

May/June 2022
Iyyar/Sivan/Tammuz 5782

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS NEWS



We're open for business!

It's been some time now since the LJS building re-opened its doors following the various lockdowns, and although we remain mindful that Covid-19 has not disappeared and LJS safety guidelines continue, there is a sense that we're 'open for business' not only for services, but for many classes and events now taking place in person as well as via Zoom.

Members and visitors describe the experience of being physically together again as something very special and moving. Perhaps this feeling is evoked by the beauty of our Sanctuary, or hearing music being played live during services, or chatting over food and drink during Kiddush. Perhaps it is seeing the Rimon Religion School children dressed up for Purim or attending the first in-person Communal Seder since 2019. It has been a delight to see people arriving at the LJS with a sense of excitement for the many social activities which create a true community spirit, and we are delighted at the prospect of welcoming back asylum-seeker families who attend the monthly Drop-In.

During the pandemic we embraced a new technological age, but to have that in conjunction with the joy of meeting up again in person is cause for celebration. Come and join us in person if you can!

Left: Nora Bielawski's Bat Mitzvah. Top row: Keep In Touch party; Dr Rachel Knightley at Purim. Lower row: Restaurant Tuesday; LJS Communal Seder

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Mazal tov!



We send our congratulations to Judith Diamond and Judith's family on her adult Bat Mitzvah held on 26 March. This was her first Bat Mitzvah and was a most moving occasion.

Membership Survey

The Liberal Jewish Synagogue is a membership organisation, and it is important that members have an opportunity to provide their views and feedback on the day-to-day running of the synagogue and its four strategic objectives, namely Spirituality, Learning, Community, and Sustainability.

An anonymised survey is therefore being designed to seek your views on key areas within the synagogue; this will be sent to you in the near future. In order for the results to be robust and representative, we need as many people to complete the survey as possible. Once the survey has been completed, the results will be fed back to the membership in a 'you said – we did' scenario. We are committed to responding to your views but can only do this if there are sufficient responses, so please, we do urge you to take the time to complete this very important survey.

There will be an annual survey so we can track changes and views over the years.

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

Celebrating Shavuot

6.45pm, Saturday 4 June

A hybrid service to mark Erev Shavuot will take place at the LJS. For those at the LJS in person, this will be followed by a chavurah supper including a cheesecake competition, and the evening will continue with the traditional all-night study session – though you need only stay as long as you like! Further details in Shalom LJS, including an outline of the study programme.

The LJS 2022 AGM and Council Elections

7.30pm, Wednesday 22 June (doors open 7.00pm; refreshments)

Our guest speaker for this year's in-person and online AGM is Rabbi Rebecca Birk (*pictured*), joint Chair of the Conference of Liberal Rabbis and Cantors (CoLRaC), who will talk about its work.



At the AGM the LJS membership will formally thank our outgoing Chairman of Council, Sue Head, and welcome the new incoming Chairman. We will also have the opportunity to thank our outgoing President, Martin Slowe. Members standing for a second term and new members to the LJS Council will be confirmed.

If you are interested in becoming a Council member, please contact Jonathan Bruck, Executive Director (execdirector@ljs.org), for more information. **Council nominations must be submitted by 9.00am on Monday 16 May.**

Details will also be available in our weekly email Shalom LJS and on the website.

Bereavements

We offer our sympathy to those who mourn:

Colin Caro, husband of Marilyn, father of Joanna and Simon

Howard Chesner, partner of Myra and brother of Anna

Alexander Crystol, son of Bryan and the late Judy

Tim Griebel, father of Mila, and brother of Rozia

Rosemarie Phillips, mother of Maureen and Jacqueline

Michael Ross, friend of many

We also extend our sympathy to Tessa Buchanan and her family on the death of Tessa's mother, **Ann Buchanan**.

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

Shabbat and Festival Services: May and June (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. At the end of each service on Friday evening and Shabbat morning, congregants are invited to join together for Kiddush either in person or via Zoom. The link is shown on the screen with clear instructions.

Friday 29 April	Co-led by Jacob Rushbrook Bar Mitzvah and his grandfather and teacher, Michael Sternberg
Shabbat 30 April <i>K'doshim</i>	Jacob Rushbrook Bar Mitzvah
Friday 6 May	
Shabbat 7 May <i>Emor</i>	Please join us for Kiddush during which we will be asking you to pledge to help Chris Berlingieri in his recovery. For more details please click here: https://www.gofundme.com/f/please-help-chris-berlingieri-in-his-recovery
Friday 13 May	Co-led by Thea and Isaac Bendel Bat Mitzvah and Bar Mitzvah David ben Alon and Rafaelle Gelein Admission services
Shabbat 14 May <i>B'Har</i>	Thea and Isaac Bendel Bat Mitzvah and Bar Mitzvah 1.00pm Nosh 'n' Drosh with Patricia Utermohlen (see page 16)
Friday 20 May	
Shabbat 21 May <i>B'Chukkotay</i>	Please join us to celebrate our Czech Scroll and commemorate the 80th anniversary of the deportation of the Jews from Moravske Budejovice, the town our little rescued scroll came from (see page 7) Zoé Syrová Admission Service
Friday 27 May	
Shabbat 28 May <i>B'Midbar</i>	Led by Rabbi Rachel Benjamin Rimon half-term
Friday 3 June	
Shabbat 4 June <i>Naso</i>	The service this morning will include a commemoration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Rimon half-term
Saturday 4 June 6.45 pm	Erev Shavuot service followed by a chavurah supper, cheesecake competition and Tikkun Leyl Shavuot – an all-night study session (see page 2)
Sunday 5 June 11.00 am	Shavuot Festival Morning Service
Friday 10 June	Co-led by Cy Solomon Bar Mitzvah
Shabbat 11 June <i>B'ha'a'lot'cha</i>	Cy Solomon Bar Mitzvah
Friday 17 June	
Shabbat 18 June <i>Sh'lach L'cha</i>	L'Dor va-Dor service led by Rimon students in the Sanctuary with Rabbi Igor Zinkov and Student Rabbi Matt Turchin Koleinu service in the Rabbi John Rayner Prayer Room with Rabbi Alexandra Wright including Aufruf for Danielle Bernstein and Mel Loades
Friday 24 June	Co-led by Kitt Frankel Bar Mitzvah
Shabbat 25 June <i>Korach</i>	Kitt Frankel Bar Mitzvah
Friday 1 July	Co-led by Jake Phillips Bar Mitzvah
Shabbat 2 July <i>Chukkat</i>	Jake Phillips Bar Mitzvah

Council Report

'Righteousness and justice are the foundation ... steadfast love and faithfulness go before you' (Psalm 89:14)



Council has recently taken part in some particularly interesting discussions. One was on the work of the Social Action committee which encapsulated a fundamental principle of

Progressive Judaism, to promote social justice.

The committee is chaired by Harriett Goldenberg. She outlined to Trustees some of the current initiatives, such as the campaigns to support refugees, including those from Afghanistan and Ukraine. Refugee Week is from 20–26 June; there will be more information in Shalom LJS on this nearer the time.

Harriett highlighted the plight of the Uyghurs against whom China is believed to be committing crimes against humanity through, among other things, forced labour and the use of re-education camps.

Council learnt of a new initiative which is to befriend a group of Progressive Jews in Vilnius, Lithuania; this group is becoming established as a community. There are various ways in which the LJS can help, such as by providing educational materials and by enabling them to join our online shabbat services.

It is always astonishing to hear about the continuing high levels of food deprivation in this country; Harriett reminded us that it is still an issue, even in 2022. You will probably have seen in Shalom LJS the link to Sufra which provides food aid to people in crisis and campaigns to end poverty.

One of the ways that members of the LJS community have been involved in social action is through the annual Mitzvah Day project. The

aim is for people to give time, rather than money, to make a difference to their local community. Last November a group from the LJS helped to clean part of the area around Regent's Canal. The next Mitzvah Day is on Sunday 20 November. The Social Action committee would be delighted if you joined in. There will be more information in due course.

Another element of the work of the Social Action committee is the promotion of the LJS as an EcoSynagogue. The Council has embedded this principle in the Strategic Plan which we have recently formulated. Harriett reminded us that whenever strategic decisions are taken, environmental considerations must be taken into account. Council is committed to doing so.

Council has recently agreed that a Membership Survey would be useful to give us a better understanding of members' interests and needs. The survey is being developed by the Membership committee and is based around the four key areas of the work of the LJS: Spirituality, Learning, Community and Sustainability. There will shortly be a link to the survey from Shalom LJS. This is your community; do take the opportunity to influence the activities the synagogue provides.

The AGM is on Wednesday 22 June at 7.30pm (doors open at 7.00pm) and will be hybrid. Rabbi Rebecca Birk, Co-Chair of the Conference of Liberal Rabbis and Cantors (CoLRaC), will begin the evening by talking about the role of this group and the issues which are of concern to them. At the AGM, two of us will be standing down from Council having served for two consecutive terms of three years as allowed by our Articles of Association. One is Karen Newman, the Honorary Officer Lead for HR (Human Resources), and the other is myself. Our President, Martin Slowe, also completes his term of six years. Please do join us at the AGM where there will also be a chance for a glass of wine as we complete this Council year.

Sue Head, Chairman of Council

On the Way to the Promised Land

Rabbi Igor Zinkov reflects on the cycle of our festivals



Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot are the three main biblical festivals. They originated from seasonal harvests. Our ancestors gave them an additional meaning – the story of the Exodus from Egypt. At

Pesach, we went out from Egypt; at Shavuot, we received the Torah on Mount Sinai; at Sukkot, we remember wandering in the desert towards the Promised Land.

Not only do we read the Exodus story in the annual cycle of Torah reading, but also, we re-enact this journey in the cycle of our festivals. On Pesach, we eat matzah with bitter herbs, and reflect on our liberation. On Shavuot, we spend all night studying Torah as an act of remembering the Sinai revelation. On Sukkot, we build tents and spend seven days eating and hosting guests in temporary structures to remember the fragility of the journey towards independence.

In his book *Exodus and Revolution*, Michael Walzer argues that the Exodus story has a fundamental and irreversible impact on Western society. In his words, this story affects the ‘way of thinking about political change, a pattern that we commonly impose upon events, a story that we repeat to one another. The story has roughly this form: oppression, liberation, social contract, political struggle, a new society.’ In other words, the story of Exodus became the pattern for all political changes in the Western world. The biblical narrative plays such an important role that we cannot see our society functioning in another way, and we deliberately look for oppression.

Do we need oppression to initiate change? Do we wait until something terrible happens to begin the process of reflection and alteration?

Often our approach to the world is reactive. We respond not to warning signs but to the result of overlooking them. The story of Passover is the

story of liberation from tyranny and slavery. This story is not sufficient on its own. At Pesach, we do not discuss how to construct the world without oppression but only how to break free from it. Therefore, Passover is not enough.

Shavuot complements the Exodus story of Passover. It revolves around the receiving of the Torah and accepting the covenant between the people and God. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel writes: ‘The dignity of man stands in proportion to his obligations as well as to his rights. The dignity of being a Jew is in the sense of commitment, and the meaning of Jewish history revolves around the faithfulness of Israel to the covenant.’ (*God in Search of Man*, pp. 216–217). The next step after liberation is to create a society that prevents oppression. From this perspective, Shavuot is the festival when we set a foundation for the future ideal society without oppression. Torah, therefore, becomes the vision for such a world.

However, Torah is not the end goal of the story. The story of Sukkot reminds us of forty years of journeying through the desert to the Promised Land. The change cannot be achieved in one day. Sometimes there is a need for a generational shift. After receiving the Torah, Jews had a very long journey to the Promised Land, and most of them did not arrive there.

The journey towards the ideal world is long; we might not get there in our lifetime. All we can hope for is dignity and respect for one another on the way.



Photos by Peter Singer

Harvest Festival mural by William Utermohlen

Sephardi Culture

LJS Member Geraldine Van Bueren explores her Sephardi heritage.



Judaism is a wonderfully rich and diverse global religion, from the Lemba in Southern Africa to the Jews in Djibouti and the Berber Jews in Morocco. Yet as Jews we are slow to recognise our wonderful religious

and cultural tapestry. As well as Ashkenazi, we are Mizrahi, including Iraqi and Turkish Jews, and we are Sephardi. So perhaps we should enquire why we do not fully celebrate our historical and contemporary cultures and traditions? It may provide us, and many others, with the many different ways of being Jewish.

Perhaps our non-embracing of our global culture is an unconscious vestige of prejudice – one of the antisemitic tropes is that Jews are ‘rootless cosmopolitans’. However, to use this as a reason not to celebrate our universality denies us the fullness of our own heritage, because we can be rooted, loyal and appreciate the extent of our rich global Jewish heritage. Because of my own roots, both Ashkenazi and Sephardi, this article will focus on the latter.

One of the most beautiful concerts I have ever attended was on a jasmine-scented summer evening in the Alhambra, the Islamic royal residence in Granada. The concert was ancient music. It was not Gregorian chants, but medieval Spanish and Portuguese music, with songs sung in Ladino, the Sephardi equivalent of Yiddish.

Ladino began as a dialect of Spanish, and is influenced, in particular, by Portuguese, Hebrew, and Aramaic. In its early development Ladino was very similar to Old Spanish. The separation of Ladino from Spanish developed more quickly after 1492 when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella ordered the expulsion of the Jewish communities.

The name, Sephardi, is derived from the Hebrew Sepharad, which means Spain. There are now

different pronunciations, which distinguishes Ladino from Spanish. Ladino, for example, retains a hard ‘f’ so that ‘hablar’ in Spanish (meaning ‘to speak’) is pronounced as ‘fablar’. These differences increased with the contributions of Jews to the Ottoman Empire, and with the absorption by Sephardi culture and Ladino of Turkish culture and some Turkish words.

As with Yiddish, Ladino can also be written in Hebrew script. Also sadly, like Yiddish, Ladino after the Holocaust was in decline, but in 2017 the Spanish Royal Academy, as part of its atonement for the expulsion, began creating a National Ladino Academy to revive and perpetuate Ladino, and there is now an exuberant revival.

As evidence of this re-emergence is the annual international Sephardi music festival held in Córdoba, which includes both ancient and contemporary music. Flory Jagoda, from Bosnia both composed and revived Sephardi music, and songs like *Ocho Kandelikas*, which means eight candles, will joyfully remain with you long after Chanukkah.

For those who love flamenco, the Sephardi contributions to flamenco are both haunting and beautiful. I play flamenco guitar, and flamenco has always proudly acknowledged its Jewish as well as its Andalusian, Arabic and Gitano roots.

Eighteenth century Sephardic Jewish architecture has a symmetry that bathes the soul. The architecture of the, thankfully surviving, Sephardi synagogue in Amsterdam (*pictured below*) is also



Bridgeman Images

reflected in the synagogue in Willemstad, the capital of Curaçao. Both retain the dark woods, brilliant white walls and brass chandeliers, with Willemstad keeping the no longer necessary sand-covered floors, which muffled the sound of services. In London, the architecture of Bevis Marks, dating from 1701, is similar in style.

In Sephardi poetry the most celebrated period is earlier and is often claimed to be during the two centuries between 1000 and 1200. Some of the poetry is known as wine poetry, although it is not restricted to the product of the grape. Many of the wine poems have religious significance as well as expressing a deep yearning for freedom.

More recently there have been Ladino translations of classical literature. Moshe Ha'elyon, born in Thessaloniki in Greece, translated Homer's *Odyssey*,

whose monsters and netherworld reflected his own survival of Auschwitz and the death marches.

Ha'elyon's translation benefitted from Avner Peretz's Hebrew-Ladino dictionary, and Peretz himself, translated Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* into Ladino.

As with Yiddish, there have been attempts at introducing Ladino into films. The film, *Novia Que Te Vea*, which is based upon the autobiographical novel by the Mexican writer Rosa Nissán, has been translated, poetically rather than literally, as *Like a Bride*. *Like a Bride* was made in Spanish but includes Ladino. At one point the question is asked, 'Do you want to revive this almost dead language?' The answer now is a resounding 'Yes' and we are all enriched by its revival.

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The story of our rescued Czech scroll

Many LJS members will know that we have a little Torah scroll which was rescued after the deportation of the Jews from Moravske Budejovice. At the Shabbat morning service on 21 May we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the deportation of its Jewish community.

Moravske Budejovice is a small town in what was once the southern part of Moravia, now the Czech Republic. The photograph below is of a plaque marking the site where the synagogue once stood in the town. Jews had lived here since the 14th century, but the community was expelled in 1564 and there were no Jews in the town again until 1774.



Plaque marking the site where the synagogue once stood in the town

By 1930 there were 77 Jews in the town, representing 1.8% of the population. In 1942, those Jews remaining after the Nazi occupation were deported to extermination camps. No community was established after the war.

The LJS's little scroll which comes from this community was one of 1,564 scrolls which were removed from synagogues and communities throughout Bohemia and Moravia by the Nazis, and which sat in a damp warehouse until 1964 when a generous benefactor, Ralph Yablon, father of LJS member Tony Yablon, bought the scrolls and had them shipped to London. Where possible, they have been repaired and given on loan to communities around the world.

The Memorial Scrolls Trust (MST) – <https://memorialscrollstrust.org> – sees the scrolls as survivors and silent witnesses:

'They represent not only the lost communities of Bohemia and Moravia, but also all those who perished in the Shoah. The MST encourages all their scroll-holders to use their scrolls for inter- and intra-faith work, as well as for ritual and education.'

Please join us on 21 May to honour the Moravske Budejovice community and its scroll.

The Platinum Jubilee

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's accession to the throne, LJS News asked members of our community about their recollections of events in 1952 and the coronation in 1953.



The LJS members we spoke to all remember hearing the momentous news on 6 February 1952 of the death of King George VI and the return to London of his elder daughter, Elizabeth, from Kenya where she and her husband Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, were staying as part of

a Commonwealth tour. This marked her accession to the throne.

Susan Levitt recalls seeing the film of the Queen coming off the plane in 1952 (*pictured below*), not quite 26 years old. 'She was so young, very pretty', Susan says. 'It was such a burden.' As a great admirer of the Queen, she used to swap pictures of the Royal Family at school and says that when King George VI's death was announced, it was a terrible shock. **Mildred Konzon** also remembers that day when the Queen arrived back from Kenya following the death of her father, and similarly remembers thinking how pretty she looked.



Born just a couple of months after the Queen in 1926, **Rita Jacobs**, who has very fond memories of joining the synagogue, and of Lily Montagu and Rabbi John Rayner (z"l) whom she thinks of to this

day, remembers watching the Pathé News report of the Queen returning from Kenya. Seeing the Queen descend from the steps of the aeroplane, she remembers thinking how composed she was, and wondering what she was going to be like as Queen. 'She was such a young girl', says Rita. 'That image has always stayed with me, seeing her dressed in black, calmly shaking everyone's hands.' Reminiscing about that moment Rita adds, 'We're the same age. A cousin had joined the Wrens, but I didn't particularly want to go into the Navy. Then I saw that the Queen had joined the Army, and I decided I would join at the same time. She drove a lorry and could dismantle cars, and I was in the War Office in Signals.' In fact, this decision turned out to be a pivotal one in Rita's life because not only did she do important war work in Signals, but, when posted to Hamburg, it was there that she met her future husband, John Jacobs.

Reflecting on events in 1952, **Bob Kirk** tells us how four particular images come to mind – images from newspapers and news reels like Pathé News. He was struck by seeing King George and Queen Elizabeth seeing off Princess Elizabeth and her husband, Philip, on their Commonwealth tour, and how one couldn't help noticing how ill the King looked. Bob recalls the image of Elizabeth and Philip at Treetops, the safari lodge in Kenya, where they received news of the King's death, and then of Queen Elizabeth II coming down the steps from her plane on her return, being received by Churchill and other dignitaries. And the most poignant image of all, he recounts, was seeing three veiled Queens watching King George's coffin: Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and the new Queen, Elizabeth II.

'Once the mourning for King George was over', Bob explains, 'attention focussed on the young monarch and her consort, Philip. Much hope – and editorial footage – was being invested in this bright, shiny new Elizabethan Age. For the first time, the coronation ceremony was televised; this

was in black and white, of course. The coronation took place in June, so there should have been bright sunshine, but that was not to be, and the enthusiastic crowds got thoroughly drenched.'



Peter Nathan was already a seasoned spectator of royal parades by the time of the 1953 coronation. In 1937 at the age of seven, he and his older brother Michael, then aged nine, and their parents had viewed the coronation procession of King George VI from outside the Reform Club in Pall Mall, where his father was a longstanding member. And two years before that, in 1935, he had watched from his father's office overlooking the Embankment near Temple Station the return route of the Silver Jubilee procession of King George V.

It was from this same vantage point outside the Reform Club that Peter was to watch the coronation procession (*pictured above*) on its return route from Westminster Abbey. His father had organised reserved seats for his wife, himself as well as their two sons in a stand specially erected for the occasion.

'The public were required to be off the procession routes by 7.00am on Tuesday 2 June 1953, Coronation Day,' Peter explains. 'I had travelled up to London the previous day from Oriel College, Oxford, where, aged 23, I was a final year student.'

Peter describes the occasion: 'The Queen with Prince Philip was in the Gold State Coach drawn by a team of eight grey horses. It rained almost all day, mainly heavy drizzle, but I remember that despite this, Queen Salote of Tonga (*pictured above right*), alone in a carriage, kept it open, wearing a red feather high out of her hat so that the crowds could see her easily.' Bob, too, has



vivid memories of Queen Salote – clearly this lady made a big impression on onlookers!

From his excellent viewing position, Peter tells us: 'An enormous succession of bands played in the procession,

so that there was a sense of continual music and joy. During the procession when leading members of the Armed Forces rode past, I remember my father pointing out how one could recognise which were the Admirals by their poor horsemanship compared with the Generals.'

Peter tells us that it was at Prince Philip's suggestion that the Abbey service was televised for the first time, and seen by millions worldwide.

Susan Levitt remembers being invited to watch the Queen's coronation on television in the flat of a friend's parents in Portland Place, and recalls thinking the beautiful dress must have been very heavy, not to mention how heavy the crown she wore must have been. Susan had read that the Queen had apparently practised wearing it around the palace! Rita had similar thoughts, and remembers thinking, as she watched the coronation on television, 'My gosh, how is she going to have that crown on her head? She's a tough cookie, very stoic; a wonderful woman.'

Mildred's viewing of the coronation was somewhat accidental. She explains, 'When I first knew my late husband, Joe, we belonged to the AJY [Association of Jewish Youth] Club, and a crowd of us used to go camping at a place called Valley View. Joe and I went to get some milk from the dairy, and watched the coronation on the dairy's television.'

Peter saw the service on television when it was repeated later. He describes how there had been great excitement in the early morning when news was first received that the New Zealander Edmund Hillary as a member of Colonel John Hunt's British Expedition had, with Sherpa Tenzing, been the first person ever to reach the summit of Everest.

This was truly a day to remember!

Photos: Bridgeman Images

Community

Liberal Judaism's Day of Celebration

Sunday 22 May at the LJS, 9.30am – 4.30pm



In the year that Liberal Judaism celebrates its 120th anniversary, the theme of 'Where Liberal and Judaism meet' offers us the opportunity to explore what it means to be Liberal, what it means to be Jewish, and what it means to be a Liberal Jew.

The keynote speakers are Sara Nathan, trustee and co-founder of Refugees at Home, and Paul Anticoni, Chief Executive of World Jewish Relief.

The diverse and engaging programme will include sessions, workshops, discussions, and competitions, and there is a special youth programme.

Further details in Shalom LJS and on the Liberal Judaism as well as LJS websites.

Join our Volunteers, the heartbeat of our community



It is a pleasure to introduce myself as the LJS Volunteer Co-ordinator, and I want to start by acknowledging the contribution of past and current volunteers, including the 100+ Members and Friends who stepped in to help during

the pandemic to such tremendous effect. Without our volunteers' dedication and support, the LJS

would simply not be able to serve the community as effectively as it does.

We value your engagement but need your continuing help. Our volunteering opportunities are diverse – from the Asylum-Seekers' Drop-In to Shabbat security; from greeters to gardening; from social action to education – there is literally something for everyone, and everyone has something to offer.

However limited your time is, let me facilitate your involvement by matching your availability and interests to our volunteering requirements. My role is to help you to help the LJS – just an hour of your time can make a significant difference to someone else. We want to inspire you, offer training if required and support you on your volunteer journey. So please take up the challenge to learn new skills and meet new people! Please email me at volunteer@ljs.org to start your adventure!

Gaby Lazarus

The West Central Liberal Chavurah Club

In the Spirit of Lily Montagu



Many of us in the Liberal Judaism (LJ) community will have been saddened to learn of the recent closure of West Central Liberal Synagogue which represents such a direct and tangible link to one of

our founders, Miss Lily Montagu (*pictured*).

A new Chavurah (Community of Friends) has therefore been formed by West Central Liberal Synagogue here at the LJS both to retain the West Central Liberal Synagogue community, and to maintain the link and honour the legacy and tradition of Miss Lily's club and synagogue that are at the root of the LJ story.

As well as former members and friends of West Central Liberal Synagogue, which is now the West Central Liberal Chavurah Club, those from the wider LJ community who wish to become part of that continued legacy are invited to the monthly

hybrid Chavurah meetings being held in the Assembly Room at the LJS.

The meetings are being held on the first Shabbat of the month at 3.00pm. The content will vary, but the mission is to carry on the spiritual legacy of Lily Montagu and her unique sense of closeness to God and kedushah in the everyday through a programme of prayer, study and community fellowship.

Please do come along or join us on Zoom. For further information and Zoom links please contact Martina at: chavurah.kedushah@gmail.com

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.

Video and Tea

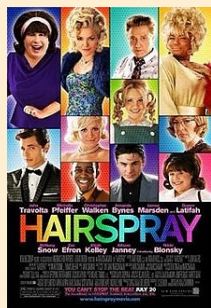
You are warmly invited to this event which takes place on the fourth Wednesday of the month 1.30–4.30pm. There is no need to book – just come along. You will have soup on arrival, then a DVD followed by a delicious tea including ice-cream. The cost is just £2.00 per session.

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

Our next screenings:

25 May: *Hairspray*

22 June: *Florence Foster Jenkins*



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 in-person weekly sessions have now re-started. 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 or phone the LJS on 020 7286 5181.

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 Group, please email ljsreaders@hotmail.com

The next books to be discussed are:

Thursday 12 May: *Violeta* by Isabel Allende

Thursday 9 June: *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* by Marina Lewycka

Bridge Club

We are delighted to announce that the Bridge Club re-opens on Monday 9 May.

We will continue to meet at 2.00pm every Monday (except Jewish and Bank Holidays) and continue till 5.00pm, with a break for refreshments. The standard of Bridge playing is average, but players should know the basics of the game. This is as much a social afternoon as a competitive one. Cost is £2.00 per members and £3.00 for non-members. We welcome new players. For more details please contact the LJS on 020 7286 5181.



The Learning Circle

Adult education classes at the LJS

Shavuot term

Tuesday classes are held until 12 July, with the exceptions of Tuesday Texts and Exploring Judaism, which continue till 19 April. Half-term is 31 May for all classes except Tuesday Texts, which runs without a break. Wednesday evening classes end 13 July with half-term on 1 June.

Shabbat morning classes run until 9 July, with the half-term break on 28 May and 4 June.

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.



Joseph sent to his brothers,
Richard McBee (Bridgeman Images)

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. 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>

Continuing Our 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

In the Shavuot term the class is looking at *Pirke Avot*, The Ethics of the Fathers, which is a compilation of the ethical teachings and maxims from Rabbinic Jewish tradition. Classes are led by our Rabbis and by class members. All are welcome. If you are interested in joining this class, 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

This special course, now held in hybrid form (in person and online), concludes with 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.

For those attending the final session of the course on 14 June in person at the LJS, do join us for a drink afterwards to thank our course leaders.



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

Our Aviv (Spring) term at Rimon this year was very eventful, especially with Purim and Passover being celebrated in person for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

The crowning event of the term was our L'Dor va-Dor intergenerational family service which took place just a few days after Purim. As has become a common feature of these services, the children ran the show, adding their own ideas, art, and words to the liturgy, and in many cases rethinking what liturgy can be. The children of Gan (Reception) kicked everything off with a Purim song which had everyone on their feet, stomping and clapping along. This was followed by the students of Alef and Bet (Years 1 and 2), who prepared us to pray with a guided meditation. Gimmel and Dalet (Years 3 and 4) read a poem about the language of prayer in nature, showcasing their fantastic artwork (beautiful examples pictured on the right) as a scroll. And all of this was just the first 20 minutes of the service, the rest of which included traditional readings by students from Zayin (Year 7), Chet (Year 8), and the Kabbalat Torah class, a beautifully composed acrostic poem on the nature of prayer by Vav (Year 6), complete with

a huge scroll unrolled across the bimah, a video about the importance of studying art written by Heh (Year 5), and a Chanukkat Limmud service led by Rabbi Alex to welcome all the new students who have joined Rimon in the past two years. We were also treated to a truly inspired sermon delivered by our Kabbalat Torah students entitled 'The Call to Prayer', which included excerpts from the wartime sermons of Rabbi Israel Mattuck, our first minister, and selections from the Bible and rabbinic literature.

I am certain that parents, teachers, and guests are eagerly awaiting the next L'Dor va-Dor service to see what the children come up with next.



We wish these young members of the LJS a very happy birthday in May and June.

May

Benjamin Allen
Zachary Benson
Nora Bielawski
Vaughn Conway
Elliott De Winter
Lorcan Eisenberg
Amelia Gale
Jasper Goldsmith
Tamara Goldsmith
Sophia Grade
Shanna Hutchinson
Ella Jackson-Drexler

Sydney Johnson
Dan Lach Stein
Roxy Lang
Seth Lefebvre Sell
Olivia Moore
Cecily Newman
Ren Rieger
Charlie Segal-Knowles
Elijah Silkoff
Isaac Sternberg
Adrien Tahar

June

Rachel Brooks
Rain Cohen
Finlo Cowley
Alfred Davidson
Niamh Eisenberg
Betty Freeman
Celia Hou Kernkraut
Daniel Landau
Masha Lander
Estella Levi-French
Tommaso Levy
Tamara Lindblad Hill

Hannah Mautner
Kurt Mautner
Antonia Moore
Romilly Morrison
Samuel Salas
Georgia Scott
Jane Scott
Margot Scott
Nuala Tyler
Ida Wiesenfeld

Do join us for the Nosh 'n' Drosh talk at the LJS on Saturday 14 May – bagel lunch following the service at 1.00pm, talk 1.30pm.

William Utermohlen – artist of the Harvest Festival Murals at the LJS: His Life and Work by Patricia Utermohlen, Art Historian and widow of the artist



William Utermohlen, Self-portrait, 1967



William Utermohlen, Self-portrait with Saw, 1997

William Utermohlen was born on 4 December 1933 in South Philadelphia, the only son of first-generation German immigrant parents. He attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. William was a classically trained artist who, because of the American G.I. Veteran's

grant, was able to study in Oxford after the war and later decided to live and work in England.

William and Pat first met in 1959, were reacquainted when he returned to London in 1961, and married in 1962. William tended to work in series. His earlier work was based on Dante's *Inferno*, later moving on to more political subjects and eventually painting scenes from the couple's daily life and intimate circle of friends. The 1960s was a time of America's increasing involvement in Vietnam. William was acutely conscious of being a voluntary exile from his own country and was ambivalent in his response to this situation – a mixture of relief at not taking part in any action of which he disapproved and guilt at not being part of it. This is the psychological background to his next series which was based on the annual New Year's parade in Philadelphia which only contains figures of men, all from less privileged backgrounds who were being made to fight and die for a questionable war.

His large-scale works include the LJS Harvest Festival murals (1981 in the old Montefiore Hall, reworked for the new Synagogue 1991 – see photo on page 5), and the mural in the Royal Free Hospital in 1986.

In later life he suffered from Alzheimer's disease, as too have other artists, but none have captured the personal experience of dementia in such an articulate and powerful manner. William's lifelong dedication to psychological observation and its translation into painting and drawing allows one to experience intimately the mental and physical effect of dementia. He died in 2007.

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

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liberal judaism 

The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

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Registered office:
28 St John's Wood Road
London NW8 7HA
Tel 020 7286 5181
Fax 020 7266 3591

Linked to Typetalk
Email ljs@ljs.org
Website www.ljs.org

Senior Rabbi

Alexandra Wright

Rabbi

Igor Zinkov

Scholar in Residence

Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton

President

Martin Slowe

Chairman of Council

Sue Head

Executive Director

Jonathan Bruck

Education Co-ordinator

Debi Penhey

Nursery Head Teacher

Caroline Villiers

Community Care Co-ordinator

Aviva Shafritz

Director of Music

Cathy Heller Jones

Organist

Tim Farrell

LJS News Team

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)