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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS News



Celebrating 120 years of Liberal Judaism

Liberal Judaism is 120 years old – the age reached by Moses. This milestone was marked by a special Shabbat morning service on 19 February hosted by the LJS with members of 25 Liberal Jewish (LJ) communities participating both in person and online.

In his introduction, Rabbi Igor Zinkov said this was a moment for remembrance and celebration. Woven into the service – a service full of music, with a D'var Torah and Torah reading by Rabbi Dr Charles Middleburgh, and a special Prayer of Thanksgiving from Rabbi Alexandra Wright – were contributions by LJ leaders who charted the history of the movement from 1902 to the present day. Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein outlined the original mission of the movement 'to provide the means for deepening the spirit among members of the community who are not in sympathy with the present synagogue services'. He paid tribute to Dr Israel Mattuck, Lily Montagu and Claude Montefiore who imbued the movement with its fundamental values including that of social justice. Rabbi Charley Baginsky quoted Rabbi John Rayner's belief that unity in diversity was the only unity worth having, and she spoke of LJ's continued commitment to providing a home for future Jewish stories as we look forward to the next 120 years.

Small photos top row l-r: Rabbi René Pfertzel, Rabbi Alexandra Wright, Rabbi Anna Wolfson, Paul Silver-Myer. Lower row l-r: Rabbi Rachel Benjamin, Rabbi Charley Baginsky, Rabbi Igor Zinkov, Karen Newman. Large photo l-r: Rabbi Yuval Keren, Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein, Kathy Shock, Rabbi Dr Charles Middleburgh Photos by Peter Singer

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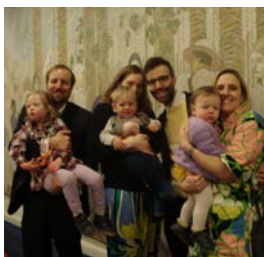
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Mazal tov!



The naming and blessing of Lizzie Lewy took place on 1 January. Lizzie, born 1 October 2021, is the daughter and firstborn child of Anna and Ben Lewy, and is pictured here aged three months.

On 22 January the naming and blessing of cousins Isaac Sternberg and Stella Sternberg-Wilson took place. In this family picture, Isaac is in the middle of the front row with his big sister, Leora, and parents Lizzie and Daniel Sternberg, and Stella is on the right with her parents Sarah Sternberg and Matthew Wilson.



Many congratulations to the families of little Lizzie, Isaac and Stella!

Celebrating Purim: Behind Our Masks

6.45pm, Wednesday 16 March

Please join us – in person or online – for a celebration of Purim: a reading of the Megillah (the Book of Esther) followed by a lively discussion on roles and identities in the Purim story and how these play out in our daily lives. Rabbis Alexandra Wright and Igor Zinkov are joined by guest speakers, Shoshana Bloom and LJS member Dr Rachel Knightley. All details, including how to book, are in the Shalom LJS weekly email and on the LJS website: www.ljs.org

Communal Seder

6.30pm, Saturday 16 April

We are delighted to let you know that the LJS will be hosting an in-person Communal Seder for the first time in three years on Saturday 16 April at 6.30pm, led by Rabbis Alexandra Wright and Igor Zinkov. The event will also be on Zoom. Full details with booking instructions are available in the Shalom LJS weekly email and LJS website: www.ljs.org

For updated information including services and Covid guidance, please see Shalom LJS or the LJS website.

Memorial Service for the Loss of a Child or the Loss of the Prospect of a Child

3.00pm, Sunday 24 April

Do join us for this communal memorial service, held at the LJS under the auspices of both the LJS and West London Synagogue, which is for those who wish to mark the loss of child, or the loss of the prospect of a child – a recent loss, or one that has stayed with you for many years. Friends and family are all welcome. For more details or if you would like a confidential conversation, contact Rabbi Alexandra Wright: a.wright@ljs.org or 07976 930112

Yom Ha-Shoah – Holocaust Remembrance Day

7.00pm, Wednesday 27 April

Please join us for this special service with an address by our guest speaker, the esteemed philosopher, Simon May, Visiting Professor, King's College London. Professor May is the author of *How to be a Refugee* – the extraordinary story of how his family hid their Jewish origins to survive the Nazis.

Bereavements

We offer our sympathy to those who mourn:

Glenda Baim, mother of Susan and Michael

Suzanne (Sue) Paul, widow of Yakov Paul (former LJS Director of Music), mother of Sandra, Marilyn and Debbie, and sister of Jeffrey

Lilian Slowe, wife of Robert, and mother of Rosanna, Jeannetta and Emeline

Barbara Sweetman, aunt of Michele and David

Daniel Wolff, husband of Tessa, and father of Michael and Jacqueline

We also extend our sympathy to Amy Gelfer and her family on the death of Amy's sister, **Genna Aboody**; to Susan Crane, Karen Newman and Lily Crane-Newman on the death of Susan's father, **Benjamin Field Crane**; and to Aviva Shafritz and her family on the death of Aviva's father, **Michael Morris**.

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

Services: March and April (in person and online)

Friday evening services are held at 6.45pm and Shabbat morning services at 11.00am.
Unless otherwise stated, either Rabbi Alexandra Wright or Rabbi Igor Zinkov will lead the service.

Friday 4 March	Co-led by Nora Bielawski Bat Mitzvah
Shabbat 5 March <i>P'kudey</i>	Nora Bielawski Bat Mitzvah
Friday 11 March	Co-led by Harry Delew Bar Mitzvah
Shabbat 12 March <i>Vayikra</i>	Harry Delew Bar Mitzvah
Wednesday 16 March 6.45 pm	Erev Purim with Shoshana Bloom, Dr Rachel Knightley and the Rabbis
Friday 18 March	
Shabbat 19 March <i>Tzav/Zachor</i>	L'Dor va-Dor Service Lunch for students of the Exploring Judaism and Continuing our Jewish Journey classes at 1.00 pm.
Friday 25 March	Led by Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton; this service is in conjunction with the Oxford Three Faiths Encounter (see page 16)
Shabbat 26 March <i>Shemini/Parah</i>	Judith Diamond Bat Mitzvah
Friday 1 April	
Shabbat 2 April <i>Tazria/Ha-Chodesh/Rosh Chodesh Nisan</i>	
Friday 8 April	
Shabbat 9 April <i>M'tzora/Ha-Gadol</i>	Lunch and event for new Members at 1.00pm
Friday 15 April	Erev Pesach/1st Night Seder – please note there will be no Erev Pesach service at the LJS this evening. If you would like to join a home Seder with LJS Members, please contact Rabbi Alexandra Wright: a.wright@ljs.org
Shabbat 16 April <i>Pesach</i>	1st Day Pesach
Saturday 16 April 6.30 pm at the LJS	Communal Seder – please see page 2 and the LJS website: www.ljs.org
Thursday 21 April 6.45 pm	Erev 7th Day Pesach
Friday 22 April 11.00 am	7th Day Pesach – Morning Service
Friday 22 April	The service will be led by this year's Kabbalat Torah class
Shabbat 23 April <i>Acharey-Mot</i>	The service will be led by this year's Kabbalat Torah class
Sunday 24 April 3.00 pm	Memorial Service for the Loss of a Child or the Loss of the Prospect of a Child – please see page 2. This service is open to both Members and Non-Members.
Wednesday 27 April 7.00 pm	Yom Ha-Shoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) with guest speaker, Professor Simon May
Friday 29 April	Co-led by Jacob Rushbrook Bar Mitzvah
Shabbat 30 April <i>K'doshim</i>	Jacob Rushbrook Bar Mitzvah

Council Report

'For I know the plans I have for you ... plans to give you hope and a future.'
(Jeremiah 29:11)



We have been planning! Beginning last autumn, the LJS volunteers, committees, rabbis, and staff have been involved in developing a three-year Strategic Plan which covers all areas of synagogue life and

centres around our Vision and Values.

This has been a testing period for the synagogue, and therefore the aim of this Strategic Plan is consolidation and sustainable growth with a focus on putting the congregation at the centre of all we do.

We began by analysing our resources. These are considerable and represent the strengths on which our Strategic Plan will build: for example, our rabbinic team, the LJS building, our Council, the dedicated volunteers and staff, our excellent education programmes.

However, we also face many challenges such as the costly maintenance of the building and the need to attract new members and retain those we have.

At our recent meeting, the Council discussed the targets we have set ourselves for the next three years. I should like to share some examples of these with you, using the four headings from the Strategic Plan:

Spirituality Our main objective for this year is to review the rabbinic and educational needs of the LJS and analyse how we can best meet them. For example, we will consider whether we need a third, part-time rabbi to work with young individuals and families.

Learning The immediate priority is to look at the leadership requirements for children and young teenagers in Rimom Religion School. As well as this,

there is to be a focus on the curriculum and on refining and expanding the education programme.

Adult education forms a key element of what we do, and we will be building on lessons learnt over the last two years by expanding hybrid learning through our use of technology.

Community Our objective is to attract new members and to provide stimulating programmes to retain our existing membership. The future of the LJS is with younger people and with young families, and we know we must focus on them. We are aiming to use the LJS database, Shulcloud, to better understand our membership demographics to inform our decisions.

Community is also concerned with care of others, and our intention this year is to restart many of the activities that had to close because of Covid restrictions, such as Singing for the Mind. Involvement in the wider community is important too and there are plans, for example, to restart the large in-person meetings of the Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families.

Sustainability Because we are focusing on increasing our membership, we have decided to employ a Communications, Marketing and Fundraising member of staff to target this key area.

Our Strategic Plan will guide the direction of the LJS; we will monitor it regularly and adapt it in line with our developing needs. The document itself will be available shortly for you to read through a link on Shalom LJS.

I also would like to thank Daniel Sternberg who has been Council's Honorary Lawyer for the last few years and who is standing down because of his appointment as District Judge at Westminster Magistrates' Court. Daniel has advised us on many occasions, and we now congratulate him on his new role. He has been replaced by Jacob Gifford-Head who attended our meeting in February. We are grateful that he has taken on this task.

Sue Head, Chairman of Council

Introducing LJS Staff Members

Following our series in which we introduced you to members of the LJS Council, we now present profiles of two members of LJS staff who play key roles in our synagogue.

Chloe Gill-Khan



“ I work at the office, where our team is responsible for a wide range of work from membership, education, community care, lettings to bereavements. I compile Shalom LJS and Thought for the Week. I also work on the

website and help with preparations for Shabbat morning services. I have been working here since November 2021, and how I came to this job deserves a separate section! I was a Research Fellow in Australia for three years, working as an academic in the field of colonial and post-colonial research. When I came back to London in 2016, I made the gradual but right decision to leave the profession, and to focus on my increasing interest in the Abrahamic religions, with particular emphasis on Jewish and Hebrew Studies.

Whilst working at a Middle Eastern bookshop and publisher, I learnt Qur’anic Arabic, Aramaic, Ancient Hebrew inscriptions and Biblical Hebrew. During this time, I made friends with a lovely gentleman who used to come to the bookshop, John Irwin, a member of the LJS, who encouraged me to visit the synagogue. I finally came when it opened last summer.

I still remember feeling in awe of the Sanctuary, learning about Liberal Judaism, and befriending so many people who made me feel welcome and part of the congregation. My experiences here profoundly influenced my ideas about religion and worship, and what it means to practise one’s faith in our modern times. Rabbi Alexandra Wright informed me about the job, and here I am. It is a privilege to learn even more about all the wonderful things that the LJS does, and how it serves the community.

In my spare time, I write articles that can be read on my website www.chloegillkhan.com. This year, I look forward to seeing what inspires my thinking! ”

Aviva Shafritz



“ As Community Care Co-ordinator at the LJS, there are two main parts to my job. First, I support congregants facing difficulties – illness; concerns about children; bereavement; the challenges of old age, and more. Working

closely with the rabbis, I look at how we can best support our members, what ways the LJS can assist, and also when sign-posting to other caring organisations can help. Secondly, I work with a large group of wonderful volunteers, members of the LJS and others, who run different activities and keep in touch with congregants through visits and phone calls. I support them with induction, training and regular meetings.

As a social worker by training, all my working life had been in the public sector, and then I stumbled across an advert in *The Jewish Chronicle* for this post at the LJS. That was nearly 8 years ago and proved an excellent move for me. I appreciate the ethos of *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness) at the LJS and how as a team we do our best to make that happen.

In March 2020 the pandemic turned everything upside down. We hastily set up an emergency team of volunteers and rabbis to tackle the crisis, aptly named *Nechushtan*, the Hebrew for ‘Cobra’. Many members of the community offered to become volunteers as we tried to support our congregants in the most challenging of times.

Being Jewish is an important part of my life. I grew up at The New London Masorti Synagogue in Abbey Road, and I belong to a Reform community and also to a Chavurah (Jewish friendship group). My children were much involved in Jewish Youth groups. One lives in Israel while the other is busily taking part in progressive Jewish activities in Washington DC. ”

The Operation Reinhard Camps

To mark Yom Ha-Shoah, Joan Salter tells us about three camps constructed in 1942 to exterminate Polish Jews – camps where her own family members perished.

Most people with only the remotest knowledge of the Holocaust will have heard of Auschwitz; yet the Operation Reinhard camps, where 1.7 million Jews were killed, are barely heard of, although readers may well recognise the names of the individual extermination camps of Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor. I, whose extended family members nearly all died in the first two of these camps, only heard their names in 2005 when I first visited Tarnow. This had been my father's home until he emigrated to the West in the 1920s leaving behind his parents and siblings. My mother emigrated to France from Warsaw, and they met and married in Paris in the mid-1930s. As Polish Jews living in France under Nazi occupation, we were targets for deportation, but we survived and were reunited in the UK in 1947.

Post-war, when my traumatised parents spoke of the complete extermination of both their extended families, the names of these camps were never mentioned. So my assumption at that time was that all my family had died in Auschwitz. When my father died, Auschwitz was the name I inscribed on his memorial headstone as the place where my grandparents and their descendants had perished.

Operation Reinhard

The plan for the 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question' was formulated at the Wannsee Conference in January 1942 – the slaughter of all Jews from the tiniest new-born to the eldest. After over two years of German occupation, there were still 2,284,000 Jews living on Polish soil in the central regions known as the General Government. To achieve the objective of the Final Solution, three camps were built specifically as 'efficient' killing centres with stationary gas chambers – the Operation Reinhard camps.

Belzec

The site of the Belzec camp, 114 miles south-east of Lublin, is now marked by a huge mound of volcanic rock surrounded by steps, each of

which marks the date of a specific transport from individual towns and villages.



Here, in June 1942, 10,000 Jews from my father's hometown, Tarnow, were transported and taken straight from the trains to the 'showers'. In the Jewish tradition, it is the men who recite the prayer for the dead. But as a Liberal Jew, and as the only one left of my family, during my visit I recite Kaddish for my family. I feel their presence and approval as I light my memorial candle and pray for their souls at the memorial wall of names.

Treblinka



I then travelled to my mother's home city, Warsaw, and onwards 80km north-east to Treblinka, the death camp where those who survived the ghetto were transported to their deaths.

There, alone, I walk through the monuments commemorating the murdered Jews. I light a candle at the Warsaw stone and say Kaddish for my mother's family.

In England I visit the graves of my parents and tell them I have honoured our past and my heritage. I scatter the earth gathered from Poland over their graves. The souls of my ancestors are now united.

© Joan Salter MBE, BSc (Hons) MA (Research) 2022

Pesach

Rabbi Alexandra Wright reflects on a key festival in our calendar



I love the festival of Pesach (Passover), and each year, as I celebrate the Seder and delve into the texts of the Haggadah, I find more to engage my interest and to discover how this extraordinary ritual came into being. Just a glance at the overall history of the Seder

demonstrates a remarkable pattern in Judaism. Think about that first meal the Israelites ate on the eve of their departure from Egypt. Each household was instructed to take a whole roasted lamb, to share it with their neighbours and eat it together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

This family and neighbourhood gathering is eventually to transform itself into a Temple ritual: the paschal lamb slaughtered only by the priests, and Pesach marked by the Temple sacrifices and the singing of *Hallel* – the psalms of praise which we still sing at our Pilgrim festivals.

After the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE and all its institutions had disappeared, Pesach was able to adapt itself remarkably well and become what it had been at the earliest moment before the Exodus – a family-based celebration around a meal.

Pesach provides us with a paradigm of how a community confronts crisis and challenge. With the destruction of the Temple, several key elements of the Pesach evening celebration became defunct. Jews could no longer offer the paschal sacrifice and eat portions of it in the evening meal. But the biblical text, where every householder could be the priest in their own home, could still provide the basis for that evening meal with the matzah and maror. The *Hallel* could still be sung around the table, and the message of Pesach – the Exodus from Egypt, freedom from oppression, expressions of

thanksgiving and hope for future redemption – could still be sung and recited. Those who shaped the direction of a post-Temple Judaism took what they could to retain continuity from the biblical period, but at the same time managed to shift the emphasis from Temple ritual to study and discussion.

And yet remarkable as this festival remains, extraordinary as I find the Haggadah with its literary greatness and diversity, there are aspects of the Seder service that can cause a degree of discomfort.

One lies in this famous statement: ‘Not by an angel, not by a seraph, not by an intermediary; but the Holy One in divine glory brought us out from Egypt.’ In this passage, a crucial theological message of the Haggadah is emphasised – God, alone, was involved in the Exodus from Egypt. There was no partnership with Moses, Aaron, or Miriam, or with the Israelite people. God alone intervened and miraculously freed the Israelites from Egypt.

Some contemporary Haggadot, including the one we use at the LJS’s communal Seder, go against the tradition of not mentioning the name of Moses or any other individual in the Exodus story. We do invoke the characters who were instrumental in saving the Israelites: the Hebrew midwives, the mother and sister of Moses, the daughter of Pharaoh, and Moses and Aaron.

By including these characters, we evolve a different kind of theology that sees God working in partnership with humanity and so shift the message of Pesach subtly, by suggesting that human rights and basic human freedoms cannot simply be left to God. They must become a shared responsibility – God and humanity working in partnership together.

Alexandra Wright

Kabbalat Torah

On Erev Shabbat 22 April and Shabbat 23 April six young people celebrating their Kabbalat Torah (KT) will be leading the LJS services. Everyone is warmly invited to come to these special occasions or watch them online.

Here Rabbi Alexandra Wright tells us about Kabbalat Torah, and on the next page this year's class introduce themselves.

Kabbalat Torah ('Acceptance or Receiving of the Torah') has played a significant role for LJS members and their children for 110 years and is a highlight of the liturgical year.

The first 'confirmation' service (as it was then called) at the LJS took place in 1912. Until recent times there had been only one year without a confirmation, during the Second World War. I have often thought about this as I've lamented the loss of access to the synagogue and in-person Rimon classes during successive lockdowns. The last Kabbalat Torah service was in 2019 – three years ago. Gathering our students back together has been a herculean task for the rabbis, and it would have been easy to have allowed our determination to weaken and accept the changed circumstances. But my knowledge of previous classes and their testimonies of affection for the LJS and for each other convinced me that the LJS plays a not insignificant role in students' lives. Whether they joined Rimon at the age of 4 or 11, friendships and a sense of belonging become increasingly important in the teenage years. Most of them have experienced the life cycle ceremony of Bar or Bat Mitzvah; they have acquired the proficiencies of reading Hebrew, reading from the Torah and leading the Friday evening service – skills which they undertake with sincerity, seriousness and grace.

From here on, the synagogue becomes a place of enduring friendships, a place of belonging; it is where their spiritual life and Jewish identity are strengthened. The very space of the synagogue – both symbolically and physically – allows them to be themselves, to be accepted for who they are, as unique individuals ready to accept their Jewish heritage and pass it down to the next generation.

Kabbalat Torah is designed to deepen a teenager's commitment to Judaism and to reflect the more profound knowledge and understanding they have of Judaism as a faith and culture. It is during these later years of their Jewish education that the individual is challenged to articulate their questions about faith and belief, and to connect those questions with the way they see the world and the choices they make in life.

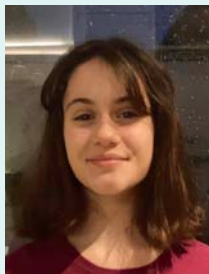
Preparing for the Kabbalat Torah service is an exciting time and marks the culmination of formal Jewish education in Rimon Religion School. It is here that friendships are forged, and horizons widened. Sadly, Covid-19 has meant recent classes have missed out on the weekend trip to Amsterdam, always a huge success socially and educationally.

An important part of the process of preparation is putting the service together. This is a creative venture, and one of the rabbis works with the class to help them use the fixed liturgy as well as creative prayers and readings and their own words to create a service in which they all participate.

Following the service, each individual becomes a member of the synagogue in their own right and takes their place in the adult community. Most importantly, they are now eligible to become teaching assistants in Rimon, and many continue to help in class, undergo training and become more involved in Liberal Judaism's youth programmes.

Kabbalat Torah is also a spiritual threshold. Knowledge, community, friendships, social action are all of critical importance for these students. How we relate to God, what we make of our spiritual heritage, are questions that become much more apparent and more real at this stage of Jewish education and awareness.

Theadora Bendel



My name is Theadora. I am 15 years old and in Year 10 doing my GCSEs at The King Alfred School. I only joined the LJS two and a half years ago, and even though much of Rimón has been online in that time, I have still become

close friends with my classmates. I'm interested in Music and Classics, and I have been doing trapeze classes for eight years. Along with the KT preparation, I am also studying for my Bat Mitzvah (postponed due to Covid)! I am very much looking forward to both services and I am planning to continue on as a teaching assistant for Rimón.

Emma Dexter



My name is Emma Dexter. I am 14 years old and in Year 10 at Francis Holland School. I have been a member of the LJS since I moved to London at about the age of 5 and joined Alef. In addition to the core GCSE subjects, I

am studying History, Latin, Geography, French and Triple Science. Some of my favourite and most cherished memories are at the LJS with all the amazing people and friends I met in the community. I am so excited to continue learning and spending time with them once we have completed KT and graduated from Rimón.

Katie Falk



My name is Katie. I am 15 years old and in Year 10. I go to South Hampstead High school, and other than the core subjects I study Drama, History, Geography and French at GCSE. My hobbies are singing, dancing and acting

which I do once a week at Spirit YPC. I've been a member of the LJS since birth as all my family from both sides have been members since the beginning. I am looking forward to the KT service and continuing as a member of the LJS for a long time to come.

Sophia Grade



My name is Sophia. I am 14 years old and in Year 10. In addition to my core subjects, I am studying French, Latin and Religious Studies. I enjoy listening to music and play the piano and the saxophone. I have always loved playing

netball and have been playing since I was seven. I have been at the LJS since I was nine years old when I was in Heh, and I am looking forward to being able to be a teaching assistant.

Layla Lewis



My name is Layla and I am 15 years old. I am in Year 10 at Immanuel College. I have been attending Rimón since I was five. I like art and creative activities. I am honoured to be taking part in KT and can't wait for the experience.

Abe Wolchover



My name is Abe, and in addition to my core GCSEs, I am studying History, Geography, Triple Science, Further Maths and Astronomy at JFS. I have attended Rimón since I was five. I enjoy classic literature, film and cricket.

Barbara Brandenburger 6 April 1930 – 25 September 2021

Caroline Kenyon pays tribute to her remarkable mother, well known and highly respected in our community, who was a member of the LJS for 53 years.



Photo by Henry Kenyon

Our mother, Barbara, had only one response when she heard of someone in need – ‘What can we do to help?’

A campaigning journalist and co-founder of the UK’s

leading charity for Bosnian Muslims, she began championing the dispossessed aged 9, holding the hand of a little Gypsy girl, shunned by the other children in the playground.

Born in London, Barbara was the only child of Bessie and David Cowan, both shopkeepers, descended from Russian and Polish Jewish immigrants. Her father never recovered mentally from the trenches of WWI. During the Blitz, her parents moved to Buckinghamshire and she went to Aylesbury Grammar School, then St Godric’s Secretarial College in London.

At 19, she met our father, 10 years her senior, who had served in WWII. He came from a contrasting background of great privilege yet it was a true marriage of shared values.

Barbara began at the BBC as a secretary. Her boss spent her time devising knitting patterns, so she covertly took over as editor of an in-house magazine, *Ariel*.

In 1963, she wrote *Working in Television* for Bodley Head, for decades the definitive text on the subject. Her freelance journalism flourished, writing for *The Observer* for the great George Seddon, interviewing John Fowles, Noel Coward, Richard Attenborough. She then wrote on child development – on adoption, gifted children, natural childbirth, children’s literacy, child abuse – long before anyone else.

Our mother determined we should invite those who needed help to share our home in Northwood. And so Rabia, 9, from Whitechapel,

came to stay with us every holiday for years. At 17, my great schoolfriend Sara lost both her parents. She came to our home, and our parents regarded her as their daughter. Our mother cared for her own parents until the end, after which she and my father moved to Parsons Green. These were happy years when they went to festivals, concerts, plays, and travelled.

In 1992, war in the Balkans erupted. Our mother watched the news and saw Bosnian Muslims being murdered. With her close friend Claude Murray, she launched a multi-faith charity, the Bosnian Support Fund. In three weeks, a lorry with 1000 bags of warm clothing for Bosnian refugees was heading across Europe before the harsh winter.

They then flew to Ljubljana to find a refugee camp to support. Accompanied by an interpreter, Faja, 17, they found Harastnik camp with 200 refugees, and focused aid there for ten years – supplies, dentistry, therapists, and eventually, resettlement.

Back home, they couldn’t forget their teenage interpreter alone in Ljubljana, his family under siege in Srebrenica. He’d represented Yugoslavia in the International Physics Olympiad. Our mother sat next to a physics teacher at a wedding; a few weeks later, Faja received an all-fees-paid scholarship to Oxford.

By the time the charity came to a natural end in 2001, our father was frail, then Barbara was diagnosed with cancer. Her clean bill of health sadly coincided with our father’s death. But her home in Fulham remained open house, an unofficial citizens’ advice bureau for friends, neighbours, local shop workers and market stallholders.

Our mother had an infinite gift for love, an infinite gift for compassion.

Barbara is survived by her children Simon and Caroline, son-in-law Charles, by Sara and Rabia, and by her grandson Henry and step-grandchildren Charlotte and Mili.

A version of this article first appeared in *The Guardian* on 31.1.2022.

Community

Community Care

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

Restaurant Tuesday

Do join us for a chance to meet and chat, and to have a delicious meal hosted by our delightful team of volunteers. Everyone is welcome! The suggested donation is £6.00. Please call the office on 020 7286 5181 if you would like to come. Please note we will be adhering to LJS safety guidelines.

Our next lunches (at 12.45):

Tuesday 15 March

Tuesday 26 April

Video and Tea

You are warmly invited to this event which takes place on the fourth Wednesday of the month 1.30–4.30pm. There is no need to book – just come along. You will have soup on arrival, then a DVD followed by a delicious tea including ice-cream. The cost is just £2.00 per session.

In these times of pandemic, you may wish to check with the office on 020 7286 5181 to ensure the event is taking place; if it is, safety guidelines will be observed as necessary.

Please note that mobility aids such as walking frames and wheelchairs are not a problem.

Our next screenings:

23 March: *That Day We Sang*

27 April: *Educating Rita*

Singing for the Mind

Singing for the Mind is open to anyone with memory problems or in the early stages of dementia. During the pandemic, our weekly sessions have continued on Zoom, but we now

plan to have in-person weekly sessions as from 10 March, with Covid safety arrangements in place. Tea and biscuits are served as people arrive to allow participants and their companions the chance to chat before we start singing. The hour-long singing session is led by a trained music leader, supported by volunteers. A dementia specialist is available for help and advice. For further details and advice on joining the group, please email: sfm@ljs.org.

The LJS Book Group

Our group began by providing a connection for those who volunteered with the LJS Drop-in for Asylum-Seeker Families during the Covid lockdowns. It has now successfully expanded and welcomes all Members and Friends of the LJS to join in. The discussions are friendly and informal, always leading to fascinating insights as readers add their own thoughts and experiences to the mix. On each date and for each book, you have a choice of either an afternoon session at 2.00pm or an evening session at 7.00pm; these online sessions last between 1 and 1.5 hours. At each meeting, we nominate a book for the next Zoom session.

If you have any questions or would like to be sent a zoom link for the next Book Club, please email: ljsreaders@hotmail.com

The next books to be discussed are:

Thursday 7 April: *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun* by Peter Godwin

Thursday 12 May: *Violeta* by Isabel Allende

LJY-Netzer spring and summer camps

At LJY-Netzer, we're very excited about our upcoming spring camp, Machaneh



Shamayim, which runs 10–14 April, and Machaneh Kadimah, which runs 15–28 August.

For further information contact Jess Mindel for School Years 3–6: jess@liberaljudaism.org and Joe Shotton for School Years 7–10: joe@liberaljudaism.org



The Learning Circle

Adult education classes at the LJS

Purim term

Tuesday classes continue until 5 April, with the exception of Exploring Judaism, which continues till 12 April. Wednesday evening classes run until 6 April and Shabbat morning classes until 26 March.

At the time of going to press, The Learning Circle classes are on Zoom apart from the Shabbat morning GCSE Syllabus class which is in person, and the Learning with Texts class which is hybrid (in person and on Zoom). Please see regular updates on the Shalom LJS weekly email or contact our Education Co-ordinator, Debi Penhey: education@ljs.org

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 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 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 Not Quite Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

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.

This class is a continuation of the Absolute Beginners class that began in September 2021.

Understanding Hebrew Grammar

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 from the LJS, £38.00) 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 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 – 9.15pm

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. The syllabus is in The Learning Circle brochure, available on the LJS website (www.ljs.org) and resources can be found on: <https://tinyurl.com/ljsexploring>

1 March: Different forms of Judaism

8 March: Presentations from students

15 March: Exploring Purim

22 March: Exploring God and Belief

29 March: Humankind in Jewish Thought

5 April: Sex and Sexuality

12 April: Exploring Pesach

Continuing Your Jewish Journey

Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright

This class is for students with some prior knowledge of Judaism, including those who have graduated from Rabbi Igor's Exploring Judaism course. It will help you learn how to access Jewish texts from the Bible to the Talmud, from medieval codes of law to contemporary commentators. We will engage with texts in meaningful and profound ways, holding together contradictory interpretations. This course may, if you wish, lead to an adult Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS 6.00 – 7.00pm

Classical Hebrew for Absolute Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

This is a continuation of the course which started in January 2022 for those with no previous knowledge of Hebrew. Using Jonathan Romain's *Signs and Wonders* (available for purchase from the LJS, £15.00), this class enables you to unlock the mystery of the Hebrew letters and start reading.

SHABBAT MORNINGS 9.45 – 10.45am

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 follow the syllabus of the GCSE in Classical Hebrew, reading and understanding unseen passages of Biblical Hebrew, translating text from unseen passages into English, and understanding the grammatical structures of Biblical Hebrew. This course is suitable for those who can read Hebrew and have some basic Hebrew vocabulary.

The True Image of Female Biblical Characters

Tutor: Nitza Spiro

In response to student request, our learning this year revolves 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 looks at how the study of midrash can affect our understanding of the Torah. We look at the Torah portion through the lens of midrashic interpretation. Classes are 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

Exploring interfaith relations

Tuesday evenings 8.10pm – 9.30pm

Judaism and Islam: A Shared History

Led by LJS Scholar in Residence, Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton and our guest Muslim lecturer, Dr Harith Ramli

We continue this special course with a session in March:

1 March: *The duties and nourishment of the heart: Comparing the origins of Sufism and Musar* Two seminal books with similar titles will be examined to demonstrate the thinking within Sufism, and how it influenced the development of Musar, the discipline of contemplation and study which enjoys increasing popularity among Jews today.

This event is in person and on Zoom (hybrid). You can register via Shalom LJS to attend; if registering for online participation, you will be given a Zoom link.

There are two further sessions in May and June:

10 May: *Why we love Jerusalem* We consider Jewish and Muslim traditions and teachings about the holy city.

14 June: *The Jewish Orientalists* We investigate the little-known story of the leading Western scholars of, and enthusiasts for, Islam who came from Jewish backgrounds. This lecture, 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: LJS Chavruta – Learning with Study Companions

Join in this exciting study opportunity which launched in November 2021 and which is always open for new enrolments.



Rabbi Igor Zinkov has adapted a traditional form of study called Chavruta (literally 'Companionship') specially for the LJS: groups of two or three people

study specific texts together in search of their meaning, then discuss how to apply their findings to their own lives. Chavruta fosters meaningful friendships between study companions.

The project has got off to an excellent start with many groups now engaged in companionable study. Each Chavruta group is currently looking into the ten LJS values underpinning the LJS.

The programme allows for continuous enrolment, so you can register at any time, and as soon as there are enough people to form a new group,

that group will open. Everyone of all ages is welcome to take part.

You are assigned study partners and texts which are from both traditional and general cultural sources. The traditional sources are in both Hebrew and English, so knowledge of Hebrew is not a prerequisite, and the experience is meaningful even if you have no knowledge of Hebrew at all. The general culture sources include poetry, art and book extracts.

Your Chavruta group meets for an hour-long session virtually or in person every month at a time agreed between participants, with the opportunity of staying together or joining other study companions for future sessions.

To find out more, and/or to register, please contact Rabbi Igor Zinkov: i.zinkov@ljs.org or visit www.tinyurl.com/ljsch



Rimon Corner

Matt Turchin, Rimon Lead, updates us on Rimon Religion School activities



With the arrival of spring, Rimon teachers and students have been busy filling our hallways and classrooms with beautiful colourful displays to mimic the beautiful renewal of nature. If you find yourself on the first floor

of the LJS, be sure to check out artwork – see examples below – created by our students either within the classroom or in one of our weekly social clubs.

Our club activities are going strong, and we are currently offering two levels of art, as well as debate, reading, music, and Hebrew catch-up. Students have truly enjoyed having the opportunity to do creative activities with other age groups, working on projects or just having great discussions and reading interesting books in our library.

One new book we are currently featuring is *An Angel Called Truth*, written by Rabbi Jeremy Gordon and Emma Parlons (daughter of LJS

members Rosemary and Tony Yablon), and illustrated by Pete Williamson, and we thank the authors for their generous gift of several copies to our library. The book follows the weekly Torah reading and provides new stories for children to relate to each parashah.

With our spring term we have also seen a few changes in Rimon. Over the last few months, we've had to say goodbye to two beloved teachers who have moved on to new endeavours. We wish the best of luck to Nurit and Noa; we will miss you and we are so grateful for your years of amazing teaching and all that you have offered to our community. We are, however, excited to welcome some new teachers and teaching assistants: James, Avi, Max, and Angie. They have already made a wonderful impact in our classrooms and among their colleagues, and we hope to benefit from their skills for a long time to come.



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
Isobel Dagtoglou
Angel Desmond
Rebecca Forster
Kitt Frankel
Albie Gavshon

Gabriel Grade
Sam Grainger
Matilde Hockley Lester
Noah Jones
Eric Lach Stein
Sofia Lach Stein
Ellie Matthews
Louise Mendelsohn
Leo Mendelsohn
Quincy Newman
Benno Ratner
Max Roeder Wald
Ollie Roeder Wald

Steven Ross
Emily Roth
Jacob Rushbrook
Oralee Sellar
Olivia Sinclair
Cy Solomons
Jonas Wiesenfeld

April
Nena Atwell
Thomas Ballheimer
Isaac Bendel
Axel Cohen

Daniel Epelbaum
Wilfred Ginsberg
Emily Gruber
Sam Hanna-Kemper
Ada Laker
Zoe Roeder Wald
Ava Rosenthal
Baxter Spurr
Emilia Stonehill
Thomas Stonehill
Zetta Tombs
Tom Wald

Oxford Three Faiths Encounter – Jewish, Christian, Muslim

God, Creation and Us: From Theology to Action

In person at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford and online

Thursday morning 24 March – Sunday 27 March

All are welcome to take part in this three faiths event. The Friday night service, led by Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton, LJS Scholar in Residence, will be live-streamed from the LJS to the conference delegates in Oxford.

The impressive line-up of speakers are at the cutting edge of thinking about the theology of climate change.

Please go to www.rabbim.co.uk for a list of all the speakers, prices and contact details.



The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

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Jo Kessler
Gaby Lazarus, in memory of David
Effie and Michael Romain
Martin Slowe
Janine and Michael Sternberg
Christine and the late Sam Stevenson
Veronica Thatcher

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Tim Farrell

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In office hours, call 020 7432 1298

At other times, call 020 8958 2112
(Calo's)

Save the date – Sunday 22 May

Please make a note of Liberal Judaism's special Day of Celebration: *Where Liberal and Judaism Meet*. Further information available soon on the LJS website and in Shalom LJS.

Recruiting for a Project Co-ordinator for the LJS Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families

The Drop-In was established in June 2014. Opening one Sunday afternoon each month, we welcome families with children under 16 who are applying for asylum in the UK. We provide a warm and welcoming space for our guests, and give money or vouchers, legal advice, medical advice, clothing, food and toiletries.

We are now seeking to recruit a Project Co-ordinator. This is a part-time salaried post requiring 16–20 hours per week, with a degree of flexibility as to when these hours are worked, though attendance at the Drop-In Sundays is required, as is attendance at the Steering Group meetings on a weekday evening 4–6 times p.a. The Job Description can be found on the LJS website (www.ljs.org).

For further information and how to apply, please email:
execdirector@ljs.org

Final copy date for the May/June 2022 issue of *LJS News* is Monday 28 March.

Copy and ideas should be emailed to: newsletter@ljs.org

In line with LJS policy, the paper which *LJS News* is printed on is recycled.

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