

May 2020  
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## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

# LJS NEWS



### Pesach celebrations

Many LJS families celebrated Seder Night using Zoom technology to be connected with family and friends, ensuring our traditions could continue in these times of coronavirus.

The LJS offered us opportunities for celebration and reflection. An online service, which we viewed on YouTube, took place on the first morning of *Pesach*, followed by a Zoom *Kiddush* when everyone had the opportunity to greet each other on screen and then break into small chat rooms to have more in-depth conversations.

The Zoom Communal *Seder* on the second night (*pictured*) was a great success. The feedback has been heart-warming, with those taking part telling us it was a very special experience.

On the last evening of *Pesach*, members took part in a Zoom event called *The Song of Hope*, sharing readings and musical performances. The last day on 15 April was marked by an online service which included the chanting of Moses' *Song of the Sea* (Exodus 15) followed by a study session.

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# Message from the Editor



Dear Members and Friends of the LJS,

I would like to send you my warmest good wishes in these distressing and uncertain times. We are all facing adversity, some grievously so, and are

discovering ways of dealing with our changed circumstances. I feel sure you share my gratitude to the LJS and admiration for the way it has adapted with great speed to a world in which technology necessarily plays a key role.

This newsletter has to be in online form only for the time being as we are unable to print and post it out. I am keenly aware that this makes it inaccessible for some members, and truly regret

this, but I encourage you, where possible, to help such members by printing off some pages and/or perhaps reading sections out aloud to them.

You'll see that the content of the newsletter remains largely unchanged, the main difference being that details of Forthcoming and Community Events aren't included as they are now best conveyed through the weekly *Shalom LJS* email or direct to participants.

The designer, Maggie Tingle, and I hope you enjoy this edition, and that it plays its part in fostering the wonderful community spirit which seems to me has strengthened during this current crisis.

Judith King

A handwritten signature of Judith King in black ink.

## Bereavements

We extend our sympathy to those who mourn:

**Gerald Butler** father of Laura and Maria

**Helena Fineman** aunt of Laura and Maria

**Roy Gluckstein** husband of Penny and father of Amanda, Emma and Simon

**Britta Lamberg** aunt of Stephen and Christopher

**David Lazarus** husband of Gaby, father of Micah and Lily, son of Berta and Leon, and brother of Andrew and John

**Yakov Paul** husband of Suzanne and father of Marilyn, Sandra and Debbie

**Robert Weston** husband of Lydia and father of Louise, Nicola and Marcus

We also extend our sympathy to:

Ergun Arican and his family on the death of Ergun's father **Mehmet Emirzade**

Susannah Alexander and her family on the death of Susannah's cousin **Janet Alexander**

Leanda Englander and her family on the death of Leanda's mother **Pamela Kroll**

Karen Newman and her family on the death of Karen's stepfather **Denis Kent**

Gary Lane and Josie Lane and their family on the death of Gary's father **Allan Lane**

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

Tributes to David Lazarus and Yakov Paul, our former Music Director, will appear in future editions of *LJS News*.

## The LJS 2020 AGM and Council Elections

This year's AGM will be held on Wednesday 24 June. Our guest speaker will be Gillian Merron, Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. At the AGM the LJS membership will confirm the election of members standing for a second term and new members to the LJS Council.

Details of Council nominations, which must be submitted by 9.00am on Monday 4 May, are available in *Shalom LJS*, or you can email [execdirector@ljs.org](mailto:execdirector@ljs.org).

## Shabbat and Festival services: May to early June

Friday evening services are at 6.45pm. *Shabbat* morning services are at 11.00am unless otherwise stated. All our services are currently online only 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	
<b>Friday 1 May</b>	Igor Zinkov	
<b>Shabbat 2 May</b> <i>Acharey-Mot/Kedoshim</i>	Alexandra Wright	
<b>Friday 8 May</b>	Alexandra Wright	
<b>Shabbat 9 May</b> <i>Emor</i>	'When the guns fell silent': shared memories by members of the congregation 75 years ago on VE Day 1945	8 May marks the 75th anniversary of VE Day, and at this service we invite members of the congregation to share their own memories or memories of parents or grandparents of that day when the Second World War came to an end in Europe.
<b>Friday 15 May</b>	Igor Zinkov	
<b>Shabbat 16 May</b> <i>B'Har-B'Chukkotay</i>	Igor Zinkov	
<b>Friday 22 May</b>  <b>Shabbat 23 May</b> <i>B'Midbar</i>	Rabbi Margaret Jacobi Rabbi Janet Burden  René Pfertzel Rebecca Birk Igor Zinkov	This weekend is the Liberal Judaism (LJ) Biennial 'At Home' and we are invited to join the Biennial services, details of which are being made available in <i>Shalom LJS</i> and the LJ website, where timings will be provided. Rabbi René Pfertzel is delivering the sermon at the <i>Shabbat</i> morning service.
<b>Thursday 28 May</b> <i>Erev Shavuot</i>	-	Please see below
<b>Friday 29 May</b> <b>1st day of Shavuot</b>	-	Please see below
<b>Friday 29 May</b> <b>Erev 2nd day Shavuot</b>	Igor Zinkov	Owing to the exigences of the present time, we are observing <i>Shavuot</i> on the second day of the festival which falls on <i>Shabbat</i> . We invite you to join us for our <i>Tikkun Leyl Shavuot</i> . More details about the programme will be available in <i>Shalom LJS</i> .
<b>Shabbat 30 May</b> <b>2nd day Shavuot</b>	Alexandra Wright	This is a full festival morning service for <i>Shavuot</i> with the reading of the Ten Commandments.
<b>Friday 5 June</b>	Alexandra Wright	
<b>Shabbat 6 June</b> <i>B'ha'a lot'cha</i>	Alexandra Wright	We celebrate Bob and Ann Kirk's 70th wedding anniversary and Bob's 95th birthday.

# Council Report

*'Whenever the cloud was lifted from the tabernacle, the Israelites moved forward...'*

(Exodus 40:36)



We the Jewish people, on our journey through history, have had at our centre our core beliefs; these have always been with us, but the way we have practised our faith has not been static. Judaism has never stood still; we have constantly adapted

as we have met new challenges, while, at the same time, retaining our underlying principles and ethics. During the present situation, we are again adjusting our way of Jewish life to meet a particular crisis, while still adhering to that which makes us progressive Jews. Our synagogue community has become an online organisation with services, learning, meetings and conversations all happening over the internet.

In April, the LJS Council, for the first time, met using the ubiquitous 'Zoom': all of us in our own homes, but still able, like the rest of the synagogue, to function and move forward. We began by reminding ourselves of one of the synagogue's principal values: 'The LJS values all purposeful activity that is designed to repair and heal the world.' This statement seems very appropriate to the work we are needing to do during the coronavirus pandemic.

Our meeting was an opportunity to update Trustees on all that has been in place to ensure that the LJS community continues to be connected with one another and to receive the support everyone needs, spiritually, intellectually, socially and emotionally. What is being achieved is truly amazing and we should take pride in our very strong sense of community which is seeing us through this time. There is an enormous team of

volunteers working to support everyone; they are led by Aviva Shafritz, our Community Care Co-ordinator. The rabbis are providing new and creative *shabbat* and festival services, enhanced by music from our choir. Education programmes have continued ceaselessly, from those for the children in the Nursery School, to those for adults, and including children in *Rimon*, our religion school, now operating twice a week. One of the Nursery School parents wrote to the Head Teacher, 'I wanted to thank you for everything you have done during this difficult time, including your support at the very beginning to providing such lovely materials from the teachers...'

What is incredible about all this is that everything is online and is exciting. It is underpinned by the LJS staff who have devoted many additional hours to ensure this community continues to flourish during the lockdown.

Judaism teaches us that we are a chosen people, chosen for a task, to look outside ourselves to improving the conditions of the wider world. As I noted earlier, it is one of the core values of the LJS, to 'repair and heal the world'. Council heard that this is in the forefront of people's minds. The Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families, for example, has found ways of helping those people who rely on the support of the monthly events which we normally run, but cannot at the moment.

The Council meeting took place after the first three weeks of restrictions. It reassured everyone that the LJS has assembled a complete online community that is developing and moving forward; it holds us together. The Trustees thanked everyone involved, staff and the volunteer team, for what is being accomplished. As one person at the meeting commented, 'It takes my breath away'.

*Sue Head, Chairman of Council*

## The First Zoom *Shabbat* morning *Kiddush* at the LJS

On *Shabbat* 28 March the morning service was live-streamed and followed by our first ever online *Kiddush* delivered via Zoom. Although using Zoom has now become second nature to most of us, for many people, participating in this first Zoom *Kiddush* was a new and slightly scary experience as we all searched our screens for the 'mute' control and 'gallery view'. Although we were muted during the blessings to avoid total cacophony, we subsequently had the opportunity to speak with each other, and Rabbi Igor put us into small chat rooms so we could converse in small groups, resulting in people meeting up with old friends, and also making new ones – something readily done in our strange new world. We even discovered some benefits of this technology: people with mobility issues could access the occasion; and people from overseas were able to join us. We even had the pleasure of glimpsing some pets, which prompted the idea of holding a special *Shabbat* with Pets' *Kiddush*! (Look out for the report on this in the June newsletter.)

The photo on the right, showing some of the people attending this first ever Zoom *Kiddush*, is definitely one for the LJS archives.



## Working in the LJS Archives – a call for volunteers!

The LJS archive collection gives us a picture of the beginning of the Liberal Movement in Britain to the present day. Our past archivists have collected a full array of material which we are now categorising, cleaning and accessioning so that they are in a retrievable state for use.

The material within the archives fall into three categories: corporate papers such as Council Meeting minutes and AGM reports dating back to the very first years of the 1910s; sermons and

education materials, including sermons from Rabbi Israel Mattuck and educational publications by Rabbi John Rayner and Rabbi David Goldberg; records of the work of our community ranging from material which demonstrates how the LJS offered support in the early days to other Liberal synagogues in Britain, to full sets of *LJS News* right from the start. These are all part of our valuable and fascinating collection.

We need both financial and human resources for our work – the latter including cataloguers and conservators, and people to work with our digital repository to rehouse material for prosperity. We have old photographs badly in need of restoration as they are literally falling apart. If anyone wishes to join the team to safeguard our relatively short but nevertheless significant history, please get in touch with me at [cinde.lee@gmail.com](mailto:cinde.lee@gmail.com)/07886 777876. For those with some spare time during this period of lockdown, please know that you can work from home uploading files into our web repository. I will be delighted to give assistance.



The construction of the original LJS building at 28 St John's Wood Road in the early 1920s

*Cinde Lee (LJS Archivist)*



# The Zoom Communal Seder at the LJS

Who would have guessed last *Pesach* that our next communal *Seder* would be via Zoom – a communication tool which most of us at that time were totally unaware of? And so it was that on the evening of Thursday 9 April well over a hundred guests joined in what was a truly special *Seder* night, and certainly one which was different from all other *Sedarim* any of us can remember.

Rabbi Alexandra Wright and Rabbi Igor Zinkov led the *Seder* using a beautifully illustrated *Haggadah*, the pages of which appeared on our screens together with a ‘gallery view’ of participants. There was music-making, with Rabbi Igor playing his guitar, and songs sung by him and Rabbi Alex. During the course of the *Seder*, various people were invited to read different sections, and there were dramatic interludes, devised by Rabbi Alex, for specially invited guests ranging from Abraham and Jeremiah to the Heavenly Voice and Pharaoh, although, if the truth be told, their voices had an uncanny familiarity with certain members of our community. The Four Questions were sweetly sung by two of our younger participants, Dean and Lyla Cumerlato, with the help of the singing and guitar-playing of Caroline Hagard. Elijah did his best to make an appearance, but was sadly locked in a waiting room, unable to turn on either the audio or video...

After Rabbi Alex supposedly hid the *Afikoman*, we were all wondering how exactly anyone would be able to find it. Rabbi Igor had come up with an ingenious solution. On screen we could

all see an image of a garage with lots going on (pictured below) and within it, if you looked hard enough, was indeed the virtual *Afikoman* he had cunningly positioned within it. Using a grid system, we could identify its location, typing this into Zoom’s ‘chat’ mechanism. Several people were winners, and they have been duly promised chocolates at a later date!

During the *Seder*, time was allocated at 8.00pm to go to our doors and windows to applaud NHS staff and all key workers. There was also a half-hour break to have our meal. Rabbi Igor put us into smaller chat rooms for this if we wanted, and it was a delightful opportunity to catch up with other guests and compare meal choices! (It has to be said, some of us were missing the delicious *Pesach* recipes of our usual Communal *Seder* caterer, Helena Miller...)

During most of the *Seder*, Rabbi Igor had wisely ‘muted’ participants so the readings could be clearly heard. However, he ‘unmuted’ us as we leaned to the left to drink our four cups of wine and say ‘*l’chaim*’ to each other. He also ‘unmuted’ us for Rabbi Alex’s rendition of ‘*Chad Gadya*’ when we were invited to make various sounds to represent what was going on in the text. The farmyard noises were relatively straightforward, though trying to make the sound of water and fire was more challenging... Suffice to say we responded with raucous enthusiasm.

The final part of the service was most poignant, and we were invited to go to a website to add our own words to convey our hopes for ‘Next year in Jerusalem! Next year in a world redeemed!’ – in other words, to offer an expression of how next year might bring us closer to an ideal world.

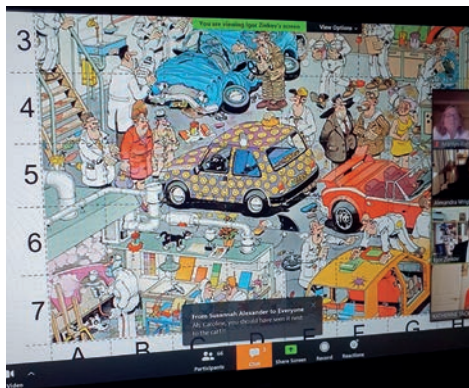


Photo sent in by Marilyn Rixhon showing the picture within which the *Afikoman* was hidden

And so ended a very special *Seder*, certainly one to remember, and one which created a wonderful sense of belonging. Although the evening was enjoyable and fun, it had at its core the important messages within the *Haggadah*, and we did not lose sight of the harsh reality of a world stricken with a deadly virus.

Our heartfelt thanks go to everyone involved in the planning, those who made all the practical arrangements, as well as everyone who led and participated in the service. Thanks are due, too, to the many guests who sent in some marvellous photos of the occasion. Although there are alas too many to print here, please know that they are all appreciated, and will be stored for posterity in the LJS archives for a time when we will look back at this period and be able to reflect on how we responded to it.



Photo sent in by Lou Chumchum



Photo sent in by Dimitar Zahariev



Photo sent in by Yvonne Tobias, who also sent in our cover photo



Photo sent in by Ann and Bob Kirk



Photo sent in by Felix Tsapir

# The tradition of eating dairy on *Shavuot*

In her seminal publication, *The Book of Jewish Food*, the cookbook writer and cultural anthropologist, Claudia Roden, explains the tradition of eating dairy food on the festival of *Shavuot*.

*'By ancient tradition, a dairy meal is eaten on the first day. It is attributed to the Biblical quotation 'And He gave us this land flowing with milk and honey', and to the legend that Jews did not have time to slaughter animals and kosher the meat after leaving Sinai. The specialities of Shavuot are all the usual things in their cheese or dairy versions. For the Ashkenazim, there are cheese blintzes and strudel, cheese kreplach, lokshen pudding with cream cheese, borscht with sour cream, cheesecake and paschka. For the Sephardim, they are filas and sambousak with cheese, milk puddings like sutlach and pastries like ataif, stuffed with cheese.'*

At last year's *Shavuot* celebration at the LJS, we held our customary cheesecake competition. Despite all the marvels of the latest technology, the sharing of actual food online is yet to be invented, so our next cheesecake competition will have to wait till such time as we can gather together in person. In the meantime, however, the recipient of the first prize for last year's competition, Jeanne Solomons (*pictured*), has very kindly shared her winning lemon cheesecake recipe. Jeanne assures us it is very easy to make, so we hope that many of you will be able to spend time in the kitchen following Jeanne's recipe and enjoying the results.



## Jeanne Solomons' Easy Lemon Cheesecake

100g digestive biscuits

50g butter

25g demerara sugar

225g cream cheese

150ml double cream

397g tin condensed milk

4 x 15ml spoons lemon juice

Crush the biscuits with a rolling pin. Melt the butter in a pan, add the sugar and mix in the biscuit crumbs. Mix well, turn into a deep 18cm pie plate or flan dish and press into shape around the base and sides of the dish with the back of a spoon.

Place the cream cheese in a bowl, cream until soft and beat in the cream and condensed milk.

Slowly add the lemon juice. Pour the mixture into the flan case.

Chill in the fridge for several hours. For a firmer set, the cheesecake can be frozen and then defrosted in the fridge overnight.

Garnish with a twist of lemon.





# Reflections on *Shavuot*: from Harvest Festival to *Har Sinai* (Mount Sinai)



Once upon a time, begins our *Erev Shavuot Haggadah*, our ancestors counted fifty days until the end of the grain harvest. They celebrated the Feast of Weeks, not as the day on which the *Torah* had been given at Sinai, but as a celebration of the harvest (*Chag ha-Katzir*) and the Day of the First Fruits (*Yom ha-Bikkurim*).

Unlike *Pesach* and *Sukkot*, *Shavuot* lasts not seven days, but just one day in Israel and progressive communities – two days in Masorti and Orthodox congregations. Its origins are agricultural. The harvest would start with the reaping of the barley, and after seven weeks ended with the cutting of the wheat and an occasion for a festive holiday.

How significant *Shavuot* was as a festival in its own right isn't very clear. In the Talmud it is called *Atzeret shel Pesach* – the 'concluding assembly of Passover' – and this suggests that it was a continuation and closing ceremony of the period that began with *Pesach*.

How did this festival become *Z'man Mattan Toratenu* – the Season of the Giving of our *Torah*? There is a brief reference in 2 Chronicles (15:2) to Asa, King of Judah, who gathered all the people of his kingdom together 'in the third month to enter a covenant to seek the Eternal One...' (v. 12). Was it here that the link was made between

the third month – the month we call *Sivan* – and revelation? Or it may have been later, in the Book of Jubilees which connects the story of Noah and the appearance of the rainbow (a symbol of the covenant) with *Shavuot*, commemorating the renewal of the covenant with God each year (Jubilees 6:17 ff).

After the destruction of the Temple, how was this rather neglected festival to be re-invented for an exiled and impoverished community? There were those who looked back and tried to re-imagine the ancient rituals of the bringing of the first fruits. But for others, despite the devastating losses in the wake of destruction in 70 CE, there was a determination to create a festival with its own rituals and liturgy, that would recall the giving of the *Torah* on Mount Sinai.

In a poignant rabbinic parable, the sages ask why 6<sup>th</sup> *Sivan* was chosen for that event and not immediately after the Israelites had departed from Egypt. God said, 'My children have just emerged from a time of slavery, working with clay and bricks – the bloom on their cheeks has not yet returned and they are unable to receive the *Torah* at once.' Time was needed for a recovery, just as a child needs time to recuperate from illness. The giving of the *Torah* was therefore to be 'on the third new moon after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt' (*Kohelet Rabbah* 3:11).

Emerging from Egypt and standing again at Sinai will have special significance for us all this year. If we are allowed to emerge from our homes into the sunlight and feel again the air on our cheeks, *Shavuot* will perhaps feel like a rebirth, a renewal of life; and we will listen again to that ever-present Voice in our history, speaking to us, in the words of Exodus 20:2: 'I am the Eternal One your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'

*Alexandra Wright*

# VE Day and its aftermath – a personal view

*As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day, LJS Member Peter Lantos offers his perspective on this significant date.*



VE Day on 9 May 1945 heralded the beginning of peace in Europe, but the Second World War (WWII) was far from concluded. The mushroom clouds had yet to rise over Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August respectively before Japan capitulated on 15 August 1945. When the audit of the war was drawn up, there remained little doubt that this was the bloodiest and most devastating conflict humanity had ever experienced. Whilst the exact figures are disputed, the number of those who perished is in the range of an incredible 75 million.

WWII was also different from the Great War of 1914-1918. First, it was genuinely a world conflict involving not only Europe, but also a large part of Asia, Africa and the Pacific. Second, the brakes on cruelty had been released and rules on the 'proper' conduct of war, like the original Geneva Convention of 1929, were ignored. Civilian populations became legitimate targets of mass murder and were accepted as part of warfare. Third, genocide, the annihilation of people on racial and religious grounds, was carried out on an unprecedented scale and with scientific planning. And finally, the peace established might have silenced the guns temporarily, but also sowed the seeds of further conflict. Churchill's historic speech at Westminster College, Fulton Missouri in 1946 so clearly stated: *'From Stettin in the*

*Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.'* Europe had been divided into two opposing camps, ensuring some 45 years of Cold, and on occasion not so Cold, War.

However, there were also important positive developments after the war. The United Nations had been officially established at its founding meeting in October 1945 in San Francisco. Israel was declared an independent country in 1948. The concepts of genocide and of crimes against humanity were the results of the work of two extraordinary Jewish lawyers from Lemberg, Raphael Lemkin and Hersch Lauterpacht, respectively. These concepts have become internationally accepted, but unfortunately often ignored. In 1951 six countries, France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, signed the Treaty of Paris to form the European Coal and Steel Community which later evolved into the European Common Market and then the European Union. The idea of Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, the founding fathers, was to tie these countries economically and later politically together to prevent yet another war on European soil.

VE Day found my mother and myself in a small, medieval East German village, Hillersleben. My parents and I were prisoners of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where my father died of starvation. As the British Army was approaching the camp, the Germans dispatched three trains, each carrying up to 2,000 prisoners to Theresienstadt, outside Prague. We were on one of these trains which were bombed and our escape was nothing short of miraculous. On 13 April 1945, two days before the Second British Army reached Bergen-Belsen, the 743rd Tank Battalion of the 30th Division of the 9th US Army liberated our train. They vacated a housing estate for German officers, disinfected and fed us, and brought us back to life. Since this

area became the Soviet Zone of Occupation, we were handed over to the Red Army. The transport the Russians should have provided to take us back to our homeland, Hungary, was postponed several times and my mother decided to escape. After an adventurous journey through war-torn Europe we arrived back in Hungary at the end of August 1945.

We found our family home empty, save for two oil portraits of my grandparents which no one had dared to steal, for in the small town most people knew who they were. Gradually we learned that 21 members of our family had perished in the Holocaust. My mother with one of her surviving brothers restarted the family business of producing timber for building firms, employing some 100 people. While Hungary was a relatively free democracy with a multiparty system of elections between 1945 and 1948, the Communist Party, with the help of the Red Army still in the country, gradually undermined the existing order, and the country became a one-party dictatorship at the end of 1949. We lived under Communist terror until the 1960s when everything was as bad as, or worse than, the Orwellian nightmare of 1984. I found out only recently that the Hungarian State Security had a file on me, a copy of which is now in my possession. I left Hungary in 1968 with a Wellcome Research Fellowship for one year and never returned. Only in this country, in my late 20s, could I take full charge of my own life.



Peter and his mother shortly after their return to Hungary in 1945

The reassessment and often the rewriting of the history of WWII had started even before the war ended and continues to the present day. The Soviet Union, although having undoubtedly carried the greatest burden of the war, tends to forget about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the invasion of Poland and the Katyn massacre. For the Americans the war started only with Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. French history concentrated on De Gaulle's Free French and the Resistance rather than on their shameful defeat in 1940 and years of collaboration. The Austrians were of course victims rather than enthusiastic followers of Nazism. The Poles and the Baltic States could not decide who they hated more, the Russians or the Germans, forgetting that they did not need outside oppressors to murder their fellow Jewish citizens. Even my native country has discovered recently that they were also victims of Nazism, giving little consideration to the 200,000 ill-trained and badly equipped young soldiers who were sent to their certain death on the Eastern Front to help the German war effort. Three of my uncles were frozen to death at the River Don.

It is fair to say that it was the United Kingdom with the help of the Empire who fought WWII from beginning to end. Whether this was the result of the vision, brilliance and perseverance of a single outstanding statesman is debatable; more likely that the determination of the people to fight against an evil ideology carried the day. Yet comparing the incumbents of 10 Downing Street of 1945 with those of the present day yields a sobering image which, however superficially, reflects the decline of this country during the last 75 years.

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Peter Lantos is Professor Emeritus of King's College London

He is author of *Parallel Lines: a journey from childhood to Belsen*; a novel, *Closed Horizon*, and two volumes of plays: *Stolen Lives* and *Love and Obsession*



# The Learning Circle

## Adult education classes at the LJS

### Shavuot term classes

Tuesday morning and evening classes run from 28 April to 14 July. *Shabbat* morning classes run from 25 April to 4 July.

Please note that while the LJS building is closed, all classes are taught via Zoom. Many of the classes have been taking place during half-term and holidays, so please check this as well as class times with your teacher and/or *Shalom LJS*.

New students are very welcome to join classes. Please register your interest with Debi Penhey, Education Coordinator at [education@ljs.org](mailto: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**

This new course is 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. Please email [education@ljs.org](mailto:education@ljs.org) for details and the link.

#### 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](http://www.ljsexploringjudiasm.wordpress.com)

### Exploring Judaism *Shavuot* term

**28 April**

Israel – People and Land

**5 May**

Messiah and Messianic Age

**12 May**

Conversion

**19 May**

Exploring *Shavuot*

**26 May**

No class – half-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

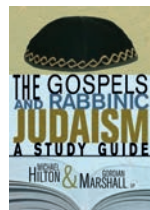
This term we will be looking at the writings of modern (20th century onwards) Jewish scholars. Our rabbis and other contributors will choose their own subjects which include, among others, Lily Montagu, Rabbi Regina Jonas, Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, and our own scholar in residence, Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton.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

## Our special Tuesday evening short course continues this month

The LJS in conjunction with the London Society for Jews and Christians:

### ***The Gospels and Rabbinic Judaism***

inspired by Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton and Father Gordian Marshall's study guide of the same title



Following on from three sessions held in March, the course continues online on three Tuesday evenings in May from 8.00pm – 9.30pm, led by experts in both Judaism and Christianity. Please note that each class is self-standing, so you can join us at any point.

Judaism and Christianity developed as sibling faiths, built on the texts of the Hebrew scriptures in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple. Come and study the rabbinic texts and compare them with the Gospel texts. In the first three sessions (in March) we saw a high degree of synergy between the Jewish and Christian texts; in the second set of three sessions in May there are some sharp contrasts.

**5 May: *Shabbat* Observance** with Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton and Rev. Patrick Morrow

**12 May: Divorce:** with Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton and Rev. Dr Anders Bergquist

**19 May: Who can forgive?** with Rabbi Alexandra Wright and Rev. Kristina Andréasson

*The course is free to LJS Members and Friends, and to LSJC Members; £10.00 per session to Non-Members.*

*Texts from the book will be provided on your screen as the book cannot currently be sent out.*

To register, please email [education@ljs.org](mailto:education@ljs.org) or call 020 7432 1284.

## Hebrew and Yiddish lessons with Spiro Ark



For details of lesson times and charges, please visit [www.spiroark.org/classes](http://www.spiroark.org/classes) or contact Spiro Ark on 020 7794 4655 or at: [education@spiroark.org](mailto: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](http://www.ljs.org) and click on Learning.

## Understanding the fate of the Uyghurs in China

**Monday 4 May 7.30pm – 8.45pm**

Please join us for an online event when the LJS together with René Cassin holds an evening with members of the Uyghur community here in the UK. We will listen to their story and find out what we can do to draw attention to the one million Muslims in China who have been robbed of their freedom. Further details are available in *Shalom LJS*.

## Remembering VE Day on *Shabbat* 9 May

**Where were you on 8 May 1945?**

**What are your memories of VE Day?**

*Were you in the army? Or at home? Were you still at school? What did it mean for you if you had come to this country as a refugee?*

As you will see from the services list on page 3, we plan to mark the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe at our *Shabbat* morning service on 9 May by listening to memories recalled by our own members at the LJS. Perhaps you have memories shared by older family members who lived through VE Day and would like to share them with the congregation. If you would like to speak for a few minutes at the online service, please contact Rabbi Alexandra Wright at [a.wright@ljs.org](mailto:a.wright@ljs.org). You may also wish to write about your memories, in which case please send them to Judith King at [newsletter@ljs.org](mailto:newsletter@ljs.org) by 4 May for possible inclusion in the June newsletter.

# Rimon Corner

## Rimon Re-Invented

The *Rimon* community has continued to share in Jewish learning in fun and engaging ways while the building has been closed. While meeting up on Zoom is not the same as being together in our building, the students and teachers alike are making the most of this situation.

*Rimon* is meeting twice a week, on *Shabbat* and Thursday mornings. While children are not in school, we decided to add Thursday as an additional day of learning with two options every week - one for younger and one for older children. *Shabbat* starts with *Tefillah* with the whole school. During our first week we had 65 students learn the sign language for the *Shema* – an inspiring sight. The students are then split into five break-out rooms so they can connect with their classmates and engage in age-specific learning.



Dean Cumerlato decorates a window with frogs

## *We wish these young members of the LJS a very happy birthday in May*

Benjamin Allen	Sydney Johnson
Zachary Benson	Theo Knapp
Nora Bielawski	Roxy Lang
Nina Bluestone	Seth Lefebvre Sell
Vaughn Conway	Olivia Moore
Elliott De Winter	Cecily Newman
Leo Delijani	Eva Ruiz-Daum
Lorcan Eisenberg	Ari Salomon-Bar
Amelia Gale	Shira Salomon-Bar
Dalia Gelfer	Charlie Segal-Knowles
Sophia Grade	Adrien Tahar
Ella Jackson-Drexler	



Jacques Sellier's vibrant frogs

The teachers have, as ever, been highly creative during these sessions. As you can see from the photo below, Susannah Alexander taught her young teenagers how to bake *matzah* at home. Holly Grainger reports that her son Charlie was even motivated to make more *matzah* – and show his brother how to do it! Rosie Cohen led a session for the under-8s on making frog wall hangings (see other photos) for the Passover Seder.

In these uncertain times it is comforting to see the young people of our community coming together and demonstrating their resilience and strength of spirit.

*Elana Dellal*



Charlie Grainger's bonanza *matzah*-making session

# Our Communal Baby Blessing

At the *Shabbat* morning service on 14 March – which was the last service to take place in the LJS Sanctuary before the lockdown – we held our Communal Baby Blessing service. Ten children and babies were each given their chosen Hebrew name followed by their own special biblical verse. This happy occasion was beautifully captured by our photographer, Anna Dilphy.



l-r: Ellis Simons; Jacques Sellier; Alexander, Edward and Charles Boizard



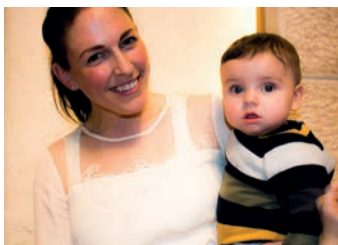
Isaac Kane with his father Joel



Mischa Gostyn with her parents Emma and Adam



Sacha Laloum with his parents Benjamin and Vanessa



Solomon Kane with his mother Gina



Jacques Sellier kissing his little brother Louis, held by their mother Julie, with Solomon Kane in the background

## 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  
Email [ljs@ljs.org](mailto:ljs@ljs.org)  
Website [www.ljs.org](http://www.ljs.org)

### Senior Rabbi

Alexandra Wright

### Rabbis

Elana Dellal  
Igor Zinkov

### Scholar in Residence

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Rabbi Elana Dellal

### Nursery Head Teacher

Caroline Villiers

### Community Care Co-ordinator

Aviva Shafritz

### Director of Music

Cathy Heller Jones

### Organist

Tim Farrell

### LJS News Team

Editor: Judith King  
Artwork: Tingle Design

### In case of bereavement:

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

Final copy date for the June issue of *LJS News* is Monday 4 May.  
Copy and ideas should be emailed to: [newsletter@ljs.org](mailto:newsletter@ljs.org)

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liberal judaism