darker and darker - there was no street lighting in those days - and then suddenly the lights went on and Buckingham Palace was lit up. The crowd got very excited, and the shouting started: 'WE WANT THE KING! WE WANT THE KING!' And all of a sudden, it became quiet, the lights shone on the balcony, and the doors opened - and there were the King and Queen, joined by the two princesses. Then the Queen turned round, held out her hand, and brought Churchill out on the balcony. The crowd cheered and cheered; the party on the balcony waved and waved. Several times they all went inside, but the crowd cheered even louder - and again they came out. This procedure went on for quite some time; but finally the lights went out completely, and we all knew it had come to an end.*



Jo Kessler, aged 16, in 1945

Jo had somehow become separated from her father and friend during the journey home, but they all got back safely. Jo tells us: *And slowly, slowly, we realised that we had participated in a most wonderful occasion. We had indeed become a part of history.*

Valerie Gaynor, also a teenager and still at school, similarly celebrated VE Day standing with the vast crowds by the railings in front of Buckingham Palace with her cousin. She had been evacuated to the USA but returned to London in the autumn of 1942. She recalls her thoughts: *I was pleased that we would not be going into our air raid shelter in the garden at night and listening for flying bombs, and that the blackout would be finished and the street lights would be on after dark. And I was relieved that my uncles and cousin would be returning safely: Malcolm from the RAF, stationed in Cairo and with whom I corresponded; John, a doctor in the Royal Navy; and Arthur who was in the Army and had fought in Italy.*



Valerie Gaynor as a teenager c 1947

Although **Joan Salter** had come from mainland Europe to the USA having survived for three years under Nazi occupation with its terrible effects on her family, she had been too young for this to be part of her consciousness. She recalls VE Day as a five-year-old at Primary school in a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: *We all had small American flags to wave and stood outside to cheer. The whole atmosphere was jingoistic: a celebration of God Bless America for having won the war.*

On VE Day a 19-year-old **Bob Kirk** was stationed in the cliff-top camp of St Audries in Somerset, just coming to the end of his Stage 1 artillery training. On 8 May, everybody, including those at the much larger Doniford camp, was allowed out into Watchet, some four miles away. Bob explains: *Six of us drew the short straw and were detailed to act as town picket - a sort of military police without any real powers. Whilst everyone else had to walk, the town picket had a truck. All in all, everything went off well - good-natured but of course boisterous. By the time we were due to return to St. Audries, everybody was quite well oiled, and some of the squaddies commandeered our truck. As many as were able piled in, and off they went, leaving the rest, including us six, to trudge back the four miles. We were not best pleased; nor did we appreciate the rocketing we got for allowing the truck to be purloined!*

Sue Lawton was 15 in 1945 and on VE Day recalls her whole school being involved in doing the conga in the house and grounds of the estate they had been evacuated to. Meanwhile, a nine-year-old **Bryan Diamond** remembers going to a park in the evening to see fireworks, and **Alice Lovell**, at her boarding school in Oxford, learned a new word that day: 'bunting'! An 18-year-old **Michael Nathan**, on leave from his naval work for VE Day, admits he set off to the Hammersmith Palais hoping to meet a girl!

VE Day was specially marked in large bold ink in the diary belonging to the mother of **Rita Adler**. The diary entry for Tuesday 8 May also notes that Rita had a friend and his mother for tea at the family home in St John's Wood Terrace to which they had recently returned. Three days after the afternoon tea visit, Rita's mother's diary reads: 'Shelter removed; geraniums arrived'. We can imagine how that signalled life was changing.



Joan Salter, the youngest child in the front, in a group of children in the care of the Red Cross, Lisbon, being evacuated to the USA in 1943



Bob Kirk, aged 19, in army uniform in 1945



An 18-year-old Michael Nathan in his naval uniform in 1945



The Learning Circle

Adult education classes at the LJS

Shavuot term classes

Tuesday morning and evening classes run until 14 July. *Shabbat* morning classes run until 4 July.

Please note that while the LJS building is closed, all classes are taught via Zoom. Please check with your teacher for any changes to classes. *Shalom LJS* also provides up-to-date information.

New students are very welcome to join classes. Please register your interest with Debi Penhey, Education Coordinator at education@ljs.org who will help you choose the right level of Hebrew if you are interested in a language class.

TUESDAY MORNINGS 11.15am-12.30pm

TUESDAY TEXTS

This friendly group is led by our rabbis and other guest tutors. We study biblical and rabbinic texts, modern poetry and short stories, and enjoy sessions on Jewish art and music. The starting point is always a text or painting, whether ancient or modern, but the class is based around discussion on a variety of different topics. New students are always welcome.

TUESDAY EVENINGS 7.00-8.00pm CLASSICAL HEBREW AT ALL LEVELS

Absolute Beginners Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

A new course for people who don't know their *Alef* from their *Bet*, and who would like to learn Hebrew from scratch. No prior knowledge is needed. You will be learning in a fun and interactive way with a native Israeli. The course will focus on reading skills and offer a basic understanding of how Hebrew is used both in

the liturgy and in spoken Hebrew. This class will take you step by step into the wonderful world of Hebrew with skill and confidence.

Classical and Prayer-Book Hebrew for Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

Have you tried to get your head around Hebrew letters for years and never quite achieved success? If so, join this fun and supportive class where we use a tried-and-tested method to get you reading faster than you thought possible. Beginning with Jonathan Romain's *Signs and Wonders*, we move on to a taste of grammar, liturgy and the Bible.

Next Steps in Prayer-Book Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Sally Gold

This class will help you to improve your understanding and confidence in prayer-book Hebrew. At the same time we will be learning the Hebrew of the *Tanakh* (Bible). You will be on the path towards greater enjoyment and participation in synagogue services. We practise reading simple Hebrew, building your reading skills and knowledge of vocabulary and grammar at an unhurried pace.

Reading the Psalms in Hebrew

Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright

The Psalms are intensely personal songs of praise, lament and yearning. Many are familiar to us – 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...'; 'I will lift up mine eyes to the hills...'. Some are read or sung in our Friday evening, *Shabbat* morning or festival liturgies. But how are they constructed, how do they sound in Hebrew, and what are they really saying? Join a class for Hebrew readers (at any pace that is comfortable for you) which will help you with your reading and understanding, and open up one of the most beautiful books in the Bible in its original language.

TUESDAY EVENINGS 8.00-9.15pm

Exploring Judaism

Tutor: Rabbi Igor Zinkov

Exploring Judaism is for people, including non-Jewish family members, who wish to know more about Judaism or who would like to brush up on their Hebrew knowledge. It is also an essential programme of instruction for people choosing Judaism by conversion. Class members are encouraged to read the materials made available 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. Resources can be found on: www.ljsexploringjudiasm.wordpress.com

Exploring Judaism *Shavuot* term

2 June

Synagogue and Home; Home Rituals and Prayers (including *kashrut*, *mezuzah*, *tallit* and *tefillin*)

9 June

Different forms of Judaism

16 June

Who is a Jew?

23 June

Humankind in Jewish Thought

30 June

17 *Tammuz*, 3 Weeks, *Tisha B'Av*

7 July

Ask the Rabbi

14 July

Siyyum/End of Year Celebration

SHABBAT MORNINGS

Beginners' Hebrew 10.00am - 10.45am

Tutor: Naomi Brightwell

This class uses Jonathan Romain's *Signs and Wonders* to help absolute beginners decode Hebrew. Classes include a little bit of grammar and vocabulary, the structure of the liturgy, plenty of off-topic conversations on Jewish food, and anything else that helps us have fun while learning. No previous knowledge is required. Former students have even gone on to lead *Shabbat* morning services!

Moving Up in Hebrew 9.00am - 9.45am

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

The aim of this class is to allow students to begin to understand the Hebrew prayers and songs used in services. Those joining the class will need basic reading skills, and we will spend some time each week increasing reading fluency. We will look at the basics of Hebrew grammar using the textbook *Prayer Book Hebrew the Easy Way* (available for purchase £27.00). We will build up your vocabulary and there will be five words a week to learn. We will also start learning how to write Hebrew letters using simplified versions of the block letters we use in the *Siddur*.

Inspiring Hebrew Texts 9.00am - 9.45am

Tutor: Nitza Spiro

The aim of this class is to allow students who have knowledge of reading to explore different Hebrew texts which they will come across in synagogue services on *Shabbatot* and festivals – from the morning blessings of *Tefillah* to the Books of Ruth and Esther, and much more. The class will work on increasing fluency in reading, but at the same time we will also explore the historical, ethical, philosophical and ideological messages of the texts.

Modern Jewish Scholars 9.45am - 10.45am

Facilitator: Michael Romain

This term we will be looking at the writings of modern (20th century onwards) Jewish scholars. Our rabbis and other contributors will choose their own subjects which include, among others, Lily Montagu, Rabbi Regina Jonas, Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, and our own scholar in residence, Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton. We welcome new members to the class. If you would like more information, please contact Michael Romain: romain@netgates.co.uk

Hebrew and Yiddish lessons with Spiro Ark



For details of lesson times and charges, please visit www.spiroark.org/classes or contact Spiro Ark on 020 7794 4655 or at: education@spiroark.org

Full details of all LJS adult education courses can be found in The Learning Circle brochure: download your copy from www.ljs.org and click on Learning.

The (Mis)adventures of a Rabbi

LJS News reports on a story told to a rapt online congregation...



During the *Erev Shabbat* service sermon on 10 April, Rabbi Alexandra Wright confessed to having felt somewhat unnerved by her first online service two weeks previously. She had been parachuted into a world in which new technology was the only way in which services could be conducted. Rabbi Alex knew she had to lead the service whilst manipulating and co-ordinating various devices. There was plenty of scope for things to go wrong...

That first online *Erev Shabbat* service, two weeks earlier, had therefore been a daunting experience for her, and one which made her recall her first – somewhat improbable – job as a researcher for a company that specialised in buying and selling metals for its clients in the futures market. One day, a new addition to the office had appeared. It was one of the early computers, the size of an electric keyboard, and altogether terrifying. Rabbi Alex had had to steel herself and learn how to input data from various sources into this computer, which would then spew forth documents indicating the predictive prices of various metals over the next three, six or nine months.

And so it was that forty years on from that first job, having pursued in the interim a somewhat unrelated professional path, she found herself embarking on that first online service, feeling similarly unnerved by her computer and her computer skills.

Rabbi Alex revealed to us the full drama of that first online service. Apparently, at the point when Rabbi Igor was in the middle of his sermon and Rabbi Alex was about to take the Zoom *Kiddush*, her doorbell had rung. This was not in the script; and anyway, who would be calling on a Friday night? The police, as it turned out.

During the service Alex had indeed heard a huge din going on outside but had kept focussed on the job in hand. What she hadn't realised at the time was that four men were escaping through her garden from a neighbouring house they'd just burgled, bashing down both sides of her garden fences in the process – hence the huge din – then making off in a getaway car, having tried to run over a police officer in the process.

Not wanting to let LJS congregants down, Rabbi Alex explained to whoever was ringing her doorbell that she was very sorry but that she was in the middle of taking an online religious service. When she did emerge from the Zoom *Kiddush*, during which she had been chatting and kindly enquiring after everyone's wellbeing, she noticed that the police officers who had presumably rung her doorbell (and perhaps been a bit non-plussed by her response) were now in her garden. It was only at this point, the service and *Kiddush* safely over, that Rabbi Alex learned what had been going on and how the police were now desperately trying to track down the burglars.

But here's the thing: even after being told of the high drama that had been playing out in her own back garden, this apparently unnerved our Senior Rabbi nowhere near as much as the stress of getting to grips with new technology – the very technology that she had found so disconcerting in her first job forty years previously, and which, lo and behold, was confronting her all over again in this new world of online services. It's all been quite an adventure.

Rimon Corner

Our new way of learning

Teaching virtually at *Rimon* - who would have thought? Once we had overcome the initial trials and tribulations of ensuring Zoom worked properly, children knowing where the mute button was, and ensuring everyone had a pencil, in a way I have never felt more connected with the children.

There is a buzzing atmosphere on Saturday mornings. Following a sign language version of the *Shema*, taught by Rabbi Elana, I have been able to teach my children and also their siblings whom I had not previously met, and watch on as they view YouTube clips, listen to songs, paint, stick, take quizzes, discuss and even cook. Whatever is possible in the classroom has been made possible virtually too: Hebrew lessons through flash cards, and songs, with children learning to put their hands up virtually. Whether it be listening to our Hebrew teacher, Leah, talk about life in the Israeli Army, mashing chickpeas and tahina together for hummus, or listening to a reading of a story with great engagement - the *Rimon* teachers have managed to do it through a screen.

Each session finishes with the coming together as a whole community to show off what we have done, and I have been inspired by the amazing things accomplished with the simple use of pens, pencils, paper and lots of recycling! Children finish the morning greeting each other *Shabbat Shalom* with a smile and a wave, and week after week they come back ready to engage in new learning over the online world, fuelling their Jewish identities.

Rosie Cohen



Blue and white artwork by Ariana Malbon-Arranitakis (above) and Beatrice and Ari Cohen (below, left to right) in celebration of Israel's birthday

We wish these young members of the LJS a very happy birthday in June

Ela Behr
Charles Boizard
Daniel Brightwell
Rachel Brooks
Hannah Cohen
Finlo Cowley
Alfred Davidson
Niamh Eisenberg
Michael Falk
Lia Grant
Celia Hou Kernkraut
Estella Levi-French

Tommaso Levy
Hannah Mautner
Kurt Mautner
Antonia Moore
Romilly Morrison
Mia Ohana-Samput
Samuel Salas
Lihu Salomon-Bar
Alma Sharabi
Gabriel Tuvey
Nuala Tyler
Ida Wiesenfeld

Singing for the Mind – now online!

How could we run a singing session for people with dementia on Zoom? Judith Silver led a team of song leaders and volunteers to try it out. There could be no singing aloud together – the sound



is confusing – but instead we experimented with call and response songs between two of the leaders, with everyone joining in at home with their microphones mute. We also tried out part songs, pre-recorded by the leaders, so we could sing the part we chose.

We wondered if it would be confusing to see the various faces on the screen but it seemed to work, and were pleased to be able to smile, wave and do actions.

We depend on the carers to set up Zoom and give participants support. These online versions we're now running have the advantage of allowing family members the chance to see what their relatives do when they come to the LJS normally. We are particularly grateful to the carers in care homes who are stepping in to help.

At the end of the sessions we go into breakout rooms for a quiet chat with just a few people - for those who still have the energy!

Judith Diamond

The Legacy of Anne Frank

To mark *Yom Ha-Shoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day), we had the privilege of hearing Gillian Walnes Perry MBE, Honorary Vice President of the Anne Frank Trust UK, speak about the legacy of Anne Frank. The fascinating illustrated talk and Q & A session followed by prayers can still be viewed on the LJS YouTube channel. Gillian covered not only the story of Anne and her family, in particular highlighting the life of her father, Otto, but also outlined the remarkable initiatives of the Anne Frank Trust with its worldwide education programmes. Teenagers from Sri Lanka to Brazil, from South Africa to the UK, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, are trained to be Anne Frank 'ambassadors', sharing her story and its important message of tolerance.

Final copy date for the July/August issue of *LJS News* is Monday 8 June.
Copy and ideas should be emailed to: newsletter@ljs.org

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liberal judaism

The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

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