

September/October 2021

Ellul 5781/Tishri/

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS  
NEWS



## The LJS Annual General Meeting

The LJS AGM was held online on 23 June, chaired by Sue Head, Chairman of Council.

Rabbi Charley Baginsky (*pictured above left*), CEO of Liberal Judaism (LJ), gave an inspiring talk, focusing on the importance and benefits of collaboration, and the unique contribution of each of the LJ communities, not least the LJS, which is the oldest and largest of them. Rabbi Charley spoke eloquently of the central role the LJS has played during this time of COVID-19 in innovating, showing creativity, and a willingness to share. LJ and the LJS have a commonality of purpose and a commitment to making our mutual goals work.

A packed programme included a financial report and an appreciation of the tireless work of our Honorary Officers, Council, Rabbis, Executive Director, staff, teachers and volunteers, as well as the voting in of new Council members and an announcement of those appointed to the Board of Deputies. Steve Penn's contribution was recognised as he steps down from serving on Council, and special tribute was paid to the extraordinary service of Peter Loble (*pictured above right*), whose seven-year role as Honorary Treasurer has come to an end and been passed on to David Adams. Sue Head said that Peter was the most thoughtful and hardworking colleague one could wish for.

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# Shabbat, High Holy Day and Festival Services: September and October

Members and Friends have been informed about attending High Holy Day services (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) and the requirement to apply for tickets for in-person attendance.

Erev Shabbat services on Friday evenings are at 6.45pm; Shabbat morning services are at 11.00am.

Times of the High Holy Day and Festival services are specified below. Please note that detailed information about times of Young Children's Services, Family Services and children's activities on both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are in your High Holy Day information booklet, along with details of individual services on Yom Kippur.

Services will be led by either Rabbi Alexandra Wright or Rabbi Igor Zinkov unless otherwise stated.

With the removal of formal limits on social mixing, Members and Friends no longer need to register in advance to attend other services in person, though Non-Members are required to register at [membership@ljs.org](mailto:membership@ljs.org) for security purposes.

We hope you will return to the Sanctuary to experience the warmth and friendship of communal worship in safe surroundings. Your High Holy Day booklet includes information on keeping you safe and minimising the risk of COVID-19. Services will continue to be streamed on YouTube, Zoom and Facebook, and after Shabbat services, congregants are invited to join together for an in-person or Zoom Kiddush.

This information is correct and in line with government guidelines at the time of going to press. The weekly Shalom LJS email provides up-to-date information.

<b>Friday 3 September</b>	
<b>Shabbat 4 September</b> <i>Nitzavim</i>	
<b>Sunday 5 September at 11.00am</b>	Annual pre-High Holy Day Memorial Service at The Liberal Jewish Cemetery, Pound Lane, Willesden NW10
<b>Monday 6 September at 6.45pm</b> <b>Erev Rosh Hashanah</b>	Erev Rosh Hashanah service
<b>Tuesday 7 September at 11.00am</b> <b>Rosh Hashanah</b>	Rosh Hashanah Morning Service Please refer to your High Holy Day information booklet for further information on children and family services/activities
<b>Friday 10 September</b>	
<b>Shabbat 11 September</b> <i>Vayelech/Shabbat Shuvah</i>	Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton is giving the sermon We will be commemorating the 20th anniversary of 9/11
<b>Wednesday 15 September at 7.15pm</b> <b>Kol Nidre</b> <b>(Fast commences at 7.01pm)</b>	Kol Nidre Service Gemma Rosefield (cello) and Tim Farrell (organ) are playing Bruch's <i>Kol Nidre</i>
<b>Thursday 16 September at 11.00am</b> <b>Yom Kippur</b>	Yom Kippur Morning Service Please refer to your High Holy Day information booklet for further information on children and family services/activities, and services throughout the day
<b>Friday 17 September</b>	
<b>Shabbat 18 September</b> <i>Ha'azinu</i>	Naming and blessing of Albert Allison
<b>Monday 20 September at 6.45pm</b> <b>Erev Sukkot</b>	Erev Sukkot Service

<b>Tuesday 21 September at 11.00am</b> <b>Sukkot</b>	Sukkot Festival Morning Service
<b>Friday 24 September</b>	Erev Shabbat Chol Ha-Mo'ed Sukkot
<b>Shabbat 25 September</b>	Shabbat Chol Ha-Mo'ed Sukkot We will be saying farewell to Lysa Schwartz, outgoing Executive Director
<b>Monday 27 September at 6.45pm</b> <b>Erev Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah</b>	Erev Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah Service
<b>Tuesday 28 September at 11.00am</b> <b>Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah</b>	Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah Festival Morning Service
<b>Friday 1 October</b>	Co-led by Bar Mitzvah Eli Wolchover
<b>Shabbat 2 October</b> <b>Bereshit</b>	Bar Mitzvah Eli Wolchover
<b>Friday 8 October</b>	Co-led by Bat Mitzvah Freya Lefebvre Sell
<b>Shabbat 9 October</b> <b>Noach</b>	Bat Mitzvah Freya Lefebvre Sell
<b>Friday 15 October</b>	Co-led by Bat Mitzvah Rachel Kops
<b>Shabbat 16 October</b> <b>Lech L'cha</b>	Bat Mitzvah Rachel Kops
<b>Friday 22 October</b>	
<b>Shabbat 23 October</b> <b>Vayera</b>	Rabbi Rachel Benjamin is giving the sermon
<b>Friday 29 October</b>	
<b>Shabbat 30 October</b> <b>Chayyey Sarah</b>	

## Sir Anish Kapoor to join the LJS for Kristallnacht

Sir Anish Kapoor, the artist commissioned by the LJS to create the extraordinarily moving sculpture in the front foyer of the LJS in memory of victims of the Shoah, will be attending our annual Kristallnacht Service on the evening of Tuesday 9 November 2021. As well as commemorating the 83rd anniversary of the pogrom which swept through Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland on the night of 9–10 November 1938, we will be marking 25 years since the dedication service following the installation of the sculpture in our synagogue.

## Board of Deputies of British Jews Appointments

At the LJS Annual General Meeting, Sue Head, Chairman of Council, confirmed the appointment of Jonathan Bromfield, Harriett Goldenberg, Karen Maxwell (re-election) and Karen Newman (re-election) as Deputies to the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Daniel Mautner was appointed our under-35 representative.

## Bereavements

We extend our sympathy to those who mourn **Joyce Dent**, mother of Simon, Caroline and Louisa.

We also extend our sympathy to Hector Gifford and his family on the death of Hector's father, **Roger Gifford**, to Caroline Villiers and her family on the death of Caroline's mother, **Pauline Parr**, and to Julian Schild and his family on the death of Julian's brother, **David Lucien Schild**.

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

# Council Report

*'Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do no work' (Exodus 23.12)*



The first meeting of the Council following the AGM was held in July, and to this we welcomed Anthony Sefton as a new Trustee, and David Adams, not new to Council, but now the Treasurer of the LJS. The meeting was still by Zoom.

The plan discussed in July anticipated that in September, which is the next time the Council meets following the August break, we would be able to meet at least in a hybrid way, with some of us returning to the building, while others may still be online.

At the meeting, Council discussed the 'right to disconnect'! This might seem an extraordinary statement to be making after a year spent focusing on how to do the opposite and keep us connected with one another. However, because so much of our communication has been online and over the internet, the LJS staff and leading volunteers receive enormous numbers of emails which arrive at any time of the day or night and with an expectation of an immediate response. This has become unsustainable and is affecting people's ability to have time off.

Let me give you an example of the scale of the problem: many of us receive over 100 emails a day. If you consider that a lot of our staff are part-time, as are all the volunteers, you can appreciate the stress that many are experiencing in trying to keep up with answering them at the same time as doing all the other aspects of their jobs.

Hence the need for a policy to safeguard people's mental health and to help them to balance work and leisure. The policy asks everyone to avoid sending and receiving emails on shabbat and Jewish holidays, and for staff, during their annual leave. 'Night owls' are asked to draft their

emails, but to send them in working hours. Please support us in this.

Council was updated on the Covid Appeal. At the time of the July meeting, we had received just over £29,500. You will recall that, as a donation to the Appeal, we had received a wonderful offer of matched funding for the £50,000 IT upgrade. This offer was made anonymously by 'a joint UK and Israeli citizen to mark the inclusion for the first time of Arab representatives in the new Government in Israel'. The offer doubled every pound the LJS raised towards our IT development, to a maximum of £25,000. I hope that by the time you read this, we will have achieved the matched funding; we were very close to this at the time of the meeting. Thank you to all who contributed to it.

The Covid Appeal is still open. As I have written many times, we are concerned about our lack of income and the synagogue's long-term sustainability; membership subscriptions are down substantially. By giving to the Appeal, you are helping us to build for the future.

Council discussed the plans for the High Holy Days with the expectation of services being live-streamed from the sanctuary as well as attended in-person by those who wish to do so. During the past year, we have learnt to be flexible; the services will be creative and uplifting, whether the country is in lockdown or completely opened up.

I wish you all a happy and sweet new year:  
*shana tovah u'metukah*

**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.*

## Alexandra Weiss



“ We joined the LJS 26 years ago and have never looked back. Tony and I got married at the LJS in 1996 with Rabbi David Goldberg officiating, and we were made to feel most welcome. I had come from a United Synagogue background

which didn't sit well with me, so I have enjoyed the inclusivity and opportunity to learn and participate in the services and attend the classes. It was only after I joined the LJS that I learned to read Hebrew properly, and understand what I was reading and why! Our daughter, Caroline, now 23, had her baby blessing at the LJS and went through the ranks of the Religion School, Bat Mitzvah, Kabbalat Torah, and teaching at the classes, as well as attending and latterly leading at LJY-Netzer, and being fortunate to be part of the Israel Tour.

I have enjoyed attending virtual services of the community very much, and am currently serving my second term on Council. I am part of the Community Care Co-ordinating Committee, known as the 4Cs, which includes Bereavement, Keep in Touch, and Phone a Member. In addition I am part of Membership, act as a greeter, and am currently an online shammash. I have welcomed the training that has been offered to me at the LJS so that I am able to undertake these roles.

My hope for this Jewish new year is to see the LJS community back together again in our beautiful building. I am especially keen to meet and greet the children and young people of Rimón. I would really like to see some younger members engaging with volunteering roles. How wonderful it would be for our members and friends to be greeted by young people on a Shabbat morning! ”

## Steven Behr



“ I joined the LJS in 2004 when my wife to be, Vanessa, and I were looking to develop an understanding of Judaism, and to find a suitable synagogue to get married. I had grown up as a member of Edgware Reform, but having moved to

St John's Wood, the LJS was a more suitable option.

After having two children, we moved back to Mill Hill where I had grown up, and we cancelled our LJS membership to once again join a more local synagogue. After a short while we realised we had made a mistake and re-joined the LJS. The rest is history!

We now have four children who are all passing/have passed through the Religion School to learn about their heritage, and also to be part of a community outside their schools.

Whilst working on security I got to know some of the other members of Council, and after being asked, I was happy to put myself forward to join the LJS Council.

The LJS has an ageing membership, and I feel strongly that it is important to build and nurture the pool of young families who will be the future of the synagogue in years to come. I have been on the Council for about five years, and although I am now standing down, it has been a positive experience.

I have worked in the City for over 25 years and have always tried to strike a healthy work-life balance. I recently retired from playing water polo, which meant travelling up and down the country most weekends playing in the British Water Polo League. I have also attended four Maccabiah games playing water polo, which I enjoyed hugely. ”

# 'A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing' (*Ecclesiastes* 3:5)



*These words from the Book of Ecclesiastes (Kohelet, in Hebrew), and read on Sukkot, capture something of the past eighteen months – moments when our urge to embrace others in joy or in sadness has been repressed by the requirement to be alert to the coronavirus. Here, Rabbis Alexandra Wright and Igor Zinkov pose questions to each other, addressing how our festivals can help us reflect on this era and adapt to changing realities in ourselves and in our world. They offer their thoughts on experiencing anew the joy of being together for our festivals.*

**Igor Zinkov (IZ):** Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur encourage us to reflect on the past year and correct our behaviour. What can the LJS community learn from the experience of the last year?

**Alexandra Wright (AW):** 'Correct' is quite a strong word. I have been acutely conscious of the punitive and often harsh circumstances of people's lives over the past 18 months and the huge difficulties and challenges that some people face: physical frailty, loneliness, poverty, worry over parents or children, anxiety.

The God who sees us as recalcitrant and stiff-necked is a God who infantilises his 'children', demanding that we do better, and I'm not sure how helpful that has been to us this past year. From the first lockdown in March 2020, I felt our prayers and sermons needed to offer comfort rather than criticism, compassion rather than blame. It has been an unforgiving time for some, and I think we

can learn from this period to be kind-hearted and loving in the way we are with people.

These deeply introspective festivals of repentance and forgiveness allow us to take a step back from the world and its tumultuous changes and, at the same time, to reach into the deepest part of ourselves, that some people call God, and discover who we really are and how we live.

**AW:** Do you remember your first meaningful Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur? What was significant about it?

**IZ:** As you will be aware, I grew up with no Jewish practice in my life. I knew that I had Jewish ancestry, but it was not reflected in my life. I was 15 when I attended my first Rosh Hashanah. It was not a religious service, but a concert organised by the Jewish community of Chelyabinsk, Russia. Among other Jewish songs, *Avinu Malkeinu* was performed there. I still remember reflecting on the concept of addressing God as 'Our Father, Our King'. I found it fascinating and very meaningful that by addressing God in this way, all people become princes and princesses. It was a very special moment when I felt the empowering nature of Jewish theology for the first time.

So too, Yom Kippur. The ritual of fasting throughout the day, the repetition of blessings and prayers, the music, the history of our people as told in the Musaf service – all this is an embodiment of our Judaism. Through our senses and bodies we encounter in those moments an understanding of ourselves and the world. These are what draw us to the synagogue at this season of repentance.

**IZ:** High Holy Days are often the only period of time when some Jews come to a synagogue. Why do you think so many people choose these festivals over others?

**AW:** Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are powerful festivals. Some might argue that these festivals are the most spiritual of all our festivals – we stand before the Divine Presence to repent, to confess



our sins and pray for forgiveness, we fast, and we encounter our own frailty and mortality.

It is during these festivals that we feel something of the embodiment of our faith and Jewish identity. The sound of the shofar is not a gentle or soothing sound; it shakes us to the core; it's a sound that belongs in a faraway place on a mountain, on rocky crags. But the more attentive we are to its sound, the more it becomes ethereal, a note that moves us beyond words and reason.

**AW: The theology of the High Holy Days often seems classically biblical and rabbinic: the Judge who sits, watching over us, inscribing us in the Book of Life – or not, pardoning us if we merit forgiveness. How do you interpret this theology for our congregation in the 21st century?**

**IZ:** For me, prayers are poetry. Jewish liturgical texts have many references to Biblical and rabbinic literature, and they are always open to interpretation. The Book of Life is one of the metaphors used in the High Holy Days liturgy. On Rosh Hashanah you imagine that two books, The Book of Life and The Book of Death, are opened, and your name is written in one of them. The key to understanding poetic metaphor is that you do not know which book your name is written in.

Many people today read The Book of Success rather than The Book of Life. The criteria of a good life are a good car, well-paid job, and lots of travel. In his book *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared*, Rabbi Alan Lew points out that on Rosh Hashanah, 'This isn't the book we need to read. This isn't the tape we need to watch. We need to watch the tape that has painstakingly recorded everything, including our failures, our dysfunctions, and our heartbreak.'

Perhaps, the metaphor of the Book of Life is to see a holistic picture, to accept yourself as you are, and to remember that the gift of life is given to you for more than individual success.

**IZ: Rabbinic literature gives Sukkot a special name – the festival of our joy. As a rabbi, what brings you joy? What are your favourite parts of your rabbinic life?**

**AW:** I think I probably take my rabbinic life quite seriously. I often surprise myself when I take

up a scroll and find myself dancing with it in the synagogue on Simchat Torah – something I hope we can do again this year. But I think joy is something more profound in some ways – it is a deep sense of gratitude and a feeling that the heart is full and overflowing.

When I see how individuals and families are moved by being part of the LJS, how children feel utterly at home with us – these things bring me great happiness. I care deeply about Liberal Judaism, about the ethical and spiritual framework it offers for us to live intentional and purposeful lives. And there is a moment, after I have built my Sukkah in the garden and I step inside with a cup of tea first thing in the morning and can hear the birds around me and feel the warmth of the sun through the *s'kach* (foliage) on its roof, when I feel that I need absolutely nothing else in the world to make me feel content.

**AW: Sukkot and Simchat Torah can sometimes seem like 'afterthoughts' to the major festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Yet they are major festivals. Are there ways you think we could involve our congregation more fully in these very beautiful and uplifting festivals?**

**IZ:** Sometimes I think that we live in a world where personal virtues are more important than collective ones. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are focused on individual reflection and repentance. Sukkot and Simchat Torah reflect the message of communal success and celebrate collective achievements. I hope that one day, our worldwide society will recognise the importance of mutual responsibility for all people, and it will be reflected in the importance and attendance of Sukkot and Simchat Torah.



Building a sukkah, Amsterdam Haggadah, 1695 (licensed by Bridgeman Education)

# The LJS Yom Kippur Appeal 5782/2021: Our Chosen Charities

*“In the Bible, ‘tzedakah’ refers to an individual act of justice or righteousness ... ‘tzedek’ is the broad vision of justice, whereas ‘tzedekah’ refers to any act that manifests a commitment to this vision. In later Jewish texts, ‘tzedakah’ begins to refer more specifically to money or other material goods given to alleviate poverty. Still built into Jewish law is the understanding that giving money to the poor should be a means of restoring the justice of the world.” (‘Where Justice Dwells; Rabbi Jill Jacobs)*

As is our custom in choosing which three charities to support for our Yom Kippur Appeal, we have selected a UK charity, an Anglo-Jewish charity, and an Israeli charity: **The Cardinal Hume Centre**, focuses on individuals and families on the cusp of poverty or who have been made homeless; **Jewish Women’s Aid** provides a range of services for women and their children who are suffering directly or indirectly from domestic abuse; **Neve-Shalom – Wahat-al-Salaam** is the Jewish-Arab village in Israel, whose **School for Peace** was burnt down by arsonists in September 2020, and our contribution will help towards its rebuilding.

## The Cardinal Hume Centre



The LJS’s local charity, located in Westminster, was founded by the Catholic Cardinal, Basil Hume, in 1986. It supports young people and families, giving people the access they need to overcome the high levels of poverty and homelessness in Westminster.

The Centre works with individuals and families at risk of losing their homes, or already homeless. Some are ‘sofa-surfing’, others living in bed and

breakfast accommodation or on the streets. The Centre also provides a safe place for unaccompanied asylum-seeker children.

The Centre’s hostel of 32 bedrooms over three floors, with a common room, large kitchen, library, quiet room and games room, provides a temporary home for young people aged between 16 and 24. They may be individuals referred by Westminster Council or young people who simply turn up at the front door.

As well as offering young people a safe space to live, the Centre provides mentoring and support, helping them to find apprenticeships or jobs, or encouraging them into further education. Approximately 90 young people find accommodation in the hostel throughout the course of the year, with an average length of stay of twelve months. Key workers operate around the clock, helping young people to reconnect with their families or to find their own accommodation.

In the coming months, the Centre will repurpose two staff offices to create two additional bed spaces for young people at risk of homelessness. These will be self-contained units, fully accessible for people using wheelchairs, with their own shower room, toilet and kitchenette. Our contribution will go towards this emergency accommodation for homeless young people. <https://www.cardinalhumecentre.org.uk/>

## Jewish Women’s Aid (JWA)



The LJS’s Anglo-Jewish charity was founded thirty years ago by two social workers who perceived a need to help Jewish women suffering from



domestic abuse. The charity now provides seven core services in Manchester and London to women who experience abuse and their children. One in four women in the Jewish community suffers abuse – emotional, psychological, financial, physical, sexual or coercive. Women of all ages are helped: JWA's oldest client is in her eighties and the charity supports teenagers who are in damaging relationships.

The freephone helpline is the first port of call for anybody who self-refers, and is staffed by 50 volunteers. The past year has seen a significant spike in the number of women, trapped at home during lockdowns, needing support; 545 women have been supported over the past 12 months.

JWA provides an advocacy and safety team of workers who have been connecting with women via Zoom. The team works with other agencies to provide emergency accommodation for women whose lives are at risk or for whom life has become unbearable. 'The Courageous Project' is a service for young people aged 14 and upwards who are experiencing abuse.

The counselling team of 20 trained counsellors work with individuals for up to two years and oversee the children's services which provide one-to-one support for children. This used to be in school, but has been on Zoom over the past year. Children are provided with tablets or laptops and a box of toys. Counsellors work intensively with children to help them process what they have witnessed at home.

Education and awareness raising are two further core services provided by JWA. Girls and boys in schools are asked what makes for a good relationship between partners. The team goes into Jewish and non-Jewish schools where there is a significant intake of Jewish pupils. The 'Safer Dating' project is geared towards 16–25 year-olds in sixth forms and on university campuses. JWA trains the *madrichim* of our youth movement, LJY-Netzer, as well as professionals who come into contact with those who have been abused.

The Dina Service is a three-tier sexual violence service that provides a free phone (separate) helpline, advocacy and specialist counselling.

Our contribution will go towards the children's services. <https://www.jwa.org.uk/>

## The School for Peace at Neve Shalom – Wahat-al-Salaam (NSWAS)



The School for Peace, the LJS's Israeli charity, is a centre for conflict resolution and education, which is part of the Arab-Jewish village NSWAS in the middle of Israel. The village itself is home to Jews and Arabs who live together purposefully, in equality and peace. Since 1979, the School for Peace has brought together Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab professionals, including educators, architects, urban planners, mental health professionals, environmentalists and lawyers in inter-group encounters. The School's focus since 1982 has been on youth encounters, connecting high school students from both groups together for the first time in a structured and safe environment. The School for Peace remains one of the few peace organisations in Israel running joint programmes with Palestinian partner organisations.

Overall, more than 75,000 graduates of its programmes form a significant minority section of the population, and there are few NGOs that do not have School for Peace alumni on their staff.

On 1 September 2020, arsonists set fire to the Peace School and destroyed it completely. The School relocated to the library in the village. That too was set on fire, but luckily not completely destroyed. NSWAS is embarking on a \$1.2 million building project to house the new School for Peace. Our Yom Kippur Appeal contributions will go towards funding materials for the interior of the building, including new technology, destroyed in the fire. <https://sfpeace.org/>

A short video from each charity will be available on the LJS YouTube channel <https://tinyurl.com/LJSyoutube> and a full version of the Yom Kippur Appeal can be viewed on [www.ljs.org](http://www.ljs.org) from 17 September. Thank you for your generosity.

# Community News

## LJS Picnic in Regent's Park

A big thank-you to Sue Bolsom for suggesting a highly successful way of allowing congregants to meet and socialise legally during the lockdown.

Drizzle and picnic both commenced at 4.00pm on Saturday 3 July. Happily, the couple of dozen picnickers far outlasted the brief drizzle, the last of the revellers strolling home in the evening sun, reflecting on great conversation, amity and fun.

After the Covid social drought, congregants, as well as our two Rabbis, met, laughed and chatted freely in Regent's Park. As usual for a Jewish gathering, more points of view than people were present, which led to fascinating conversations.

Unusually, food and drink couldn't be shared. Picnic rugs spread, children joyously running around, toddlers toddling, adults mingling – the community interacting in person at last. It was particularly good to be able to meet new and old congregants across all age groups. We are such a diverse international community, which makes sharing our different backgrounds and lives so interesting.

*Hazel Summerfield*

**Note: The next Picnic in the Park is 3.00pm on Shabbat 4 September. Details in Shalom LJS.**

## The Out & About Club

The first in-person meeting of the Out & About Club since the pandemic took place on Tuesday 27 July, and all went very well. Rabbi Alex gave a lovely welcome speech to everyone, and recited the *shehecheyanu* blessing.



Out & About Club members enjoying being back together

Members also enjoyed a return to normality on their annual outing to Worthing on 1 August. As always, a good time was had by all.

## 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](mailto:a.shafritz@ljs.org) or by telephone on 020 7286 5181.

## Video and Tea

The monthly Video and Tea Group has returned to the LJS to the great pleasure of participants and our dedicated band of volunteers.

The 2021 programme continues on the fourth Wednesday afternoon of the month.

**Forthcoming screenings:**

**22 September:** *Show Boat*

**27 October:** *On Golden Pond*

No need to book. Doors open 1.30pm for a 2.00pm start. After the film we serve a delicious tea followed by our famous homemade coffee ice-cream. The subscription is still only £2.00. Safety guidelines will be provided nearer the time, including any requirement to wear a mask.



Video and Tea regulars resuming their monthly get-togethers and film screenings



# The Learning Circle

Adult education classes at the LJS

## Welcome to the New Year's Learning Circle programme

We have a rich programme on offer which includes preparation for the High Holy Days, Hebrew classes at all levels, and opportunities for learning and discussion about Judaism and Jewish life. In October we begin our latest study course in exploring interfaith relations, and also launch Chavruta – a programme for learning with study companions. In January there will be a new class for members wishing to have an adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

If you would like advice, including which level of Hebrew is suitable, please contact our Education Co-ordinator, Debi Penhey: [education@ljs.org](mailto:education@ljs.org)

### Dates of classes

**Tuesday classes** (apart from Exploring Judaism) **run 5 October – 14 December**, with a break for half-term on 26 October. (This start date is later than usual because of the dates of the High Holy Days and other Festivals.)

**Exploring Judaism classes are on Tuesday evenings and run 14 September – 14 December.**

**Thursday evening classes run 7 October – 16 December.**

**Shabbat morning classes run 11 September – 4 December**, with a break for half-term on 23 and 30 October.

Please note that some classes may not have a half-term break, and your tutor will advise accordingly.

## Location and times of classes

In these uncertain times of Covid, some classes may be online only, and others hybrid – that is, a mixture of Zoom and in-person. Unless classes are specifically stated as being held online, the plan is that they will be hybrid. However, please check in advance by looking at the LJS website, the weekly email Shalom LJS or by contacting Debi Penhey.

The precise time of classes may be different from those given in this newsletter, so although they are correct at the time of going to press, please check in advance. Note that all Shabbat morning classes will finish before the start of the Shabbat morning services at 11.00am.

## High Holy Day Preparation

**Tuesday 31 August 8.00 – 9.15pm**

**'The Two Haftarat for Rosh Hashanah: Fulfilling God's word'**

Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton and Rabbi Alexandra Wright will compare the two alternative Haftarat for Rosh Hashanah – the birth of Samuel in I Samuel 1 and the call to repentance and God's willingness to pardon in Isaiah 55. Do these passages – one narrative, one prophetic – share any common themes? How can they help us find meaning and value in our *Yamim Nora'im* (Days of Awe)?

**Tuesday 14 September 8.00pm – 9.15pm**

**'Mystical Interpretations of the Book of Jonah'**

Dr Alinda Damsma, Lecturer in Biblical Hebrew in the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College London (UCL), will focus on mystical interpretations of the Book of Jonah as we think about what the journey of Yom Kippur means for us.

## Sukkot term classes

**TUESDAY MORNINGS 11.15 – 12.30pm**

### Tuesday Texts

This friendly group is led by our Rabbis and Dr Dov Softi. We study biblical and rabbinic texts, modern poetry and short stories, as well as Jewish history, and we 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 (on Zoom)**

This course aims to increase students' understanding of Biblical Hebrew. The class reads key chapters in the Book of Joshua, and discusses the interactions of the text and how it fits into the Biblical Hebrew canon. We study the grammatical structure of sentences as well as extend 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 Absolute Beginners

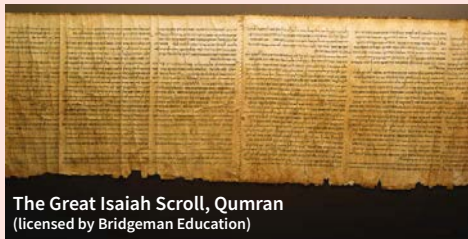
**Tutor: Susannah Alexander (on Zoom)**

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, £15.00), this class will enable you to unlock the mystery of the Hebrew letters and start reading. Absolutely no previous knowledge is required, just regular attendance of this friendly and supportive class.

### Understanding Hebrew Grammar

**Tutor: Dr Dov Softi (on Zoom)**

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 from the LJS, £34.00) 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.



The Great Isaiah Scroll, Qumran  
(licensed by Bridgeman Education)

## 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 gain confidence. Our reading of *Bereishit* (Genesis) is guided and at your own pace, with questions about the language and texts encouraged. As you gain skills and understanding, you will be on the path towards greater enjoyment and participation in synagogue services, using the Siddur, Bible reading and Jewish life cycle, for all of which Hebrew is the key.

## Narrative and Counter-Narrative: The Story of Joseph

**Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright**

From the very beginning of the story of Joseph, we are aware of an undertow to the plot. Jacob is 'settled' in the land of Canaan, but his 'settled' status is about to be overturned by the loss of his favourite child. His brothers plan to kill him, but then sell him to traffickers, telling their father he has been 'torn to pieces' by a wild animal. Joseph is taken to Egypt, escaping the toxic jealousy of his brothers. But is this where he can flourish, or is there a poignant awareness of his own losses as he experiences years of imprisonment and then a sudden rise to power? The text is studied in Hebrew, and we welcome readers with different levels of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

## 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>

14 September: Exploring Rosh Hashanah  
 21 September: Exploring Yom Kippur  
 28 September: *No class – Simchat Torah*  
 5 October: Exploring Sukkot and Simchat Torah  
 12 October: What is Judaism? Jewish Values and Beliefs Overview  
 19 October: The Jewish Calendar, Rosh Chodesh and Shabbat  
 26 October: *Half-term – no class*  
 2 November: Jewish Symbols  
 9 November: Kristallnacht Remembrance Service  
 16 November: Exploring Kashrut (Jewish dietary laws)  
 23 November: Exploring Chanukkah  
 30 November: Jewish History Overview  
 7 December: Presentations from students  
 14 December: Synagogue and Home: Home Rituals and Prayers

### THURSDAY EVENINGS 6.30 – 7.30pm

#### Classical Hebrew for Post-Beginners

**Tutor: Susannah Alexander (on Zoom)**

This is a fun and supportive class which began with Jonathan Romain's *Signs and Wonders*, and has now moved on to grammar, liturgy and the Bible. New students who would like practice in reading and understanding key prayers are also welcome.

The class is a continuation of the Absolute Beginners class that began in March 2021 and will continue until December 2021.

### SHABBAT MORNINGS 9.45 – 10.45am

#### 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 and 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.

#### The True Image of Female Biblical Characters

**Tutor: Nitza Spiro**

In response to student request, our learning this year will revolve around the true characters of women in the Bible, understanding them through sensitive analysis of the texts using linguistics, psychology and history, and making comparisons with ancient Middle Eastern cultures, leading to surprising revelations!

The texts are prepared by participants during the preceding week, reading them in class in Hebrew, but discussing them in English.

#### Learning with Texts

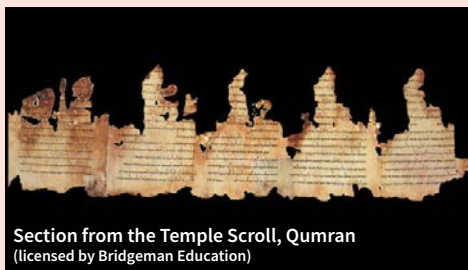
**Facilitator: Michael Romain**

This class addresses 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. Classes will be led by our Rabbis and by members of the class. All are welcome. If you have any questions, please contact Michael Romain: [romain@netgates.co.uk](mailto:romain@netgates.co.uk)

#### 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.



Section from the Temple Scroll, Qumran  
 (licensed by Bridgeman Education)



# New course in exploring interfaith relations

**Tuesday evenings 8.10pm – 9.30pm**

## Judaism and Islam: A Shared History

with LJS Scholar in Residence, Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton and our guest Muslim lecturer, Dr Harith Ramli from Edge Hill University

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

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

Further dates in 2022: 25 January, 1 March, 10 May, 14 June

Please note that the lecture on 14 June, the culmination of the course, is the Rabbi Dr David J. Goldberg Memorial Lecture, and there will be a special reception in honour of our late Rabbi Emeritus.

## New study initiative: Chavruta – Learning with Study Companions

*Join in this exciting study opportunity!*

Traditionally, Jews study in small groups, a method known as Chavruta ('Companionship'). Through this method, two or three people endeavour to understand the meaning of a specific text, and discuss how to apply it to their own lives.

The aim of Chavruta is to provide a platform for establishing meaningful relationships through learning among LJS Members and Friends of all ages from 18 to 120. Chavruta Lead, Rabbi Igor Zinkov, will split all participants into small groups and introduce them to each other. Once a month participants will receive a selection of texts and related questions that might include Jewish traditional texts, passages from classic, modern or academic literature, or poetry.

You will meet your Chavruta group at a mutually convenient time for an hour-long meeting virtually or in person, read and discuss the texts, and answer the questions. You should feel free to discuss any other texts and topics of interest to you.

After the first two sessions you will have a feedback session, and each participant will decide whether to continue studying in the same group or to join other study companions.

**Look out for information about Chavruta, including two presentations given by Rabbi Igor Zinkov:**

**Thursday 7 October at 7.30pm**

**Sunday 17 October at 11.00am**

If you'd like to attend one of these presentations to find out more about the project before you register, please contact Rabbi Igor Zinkov:

[i.zinkov@ljs.org](mailto:i.zinkov@ljs.org)

## New courses starting in 2022

**Tuesday evenings  
7.00 – 8.00pm  
from 11 January  
Absolute Beginners  
Hebrew**

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

**Tuesday evenings  
8.10 – 9.15pm  
from 11 January  
Adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah  
class**

Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright

This class is for adults who would like to celebrate a Bar or Bat Mitzvah either individually or as part of a group. The sessions will build on existing Hebrew and Jewish knowledge by studying different passages from the Torah, and students will learn how to construct a D'var Torah (their own interpretation of a Torah portion) using the text itself, medieval commentators, midrash and contemporary commentaries.

# Rimon Corner

## *Matt Turchin, Rimon Lead, looks back at the end of the school year*

The final few weeks of the final term of 5781 proved to be eventful. On 12 June, the LJS community was treated to a service with our KT students. Under the tireless tutelage of their teacher Danny Lang, these teenagers had rounded out their Rimon experience this year in a vastly changed world, with lessons completely online and reimagined to suit their interests and goals. The service was punctuated by a beautiful video sermon in which the students expressed their chosen theme of study: *bal tashchit* – the Jewish concept of ‘do not destroy’ – which is rooted in the ancient rules of protecting fruit-bearing trees in a time of war as commanded in Deuteronomy 20:19-20. Each student presented at least one image as the backdrop for their spoken messages about the various ways in which humans have negatively impacted our environment through disregarding this extremely important mitzvah.

As the final day of Rimon arrived, our students prepared for their own presentations to showcase a few of their achievements over the course of the year. We were spoilt for choice! Whether through music, art, written word, or a combination of methods, our Rimon students made their

teachers and families proud. In response to these presentations, one parent wrote:

*‘My husband and I loved watching the presentations from all the classes. It has been such a pleasure for us as a family to join Rimon, and especially with classes online it’s been a bonus for me to see what they’re learning about and how kind and thoughtful their teachers are. It feels like a privilege to be part of this community. Thank you and the team so much for such wonderful lessons even in these strange times.’*

And as the final day of Rimon came to a close, students and teachers were treated to an online cookery session with *kitah vav* teacher Susannah Alexander, in which she demonstrated how to make flatbread. This was the perfect symbol to represent our year of online learning, as no Jewish meal is complete without bread on the table, and the joyous conversation which accompanies its consumption.



Max and Michael Josefs present their flatbread. (It looks as though they’ve already taken a bite!)

## *We wish these young members of the LJS a very happy birthday in September and October.*

### **September**

Aman Abib  
Albert Allison  
Edoardo Armstrong  
Brooke Behr  
Max Daals  
Felix Freeman  
Max Freeman  
Cedric Ginsberg  
Leila Goldstone  
Joshua Gulperin  
Rachel Kops  
Talia Ting Hui Kriegel

Electra Levi-French

Bea Matthews  
Spencer Menaker  
Dinwiddie  
Daniel Radin  
Brooke Shipman  
Claudia Spanier  
Zach Wald

### **October**

Raphael Abib  
Ethan Abolins-Loguiiko  
Eva Abolins-Loguiiko

Freddie Albert  
Sophia Baneth  
Edward Boizard  
Eliza Davidson  
Shoshana Davidson  
Gideon De Winter  
Harry Delew  
Katie Delew  
Raphael Dellal  
Katherine Falk  
Ruth Forster  
Charles Grainger  
Aida Hassan

Michael Josefs  
Freya Lefebvre Sell  
Alma Munthe Sforza  
Jacob Pleass  
Lola Pollak  
Rachel Posner  
Zoë Rushbrook  
Louis Sellier  
Bae Shipman  
Meela Shipman  
Michael Sokel  
Eve Spearman-Walters  
Josh Wald

## Mazal tov!



On 8 July, Emily Cohen and James Fryer (*above*) received a special rabbinic blessing in the Sanctuary following their marriage. Congratulations to Emily and James and their families.



Congratulations, too, to Rabbi Igor Zinkov and Rabbi Deborah Blausten (*above*) who are engaged to be married. Their wedding will take place next summer.

## New Executive Director



**Jonathan Bruck** has been appointed as our next Executive Director, taking over from Lysa Schwartz when she retires this autumn.

Jonathan has over 20 years' experience of working in the not-for-profit sector, having held positions at Jewish Care, Sport England and most recently the Anne Frank Trust, where he was Director of Resources. He has leadership and management

experience in organisational development, finance, governance and growth. Having been part of a membership organisation, he has worked closely with members to ensure they are listened to and supported.

In his spare time, when he is not driving his 16- and 14-year-old children to various events, Jonathan is a Trustee of a sports charity, coaches children's cricket and is a school governor.

Jonathan will officially take on his role at the LJS from the beginning of October, though he will be with us for an induction period prior to that. In the next newsletter we will have the opportunity to thank Lysa for all she has done for us as Executive Director, and bid her a fond farewell. In the meantime, we extend a warm welcome to Jonathan, who is very much looking forward to working with us.

Final copy date for the November/December 2021 issue of *LJS News* is Monday 27 September. Copy and ideas should be emailed to: [newsletter@ljs.org](mailto:newsletter@ljs.org)  
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liberal judaism

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Christine and the late Sam Stevenson

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### Rabbi

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### Scholar in Residence

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Aviva Shafritz

### Director of Music

Cathy Heller Jones

### Organist

Tim Farrell

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Editor: Judith King  
Designers: Nick and George Newton

### In case of bereavement:

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