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Tishri/Cheshvan 5781

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS
NEWS



Dramatisation of the Book of Jonah

Top l-r: Janet Suzman (Voice of God); Rabbi Igor Zinkov (technical producer and sound); Lily Carr (Sailor 2); Roy Ackerman (King) **2nd row l-r:** Nicky Margolis (Captain); Felicity Davidson (Narrator 1); Joshua Higgott (Jonah); Caroline Catz (Narrator 2) **3rd row l-r:** Esta Charkham (casting and director); Rabbi Michael Hilton (Old Jonah); Rabbi Alexandra Wright; Jake Lovick (Sailor 1)

The LJS has shown tremendous innovation and creativity during this era of coronavirus, and never more so than with the inspired idea of Rabbi Alexandra Wright to produce a dramatisation of The Book of Jonah recorded for the afternoon of Yom Kippur.

The wonderful cast, chosen and directed with aplomb by Esta Charkham, brought the Biblical text of the Jonah story to life most compellingly. The words of God, as spoken by Dame Janet Suzman, carried potency, and the intensity of the story was enhanced by an atmospheric sound world of music and special effects.

Interspersed within the story were thought-provoking reflections written by Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton, and delivered by him as an older Jonah, looking back on his life experiences with the wisdom of age.

This rendition of the Jonah story will long stay in the minds of all of us who watched it. Heartfelt thanks to everyone involved.

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Raise your voice in song – and lift your spirits!

Singing for the Mind is just the thing for those with memory loss, or early or later dementia. Now on Zoom, it may be different, but is as enjoyable as ever.

You may be worried about your memory, or know someone, a friend or a relative, whom you want to help. Singing for the Mind is a programme designed to do exactly that, and everyone who comes – whether with memory loss, or supporting someone – has a great time. Once they start, most people do not want to stop because it is such fun.

You may need to provide your own tea and biscuits now, but we still find the chance to chat and dance as well as sing. And on Zoom you can sing out of tune and no-one will know.

We can have more participants while on Zoom, and are happy to welcome visitors. Come to the Zoom session, even alone, and join us for a session to see what it is all about. Or recommend it to a friend, Jewish or not. To find out more contact Judith Diamond at: sfm@ljs.org

Judith Diamond

Thank you!

Our **Emergency Appeal on behalf of the Drop-In for Asylum Seekers** exceeded its target of £7,500 to raise over £9,000. These funds enabled us to increase the value of the monthly contribution we have been sending to the families who, pre Covid-19, regularly attended the Drop-In. We do not yet know when meetings will be able to resume, safety remaining our chief concern. However, the feedback we have had from families who rely on our support for necessities such as food and toiletries has been incredibly positive. The additional funds make a huge difference.

We are most grateful for the generosity and kindness of our community for their support of this appeal. You have provided a lifeline to families at a time of great need.

Bereavements

We extend our sympathy to those who mourn:

Colin Leventhal, husband of Trea, and father of Amelia, Matilda and Kate.

We also extend our sympathy to the family and close friends of former LJS member **Eddy Pinto**, who died in Greece.

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

The Lionel Blue Lecture

7.45pm – 9.00pm on Thursday 22 October

The speaker at this lecture, held under the auspices of Leo Baeck College, is **Trevor Phillips OBE**, writer, television producer and Founding Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

All are welcome. Tickets are £35.00. To book, please visit: <https://lbc.ac.uk/lionel-blue-lecture/> Further details will be supplied after registration.



Shabbat and Festival services: October to early November



Rabbis Alexandra Wright and Igor Zinkov prepare for the first live-stream service from the Sanctuary with the new recording equipment in operation.

Friday evening services are at 6.45pm. Shabbat morning services are at 11.00am. Times of Festival services are specified below, and as they fall on Shabbat, adhere to our normal service times.

At the time of going to press, we are planning for 'hybrid' services: a safe and limited number of people may be admitted to the Sanctuary; others will be able to access the services online. Our return to the synagogue will be based on government guidance. Please see Shalom LJS for further information nearer the time or telephone the LJS on 020 7286 5181. You will probably need to book your place in the synagogue from week to week.

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 2 October Erev Sukkot at 6.45 pm	Alexandra Wright	
Shabbat 3 October Sukkot at 11.00 am	Igor Zinkov	
Friday 9 October Erev Shemini-Atzeret/ Simchat Torah at 6.45 pm	The Rabbis	
Shabbat 10 October Shemini-Atzeret/Simchat Torah at 11.00 am	The Rabbis	
Friday 16 October	Igor Zinkov	
Shabbat 17 October <i>Bereshit</i>	Alexandra Wright	Bar Mitzvah Leo Mendelsohn
Friday 23 October	Alexandra Wright	
Shabbat 24 October <i>Noach</i>	Council	Council Shabbat – Service led by the new Council of the LJS
Friday 30 October	Igor Zinkov	
Shabbat 31 October <i>Lech L'cha</i>	Alexandra Wright	
Friday 6 November	Alexandra Wright	Co-led by Bar Mitzvah Charlie Grainger
Shabbat 7 November <i>Vayera</i>	Alexandra Wright	Bar Mitzvah Charlie Grainger Remembrance Shabbat

Council Report

'You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you at liberty to abstain from it' (Mishnah Avot 2:16)



In September, Council met for the first time after their summer break. Meetings continue to be on Zoom, but we are hoping that, later in the year, some of us may be able to meet in the LJS building. For the time being we are concentrating on putting in place

hybrid services from the sanctuary and not considering how to reorganise our meetings.

Council was pleased to receive updates on the work completed in the summer. Most significant has been the updating of the technology in the sanctuary and the installation of a new fibre cable to enable the upgrade of the Wi-Fi throughout the building. This will give us the opportunity for people to participate in services and in learning both at home and in person. By the time you read this, you will have had the chance to see the live streaming from the sanctuary.

Council was also informed that the Nursery School had just reopened. The good news is that we are anticipating that all classes will be full. During the autumn, while we are not needing the Montefiore Hall for other activities, the Nursery will use the area as a classroom, giving the children lots of space and air.

This term, adult learning and Rimom Religion School will meet online. We hope that from January Rimom will be able to return to the building. We are keeping this under review because the social-distancing rules are challenging to implement in our multi-use building.

I should like to reassure you that, before any consideration of having people in the building, risk assessments have been undertaken for

each activity; for example, services with limited numbers, office staff working, children attending the Nursery. Alongside these, appropriate access plans have been developed. Council thanked Trevor Haynes for taking on the role of ensuring our Covid compliance. Trustees were also pleased to hear that the caretakers have completed their online Covid compliance training course.

The LJS is forward thinking and Council received a presentation on a new Social Media Policy (involving Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram) which had been drafted by Anna Dilphy and Rabbi Igor Zinkov. The purpose of these ways of communication is to encourage members who do not engage with emails, Shalom LJS or hard-copy post. Often these are younger people, such as students or young working adults. The content of what is disseminated by social media will not need to be rewritten, but will reuse articles and information we already have. Our hope is to engage our existing membership, particularly those who are not currently active, and to attract new members. Council was enthusiastic about this initiative and grateful to Anna and Igor for beginning the process.

Two decisions were taken at the Council meeting. One was to approve Igor as a new Marriage Secretary, joining the existing team. The second was to agree the suggestion that our newsletter would be produced bi-monthly, instead of the current ten months a year. Covid-19 has changed the way we communicate with our membership, and Shalom LJS now plays a greater role. *LJS News* is no longer the only way people are informed of forthcoming events and has become much more of a magazine. Council agreed this and will review it in a year's time.

Sue Head,
Chairman of Council

‘Rejoice and be joyous on Simchat Torah’

As a teenager I sang in the Members’ Choir of the LJS, and one of the highlights of the year was singing on Erev Simchat Torah – the last of the festivals that fall in the month of *Tishri*. That was when we crowded into what was called the ‘new synagogue’, built in the 1960s next to the old synagogue, to accommodate smaller congregations. The chairs were arranged in a large central block so that the scrolls could be processed from the bimah around the congregation. I can’t remember there being very much room to dance with the scrolls; I suspect our *hakkafot* (processions) were slightly more decorous in those days.

The festivals of *Tishri* take us on an extraordinary spiritual journey from the solemnity of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and their themes of penitence and forgiveness, to thanksgiving and rejoicing. Sukkot is often a relief – to stand for a few moments each day in the autumn sunshine of my Sukkah, contemplating the gentle farewell to summer, before the unrestrained celebration of Simchat Torah that brings this season to an end.

Simchat Torah, as a festival in its own right – rather than the second day of Shemini Atzeret (the Eighth Day of Assembly), as it is designated in the Talmud – developed only around the 10th century, when the one-year cycle for the reading of the Torah (as opposed to the triennial cycle) gained wide acceptance.

Many different customs characterise Simchat Torah, in addition to processing with all the scrolls seven times around the synagogue, both on the eve and morning of the festival. Often the whole congregation is called up in groups to say the blessings over the reading of the final verses of Deuteronomy and the opening verses of Genesis; children under the age of Bar and Bat Mitzvah are also called to the Torah and blessed with words from Jacob’s blessing to his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48:16). The Torah readers for the day are designated as *Chatan* or *Kallat Torah* and *Bereshit* – the bridegroom or bride of the Torah and Beginning, symbolising the joy that we derive from the Torah.

A 17th century woodcut from Holland portrays a man and a woman distributing sweetmeats to six children at their feet, all trying to catch as many as possible. In our own community, the *Chatan* and *Kallah* sometimes provide a huge tin of sweets or apples for the congregation, the apples often stuck on the tops of flags which are waved during the processions.

As I write, Rabbi Igor and I are still working out how to celebrate Simchat Torah without handling the scrolls or passing them from one person to another; how to choreograph a joyous dance without linking arms; how to bring joy and gladness into our community as we head into the autumn and anticipate a winter of social restrictions and isolation.

Perhaps the pandemic, in its own way, can bring these festivals into our homes and our hearts more closely as we build our own Sukkot and watch burnished leaves fall from the trees, the animals harvest their food for the winter, and we find light and joy in our virtual study of Torah with each other.

Alexandra Wright



Rabbis dancing at Simchat Torah in Jerusalem, 1992 (oil on board), Holzhandler, Dora (1928-2015) / Private Collection / © Estate of Dora Holzhandler / Bridgeman Images

The LJS Yom Kippur Appeal 5781/2020: our chosen charities

The wife of the Rabbi of Ropschitz said to him, 'Your prayer was lengthy today. Have you succeeded in bringing it about that the rich should be more generous in their gifts to the poor?' The Rabbi replied, 'Half of my prayer I have accomplished. The poor are willing to accept them.' (Machzor Ruach Chadashah, page 220)

Consideration is given to many charities during the process of deciding on the beneficiaries of our Yom Kippur Appeal. The choice is difficult as there are many we would like to support. We believe that the three that have been selected this year are truly deserving causes, especially as two of them have even greater need for support during this time of coronavirus. As is our custom, we have selected a UK charity, supporting disadvantaged young people in our neighbourhood, an Anglo-Jewish charity supporting our progressive Rabbis of the future, and an Israeli charity, supporting those who are impoverished and marginalised. Here we tell you about each of them.



St Mary's Centre for Youthwork

Founded in 2006, the specific aim of St Mary's Centre for Youthwork (SMC) is to reduce violence and save lives among the most disadvantaged young people of Camden and surrounding areas through one-to-one mentoring and counselling, mediation of violent situations, prison visits and amnesties of weapons.

Knife crime and gang warfare are prevalent in Camden, and this year, with the lockdown and

the closing of schools, SMC has had to shift its work to video counselling and telephone calls. Most worryingly, many young people, already challenged in education, have become even more disengaged from learning and more isolated from the support structures that may have been offered in school or college.

We are intent on supporting SMC's 'Education in Covid Project' which is designed to help young people, living under intolerable pressures of home and violence and with low self-esteem, to return to education and training in person. Last year, it helped 16 young people into employment and a further 21 into education and training. Its purpose is to foster aspirations for those who have been left behind on so many different levels.

Young people who have received support from SMC have described to us how the team there gave them the confidence to turn their lives around.

A budget of £14,205 will cover online course fees and youthworker time, which has been increased 50% to provide more support. The project will run for one year from January 2021.

It has never been more important to support a charity which has the scope to transform lives.

<https://www.smcyouthwork.org/about>

Leo Baeck College

Founded in 1956, Leo Baeck College is the oldest rabbinic seminary in Europe. It has trained nearly 200 Rabbis and over 90 educators, who are now serving in communities throughout the world. The LJS directly benefits from the rigorous academic and vocational training offered at Leo Baeck. The majority of our Rabbis are graduates and this year, second year Student Rabbi Matt Turchin is doing his apprenticeship with us



The ordination of four new Rabbis who studied at Leo Baeck College. This took place at the LJS in July 2020.

and has taken on the role of Rimmon Religion School Lead. In addition, one of our members is about to begin an MA in Jewish Educational Leadership. Rabbinic training is rich and diverse and encompasses many disciplines.

Within Liberal Judaism, a number of Rabbis have retired or are making plans for their retirement. Without Rabbis, communities – however strong their membership and commitment – often flounder. Rabbis are spiritual leaders, they are pastoral care givers, they are teachers and social activists. Covid-19 has placed inordinate pressure on congregations who are relying on their Rabbis to keep them together in virtual spaces while they cannot meet in person.

Our donation will go towards core funding for the College, ensuring that present and new intakes of students receive the teaching and support that will enable them to become progressive Jewish leaders in the future. As we have seen in the last few months, Judaism must remain dynamic and highly creative if we are to maintain the loyalty of our congregations. Rabbis and teachers are trained to help our communities to deepen and expand our spiritual and intellectual journeys.

<https://lbc.ac.uk>

Rabbis for Human Rights

Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), our Israeli charity, is the rabbinic voice for human rights and social justice in Israel and works in three main areas: 1) social justice and economic rights, working with vulnerable and disadvantaged communities to access rights and to advocate for a proper policy for those who have been made unemployed or whose

businesses have collapsed because of the pandemic; 2) Human Rights Education and Interreligious Activities working with Israeli young adults in pre-army programmes and with the general public with regard to interreligious activities; 3) protecting the agricultural rights of the Palestinian population, helping them to access their land in the West Bank.

Covid-19 has exacerbated unemployment levels and poverty in Israel; 25% of children in Israel suffer from food insecurity and there are close to 841,000 who live in poverty. Families and individuals, often find the system of accessing their rights and entitlements complicated and impossible to manage.

For ten years, RHR operated a social justice walk-in clinic which dealt with 1,400 cases per year of individuals and families facing poverty and food insecurity.

Coronavirus forced the closure of the clinic and RHR established a hotline, recruited volunteers, including lawyers, social workers and students, and together with RHR staff, fielded 500 calls.

The Centre will address itself to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised who are left out of any kind of recovery from the economic consequences of the pandemic. In order to sustain this project of economic and social justice, RHR is looking to raise £15,940 towards direct activity costs of its social justice department. <https://rhr.org.il/eng>



A full version of the Yom Kippur Appeal for 5781/2020 can be viewed on: www.ljs.org

Thank you, as always, for your generosity in supporting others at this very special time of the year.

Reading *Kohelet* - the Book of Ecclesiastes - at Sukkot

LJS member Bernie Bulkin investigates the message of Kohelet, and why it is read during the festival of Sukkot.



According to Ashkenazi Jewish custom, the biblical book *Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes) is read in the synagogue during the festival of Sukkot. *Kohelet* is one of the five *megillot*, or scroll books of the Bible, along with Esther, Song of

Songs, Ruth and Lamentations. Each of these is read on a holiday – Esther of course at Purim, Song of Songs, being about Spring, at Passover, Ruth at Shavuot, for many reasons, including its harvest theme, and Lamentations at Tisha B'Av, a day of mourning, because it is the saddest book in the Bible. There is some rationale for each of these choices, but there is not much rationale for reading *Kohelet* at Sukkot. One view is that once there was a liturgical spot for each of the other *megillot*, Sukkot was left for *Kohelet*.

Of course commentators through the ages have advanced other reasons. Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe, writing in Poland in about 1600, said that we read *Kohelet* on Sukkot because another name for Sukkot is '*z'man simchateinu*', the season of our rejoicing, and *Kohelet* urges people to rejoice in their portion and not run after increased wealth. A person should enjoy what he has, Rabbi Yaffe said, interpreting *Kohelet*, because it is a gift from God. Likewise, Chabad commentators have said that another name for Sukkot is '*chag ha-asif*', the festival of ingathering, when we store our harvest for the coming year. We may find great satisfaction in seeing the fruits of our labour before us, but *Kohelet* reminds us that we must seek real satisfaction elsewhere, and that

these harvests are as transient as the Sukkah in which we will dwell.

In fact the message of *Kohelet* is far more subtle and complex than those explanations or similar ones advanced by other medieval commentators. *Kohelet* was a deep philosophical thinker, on a par with the philosophers we read and discuss from the 19th and 20th centuries – Kant, Bergson, Kierkegaard, Sartre and Camus. We do not know much about the authorship or date of the book. It begins by saying that *Kohelet* was king in Jerusalem, and the son of David – that is, the text wants us to believe that this is the writing of Solomon, known for his wisdom. Two other biblical books, Song of Songs and Proverbs, are also ascribed to Solomon. Modern biblical scholars dismiss this attribution for *Kohelet*, and would place the book much later, c. 400 BCE. The idea of Solomon as an author may have been used to justify the inclusion of Ecclesiastes in the canon, among the books we call the Tanakh or Bible, because its message is often one of scepticism and questioning of God's ways. Moreover, as *Kohelet* looks at the world, he sees many contradictions, and seems to veer between different conclusions as to what is correct behaviour.

Our knowledge of the Bible is (unduly) influenced by the King James Version translation, and for Ecclesiastes its famous opening line is 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, says the Preacher.' In using the word 'vanity' as a translation of the Hebrew word *hevel*, the meaning they wanted to convey was that what we are doing is 'in vain'. The Jewish Publication Society (JPS) translation of this same opening is 'Utter futility! – said *Kohelet* – Utter futility! All is futile.' This sentence frames the book, as it occurs again as verse 12:8, which concludes the main text of *Kohelet*, after which there is an epilogue in a different voice.



The Book of Ecclesiastes from the Biblia de Cervera, Portugal. Image © Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal

The word *hevel* occurs 38 times in the book, and it is very difficult to find a translation of it that works for each context. Indeed, the JPS uses eight different translations, including ‘amounts to nothing’, ‘nothingness’, ‘illusory’, ‘brief span’, and ‘frustration’. Others have used ‘ephemeral’, ‘fleeting’, and ‘incomprehensible’. The great modern biblical translator, Robert Alter, goes back to the literal meaning of the word, which is to describe the vaporous breath that we see for an instant on a cold day, and so translates the opening as ‘Merest breath’. While I am usually a great fan of Alter’s translations, I don’t think this one works, because the Hebrew is intending to convey a metaphorical meaning, and we need that metaphor to grasp the message of the book.

One of the greatest modern scholars of Kohelet is the American commentator, Michael V. Fox, and he argues for translating *hevel* as ‘absurd’. By this he means senseless, counter-rational (not absurd in the sense of ludicrous). This includes combinations of facts or scenarios which we would not normally call futile or

ephemeral, often with contradictions apparent between them. It is this translation which helps us to connect Kohelet to 20th century existentialist philosophers such as Camus.

Why is this? Because Kohelet explores many of the absurdities of our life, many things that even with wisdom he finds contradictory or incomprehensible. What is the point of accumulating wealth? ‘So too I loathed the wealth I was gaining under the sun. For I shall leave it to the man who succeeds me, and who knows whether he shall be wise or foolish’ (2:18-19). Kohelet rejects any idea of an afterlife, as do the existentialist philosophers exploring questions of how to find meaning in our lives. ‘Even if a man lives many years, let him enjoy himself in all of them, remembering how many the days of darkness are going to be. The only future is nothingness’ (11:7-8). And in the spirit of absurdity, he is led to questions of theodicy – that is, asking why bad things happen to good people. ‘In my own brief span of life, I have seen both these things: sometimes a good man perishes in spite of his goodness, and sometimes a wicked man endures in spite of his wickedness’ (7:15). It is remarkable, I think, that the rabbis and scholars two millennia ago felt that a book asking these – and many more – deep existential questions needed to be part of our Bible.

In the end, Kohelet is led back to God, and the conclusion of the book is ‘The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere God and all his commandments!’ (12:13). But do we, questioning everything, come to the same conclusion? Ultimately, that is why Kohelet needs to find a place in our worship, and Sukkot is as good a place as any. This beautiful and sometimes subversive book reminds us to ask tough questions of our religion and of ourselves, and to do so every year. At Sukkot we have come through the period of asking these questions at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and it is not too soon to begin again.

Bernie Bulkin

Unintended consequences

Still in the midst of these strange and challenging times, LJS members and our Rabbis share with us how this new world has brought changes in their lives - sometimes changes they hadn't expected...

On being asked about lifestyle changes, a number of people in our community spoke of a new exercise regime, sometimes bringing unforeseeable consequences. With gyms closed, **Rabbi Alexandra Wright** chose to go on a daily afternoon cycle ride. By chance her route took her past a group of protesters, demonstrating in support of the Uyghur community in China – the three million Muslims being ‘re-educated’ in concentration camps. And she found herself joining them – and plans to continue doing so whenever she can on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 6.00pm.

Mary Rossiter was surprised by her new-found interest in exercise. ‘Until lockdown I had taken little exercise apart from walking to and from my car. I have now discovered a smorgasbord of exercise videos for seniors and beginners on YouTube. Energised by daily workouts of especially cardio, balance and strength, I have developed an aura of smugness and visible biceps muscles’, Mary is pleased to report!

Samantha Kriegel says she has never walked so much in her life – not only because public transport has been off-limits but because walking and exploring by foot is one of the few consistent pleasures available during the pandemic. She tells us, ‘I have got to know my neighbourhood so much better and in a different way from before – you see things differently on foot. I am not quite brave enough (yet) to step up to biking, but I am considering it seriously in a way that I never would have pre-Covid. I want to be able to keep exploring my surroundings in this lovely, slower way.’

And **Rabbi Igor Zinkov** is also getting about on foot, but doing so at greater speed – on roller skates! Pleased to be acquiring a new skill, roller-skating is now his go-to exercise activity, and one he finds highly enjoyable and plans to continue.



Meanwhile, **Carolyn Simon**, intent on keeping up her swimming, was somewhat thwarted by the closure of her health club. When Copthall municipal pool got its act together impressively swiftly, re-opening after lockdown three weeks ahead of the health club, she decided to give it a try. Carolyn reports, ‘I discovered the pool there is airy and bright, and the staff are friendly.’ With the added benefits of plenty of parking and a monthly saving of £75.00, Carolyn decided to leave her expensive health club and is now a regular at the Copthall pool.



A different kind of exercise – housework – led **Vivien Rose** to a new world of audio. ‘A combination of spending more time cooking and cleaning at home, and needing sometimes to listen to something other

than the News has led me to explore the world of podcasts, beyond simply catching up with broadcasts I have missed’, she tells us. ‘I stumbled upon the network 1001 Short Stories and 1001 Stories for the Road where you can hear complete readings of classics such as *Tarzan of the Apes*, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, *The Lost World* and many Sherlock Holmes stories in all their original, politically-incorrect glory before Hollywood and the comic books got hold of them.’ Although glad to relinquish the cleaning duties after her usual home help returned following the easing of lockdown, Vivien hopes to find time to carry on listening to these wonderful tales.

A number of people have spent more time cooking, and found themselves being more inventive than they'd imagined they could be and less fearful of improvising. During Pesach, **Sonia Leanse** was determined to make the chocolate cake from a recipe Rabbi Alex had contributed to the LJS Centenary Cookbook. She proved herself to be resourceful in overcoming a challenge that the

recipe posed. Sonia explains, 'Unable to obtain potato flour, I decided I would substitute this with fine matzo meal, and hope for the best. However, none was available, so I Googled and made my own matzo meal from matzo.' The cake was a big success and Sonia says it gave her a real feeling of accomplishment. In fact, she's altogether a more adventurous cook, now wielding a wok with confidence!



Unable to continue with her normal work in Catering and Event Management, **Shelley Salter** needed to find another outlet for her culinary talents, and launched an artisan bakery. The first week she had

orders for 18 challahs! She now produces a range of dishes for neighbours, including a very popular organic chicken soup, and has also catered for Covid medics at the Royal Free Hospital, proving herself adept at re-inventing herself according to circumstances.

A number of people say that they feel much more comfortable with using new technology, discovering that Zoom and Skype are the gateway to keeping in touch with friends and family. With the easing of lockdown, actually being physically present with those people has felt a much more special experience. **Jo Kessler** tells us how much she's enjoyed sharing memories of happy times, trying to dwell not on what's changed, but the constancy of relationships. But for some people, those visits simply aren't possible. **Stephen Owen** usually spends much of the year in India, heavily involved in education projects. He is now doing what he can as an online teacher, something he'd never previously undertaken. Members may be aware that Stephen has introduced two of his Indian friends, one Hindu and one Christian, to LJS online services, offering them a new experience, and enabling us to welcome visitors from round the world. We all hope these online guests from far and wide will continue.

Several LJS members have found they've needed to acquire new skills, or resurrect old ones. Shielding in their home in rural Suffolk, **Leanda Kroll-Englander** has had to draw on her work

as a junior doctor 33 years ago and become a phlebotomist to enable her husband Peter Englander to receive his medical treatment. Leanda has also applied her skills as a doctor to become a vet and dog groomer for their dog, Rusty.



The pandemic has led many of us to re-evaluate our lives. **Anna Dilphy** writes, 'Many people are feeling pressure to organise every room in their home, become expert chefs

or bakers, write the next King Lear or get in shape.' She feels there is an urge to over-achieve and 'for every nanosecond of our lives to be commodified and pointed toward profit and self-improvement'. Anna had originally studied at the Beaux Arts in Paris, and she tells us how, during Covid-19, 'rather than learning something new, I have rediscovered something I once knew. I retrieved my paints and brushes, and returned to the quiet joy of painting the world around me.'

And for **Hazel Summerfield**, the unintended consequence of this pandemic is something set to change her life in a more fundamental way. 'Weekends and odd weeks were all I knew of the countryside until Covid meant I followed the ancient strategy of city dwellers: when plague strikes, move to the country. I discovered the kindness of country folk. On my birthday, first a bunch of roses ascended over the garden fence, followed by a small hand, followed by a larger pair as the little girl's father raised her. No latte on my morning walks; instead, pheasants wobbling down the lane, raiding flowerbeds. I swapped pavements for footpaths. Danger came from bulls not cars. Ladies who lunch took on a new meaning as I watched calves milking their mums. During a searing May I lay admiring red kites soar, twisting their forked tails to change direction. Now this Londoner is wondering whether to call where she wandered home.'

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this article. Many thanks, too, to Anna Dilphy for the photos of the roller skates, challah (supplied by Amanda Dickinson) and paintbrushes.



The Learning Circle

Adult education classes at the LJS

Tuesday classes run until 8 December, with a break for half-term on 27 October; Shabbat morning classes run until 12 December, with a break for half-term on 24 and 31 October.

At the time of going to press, classes are being run online only, and class times relate to online classes. (Shabbat morning classes run from 9.45am- 10.45am when held in the LJS building.) The LJS website and weekly newsletter, *Shalom LJS*, give up-to-date information about classes and class times, and will provide information about when classes might re-start in the LJS building. You can also contact our Education Co-ordinator, Debi Penhey: education@ljs.org

Sukkot term classes

TUESDAY MORNINGS 11.15am-12.30pm

Tuesday Talk, Texts & Discussion

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

TUESDAY EVENINGS 5.45 – 6.45pm

Reading Joshua

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

This course aims to increase students' understanding of Biblical Hebrew. The class will read key chapters in the Book of Joshua, will discuss the interactions of the text and how it fits into the Biblical Hebrew canon. The class will study the grammatical structure of sentences as well as extend their Hebrew vocabulary. The course is suitable for those who can read Hebrew and wish to practise reading as well as discuss the meaning of the text.

TUESDAY EVENINGS 7.00 – 8.00pm

Classical and Prayer-Book Hebrew for Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

Have you tried to get your head around Hebrew letters for years and never achieved success? Or is Hebrew new and uncharted territory to you, and you need a friendly, experienced guide to walk you through your first encounters with the letters? 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.

Moving up in Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

This class is for students who completed the Absolute Beginners' Hebrew class which Dov ran during the Shavuot term. The aim of this class is to enable students to begin to understand the Hebrew prayers and songs used in services. Those joining the class will have 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 *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* (available for purchase £27.00) and will build up your vocabulary. The class will also read key Torah portions.

Gaining Confidence in Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Sally Gold

If you can read a little Hebrew, no matter how long ago or how recently, this highly supportive, informal class will help you to start reading again. Our reading from the Siddur (Prayer Book) and Bible is guided and at your own pace, with questions about the language and texts encouraged. As you gain skills and confidence, you will be on the path towards greater enjoyment and participation in synagogue services, Bible reading and the Jewish life-cycle, for which Hebrew is the key.

Reading the Book of Jonah in Hebrew

Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright

The prophet Jonah is called by God to prophesy to the Ninevites – the ‘Nazi storm-troopers of the ancient world’. From the word go, he is a man on the run, away from his homeland, his people and his God. But, of course, it’s not that easy for a man to flee from God, nor from a God who tampers with the natural world – a storm, a fish, a gourd, a worm and a driving east wind. This is a deeply satisfying book to study in Hebrew with its repetition and word-plays. This class is for Hebrew readers (at any pace that is comfortable for you) and will help you with your reading and understanding of a well-known biblical text.

TUESDAY EVENINGS 8.10 – 9.10pm

Exploring Judaism

Tutor: Rabbi Igor Zinkov

Exploring Judaism is for people, including non-Jewish family members, who wish to know more about Judaism, Jewish history and the Jewish people. It is also an essential programme of instruction for people choosing Judaism by conversion. Class members are encouraged to read materials which will be put online during the year. In addition to offering knowledge of Judaism, the course encourages practical experiences of Liberal Judaism and space for reflection within the group.

Resources can be found on:

<https://tinyurl.com/ljsexploring>

6 October: What is Judaism? Jewish Values and Beliefs Overview

13 October: Jewish History Overview

20 October: Who is a Jew?

27 October: Half-term – no class

SHABBAT MORNINGS 9.00am – 9.55am

Beginners' Hebrew

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

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!

Inspiring Hebrew Texts

Tutor: Nitza Spiro

These classes enable students to become familiar with key Biblical texts and prayers which are the bedrock of Jewish identity. Texts will be read in Hebrew but discussed in English. Students will have come across them both in synagogue and through their representation in art, music and literature. We approach the texts from historical, sociological, ethical and ideological perspectives, exploring the status of women in Jewish source material in the process.

GCSE Syllabus in Classical Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

The course aims to develop knowledge and understanding of ancient literature, values and society through the study of original texts. Students will follow the syllabus of the GCSE in Classical Hebrew, will read and understand unseen passages of Biblical Hebrew, translate text from unseen passages into English, and understand the grammatical structures of Biblical Hebrew. This course is suitable for those who can read Hebrew and have some basic Hebrew vocabulary.

Learning with Texts

Facilitator: Michael Romain

This term we will continue with looking at the writings of modern Jewish scholars. These subjects will include: Rabbi Israel Mattuck, Claude Montefiore, Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits, Rabbi Albert Friedlander and Professor Ada Rapoport-Albert. Classes will be led by Rabbis Alexandra Wright, Igor Zinkov, Michael Hilton, and Sybil Sheridan, and by lay members of the class. We welcome new students. If you would like more information please contact Michael Romain at: romain@netgates.co.uk

Announcing a new Tuesday evening short course starting in November
Tuesdays 8.15pm – 9.30pm on Zoom

Racism: Identifying it, Learning about it, Combatting it

3 November

Jewish teaching on racism

with Rabbi Alexandra Wright

‘And God created human beings in the Divine Image’: How Jewish texts uphold the principle of the unity of humanity

While the Bible contains some harsh comments about certain tribes (for example, the Amalekites), overwhelmingly it teaches us not to discriminate on any grounds and to see humanity as one people, the children of One God. ‘God stamped every human being with the seal of Adam, yet not one of them is like another’ (*Mishnah, Sanhedrin* 4:5). God made us all different, unique, yet part of the unity of creation.

10 November

Jewish history of anti-racism activity

with Dr Edie Friedman (Executive Director of JCORE – the Jewish Council for Racial Equality)

17 November

Facts and figures of racism in Britain, and practical action to combat it

with Dr Edie Friedman and a colleague (to be announced)

Date to be confirmed

Report of the Board of Deputies inquiry into racism in the Jewish community

Speaker to be confirmed

Register for these sessions at education@ljs.org.

Zoom links will be emailed on the Monday before each class.

Cost: Free for LJS members and friends; £10.00 per session for non-members.

Book recommendation on the subject of racism

Chair of Education, Sarah Lasher, tells us about *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge. This is considered the essential handbook for anyone who wants to understand race relations in Britain today.

Sarah writes:

I highly recommend *Why I’m no Longer Talking to White People about Race*. The author, Reni Eddo-Lodge, is an award-winning journalist who grew up in North London around the same time as me. I listened to the audiobook while out walking during lockdown – the author reads her own work, and I found it very powerful.

I learnt a lot about Black British history, reflected on my White privilege, and saw a new perspective on feminism.

Let me share a few sentences from the book that I found particularly impactful. Even out of context, I hope they’ll have an impact on you, too.

◆ *When I was four, I asked my mum when I would turn white, because all the good people on TV were white, and all the villains were black and brown.*

◆ *In order to dismantle unjust, racist structures, we must see race. We must see who benefits from their race, who is disproportionately impacted by negative stereotypes about their race, and to who power and privilege is bestowed upon – earned or not – because of their race, their class and their gender.*

◆ *Can you be a feminist and be wilfully ignorant on racism?*

◆ *[Their racism] manifests itself in the flick of a wrist that tosses a CV in the bin because the applicant has a foreign-sounding name.*

◆ *Why don’t white people think they have a racial identity?*

I could read this book over and over and take something new each time.

Sarah Lasher

Rimon Corner



The name 'Rimon'

Some people have asked about the name of our Religion School: Rimon.

It was Dr Dov Softi who originally suggested 'Rimon' as a fitting name, and Susannah Alexander explains why it works so well:

'Rimon' means pomegranate. It's a reference to the mitzvot being as numerous as the seeds of a pomegranate. Also, a pomegranate is sweet, just like Jewish learning should be!

You may be familiar with the Rimon logo (pictured) and will now be able to add this word to your Hebrew vocabulary – you never know when it could come in handy!

Rimon teacher inset morning



New Rimon Lead, Student Rabbi Matt Turchin, describes the Rimon teacher inset morning which took place on 5 September ahead of the Stav (Autumn) term.

For the first time in the history of Rimon, our teachers and teaching assistants gathered together virtually on Saturday 5 September in preparation for the Autumn term.

The morning began looking over the updated structure for Shabbat mornings, with an explanation of the new format for online lessons. As the morning is broken up in a different way, with younger students finishing earlier and older students staying on for an additional session, Hebrew teachers will now have more availability

to split their time and serve different ability levels more effectively. This was followed by a session on safeguarding, led by our teacher and safeguarding lead, Dov Softi, who explained our new policy for safeguarding children in a virtual learning space. Sessions were also offered by Rosie Cohen on the best practices for teachers to utilise and support their teaching assistants, and by Susannah Alexander for those assistants on how best to work with their teacher and students. A session run by Debi Penhey gave teachers the opportunity to talk through the best ways to utilise the Zoom platform. We also received words of thanks and encouragement from Rabbi Alex, and from Sarah Lasher, who, as Chair of the Education Committee, explained its role.

We ended our session with a text study and a discussion of plans for the Family High Holy Day services set to take place on the mornings of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

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

Raphael Abib
Ethan Abolins-Loguiiko
Eva Abolins-Loguiiko
Freddie Albert
Edward Boizard
Eliza Davidson
Shoshana Davidson
Gideon De Winter

Harry Delew
Katie Delew
Raphael Dellal
Katherine Falk
Ruth Forster
Charlie Grainger
Michael Josefs
Lukas Klein Wassink

Freya Lefebvre Sell
Toby Levitt
Alma Munthe Sforza
Jacob Pleass
Lola Pollak
Rachel Posner
Helen Roth
Zoe Rushbrook

Andrea Schapira
Louis Sellier
Bae Shipman
Meela Shipman
Michael Sokel
Eva Spearman-Walters
Joshua Wald

Build your own Sukkah

Rabbi Alexandra Wright offers advice on building your own Sukkah

It seems doubtful this year that we will be able to squeeze into our Sukkah at the LJS, and so we invite you to construct your own Sukkot in your gardens, if you have one, on your balconies, or even an improvised Sukkah in your homes, if you don't have any outdoor space. Your Sukkah doesn't need to be elaborate. You can use the back wall of a house or garage as one of the walls, to which you can add wooden fencing or other material to create a frame. If your frame is made from metal, then you may wish to hang some waterproof fabric to create the walls. If wooden, then decorate your Sukkah with branches of leaves and other foliage. Remember you should be able to see the stars through the roof on a clear night.

In previous years, the children of Rimon have decorated the LJS Sukkah with hanging fruit and vegetables and drawings of honoured guests (usually biblical characters) and paper chains (*pictured*). If you have children, please encourage them to prepare their own decorations or to make a tiny little Sukkah out of a shoebox and to keep it visible throughout the week of Sukkot.



We will be inviting you to Zoom in on Sukkot morning from your Sukkah.

The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

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Director of Music
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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)

Oxford Three Faiths Encounter

7.30pm – 8.45pm on Monday 5 October

Our Journeys to the Holy Land: a conversation on Jewish, Christian and Muslim encounters in the Holy Land.

Imam Monawar Hussain, The Oxford Foundation
Heather-Jane Ozanne, Spirit of Peace
Rabbi Michael Hilton, Scholar in Residence, The LJS

Please register for the webinar at this link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hiHTQdE8QqWUtz7DJ3zr8A

Final copy date for the November/December issue of *LJS News* is Monday 5 October. Copy and ideas should be emailed to: newsletter@ljs.org

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