

July/August 2021
Tammuz/Av/Ellul 5781

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS NEWS



Celebrating Bob Kirk's Third Bar Mitzvah

Tradition has it that after 70 years, you start counting your age from the beginning: after a first Bar Mitzvah at 13, a second one takes place at 83 – and a third at 96! And so it was that on 5 June we celebrated Bob Kirk's third Bar Mitzvah, as well as his and Ann's 71st wedding anniversary.

Bob's Torah portion was the story of the twelve spies, of whom ten brought back an 'evil report' of the Promised Land to the Israelites still in the wilderness. As Ann related in her reading of the translation, they felt like mere grasshoppers, such were the inhabitants' giant size. Bob's thoughtful D'var Torah focused on God's later commandment to Joshua on entering the Promised Land: '*Chazak ve'ematz* – Be strong and of good courage'. He suggested that this would have been a good slogan for the Kindertransport generation as they embarked on a scary journey, hopefully as the advance party for their parents, and valid, too, for today's asylum seekers. It would also resonate for those of us still wary of the virus, as we venture forth after lockdown.

Mazal tov and thank you, Bob and Ann, for continuing to inspire us.

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Key dates for High Holy Days and Festivals in the month of Tishri

Please note that the High Holy Days and Festivals fall very early this year, and all are in September. Everyone will be contacted by email or letter about tickets and arrangements for the High Holy Days.

Erev Rosh Hashanah	6.45pm on Monday 6 September
Rosh Hashanah	10.30am on Tuesday 7 September
Shabbat Shuvah	11.00am on Saturday 11 September
Kol Nidre	7.15pm on Wednesday 15 September
Yom Kippur	10.30am on Thursday 16 September
Erev Sukkot	6.45pm on Monday 20 September
Sukkot	11.00am on Tuesday 21 September
Erev Chol Ha-Mo'ed Sukkot	6.45pm on Friday 24 September
Shabbat Chol Ha-Mo'ed Sukkot	11.00am on Saturday 25 September
Erev Simchat Torah	6.45pm on Monday 27 September
Simchat Torah	11.00am on Tuesday 28 September

Farewell to Maggie, and welcome to Nick and George

Our heartfelt thanks go to freelance designer Maggie Tingle who started working for us at the LJS four years ago, and who has designed the newsletter since the summer of 2018. In addition to her elegant designs for *LJS News*, Maggie has also designed the last three Annual Reviews, assorted other communications, and has established the LJS design guidelines and colour palette. It has been a great pleasure working with Maggie. She is leaving to pursue a different career – one which has long been of interest – as an Anna Chaplain, offering spiritual support to older people within the community, sheltered housing and in care home settings. We wish her all the very best in her new position.

We are delighted that father-and-son design team, Nick and George Newton, have agreed to take on the design of *LJS News*, and this is the first newsletter designed by them. Nick and George are highly experienced designers, and we look forward to working with them.

Community Care

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

Paper copies of the newsletter

Although the LJS is committed to an environmental policy of not using paper unless necessary, we recognise that some people would much prefer receiving a printed copy of *LJS News* rather than reading the online version. We already ensure that older members of our community and those without internet access receive printed copies, but would like to extend this option to anyone else for whom paper copies would be a benefit. Please contact LJS by emailing communitycare@ljs.org or call 020 7286 5181.

Bereavements

We extend our sympathy to those who mourn:

John Edelnand, friend of many

Frances Franklin, mother of Rodney, Donald, Ian and Flora, and sister of Peter

Susan Lawton, mother of Jenny and Trish, and sister of Elizabeth, David and the late Jenny

We also extend our sympathy to Student Rabbi and Rimon Lead Matt Turchin and his family on the death of Matt's father, **Ray Turchin**.

הַמָּקוֹם יִנַּחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׂאֵר הָאֲבֵלִים
May God comfort you and all who mourn

Shabbat Services: July and August

Friday evening services are at 6.45pm. Shabbat morning services are at 11.00am. Unless otherwise specified, either Rabbi Alexandra Wright or Rabbi Igor Zinkov will be leading the service. At the end of each service on Friday evening or Shabbat morning, online congregants are invited to join together for Zoom Kiddush.

Friday 2 July	
Shabbat 3 July <i>Pinchas</i>	
Friday 9 July	Co-led by Bar Mitzvah Raife Hockley
Shabbat 10 July ♦ <i>Mattot-Mas'ei</i>	Bar Mitzvah Raife Hockley
Friday 16 July ♦	
Shabbat 17 July <i>D'varim/Chazon</i>	Bat Mitzvah Libby Lewis
Saturday 17 July <i>Tisha B'Av (Fast of Av)</i> 8.30pm	We will mark the eve of Tisha B'Av with an online service – please see page 13. Joining instructions will be provided in Shalom LJS.
Friday 23 July	
Shabbat 24 July <i>Va'etchanan/Nachamu</i>	
Friday 30 July	
Shabbat 31 July <i>Ekev</i>	
Friday 6 August	
Shabbat 7 August <i>Re'eh</i>	Service led by Student Rabbi Matt Turchin
Friday 13 August	
Shabbat 14 August <i>Shof'tim</i>	
Friday 20 August	
Shabbat 21 August ♦ <i>Ki Tetze</i>	Aufruf: Alexandra Trebulova and David Weinberg
Friday 27 August	
Shabbat 28 August <i>Ki Tavo</i>	
Saturday 28 August 8.30 pm	Selichot service

♦ Parking alert: cricket at Lord's on this date

Following government guidelines, a safe and limited number of people can now be allowed in the building, and we invite you to join us in our beautiful Sanctuary. You can book your places by emailing ljs@ljs.org, or leave a message on 020 7286 5181 by 10.00am on each Friday for attendance at the following Shabbat services. Your place will be confirmed by email or phone message. Alternatively, you are welcome to access our services online.

Council Report

Contributing 'to the dynamic growth and development of Liberal Judaism in the UK... and beyond' (LJS Value Statement)



The LJS Council was delighted to welcome Ruth Seager, the Chair of Liberal Judaism, to a recent meeting to hear her vision for the future of Liberal Judaism and to discuss LJ's developing partnership with the LJS. She described the special status

of the LJS as the flagship synagogue of LJ and acknowledged our generosity to the movement, particularly highlighting the contribution of our Rabbis. Ruth commented on her wider role which she saw as 'building bridges' and 'strengthening relationships' with many different organisations.

Council has now completed its review of the LJS Vision and Values. Responding to the issues concerning people of today, two new value statements have been added, one highlighting the climate emergency and the LJS commitment to reducing our impact on the environment. The other is the LJS endorsement of the State of Israel's Declaration of Independence as a country based on the principles of freedom, justice, peace and equality for all its citizens. Please see page 7 for Rabbi Alexandra Wright's article which expands on the subject of our Vision and Values. The full list of the LJS value statements is published in the Annual Review and is also on our website. Your comments are welcome (please send them to ljs@ljs.org).

Also being discussed is the synagogue's ethical policy regarding its investments. This policy is reviewed by both Council and the Investment Committee to ensure that our investments are consistent with our Vision and Values. The LJS investments manager scrutinises investments in line with the policy to make certain that no company in the investment portfolio

breaches international conventions on human rights, labour ethics, care of the environment, or endorses bribery. We also monitor our investments so that they are in accordance with our vision to make the world a better place for future generations.

The discussion at Council was the beginning of the review process. There was a recognition that further work needs to be done to make the policy more appropriate to the modern world.

Lysa Schwartz, our Executive Director, provides a monthly update to Council on the renovations and improvements taking place in the building. Although many of us have not been able to attend the LJS itself over the last year, work has been ongoing to maintain it and improve its facilities; for example, we are now replacing the roof, planning phase two of renewing the heating, and installing the technology in the upstairs rooms to allow for hybrid meetings and classes.

The Council meeting in June was the last before the AGM. At this meeting Council agreed the Trustees Report and Financial Statements for 2020. A substantial amount of work goes into these documents before they are presented at the AGM. Council acknowledged the efforts by Lysa and the office staff, Peter Loble our Treasurer, and the auditors to make sure of their accuracy.

The June Council meeting was also the last for two Trustees who are standing down, having completed their second term as Trustees. One is Steve Penn, to whom we are grateful for all he has done, and fortunately for us, will continue to do, for security. The other is, as I have mentioned in a previous newsletter, Peter Loble who has been our Treasurer for several years. Council thanked Peter for his work as both the Treasurer and as an Honorary Officer, as we closed this Council year.

***Sue Head,
Chairman of Council***

Introducing Members of our Council

We continue our series in which we introduce you to members who sit on Council and play a key role in the running of the LJS.

Karen Newman



“ I had a fairly typical North London Jewish upbringing: we belonged to an Orthodox synagogue; our thrice-yearly visits serving as regular reminders as to why we didn't go more frequently – there being little to suggest

that intelligent women with inquiring minds might have a place there... Our home was kosher, and, of course, my grandmother, after whom my daughter is named, made the best chicken soup in the world, which isn't surprising, as she sold chickens in Petticoat Lane throughout the war. . .

I joined the LJS in 2003 at about the same time that my job in an international organisation for which I had worked for more than 20 years was made redundant; looking back I can see how the LJS became my community before I knew I needed one. My partner, Susan, had discovered the Jewish LGBT+ Group, which we joined hoping to find a father with whom to create the daughter we now know as Lily. Through the Group I reconnected meaningfully with my Judaism, and was introduced to the LJS by Rabbi Mark Solomon, who regularly led Group services.

What I love about the LJS is that it is uncompromising about its Judaism, serious about inclusivity, caring both within and beyond our community, and warmly welcomes people at all stages of whatever Jewish journey is most relevant to them in ways that enrich and spiritually guide and enhance that journey.

At the moment I am a Council member, Chair of the Avodah Committee, Honorary Officer with special responsibility for Human Resources, and am proud to be one of four Deputies representing the LJS at the Board of Deputies for British Jews, where I serve as a member of the Constitution Committee. ”

Chris Godbold



“ My path to the LJS was not typical. I wanted to learn more about Judaism and perhaps join a synagogue, but was uncertain whether gays would be welcomed. So Trevor (my partner of now 45 years and not Jewish) and I found

ourselves visiting the LJS during London Open House weekend. The welcome we received and the leaflet I collected convinced me that I needed to follow this through. I believe that ancestors of my father were Jewish. I was admitted in 2003 and I suppose you could say that I've never looked back.

I am deeply interested in Jewish culture and a Friend of the magazine *Jewish Renaissance*. We have travelled to many countries in search of Jewish history (as well as to inspect the trains, buses and cinemas – abiding passions!), including a memorable visit to the last synagogue in Myanmar.

After many years of LJS security (members usually expect to see me in a yellow jacket), I was persuaded to join the Council and am now an Honorary Officer, specialising in governance. This builds on the experience I gained while working for Transport for London for over 40 years, running its staff charity, as a pension trustee and a trade union representative for most of my career. Outside the LJS, I am treasurer of various organisations – notably our village hall, where I also lead on governance. We have lived in Northamptonshire for over 40 years and in Corby for over 30, and are also members of Leicester and Peterborough Liberal congregations.

I am responsible for implementing the physical arrangements which have allowed members access to LJS services during the pandemic, and look forward to the day when that task is no longer necessary. ”

A discussion on the interplay between Shavuot and Pentecost



A second Shavuot in lockdown was celebrated with two interesting talks from two very different theologians: Judith Plaskow is an American Jewish feminist theologian, whose ground-breaking work

includes *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* and an essay collection, *The Coming of Lilith*; Professor John Barton is an Anglican priest whose scholarship includes the book and Radio 4 series *A History of the Bible*.

Judith Plaskow, in conversation with Rabbi Rebecca Birk, spoke about the new rabbinic roles she hopes women rabbis can create.

In *Standing Again at Sinai*, Plaskow argues that the absence of female perspectives in Jewish history has had a negative impact on Judaism. Queen Vashti is clearly a feminist, refusing to be paraded in front of men, but other women in the Bible, such as Ruth, use their femininity to make their way in a patriarchal society.

In her midrash *The Coming of Lilith*, Plaskow considers Adam's wife Lilith as a woman wrongly punished for desiring her rightful equality with Adam. Lilith allows feminists to reimagine the traditional landscape as a place where women are considered equal to men in both the public and private spheres.

Plaskow believes that difficult texts, such as ones depicting violence towards women, should not be ignored or rewritten but used as a mirror we hold up to ourselves and ask, 'How do we go forward from here?'

Judith Plaskow was tenth out of the hundred theological scholars chosen to write to President Joe Biden during his first 100 days in office suggesting core values his presidency should

pursue. Echoing Moses, she asked him to be 'strong and resolute' combatting climate change, Covid and addressing the inequalities which Covid amplified. The custom of 100 letters, relating scriptural values to the modern world, written in the first one hundred days of a presidency was established in reaction to Trump's election.

In the Bible, 40 rather than 100 days have a mystical significance, and for Shavuot and Pentecost, 49 plus one day is the magic number.

In the third of a study series illustrating the ways in which Judaism and Christianity influenced each other's festivals, Professor John Barton and Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton compared the festivals' meanings and the 50-day periods observed around Shavuot and Pentecost. In Judaism, Shavuot was originally a harvest festival emphasising hospitality and inclusivity. Around 300 CE the Babylonian Talmud mentions Shavuot as fixed to 50 days after Passover, and links it to the giving of the Covenant on Mount Sinai. The 50 days and the new revelatory emphasis of Shavuot may have been in reaction to Pentecost, which falls 50 days after Easter which is when Christ's spirit is given to his disciples. The Holy Spirit given by Jesus serves as God's envoy extending the divine invitation of hospitality 'to Israel and all the nations'. The Gospel of Luke, like the original harvest festival, emphasises the importance of hospitality and how a society which is not inclusive is dysfunctional.

Both religions cohere around a 50-day period when the values or law are disseminated to everyone, and, crucially in Christianity, understood by everyone, as the speaking in tongues in Acts 2 emphasises.

Could the circumstances of the new American letter writing custom echo how religions form sacred numbers and agree core values which are then embedded in memory through rituals and festivals?

Hazel Summerfield

The LJS Vision and Values 2021: the addition of two new value statements



In October 1902, the Jewish Chronicle published an announcement advertising the first service of the Jewish Religious Union (JRU) – a society for Jews of all denominations that would provide special services for adults and children, as well as

lectures. It described its objective in these words:

‘To provide means for deepening the religious spirit among those members of the Jewish Community who are not in sympathy with the present Synagogue Services, or who are unable to attend them.’

Early publications by the JRU outlined beliefs about God, the soul and revelation, the duty of Jews to be ‘witnesses’ of God and of religion, and their mission to show its truth to all humanity. It addressed the subject of miracles and questions of belief and disbelief. Its mission was to stem the tide of Jewish disillusion with synagogue services and to respond to Christian Missionary Societies that were actively trying to convert recent Jewish immigrants to Christianity.

By 1909, they had published a ‘manifesto’ which was published in full in the Jewish papers. Claude Montefiore listed the teachings which the JRU shared with Orthodox Jews and then went on to list some of the new concepts. These included: the difference in the concept of revelation and the infallibility and authority of the Torah, ‘acceptance of free enquiry and critical investigation’, the conception that religion is ‘progressive’, retaining Jewish festivals, but being open to ‘charge them with new meaning’, and the significance of observance of Shabbat.

The establishment of the LJS in 1911 ensured a commitment to universalism and a certain degree of inclusivity and gender equality, particularly in the education of boys and girls. Social welfare and concern with social justice issues defined the LJS from its inception. Early attitudes to Zionism among

Liberal Jews were restrained and unreceptive, but that changed with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the Six-Day War in 1967.

In 2012 we drafted our ‘Vision and Values’ which was presented as a dynamic document, outlining our aspirational objectives and eight values, under the headings of: *Kehillah* (Community), *Avodah* (Worship), *Torah* (Learning), *Gemilut Chasadim* (Deeds of Loving Kindness), *Tikkun Olam* (Repairing the World), *Chayyim* (Life Cycle Ceremonies), *Din v’Cheshbon* (Responsible Governance) and *Yahadut Mitkademet* (Progressive Judaism).

The document was brought to the Council again in March this year for consideration and update. Certain minor amendments were agreed, as well as two additional values: *Bal Tashchit* (Do not destroy) and *Bakkeish Shalom* (Seek Peace).

Bal Tashchit, (a rabbinically derived law prohibiting the destruction of the natural environment and waste), recognises the climate emergency that is engulfing the world and our community’s aspiration to reduce our own impact on the planet. As part of EcoSynagogue which regularly provides an audit of our synagogue’s ‘green’ credentials, the LJS strives to increase awareness and to reduce our consumption of environmental resources.

The second value, *Bakkeish Shalom* (Seek Peace), is an endorsement of the State of Israel’s Declaration of Independence which affirms the principles of ‘liberty, justice and peace’ and ‘the full social and political equality of all its own citizens’.

In addition to our weekly prayer for Israel which affirms our attachment to the land of our ancestors and our commitment to equality, justice and peace, the LJS provides a platform for many organisations, NGOs and charities which work collaboratively for peace, here and in Israel.

In the current climate of tension on the borders of Israel and Palestine, it felt important to underline our support for Israel and all its citizens, and to cooperate with its earnest endeavours to seek peace. It brings the number of our values to ten.

Rabbi Alexandra Wright

Thinking like an outsider

LJS Member David Davidson tells us about his experience of learning to think like an outsider following his decision to choose Judaism.



Since the process started in the 1970s when I was in my 20s, I have to go back to that time to put everything in context. Britain was a completely different country and much less

multi-racial and multi-faith. If you were white Protestant and born into the middle classes, your position was comfortably assured, as it had been for several generations. Almost all my school teachers and fellow pupils were from a similar background. I went to boarding schools close to my rural home. My parents and other elder relatives had spent much time in and were very knowledgeable about India. There were then many British families of similar background, army or otherwise. One absorbed very conventional thought processes.

Religiously the choices were Protestant, Catholic (unlikely to be encouraged) or agnostic or atheist. I had little awareness of contemporary Jews and Judaism save that I do remember being thrilled that Israel won the Six-Day War, because it was a democracy, it was one in the eye for the Soviets, and because I had been very thoroughly educated in what I referred to as the Old Testament. I had encountered no antisemitism in any environment until I went to live in London to do my legal training at the age of 22, having been at Edinburgh University and had a gap year travelling round Australia, Central and North America. I had had minimal contact with Jewish people apart from the fact one of the cooks in a West Australian mining camp was an American Jew. My travels had begun to loosen the shackles of conventionality.

I certainly remember the widespread, odd, tacit, casual antisemitism in the early years of my legal training. I met my wife in this period, and she and her family, who knew a good number of my circle of relations, began my education about Jews and Judaism. I vividly recall shortly after I qualified going to swear an affidavit at a very respectable solicitor's office in St Martin's Le Grand, and telling a senior practitioner aged around 50 that I wished to swear on the Old Testament. He dug one out of his desk and pointed apologetically to words saying it was for Jewish people.

In the 1970s the continued existence of the State of Israel was far less assured. The very first time I attended a Yom Kippur service was in 1973. By that evening Israel was hanging on for survival for dear life. When in the following days I said to a work colleague, who remains a very good friend and who was in no way antisemitic, that Britain had a duty to enable Israel to survive as it was a democracy, he replied emphatically to the contrary. I was amazed. What had the Second World War been for? Of course the Yom Kippur War triggered a lot of debate about Jewish dual loyalties. This issue, which is in reality a non-issue, was something I thought very deeply about and made me open to questioning establishment stances.

More and more books were coming out in the 70s and 80s by people who had survived the Holocaust, and I read them avidly. I have long felt that it was a phase of history that undermines the Christian theology that God could intervene in human affairs by sending His own Son into the world. Those books imbued me with the enduring strength of Jewish values and culture.

Families that have lived in Britain for centuries have difficulty in grasping how fortunate they are in living in a society that has only twice had to contemplate military invasion, that is, during the Napoleonic wars and in the Second World War, and then only briefly. I had a Polish Catholic

assistant who emphatically agreed with me on this.

I have frequently worked with Jewish barristers in family finance/children litigation, and such work involved analysing clients and families of many different backgrounds, albeit the majority having been British born and often privately educated. One has to understand one's clients to serve them well, and it is easier to do so with an extra, acquired pair of social spectacles as well as those I had been born and brought up with. My closest friends are those I have worked with professionally, and the British legal profession is a wonderful blend of old establishment, rising

thrusting old British working class, old and new Jewish families, and now Caribbean and Asian immigrant families who work and get along very well together.

I feel being Jewish has given me an extra layer, and the concentration on home ceremonies within Judaism, including Kiddush, Seder, Rosh Hashanah and Sukkot, adds so much. It does not detract from earlier loves like the rural world of Thomas Hardy, of which vestiges still remained in my village upbringing; nor does it detract from my identification with my Scottish roots and Scottish literature. But the experience of acquiring this extra layer has been enriching.

Social Action Report

The work of Social Action is based on the ethical principles of Judaism, and the notion of Tikkun Olam, the injunction to repair the world.

Social Action looks outward to the wider community and society, and the social issues that we feel able to engage with and to raise consciousness about.



In the words of my favourite Jewish poet, Marge Piercy, from her poem *The Task Never Completed*:

‘... Incomplete, becoming, the world
was given to us to fix, to complete
and we’ve almost worn it out ...’

While it’s been difficult to carry out hands-on social action with the pandemic in the background these past 15 months, we have remained stalwart supporters of Sufra, a local food bank.

We have joined in campaigns to raise consciousness and to lobby governments to protest against the mistreatment and persecution of the Uyghur community in China.



Closer to home, we held a four-part series in conjunction with JCORE (the Jewish Council for Racial Equality): *Racism: Identifying it, Learning about it, Combatting it* with distinguished LJS and guest speakers. This featured Jewish involvement in civil rights movements, the past historic year for Black Lives Matter, and the Board of Deputies’ Commission investigation into racial inclusivity in the Jewish community.

We held Unconscious Bias training for staff, Committee Chairs and Council members, and we are working toward the creation of an LJS policy on Diversity. In celebration of the diversity within the LJS community, and our roots around the world, Social Action has created the LJS Heritage Trail, which you can view and (if you’re a Member or Friend) join in, on our website www.ljs.org.

As members of EcoSynagogue we are working our way through an environmental audit of our building and practices, really crucial as we approach a fuller return to the building, and we have supported the Climate Emergency Declaration.

The areas we involve ourselves in are wide-ranging, and participation from anyone in the community is very welcome.

Harriett Goldenberg,
Chair of Social Action

The LJS as a Video Game!



Not all readers of this newsletter will be completely *au fait* with video games, but these games are very much part of the experience of our younger members. One such person is 13-year-old Michael Josefs. Michael is something of a technical wizard, and with the help of his younger brother, Max, he's developed an extraordinary Minecraft game.

If you're not familiar with Minecraft, it's a video game in which players explore a 3D world with infinite terrain, and can discover and extract raw materials, craft tools and items, and build structures. Players can cooperate with or compete against other players in the same world, and they can acquire resources to build the world.

During the various coronavirus lockdowns, Michael tells us that he had more time than usual, and explained how he wanted to do something that other people can enjoy, and that he would enjoy creating. So at a time when a lot of people were baking banana bread or finally rationalising their sock drawer, Michael, inspired by YouTubers who have been creating major cities, brick for brick, stone for stone, set to with Minecraft to make a replica of the LJS! This seems like a particularly appropriate choice as we celebrate 30 years of our rebuilt synagogue.

During the pandemic, Michael, like many of us, really missed the synagogue building, and all the memories it holds. For him it is a particularly beautiful building, with wonderful structures and shapes, and he appreciates the thinking behind all aspects of it, including the lighting. In fact, he explains how the building is so special to him that even if it weren't his synagogue, he'd still want to build it in Minecraft on account of its beauty.

The process of the Minecraft build is complex and still ongoing, and Michael has put a lot of thought into features he wanted to include. For those not familiar with the term 'parkour', this is a training discipline in which those taking





part aim to get from one point to another in a complex environment and without any equipment to assist them – so a sort of obstacle race. It involves seeing one's environment in a new way, and imagining potential for navigating it by movement around, across, through, over and under its features. Minecraft offers great potential for creating parkour courses, and in his LJS Minecraft project, Michael has included an invisible parkour course which is very difficult to complete, and will eventually lead to the roof of the building. On your way up, Michael explains how you get to the top of a tree, and tells us what you find there – the first of many 'Easter eggs'; the term for hidden items left by game developers for industrious players to find during gameplay. Michael had the ingenious idea of renaming Easter eggs 'Afikoman'! Michael promises many more surprises in the final build.

Something else which Michael has planned is a 'spawn point', which is the term for the location in a Minecraft world where a player or entity is generated at the beginning of gameplay or after an untimely virtual death. In Michael's LJS Minecraft, the spawn point where you start the game is across from the building façade. You apparently turn around and there is a car with a sign that says, 'Please take a yarmulke/kippah'. So you take it, and then you can put it on. It goes into your inventory, which is the pop-up menu that

the player uses to manage items they carry. In this instance the yarmulke/kippah is termed 'armour'!

Michael explains how he is also making things functional, so you can interact with them whilst playing the game. For example, the gate by the security door opens. He's also making a billboard at the front, so if there's anything anyone specifically wants to have written there, Michael would be delighted to hear from you so he can create a nice message of welcome there. Michael would also be pleased if anyone wants to contribute by submitting photos of anything in the building, such as offices and classrooms, and he will do his best to incorporate these.

Once the project is completed, Michael will be giving a download link to anyone with Minecraft. His aim is to make it as lifelike as possible, and it could even be used for synagogue tours.

As we mark 30 years of our new building, how wonderful that Michael is in the process of creating a virtual environment in celebration of a space which is so special for us all. Mazal tov to Michael for his initiative, creativity and technical skills – and making the most of lockdown!



Many thanks to Student Rabbi and Rimon Lead Matt Turchin who interviewed Michael Josefs about this project. If you'd like to contribute to the project or find out more, please contact Matt Turchin at rimon@mattturchin.com.

The LJS Time Capsule

In celebration of the 30th anniversary of being in our rebuilt synagogue, we report on the LJS Time Capsule.



The placing of the LJS Time Capsule. Back row l-r: Sir Peter Lazarus and Rabbi Dr David Goldberg. Middle row l-r: Janet Suzman, Rabbi Alexandra Wright and Richard Moross. Front row l-r: Rita Adler and Sharon Moross (now Lewison).

It was in April 1988 that Prue Baker, project co-ordinator of the new building, noted in her diary that Council had agreed to lay a time capsule behind the portico wall of the new synagogue. Prue rejected the offer from a high precision firm in Crawley who quoted £1,375.00 plus VAT, who wanted to know very specifically how long the capsule was to last: 'Would you require 250 or 300 years, Madam?' Prue was asked. Prue got a more attractive quote through a source provided by Tesco's...

In July 1989, Prue asked the Religion School children what they would put in the time capsule. They were apparently full of ideas, not always items which could realistically fit in a capsule described to them as the size of a giant can of baked beans. They were also eager to send a message to the future, and this was to be the reward for whoever compiled the best list – and won by Richard Moross.

The adult membership was apparently slower to offer suggestions, but towards the end of that summer a varied list emerged, strongly focusing on the writings of Progressive Judaism and the

LJS. In September 1989, from over 150 suggested items, Rabbi John Rayner and Brenda Nathanson, then Chairman of the Education Committee, selected around 20 to be included in the capsule.

On the advice of Professor Colin Goodman and Dr Anthony Roe, the contents were wrapped in acid-free archival paper. Silica gel crystals were packed in to ensure dryness, and the capsule was sealed with a Viton seal.

Among the items was a message to the unknown finder from Rabbi Dr David Goldberg. Here is an excerpt from that message:

Because Judaism is the oldest of the western faiths, and 'a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past' (Psalm 90:4), we are confident that the religion of Abraham, Moses, the Biblical prophets, the Talmudic rabbis and the medieval scholars, will have survived to be known by your generation. What we won't live to know, but can only guess at, is the configuration that Judaism and the Jewish people will have adopted one hundred years from now.

Here are the contents of the LJS Time Capsule:

- ◆ Photos of No. 28 Loudoun Road
- ◆ social activities (including Seder)
- ◆ Original 1902 membership list
- ◆ Current membership list
- ◆ Last service at No. 28 (service sheet and cassette)
- ◆ Foundation Stone Dedication (service sheet)
- ◆ *Service of the Heart, Gate of Repentance, Haggadah* (ULPS)
- ◆ *Judaism for Today*
- ◆ *The Jewish People*
- ◆ *LJS News* (October and November 1989)
- ◆ *ULPS News* (October 1989)
- ◆ Annual Report 1988
- ◆ Pamphlets on Jewish history, history of ULPS and WUPJ
- ◆ Sermons from Rabbis Rayner, Goldberg and Wright
- ◆ Message to Finder by Richard Moross
- ◆ Message to Finder by Rabbi David Goldberg
- ◆ Miniature Kiddush bottle of wine and Kiddush cup



Many thanks to LJS archivist Cinde Lee for supplying both information and photos to create this article.

Tisha B'Av 5781 / The Fast of Av 2021

The pandemic has forced us to adapt and change many of our practices. This year, in response to the losses many have suffered, and our loneliness and sense of disconnection, we invite you to join the Rabbis and members of the congregation for a quiet time of reflection and prayer on the eve of Tisha B'Av.

Av is seen as the most mournful month in the Jewish calendar. 'When Av comes, joy is diminished', said the rabbis. Remembrance of destruction and exile darken the first weeks of this month.

Liberal Judaism, which abolished prayers for the restoration of the Temple, might have done away with Tisha B'Av. But Tisha B'Av has retained its relevance in every generation as we remember our people's suffering. It has become a magnet on which to recall events that stretch from the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 586 BCE to the Shoah in the 20th century.

The day is no less relevant in 2021, and although we had hoped to open our doors to the congregation and visitors to reconnect with the Sanctuary and mourn our losses as a community, the extension of the lockdown means that we are holding the service online once again, as we did last year. This year the service is on the night of **Saturday 17 July at 8.30pm**. Please refer to Shalom LJS for joining instructions.



The Arch of Titus in Rome showing the Jews leaving Jerusalem carrying the menorah after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE
Photo © Ken Welsh / Bridgeman Images

Pulpit Exchange with Congregation Beth Elohim



Under the auspices of the World Union for Progressive Judaism 'Pulpit Exchange' programme, the LJS was matched with the Congregation Beth Elohim (CBE),

a 1300-seat synagogue in Brooklyn, NYC. Rabbi Alexandra Wright and Rabbi Rachel Timoner (pictured) of CBE interviewed each other, and on Erev Shabbat 28 May, CBE heard Rabbi Alex being interviewed, and during the sermon slot in the Shabbat morning service on 29 May, LJS congregants heard Rabbi Rachel, which made for fascinating insights into this Reform synagogue and its major programme of social justice initiatives.

The impact of Covid on CBE was in many ways similar to that experienced at the LJS – the

reaching out to the community and the rapid switch to online services. Rabbi Rachel referenced a teaching of the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l – the requirement for what he termed 'adaptive leadership', partly because of the pandemic, but also because of our rapidly changing society grappling with shifting economies, migration and climate change.

Rabbi Rachel gave an account of how CBE became a beacon not just for their members but for the wider community who were determined to counteract policies of President Trump, including bans on Muslims, attacks on racial equality, women's rights, and freedom of the press, inter alia. A huge effort was made to encourage voter registration, and there was great relief when Joe Biden was elected President.

The discussion points were wide-ranging, and encompassed antisemitism and views on Israel and Palestine. The interview can be watched on the LJS YouTube channel.



The Learning Circle

Adult education classes at the LJS

Shavuot term classes

Tuesday morning and evening classes continue online until 6 July, apart from Tuesday Texts which continues until 20 July.

Shabbat morning online classes continue until 3 July.

Summer Learning

We would like to draw your attention to the following online course held on three consecutive Thursdays from 7.30 - 9.00pm on 1, 8 and 15 July, held under the auspices of Lehrhaus at Leo Baeck College. Further details are on their website.

Lamentations and its After Images with Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris

High Holy Day Preparation

Preparation for Rosh Hashanah: 8.00pm on Tuesday 31 August

Preparation for Yom Kippur: 8.00pm on Tuesday 14 September

For the Yom Kippur class, our guest speaker is Dr Alinda Damsma, Lecturer in Biblical Hebrew, Hebrew and Jewish Studies Department, UCL, who will talk about 'The Book of Jonah in the Zohar'.

Preview of Sukkot term classes

Details of all classes will be announced in the forthcoming brochure for The Learning Circle, in the next newsletter, and in the weekly Tuesday Shalom LJS email.

Classes are held on Tuesday evenings and Shabbat mornings prior to the Shabbat morning services, except for the Tuesday Texts class which is held on Tuesday mornings 11.15am – 12.30pm.

Hebrew classes

Classes at all levels of Classical Hebrew, from beginners to those following the GCSE syllabus

in Classical Hebrew, are held throughout the academic year. A new class for Absolute Beginners starts on Tuesday evenings in the Sukkot term. There are classes for those who would like to learn more about biblical and prayer-book Hebrew, including classes focusing on the reading of Genesis and Joshua.

Discussion classes

Discussion classes are held on Tuesday and Shabbat mornings.

In the Tuesday Texts classes, biblical and rabbinic texts as well as modern poetry and short stories are studied, and there are also sessions on Jewish art and music.

The Shabbat morning Learning with Texts classes will address the question:

'How does Judaism affect my attitude towards...?'

Subjects will include our approach to existential risk, Covid-19, civil disobedience, inequality in society, and social media.

Exploring Judaism

This course is for people, including non-Jewish family members, who wish to know more about Judaism. It is also an essential programme of instruction for people choosing Judaism by conversion.

Judaism and Islam – a shared history

Our next study course in exploring interfaith relations is being led by our Scholar in Residence, Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton, with our guest Muslim lecturer, Dr Harith Ramli from Edge Hill University.

The first two sessions are:

Tuesday 12 October *Joseph: the most beautiful of all stories*

Tuesday 7 December *Pathways to God: Judaism and Islam as Religions of Law*

There will be four further sessions in January, March, May and June 2022.

Rimon Corner

Susannah Alexander reports on the highly successful 'Shavuot Schmooze'



The Book of Ruth, traditionally read at Shavuot, begins with a natural disaster and ends with new life and the beginnings of a new model of leadership for the Jewish people. This past year, our own natural disaster has led us to new models of learning online. For Shavuot, Rimon students joined nine other progressive communities for 'Shavuot Schmooze', an event organised by Debi Penhey and Dov Softi working with the Head Teachers of the other communities. Over 200

students aged 4-15 came together online to participate in a choice of 15 Shavuot-themed activities. These provided opportunities for pupils to engage intellectually, creatively and emotionally, and of course to enjoy themselves and meet new friends.

Some activities took advantage of technology such as the newly-popular Kahoot app. As Rosa from Class Vav told us, 'I did a quiz and a Kahoot, which is like a game or a quiz. I liked learning with kids from different synagogues.' There was room, too, for traditional Shavuot favourites. Spencer, also from Class Vav, reported, 'I used melted chocolate chips to make chocolatey cheesecakes. It was fun, easy, and delicious. The cooking was fun, but the best part was eating what I made.'

Rimon staff were inspired, informed and invigorated by the morning too. Gan teacher Caroline explained, 'The sessions were brilliant and well presented. I myself went to the two story-telling sessions and have loads of ideas and things to do with the children I teach.' Some of our teachers are also parents and got to enjoy the experience from both perspectives. Hebrew teacher Nurit told us her nine-year-old daughter left the day knowing more, but without even realising it had been a learning experience; and KT teacher, Danny, and his daughters Roxy (12) and Jazzy (9) were similarly enthusiastic: 'Jazzy got to sing in a Zoom meeting room with three guitarists singing to her and telling stories. Roxy had a grown-up conversation about Israel-Palestine, and together they had great fun trying to make ice cream.'

We look forward to being part of Shmooze events in future, whether in person, online or a bit of both.



We wish these young members of the LJS a very happy birthday in July and August.

July

Benjamin Atwell
Michael Berlingieri
Emily Cooper
Arthur Davidson-Kelly
Oscar Davidson-Kelly
Tristan Del Mar
Emma Dexter
Joseph Frank
Samuel Frank
Liam Gold
Annabel Grade
Milo Langham McLellan
Adam Mondschein
Joel Pinto
Jonas Sellar
Nathaniel Sellar
Raphael Sellar
Angelina Sokel
Rosalie Wolchover

August

Willow Behr
Mia Dexter
Daniel Fisher
Theo Frankel
Stephanie Frischmann
Freddie Grant
Noah Gulperin
Ralph Hockley Lester
Max Josefs
Solomon Kane
Theodore Korn
Efron Levi-French
Dahlia Levin
Libby Lewis
Benjamin Mencer
Gideon Putnam
Nathan Simon
Acacia Steen
Joshua Tobias
Zachariah Turner
Skyler Tuvey
Ursula Warshaw
Eli Wolchover

Mazal tov to our Kabbalat Torah students

Although the usual Kabbalat Torah classes, the trip to Amsterdam and the special KT ceremony have not been able to take place in customary fashion on account of the pandemic, nevertheless a group of stalwart students have shown great commitment in continuing their studies online with their highly respected teacher, Danny Lang. They took part in the L'Dor va'Dor Shabbat morning service on 12 June. This service was led by Rimón Lead, Student Rabbi Matt Turchin, and Rabbi Igor Zinkov, with a warm introduction by Rabbi Alexandra Wright, and the KT students all contributed with beautifully delivered readings. They also produced a film on the subject of the environment, and, using well chosen images, they talked most eloquently and compellingly about the environmental issues that are so important to us all and which they are striving to address. This is very much in line with the new LJS Value about care of the environment, *Bal Tashchit*.

Mazal tov to all those who took part in the service, and to their Rimón teachers. Rabbi Alex has promised that as soon as it is possible, the trip to Amsterdam to visit the Anne Frank House and the Portuguese Synagogue, not to mention a highly rated pancake venue, will take place!

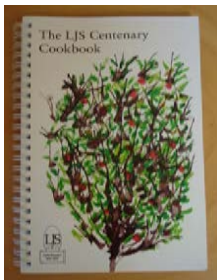
A summer recipe

To mark 10 years since the publication of *The LJS Centenary Cookbook*, we've picked a recipe for you to try out which sounds just the thing for a summer's day. Our thanks to Sue Bolsom for her recipe.

Instant Blueberry Ice Cream

Blueberries
Sugar to taste
Squeeze of lemon juice
Dollop of Greek yogurt
Hand stick blender

Wash blueberries and sprinkle with sugar and freeze for a few hours or overnight till hard. Put serving glasses or dishes in freezer ten minutes before, so they are cold. Put a few frozen berries in blender jar and blend with yogurt and squeeze of lemon; keep adding the berries a few at a time. You want to keep it as stiff as possible, so only add enough yogurt for the blender to work. Adjust sugar and lemon. Spoon into cold glasses and eat immediately. Do not refreeze. *Enjoy!*



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The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

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