

March/April 2021
Adar/Nisan/Iyyar 5781

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS News



Celebrating the 30th anniversary of our new synagogue building

On 9 January 2021 we celebrated the 30th anniversary of our return to the newly rebuilt synagogue building with its beautiful Sanctuary. It was poignant, not to say ironic, that this occasion had to be online, with just a handful of people physically at the LJS, including Rabbis Alexandra Wright and Igor Zinkov, and our singers, Tami Tal and Dominic Bevan, together with pianist, Martin Sanders-Hewett. Nevertheless, it was a most joyous occasion, bookended with recordings of pieces by Mendelssohn and Charpentier played by Tim Farrell – the very pieces which had been played during the Service of Dedication 30 years ago.

To mark the occasion, Rabbi Alex put together a reunion featuring live or recorded interviews with many of the people who had played key roles in the rebuilding project, including the original architects. Everyone who had contributed three decades ago was remembered with gratitude and affection, with relatives of some of them reading prayers within the service – Victoria Lazarus, granddaughter of Sir Peter Lazarus z”l; Nicola Solomons, daughter of Tony Solomons, and Carole Goldberg, the widow of Rabbi Dr David J. Goldberg z”l.

An account of this special reunion can be found on pages 8-11.

Top l-r: Rabbi Alexandra Wright, Neil Levitt, Prue Baker, Trevor Moross
2nd row l-r: Michael Schwartz, Carole Goldberg, Nicola Solomons, Les Koski
3rd row l-r: Victoria Lazarus, Bob Kirk, Jane Finestone, Simeon Hartwig

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Congratulations to the Baneth and Davies-Benjamin families!



We are delighted to announce the safe arrival of two new little people in our LJS community. **Sophia Émilie Baneth**, daughter and firstborn of Caroline and Daniel Baneth, was born on 10 October 2020 and is pictured here aged four months.



Quincy Ezekiel Vaughan Davies-Benjamin, son of Izzy and Matthew Davies-Benjamin and little brother to Ambrose, was born on 24 January 2021. He is pictured here at two weeks old. Mazal tov to both families!

Mazal Tov to Matt and Avi!

Matt Turchin, currently a student rabbi and known by many of us as Rimmon Lead, married Avital Green on 18 December 2020 at Hendon Town Hall. The civil ceremony was attended by a few close friends, with family and friends from the USA, Israel, and Europe joining in via Zoom. Matt and Avi plan to have a chuppah wedding at a later date. We send our warm wishes and congratulations to the newly-weds.



Bereavements We extend our sympathy to those who mourn:

Susan Bilmes, wife of Anthony, mother of Alex, Nick and Christopher

Patricia Estelle Clayton-Benians, wife of Robin, and mother of Richard, Jane and the late Charlie

Arthur Defries, friend of many

Ronald Lopez Dias, husband of Clara, and father of Nathan and Cygalle

Mathilde (Tilly) Fraenkel, mother of Ellen and Martin

Isobel Monnickendam, wife of Philip, mother of Marjorie, Graham, Andrew, Elizabeth and Jonathan

Geoffrey Myerson, husband of Barbara, and father of Victoria, Alexandra, Atalanta, Joshua, Arabella, Lavinia and the late Timothy

Alan Pearson, husband of Miriam-Zvia (Miri) Klibansky, father of Tereasa, and step-father of Orly, Hily and Danit

Barbara Rossiter, wife of the late Peter Rossiter, mother of Nigel, William, Michael and James, sister of Carol, and sister-in-law of Mary Rossiter

Helga Wolff, mother of Denise

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of LJS member, **Rosita Rosenberg**, mother of Sallie, who served as Interim Executive Director of the LJS, and as Executive Director then Vice President of Liberal Judaism. She co-authored *Liberal Judaism: The First 100 Years* with Rabbi Lawrence Rigel.

We also extend our sympathy to Alexander Rosen on the death of his sister **Rhoda Kohn**, and to Jessica de Rothschild and her family on the death of Jessica's mother, **Victoria de Rothschild**.

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

Shabbat and Festival Services: March and April

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

Friday 5 March	
Shabbat 6 March <i>Ki Tissa/Parah</i>	
Friday 12 March	
Shabbat 13 March <i>Va-yakhel-Pekudey/ Ha-Chodesh</i>	This service is being held jointly with Birmingham Progressive Synagogue, and led by Rabbi Rachel Benjamin with Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi from the Birmingham community.
Friday 19 March	
Shabbat 20 March <i>Vayikra</i>	
Friday 26 March	
Shabbat 27 March <i>Tzav/Ha-Gadol</i>	
Saturday 27 March Seder Night	1st Night Pesach - If you would like to join an online family Seder, please contact Rabbi Alexandra Wright: a.wright@ljs.org
Sunday 28 March at 11.00am 1st Day of Pesach	Festival Morning Service
Sunday 28 March at 6.30pm	Communal Seder (online). Please see page 14 for how to register and join our 2nd Night Seder. There will also be information in Shalom LJS.
Friday 2 April at 6.45pm Erev 7th Day Pesach	We mark the last evening of the Festival of Pesach.
Shabbat 3 April at 11.00am 7th Day Pesach	Festival Morning Service for 7th Day Pesach
Wednesday 7 April Erev Yom Ha-Shoah at 8.00pm	To mark Holocaust Day, the author and illustrator Peter Sís talks about his new book <i>Nicky & Vera</i> which weaves together Nicholas Winton's story with that of Vera Gissing, one of the children he saved. Please see Shalom LJS for details.
Friday 9 April	
Shabbat 10 April <i>Shemini</i>	
Friday 16 April	We mark Yom Ha-Atzma'ut / Israeli Independence Day (15 April).
Shabbat 17 April <i>Tazria/M'tzora</i>	Bar Mitzvah Kobe Behr
Friday 23 April	
Shabbat 24 April <i>Acharey-Mot/Kedoshim</i>	
Friday 30 April	Liberal Judaism (LJ) Biennial: we join together with members of other LJ congregations from around the UK this Shabbat.
Shabbat 1 May <i>Emor</i>	As above

At the time of going to press, services are online only. We hope we will be able to resume 'hybrid' services before too long, with a safe and limited number of people admitted to the Sanctuary, and others able to access the service online. Our return to the synagogue will be based on government guidance. Please see our weekly Shalom LJS email for up-to-date information or telephone the LJS on 020 7286 5181. If you would like to attend the service in person when that becomes possible, you will probably need to book your place in the synagogue from week to week.

Council Report

*Moses' father-in-law said, '...the task is too heavy; you cannot do it alone...'
(Exodus 18:18)*



In February, the LJS Council participated in a Council Shabbat by leading the service on a shabbat morning. This was an occasion for the Council Trustees to do something different together and to show to the community the individual

people whose role is the governance of the LJS. The Torah reading (*Exodus 18:13-23*) was a reminder to us of the importance of sharing these responsibilities, and the Haftarah (*Isaiah 6:1-13*), that social justice is one of our defining principles and that behaving ethically is of fundamental significance today, as in the past.

In a year when Council has not met in person, but only on Zoom, it was an opportunity to feel part of the team and to look forward with enthusiasm. The LJS has a bright future, as was highlighted by Sarah Lasher and Daniel Sternberg 'in conversation' in the sermon slot.

The discussions at the Council meetings and the planning show the creative thinking which is taking the LJS in a clear and positive direction.

An example is the report given to Council by Benita Hart (Chair of Communications and Marketing) on our developing website and on the growth in social media. Benita informed us that the LJS now has about 1,000 followers on Twitter and that the Instagram account (which is not a public forum) is live and being advertised on Shalom LJS.

As part of looking ahead with confidence, we were very pleased, at our recent meeting, to be joined by Rabbi Charley Baginsky, Chief Executive Officer of Liberal Judaism. We

explored together ways in which the LJS and LJ can work collaboratively for our mutual benefit. There will be further discussions on how we can take this forward.

Council also considered the diversity of the people who make up the community of the LJS; we come from many backgrounds, are of different ages and sexual orientation, have different opinions and ways of life, and some may not be born Jewish. A focus group has met to look at ways to acknowledge and celebrate our differences and to consider how to encourage a variety of people onto our committees.

These discussions at Council result in our Strategic Plan. We have recently been working on this important document which will guide us through the next year and beyond.

Sadly for us, our Executive Director, Lysa Schwartz, will be retiring in December 2021. Although it is many months away, we have begun planning the recruitment of her successor. There will be time, later this year, to express our appreciation to Lysa for her work at the LJS.

However, we have good news: David Adams, one of our Council members, has agreed to become the next Treasurer. At our recent meeting, Council thanked him and welcomed him into his new role. Peter Loble has been our Treasurer for several years, and you may remember, was due to stand down at last year's AGM, having completed his term of office, but because of the difficulties in recruiting, brought about by COVID, agreed to stay for a further year. We are hugely grateful to Peter for all he has done and will also have a chance to thank him at the AGM. In the meantime, he will be helping David to adjust to his new role.

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.

Harriett Goldenberg



“ I grew up in a Conservative synagogue in Saskatoon, Canada, one of the first generation to have a Bat Mitzvah. I moved to England to read Law at Oxford and stayed. After an initial involvement with the Reform movement, I

made my way to the LJS, and joined together with my husband, John, within months of Rabbi Alex becoming Senior Rabbi.

The best way of feeling part of something is to become involved, and over the past twenty plus years I have been engaged with many aspects of synagogue life. I began creating Shabbatonim, then became involved with other aspects of Adult Education and the Education Committee, acting as Chair for over five years. During those early days, I helped teach the Introductory Hebrew class to adults which then developed into the Learning with Texts class which I've loved this past decade. I've also been a member of Bereavement Support for some years, and helped set up, and remain involved with, our Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families. I am currently Chair of Social Action.

I am serving my third term on Council. While so much goes on across the committees and groups of the synagogue, ultimately everything comes through Council, so it's both a responsibility and an honour to have a sense of the overall activity of the synagogue, how it's supported and what our focus is over time.

The LJS is a very special place for us. Our daughter Olivia grew up here, and over the years we have developed strong friendships and bonds within the community.

Outside of LJS activities, I work as a psychotherapist, writer, and trainer, and straddle our life in London, with our two dogs, with being very involved with my family in Canada.

David Davidson



“ I converted to Judaism in 1974 through West London Synagogue. I recall during conversion discussions with the Sephardic Rabbi and Haham, Dr Solomon Gaon (my wife's family are Sephardi), that he said it takes a long time,

possibly a lifetime, to convert fully. I think in my case it took between 25 and 30 years. I grew up in a Protestant family that had served in India. I had to switch my thought processes from an establishment frame of mind to being an outsider. This has been an illuminating process.

We have been members of other synagogues, none of which really suited. We started a synagogue crawl in 2005 and at our elder daughter's prompting picked the LJS in 2006. Our whole family are members, with our eldest grandson preparing for his bar mitzvah and a granddaughter attending Rimon. I love the music, am deeply inspired by the leadership, and I enjoy the opportunities for participating in services and for Jewish and Hebrew learning. Being on Council for over three years has given me a much better picture of everything that is going on.

I have been retired for seven years, and although I enjoyed my work as a solicitor, working in London and specialising in Family Law, it's not something I now miss.

I am Hon. Treasurer of British Friends of Rabbis for Human Rights, learning a lot about what is happening in Israel, both good and bad. The inspiring work done by members in Israel fortifies my father-in-law's deeply-held view that Israel's continued existence is dependent on following the ideals of the prophets.

My wife, Mary, and I live in rural Surrey. My hobbies are birdwatching, hill walking (mostly in the Cairngorms), cricket and gardening.



Accessing Employment and Financial Support



These are difficult times for so many of us who may be facing unemployment, struggling to keep businesses afloat or tackling all kinds of financial hardship. As Community Care Co-ordinator at the LJS, I have been much concerned about

these issues, and have discussed with our rabbis and our lead volunteers what we as a community can do to support our members.

There are two Jewish, not-for-profit organisations in London offering skilled support: **Resource** and **Work Avenue**. I met some of their staff and volunteers at a recent webinar, and was heartened and impressed by their expertise, experience and positive approach. While in no way diminishing the economic problems that so many of us face due to the impact of the pandemic, they stressed how much they can do to help individuals and businesses. I saw for myself how much help the staff offered to individuals at the webinar, each with his or her particular problems and challenges.

Resource

Here is a quote from the Resource website:

Take the first step in getting back to work or in to your first role. Our team of professional experts will help you meet the challenges of returning to or starting employment.

Resource offers one-to-one support, IT training, psychometric profiling, mentoring, mock interviews, networking and much more. The organisation recently received an award from the National Lottery's 'Coronavirus Community Support Fund' which recognises the important service they are providing. All their activities are online at the time of writing. Do have a look at their website for full details: www.resource-centre.org

Work Avenue

Work Avenue gives support to those setting up and running businesses as well as those looking for work. Their mission statement is 'To help people become financially independent'.

Quoting from their website:

Work Avenue is a charity that aims to provide people in the community with essential lifelong skills to support themselves and their families by:

- *providing advice and guidance to support people into or back into work*
- *placing people into suitable employment*
- *training people with contemporary and commercial skills*
- *increasing the success rate and long-term sustainability of new and existing businesses*
- *providing a supportive shared workspace for entrepreneurs*

Work Avenue recently established a bursary scheme for people looking to retrain or gain new qualifications.

You can find full details about the many services they provide on their website:

<https://theworkavenue.org.uk>

Supporting Resource and Work Avenue

Recruitment: Each organisation has a 'jobs board' where jobs are advertised. Should you be looking to recruit staff, please do consider advertising at Resource and Work Avenue.

Donations: Both organisations depend on donations to survive. You may wish to donate to one or both, supporting them in their work at this economically challenging time when so many need their services.

The LJS is here to support you

Sadly, unemployment, financial problems and uncertainty often have ramifications beyond looking for work. Anxiety and stress take their toll and impact on our mental health and wellbeing. I am here, should you wish to talk with me about any of these issues affecting you or members of your family. I also have information about other resources that can assist. It's best to contact me initially by email: a.shafritz@ljs.org or leave a message for me on the LJS number 020 7286 5181. All calls will be treated in complete confidence.

Aviva Shafritz
Community Care Co-ordinator

How is this year different from other years?

Rabbi Igor Zinkov reflects on the festival of Pesach



If you ask the average Russian-speaking Jew what the most important Jewish festival is, most likely they will think of Passover. Many years of restrictions of personal and religious freedoms made

Russian-speaking Jews sensitive to the key themes of Pesach – freedom and redemption. ‘Let My People Go’ became a motto for many ‘refuseniks’, that is, Soviet Jews who were refused permission to leave the Soviet Union. Even today, thirty years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, many of my Russian-speaking Jewish friends would choose to attend a communal Seder Pesach over any other Jewish festival.

How does one mark this Festival of Freedom, when circumstances restrict your ability to make choices? The traditional text, recited at Seder tables, reads: ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Eternal One our God took us out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not led our ancestors out of Egypt, then we, our children, and our children’s children would have remained slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.’ During the pandemic, regardless of your background and experience, Passover becomes the expression of our hope and a space to reflect on what it means to be free. Today the theme of freedom is poignant for all of us, not just post-Soviet Jews.

Last year I had the privilege of leading an online Seder Pesach with Natan Sharansky, an Israeli politician and human rights activist, who spent nine years in Soviet prisons as a refusenik in the Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s.

In his speech, he shared that even in prison he celebrated Pesach. He did not have matzah, so he dried a piece of bread. He did not have bitter herbs, so he used salt instead. He did not have a Haggadah, so he recited some poetry which he remembered. In one of his interviews, Sharansky said, ‘I believe that inner freedom is the basis of freedom in the world, and I believe that human rights, the desire of people to live in freedom, is the basis of real security, of peace, and of stability in the world.’ Even though one’s physical freedom can be restricted, one can still choose to be free.

In his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*, which chronicles his experiences as a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps, Victor Frankl wrote, ‘The last of the human freedoms: to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way. And there were always choices to make. Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom, which determined whether or not you become the plaything to circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity.’ Circumstances can limit your actions, but nobody can limit your freedom.

According to Jewish tradition, in every generation we must regard ourselves as though we personally had gone out of Egypt. Perhaps this year it is our turn to experience the Exodus. At Pesach we will gather online, sing songs, come out of our metaphorical ‘Egypt’ and hope that redemption will come soon. As usual, we will end the Haggadah with the hopeful call ‘Next year in Jerusalem!’. Although the texts will be the same, their meaning will be different from all other years. This year we will end the Seder Pesach with the hope that next year we will celebrate the Festival of our Freedom in person.

Next year in person!

Igor Zinkov

‘The Reunion’: 30th Anniversary Service of our new Sanctuary and Synagogue

At the service on 9 January 2021, Rabbi Alexandra Wright told the story of this ambitious building project completed 30 years ago. Many who had played key roles took part. The online event, richly illustrated with archival photos, can be viewed in full on the LJS YouTube channel. Here we present an abridged account of ‘The Reunion’.

During the night of 1 November 1940, our synagogue was bombed and severely damaged. It was to be another 11 years until repairs were completed, and on 23 September 1951, Rabbi Leo Baeck carried the first scroll into the Reconsecration Service of the restored synagogue. But by the early 1980s, it was clear that the repairs were inadequate. The leadership of the synagogue faced the massive question of what to do with the damaged building. Rabbis John Rayner and David Goldberg (z”l) had worked alongside each other for more than a decade, and when Rabbi Goldberg became Senior Rabbi in 1989, he worked closely with the Chairman Sir Peter Lazarus (z”l). Together they worked tirelessly to drive forward what was to become a major project.

Neil Levitt was Chairman of the House Committee in the early 1980s, and eventually became Chairman of the Design and Use Committee, overseeing the design of the new synagogue. Neil addressed us, explaining how he had reported to Council that according to the buildings experts who were consulted, the annual major repairs were an unsustainable proposition.

The question remained as to how it would be possible to deal with a building that was structurally unsound and would inevitably bequeath huge costs of maintenance to future generations. Four options were proposed: 1) to make do and repair the existing synagogue; 2) to move to a new site and sell the existing building; 3) to rebuild on the existing site and provide additional accommodation, to be let or sold; 4) to turn the site into a community centre with space for a synagogue.



The interior of the old synagogue

The decision was not going to be easy, and discussions grew heated. Many of the more established members were not only fond of the old synagogue which held dear memories for them, but they had also invested funds into the original and reconstructed building.

A working party's decision to advocate redevelopment met with a mixed reception from the congregation, but the decision was eventually taken to enter an agreement with Abbey Housing whereby part of the land on which the old synagogue was situated would be sold for one million pounds, providing for the shell of the new synagogue, the rest of the money to be raised for the interior design of the synagogue by the community.

In order to ensure the redevelopment plan would be accepted by LJS members, meetings were held in which Council's recommendations were reported back. Many vehemently resisted while others pleaded for the wooden surround of the Ark and the Compton organ to be retained. Trevor Moross, closely involved in the rebuilding project from the outset, told us how he had tried

to win over the congregation by engendering excitement and enthusiasm for this opportunity for modernisation and revitalisation – a chance to address the needs of a congregation who by now were a different demographic and living differently from our founding congregation.

Both Neil and Trevor were to work closely with the architects, builders and ancillary firms. Trevor explained to us what had impressed him about the winning architects for the interior of the synagogue: Michael Schwartz had immediately understood the soul of the congregation. In designing a hexagonal-shaped Sanctuary which wrapped itself around congregants, he created a sense of intimacy which worked equally well both when there were only a few people present and when there were high numbers for the High Holy Days.

Michael Schwartz then addressed us, elaborating on his concept – that of a synagogue within a synagogue: from the bustle of St John's Wood Road, one would come through the entrance with the pillars of the former building, to a space for congregants to greet each other. But there was a slit in the stucco wall in the lobby through which you could see the Ark and Ark wall. And then, on entering down the two aisles which led to the bimah, there was a sense of entering a place of prayer. A key feature in creating a space which worked for different numbers of worshippers was

the use of a retractable lower bimah which brought congregants close to the rabbis and the Ark, but which could slide back into the upper bimah to accommodate greater numbers and give the rabbis a view onto the whole congregation. Another important feature was the use of natural materials – wood and, in particular, Jerusalem stone.



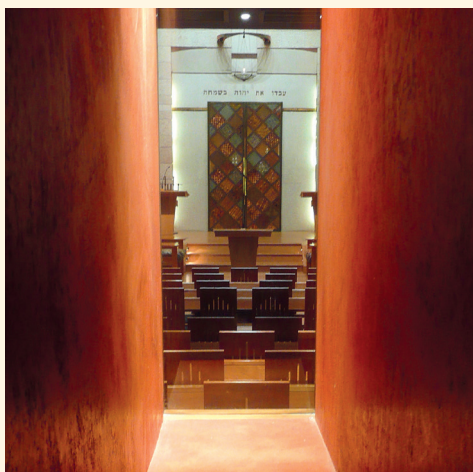
Cutting the Jerusalem stone

A farewell service to the old building was held in 1988 and the congregation moved into a disused church in Loudoun Road for services. The congregation was to be in exile for 33 months.

Crucial to communication with Michael Schwartz's Jerusalem studio was the association of the London office of Koski Solomon. Les Koski recounted how he'd learned a valuable lesson from his Hebrew teacher back when he was in High School – it wasn't simply a matter of getting the right product; it was getting the right *process* which would lead to the right product. Les explained how designs and drawings were all very well, but interested parties had to be included in the debate. Weekly Tuesday evening meetings consequently took place to review sketches and discuss ideas.



l-r: Michael Schwartz, Les Koski, Sir Peter Lazarus, Maxwell Stern, Willie Kessler, Rita Adler, Neil Levitt



View through the slit in the wall

The next person to speak was Prue Baker, project co-ordinator, whose role it was to ensure every aspect of the project was documented and communicated so that the LJS community and the professional team were kept fully informed. Prue reminded us this was at a time when minutes had to be typed up on a typewriter, hard copies filed, and documents posted out.

Although Prue had initially been given use of office space by Tim Simon, it later became necessary for her to be located at the LJS – at the time an empty concrete shell. Although she was in a large and lonely space, Prue said there were compensations as she saw the building come alive. She remembers the day the seating for the Sanctuary was brought in. The seating had been specifically designed to look as though the Sanctuary were full of people, and Prue described the arrival of the seating as though the congregation were arriving.

The foundation stone dedication ceremony was held on 24 September 1989 with more than a dozen of those who had laid bricks in the original building laying new ones. A time capsule was put in position by Janet Suzman. But it was to be another sixteen months before the congregation moved back and some of the synagogue's most striking features would be installed.



The Ark doors and *Ner Tamid* surrounded by Jerusalem stone

As well as the Jerusalem stone surround to the Sanctuary, there were the beautiful Ark doors, a joint venture with Amit Shur, who was studying Jewellery at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. Michael Schwartz explained how the Ark doors, as with the Ark wall, had a tactile quality.

The metallic diamond-shaped panels which make up the door were designed so that they became increasingly translucent the higher up you look, allowing a glimpse of the top of the Torah scrolls. The panels needed to be brought from Israel to the UK to be made into doors in Sheffield, and Michael told the story of how he was detained at Customs as he brought in the sixty diamond panels, trying to explain his unlikely booty to bemused officials.

The whole project wasn't without its problems. Neil Levitt recounted how one of the features of the new design was that the original portico would be retained. The pillars and the stone from the building had been carefully dismantled and stored, but when finally re-positioned, they did not align with the walls of the newly built building, and the portico had to be taken down again and re-instated.

Another problem, recounted by Les Koski, was how towards the end of the construction he'd noticed that three of the stones surrounding the Ark were missing. He had asked the stone contractor, Mr Ella, where they were, and got the response, 'Where's my sixteen thousand dollars?'

Les explained what then ensued. 'Mr Ella had been bugging me for \$16,000 to fly his crew back to Israel for a long weekend – something I could not authorise as it was not in their contract, and Chris Hill [the project manager] was nervous that they may not return in time to finish the work. The inauguration date had been set, invitations sent out – and we had a big hole around the Ark... I might add that this was at the time of the Lebanon hostage crisis where Terry Waite had been held for many years. My fear was that the stones were similarly being held hostage. Being bound by the terms of the sub-contract, I knew not what to do, so I called Michael Schwartz. He said, "Leave it to me", and later I learnt what that meant.

'Michael had called Grabelski, Jerusalem's biggest stonemason and said, "I'm placing an order with you for three stones but do not start production. But you can say that you are taking over the London project from the Ella Brothers." Within three days the missing stones had arrived. Saving face by not defaulting on an international project was a higher priority than an extra \$16,000.

The lesson I carried forward into my business career was that I could never out-negotiate a Middle Easterner!

Trevor Moross explained the story behind the *Ner Tamid* – the everlasting light – which was to hang in front of the Ark. The plan was that it should have a real flame rather than an electric light. Westminster Synagogue had such a *Ner Tamid*, apparently kept alight using Mazola corn oil, a system to be deployed for ours. However, the draughty position of our *Ner Tamid* meant the light kept blowing out. After much research, Trevor chanced upon a solution whilst having a business dinner in Santa Monica. He noticed how the table lamp had a real flame unaffected by the windy conditions. Trevor made enquires and learned such lamps, containing a glass vial of paraffin, were widely used in the area, so he bought two to take back to London – and was very relieved to discover they worked!

The last Shabbat service at Loudoun Road was held on 12 January 1991. The next day, the congregation packed into the new Sanctuary with great excitement and anticipation, and stood waiting for the scrolls to be processed in and placed in the new Ark.



The relighting of the *Ner Tamid*

Simeon Hartwig was 11 years old on that day, and one of three pupils from the Religion School, together with the Head Teacher, Sharon Moross (now Lewison), invited to light the *Ner Tamid*. Simeon recalled how excited and proud – and also nervous – he felt. He described to us how as a young boy he loved going upstairs into the gallery where you could look down at your parents and take in the whole place and the choir.

The position of the choir has its own story. The interior of the Sanctuary had been designed so the choir would sing from a hidden choir loft, as it had in the old building. However, as Trevor Moross explained to us, the organ couldn't be moved upstairs so there was a TV link between the organist, Tim Farrell, and the then music director, Yakov Paul, and the choir. It soon became obvious that this didn't work, and the solution was to bring the choir downstairs next to the organ. This turned out to have a significant impact on the nature of services, and helped build the community we have today.

As Rabbi David Goldberg said in his address at the dedication service on 13 January 1991, there was still much completion work to be done. The Women's Society had contributed the beautifully designed chairs on the bimah, and LJS Member Jane Finestone, who designed the chair covers on the bimah and in the foyer, gave us a wonderful account of 'Project Chairscape' which will appear in a later issue of *LJS News*.

It was to take another five years after the return for an appropriate and powerful memorial to the victims of the Shoah to be commissioned. Bob Kirk, who had played a key role in this project, explained to us the artist's brief and the process of choosing the artist. His illuminating account of this will appear in this newsletter to coincide with our Kristallnacht commemoration in November.

Rabbi David Goldberg, who had led the congregation through its exile and whose leadership is associated so closely with the success of the new building, in his address to the congregation on that day in January 1991, concluded with these words: 'We give thanks to all, named and unnamed, who have made today possible... But most of all, of course, we give thanks to God, to whose service this building is dedicated, for having kept us alive to witness this great occasion and be able to take pride in the work of our hands.'

Rabbi Alexandra Wright expresses her gratitude to LJS Archivist, Cinde Lee, and to Rita Adler for their help in the preparation of 'The Reunion', as well as to all participants for their memories and records. Photos by the late Michael Goldhill z"l are also much appreciated.



The Learning Circle

Adult education classes at the LJS

Purim Term Tuesday morning and evening classes continue until 23 March, with Shavuot Term classes starting on 27 April, apart from Exploring Judaism, which starts on 20 April. Purim Term Shabbat morning classes continue until 20 March, with Shavuot Term classes starting on 24 April.

Classes are free to LJS Members and Friends, and £10.00 per class for non-members, with reductions available for advance payment of a whole term.

At the time of going to press, classes are being run online only, and class times relate to online classes. Please see Shalom LJS for up-to-date information or contact Education Co-ordinator, Debi Penhey: education@ljs.org

Purim 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 is reading key chapters in the Book of Joshua, discussing the interactions of the text and how it fits into the Biblical Hebrew canon. We are studying the grammatical structure of sentences as well as extending our 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 Hebrew for Post-Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

This course is for those who have some basic familiarity with the Hebrew *alef bet*, and can read simple phrases. In a supportive and friendly environment, you will be taught using a tried-and-tested method to improve your reading. We use Jonathan Romain's *Signs and Wonders*, study new vocabulary, some basic grammar, and become acquainted with the structure of the liturgy. There are off-topic conversations on Jewish food, and anything else that helps us have fun whilst learning.

Moving up in Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

The aim of this class is to enable students to understand the Hebrew prayers and songs used in services. Those joining the class will need basic reading skills, and we spend some time each week increasing reading fluency. We look at the basics of Hebrew grammar using the textbook *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* (available for purchase £27.00) and build up your vocabulary as we go. The class also read key Torah portions to reinforce the basic grammar and to understand the geography of the Torah.

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 Ruth in Hebrew

Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright

In this class we read and discuss the Book of Ruth. Do join us to study what is ostensibly a pastoral idyll and love story, but fundamentally a subversive book about the role of women, foreign marriage, seduction and the Davidic dynasty.

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>

Purim Term classes

2 March: Israel: People and Land

9 March: Messiah and the Messianic Age

16 March: Conversion

23 March: Exploring Pesach

Shavuot Term classes

20 April: Exploring God and Belief

27 April: Humankind in Jewish Thought

NEW! THURSDAY EVENINGS 6.30 – 7.30pm

Classical Hebrew for Absolute Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

Don't know your *alef* from your *tav*? If you know absolutely nothing about reading Hebrew, but want to learn, this class is for you. Using Jonathan Romain's *Signs and Wonders* (available for purchase from the LJS), this class will enable you to unlock the mystery of the Hebrew letters and start reading. Absolutely no previous knowledge required, just regular attendance of this friendly and supportive class.

This new course starts on 4 March.

SHABBAT MORNINGS 9.00 – 9.55am

Classical Hebrew for Post-Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

This course is for those who have some basic familiarity with the Hebrew *alef bet*, and can read simple phrases. In a supportive and friendly environment, you will be taught using a tried-and-tested method to improve your reading. We use Jonathan Romain's *Signs and Wonders*, study new vocabulary, some basic grammar, and become acquainted with the structure of the liturgy. There are off-topic conversations on Jewish food, and anything else that helps us have fun whilst learning.

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.

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.

SHABBAT MORNINGS 9.45 – 10.45am

Learning with Texts

Facilitator: Michael Romain

This term we will continue with the subject of modern Jewish scholars, writers and politicians. The teachers will include Rabbis Alexandra Wright, Igor Zinkov and Michael Hilton. All are welcome. If you wish to know more about the class, please contact Michael Romain at: romain@netgates.co.uk

Our special Tuesday evening study course continues on 9 March and 11 May

Jewish Festivals in Dialogue with Christianity

with Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton, LJS Scholar in Residence



In this study course, led by Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton and with Christian guest speakers, we examine the intriguing ways in which Judaism and Christianity have influenced each other's festivals.

Jewish customs have never developed in isolation from other cultures. In this course we look at Jewish festivals and their links with Christian practices. In the February session, we discussed how the costumes, plays and parodies associated with Purim imitate some of the practices of the Lenten carnival, in part because Jews were excluded. In the March session we investigate how the idea of giving a meaning to specific foods, found in Rabban Gamliel's explanations in the Passover Seder, was earlier found in accounts of Jesus' last supper with his disciples. In the final session in May we examine the way in which the Jewish festival of Shavuot and the Christian equivalent of Pentecost (Whitsun) are closely parallel festivals of revelation.

9 March: The Last Supper and the Passover Seder Our guest speaker is the Revd Dr Nathan Eddy, Interim Director, Council of Christians and Jews

11 May: Pentecost and Shavuot

Please email education@ljs.org for the Zoom link.

How to lead an online Seder

with Rabbis Igor Zinkov and Alexandra Wright

Sunday 14 March 11.00am – 12.15pm

This time last year we were all propelled into preparing for exclusively online home Sedarim. This year, we want to be a bit more prepared. Rabbis Igor and Alex will provide you with resources and tips to help you lead your online Seder this year – including with friends and family from across the globe.

Please email education@ljs.org for the Zoom link.

The LJS Online Communal Seder

Everyone is welcome to join us for our Communal Seder held online on the Second Night of Pesach

Sunday 28 March at 6.30pm

Please provide your own symbols for the Seder plate: parsley, charoset, maror, roasted egg, roasted lamb bone or vegetarian alternative.

You will also need wine or grape juice.

Rabbi Igor and Rabbi Alex will provide the Haggadah, lead the songs, explain the symbols and help you find the virtual Afikoman.

There is no charge for this event.

To book please contact education@ljs.org



Traditional Jewish Meal, Passover (vellum)
© Giancarlo Costa / Bridgeman Images

Full details of all LJS adult education courses can be found in the Learning Circle brochure: go to www.ljs.org and click on Learning to view.

Rimon Corner

Rosie Cohen and Matt Turchin give us a round-up of Rimon activities

At the time of writing in early February, Rimon is getting ready for our L'Dor va'Dor Purim family service, for which our students are in the process of creating some new liturgy. Taking inspiration from our siddur, our classroom studies and each other, each class is composing and presenting an original piece to add that special extra touch to our intergenerational service. The students also had a chance to shine at our previous L'Dor va'Dor service in December. This was led from the Sanctuary by Rabbi Igor and Rimon Lead Matt, with students and families joining over Zoom, and art provided by the younger years of Rimon, who got into the spirit of Chanukkah with arts and crafts. Classes Alef and Bet wanted to find a way to bring our Chanukkah crafts to everyone, which of course was not totally possible, but we were determined to find a way! We got crafty with creating paper collage chanukkiyot in various forms, all following the same theme of bringing happiness to whoever looked at them. These were then shown during the L'Dor va'Dor service online for all to see. No doubt there were many proud families watching at home! During the service we also put on our own Hollywood production of 'The Latke Who Couldn't Stop Screaming' where our Rimon staff took some time to get comfy and each read a bit of the story. Although we were all in our homes rather than physically together, it still created a strong sense of togetherness. We all came together to enjoy the music, the performances, and the art and beauty of Chanukkah.

Well done to all at Rimon and our community for finding a way to celebrate the holidays with joy, and bring light to each other even when we are far apart!



We wish these young members of the LJS a very happy birthday in March and April

March

Emma Armstrong
Isaiah Baum Appignanesi
Romilly Blitz
Lawrence Bresnark
Honor-Ray Caplan-Higgs
Lily Chevallier
Isobel Dagtoglou
Angel Desmond
Rebecca Forster
Kitt Frankel
Albie Gavshon
Gabriel Grade
Samuel Grainger
Mirabelle Haddon
Matilde Hockley Lester
Eric Lach Stein
Sofia Lach Stein
Sacha Laloum
Ellie Audrey Matthews
Fanny Mendelsohn
Leo Mendelsohn
Quincy Newman
Benno Ratner
Max Roeder Wald
Ollie Roeder Wald
Steven Ross
Emily Roth

Jacob Rushbrook
Sasha Sebag-Montefiore
Oralee Sellar
Olivia Sinclair
Cy Solomons
Jonas Wiesenfeld

April

Nena Atwell
Tom Ballheimer
Kobe Behr
Isaac Bendel
Axel Cohen
Daniel Epelbaum
Wilfred Ginsberg
Emily Gruber
Ethan Haller
Naomi Hanna-Kemper
Sam Hanna-Kemper
Ada Laker
Zoe Roeder Wald
Ava Rosenthal
Baxter Spurr
Emilia Stonehill
Thomas Stonehill
Zetta Tombs
Tom Wald

On the right, Manny Appignanesi presents his Happy Chanukkah picture, and below is an ingenious edible chanukkiyah created by Max Josefs.



Congratulations to Maggie Carver and Anthony Spiro

We are delighted to announce that two LJS members received awards in the 2021 New Year Honours List.

Maggie Carver, currently Interim Chairman of Ofcom and Chairman of the Racecourse Association and also on the Board of the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) and The Licoricia of Winchester Statue Appeal (Chairman), has been awarded a CBE for services to media and sport.

Anthony Spiro was awarded an OBE for voluntary service to Holocaust Remembrance. Anthony was Chair of the Wiener Holocaust Library from 2004 to 2018, and has been Joint President since 2018.



The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

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Cathy Heller Jones

Organist

Tim Farrell

LJS News Team

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Artwork: Tingle Design

In case of bereavement:

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

The Board of Deputies needs you!

Have you ever thought of representing the LJS at the Board of Deputies for British Jews? We are holding elections for the four Deputies (plus one additional under 35 representative) to which we are entitled at an EGM in May. The Board is the only democratically elected, cross-communal, representative body in the Jewish community; the progressive voice within the Board needs to be as strong as possible to influence Board policy on issues we care about. If you'd like to stand for election, you will need to be proposed and seconded, and also send 200 words explaining why you'd like to be an LJS Deputy to execdirector@ljs.org by Friday 26 March. If you'd like to speak to any of our current Deputies about what it involves, please email bod@ljs.org and one of us will get back to you.

Karen Newman

Final copy date for the May/June 2021 issue of *LJS News* is Monday 29 March. Copy and ideas should be emailed to: newsletter@ljs.org
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liberal judaism