

November/December 2023

Cheshvan/Kislev/

Tevet 5784

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS NEWS



Remembering Lily Montagu CBE 1873–1963

Lily Montagu was instrumental in the founding of our synagogue, of the Liberal movement in the UK, and – in 1926 – of the World Union of Progressive Judaism.

Raised in an Orthodox home, Lily Montagu, a social worker, questioned certain aspects of Orthodoxy especially with regard to the position of women. Seeking a different religious community that accepted and encouraged women’s participation, she founded a club in the 1890s which became the West Central Liberal Synagogue (WCLS) whose doors were open until 2022. The LJS now hosts the monthly Chavurah Club which continues Lily Montagu’s legacy.

This year we commemorate the 150th anniversary of Lily Montagu’s birth and the 60th anniversary of her death. At the LJS this winter, look out for an exhibition on her which will inaugurate the new niche cabinets in the corridor around our Sanctuary. Books about her from our library will also be on display.

At 1.15pm, after the service on Shabbat 2 December, you are warmly invited to the illustrated talk by Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick, the Rabbi of the West Central Chavurah Club, who will speak on ‘Lily and her Club’.

For more on Lily Montagu, read Dr Edward Kessler’s article on page 9.

Left: Lily Montagu, aged 19 (from *Lily H. Montagu, Prophet of a Living Judaism* by Eric Conrad, photo by Helen McCaul) Right: Lily Montagu with Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck (left) and Martin Buber (right)

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Services: November and December (in person and online)

Unless otherwise stated, Friday evening services are at 6.45pm and Shabbat morning services are at 11.00am, and led either by Rabbi Alexandra Wright or Rabbi Igor Zinkov. At the end of each Friday evening and Saturday morning service congregants are invited to Kiddush either in person or via Zoom. The link is shown on screen with clear instructions.

Please note that Rabbi Igor Zinkov is on sabbatical from 20 November 2023 for two months.

Friday 3 November	
Shabbat 4 November <i>Vayera</i>	Community Care Shabbat, celebrating 20 years of Community Care, led by Community Care volunteers – see page 8; sermon given by Rita Adler
Thursday 9 November 6.45pm	Kristallnacht commemoration (online only): film screening of <i>Kindertransport</i> and Q&A with Ann and Bob Kirk – see page 4
Friday 10 November	
Shabbat 11 November <i>Chayyey Sarah</i>	Remembrance Shabbat: dedication of the ‘Earth Window’ in the Rabbi John Rayner Prayer Room following the service
Friday 17 November	
Shabbat 18 November <i>Tol’dot</i>	Acacia Steen, Bat Mitzvah Nosh ‘n’ Drosh with the Bereaved Families Forum, one of our Yom Kippur Appeal charities – see page 4
Friday 24 November	Service led by Rabbi Anna Wolfson
Shabbat 25 November <i>Vayetze</i>	
Friday 1 December	
Shabbat 2 December <i>Vayishlach</i>	L’Dor va-Dor Service in the Sanctuary with Rabbi Elana Dellal and Rimon Koleinu Service in the Rabbi John Rayner Prayer Room with Rabbi Alexandra Wright Nosh ‘n’ Drosh with Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick on Lily Montagu – see page 4
Friday 8 December	The Friday Night Rock Service, followed by a buffet supper and more music – see page 5
Shabbat 9 December <i>Vayeshev</i>	
Wednesday 13 December 4.00 for 4.30pm	Multi-Faith Chanukkah celebration – see page 5
Friday 15 December	
Shabbat 16 December <i>Mikketz</i>	Torah reading and sermon read and given by Professor Michael Alpert Blessing and Naming of Hugo Fryer
Friday 22 December	Service led by Susannah Alexander
Shabbat 23 December <i>Vayiggash</i>	Sermon given by Rabbi Sybil Sheridan
Friday 29 December	
Shabbat 30 December <i>Va’y’chi</i>	Aufruf for Tamar Fyne and Josh Kirk
Friday 5 January	Co-led by Lyla Cumerlato, Bat Mitzvah
Shabbat 6 January <i>Shemot</i>	Sermon given by Rabbi Elana Dellal Lyla Cumerlato, Bat Mitzvah

Congratulations



Mazel tov to **Izzy Burman** and **Adrian Wijenathan** whose wedding blessing took place at Trinity Buoy Wharf in London on 8 October 2023.

Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families

The next LJS Drop-Ins for asylum-seeker families are on Sunday 12 November and Sunday 10 December from 2.00pm – 4.00pm.

If you are interested in becoming a Drop-In volunteer, please email Hannah Tickle at: asylumproject@ljs.org



We are delighted to announce the following births:

Hugo Arthur Charles Fryer, pictured above left at 11 weeks, was born on 19 June 2023, the firstborn son of Emily and James Fryer, and grandson of LJS members Sarah and Charles Cohen.

Ezra David Efé Samuel, pictured above centre at 6 weeks, was born on 15 September 2023, the firstborn son of Felicity and Clifford Samuel, and grandchild of LJS members Mary and David Davidson.

Hugo and Ezra are second cousins!

Bryn Rowan Jacob Roiser, pictured above right at 7 weeks, was born on 26 June 2023 in Oxford, a first child for Wenna Purves and Dan Roiser, and a first grandchild for LJS member Marian Roiser.

Edith Fleurette Turchin was born on 22 July 2023 to Avi Green and Student Rabbi Matt Turchin. Many in our community will know that Matt was Rimon Lead at the LJS until June 2022.

Spotlight on Volunteering – Getting involved!

We have a wide range of volunteering opportunities (www.ljs.org/volunteering.html) and are always looking for new helpers. Do read Rita Adler's article on page 8 for inspiration. Whatever your interest or time commitment, please contact volunteer@ljs.org and let the LJS help YOU to get started on your volunteering journey.

Bereavements

We offer our sympathy to those who mourn:

George Apter, husband of Jayne and brother of Evelyn

John Bard, brother of Laurence

Eva Feldman, mother of Nick and Deb

Carole Finkeltaub, mother of Elaine

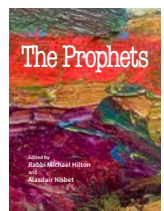
Valerie Halperin, mother of Charles and Lloyd

John Myers, father of Jeanne and Anne

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

The Prophets

If you would like to purchase a copy of *The Prophets*, which was published in September by the LJS, please click: www.ljs.org/form/the prophets.html. Copies can also be bought in person at the synagogue. This illuminating collection of essays was written by our Rabbis and members of the 'Reading with Texts' class, and edited by our Scholar in Residence Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton and Alasdair Nisbet.



Forthcoming Events

Let's Face the Music

Sunday 5 November 5.30–9.00pm

Be sure to come to what promises to be a fabulous celebration of music by Irving Berlin in a cabaret-style performance with acclaimed musicians.

To book your tickets: www.ljs.org/event/lfm2023

Tickets cost £35.00 and include supper.



THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE
PRESENTS

LET'S FACE THE MUSIC



A celebration of iconic music from Irving Berlin in this cabaret-style performance featuring some of his greatest hits, plus a number of classics from the Great American Songbook.

With Iain Farrington on piano, Caroline Kennedy as Annie and Stuart Pendred as Harry.

5 NOVEMBER 6.00-9.00PM £35.00 INC. SUPPER

BOOK TICKETS AT: WWW.LJS.ORG/EVENT/LFM2023

THE LJS, 28 ST. JOHN'S WOOD ROAD, LONDON NW8 7HA

Commemoration of Kristallnacht (online only)

Thursday 9 November at 6.45pm

To commemorate 85 years since Kristallnacht, please join us online for a short service and a screening of the film *Kindertransport*, created by Holocaust Learning UK and featuring LJS Members Bob and Ann Kirk. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with Bob and Ann.

Kindertransport



Three *Kindertransport* children tell the story of how their parents sent them as unaccompanied refugees to the UK in order to escape Nazi persecution.

This newly released film runs at just under 20 minutes. Filming took place at various locations, including in the homes of the *Kindertransport* children, at Liverpool Street and Harwich stations, and at the new *Kindertransport* Memorial in Harwich.

This contemporary retracing of their steps offers insight into their experiences.

RSVP: www.ljs.org/event/kristallnacht2023

Nosh 'n' Drosh

Join us for our occasional series of talks and discussion over a bagel lunch following the Shabbat morning service. All welcome.

Shabbat 18 November at 1.15pm

We are honoured to hear representatives of the Bereaved Families Forum, one of our High Holy Day charities.

This is a very special opportunity – please do join us.

Shabbat 2 December at 1.15pm

Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick will speak on Lily Montagu, marking the 150th anniversary of her birth in 1873 and the 60th anniversary of her death in 1963. Lily Montagu was the first woman to play a major role in Progressive Judaism. The Heritage Committee is putting together an exhibition of books and artefacts at the LJS in her honour.



Donations to mark Mitzvah Day

Shabbat 18 November

At the Shabbat morning service on 18 November (the day before Mitzvah Day) our community, including Rimon Religion School, is being asked to make contributions to Sufra NW London Food Bank. For the list of items the charity is in need of, please refer to Shalom LJS.

The following weekend on 25 November, the KT class from Rimon will be visiting Sufra to deliver the goods, and will also have the opportunity to see their wonderful vegetable garden.



The St Raphael's 'Edible Garden' at Sufra



The Friday Night Rock Service

Friday 8 December at 6.45pm

Our Erev Shabbat service features The Friday Night Rock Service. This service celebrating Chanukkah will be followed by a buffet supper and more music.

The band's unique blend of traditional and familiar melodies, infused with a rocking soundtrack inspired by legendary artists such as The Beatles, Led Zeppelin and Guns N' Roses, has been a hit amongst all generations.

To attend the supper after the service, please book your tickets: www.ljs.org/event/fridaynightrock

Celebrating Chanukkah at the LJS

Wednesday 13 December at 4.00pm for 4.30pm

Multi-Faith Chanukkah Celebration

We will be holding our annual multi-faith Chanukkah celebration at the LJS.

This year, we will hear from special guest speakers from Nisa Nashim, the Jewish-Muslim women's organisation: Laura Marks, who is Jewish, and Julie Siddiqi, who is Muslim.

Please note our celebration will be held both in person and online.



Photo: Peter Singer

Chanukkah Candle Lighting

Chanukkah is 7–14 December.

In accordance with LJS tradition, we will be lighting the candles at the synagogue on the following days, and invite you, your families, friends and neighbours to join us for this lovely celebration followed by tea, latkes and doughnuts:

Thursday 7 December at 4.00pm in the foyer

Friday 8 December at 6.45pm in the Sanctuary

Sunday 10 December before 4.00pm at the Drop-In

Monday 11 December at 4.00pm in the foyer

Tuesday 12 December at 4.00pm in the foyer

Wednesday 13 December at 4.30pm in the Sanctuary – part of the Multi-Faith Chanukkah Celebration

Thursday 14 December at 4.00pm in the foyer

Community

The LJS Book Group

All LJS Members and Friends are invited to join our friendly and informal book group. The sessions are on Zoom, start at 7.00pm and last between an hour and an hour and a half.

The next session is:

Thursday 2 November: *The Little Man from Archangel* by Georges Simenon

Please note there is no session in December.

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

Restaurant Tuesday

Everyone in our community is welcome to attend our informal lunch club at 12.45pm on the third Tuesday of the month for a chance to meet and chat and have a delicious meal, hosted by our delightful team of volunteers. We suggest a donation of £7.50.

Our next lunches are on **21 November** and **19 December**. Please call the office on 020 7286 5181 to let us know if you are coming.

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 for some soup on arrival, after which we hold the film screening. This is followed by a delicious tea including ice-cream. The cost is just £2.00 per session.

Our next screening:

22 November: *Father Xmas & The Snowman*

Please note there is no session in December.

Chavurah Club

Former members and friends of West Central Liberal Synagogue, as well as those from the wider LJ community who wish to continue the legacy of Lily Montagu, are warmly invited to the monthly hybrid West Central Liberal Chavurah Club. These meetings are held in the Assembly

Hall at the LJS on the first Shabbat of the month. A talk or discussion at 2.00pm is followed by an afternoon Shacharit at 3.00pm, after which there is tea and coffee and some social time.

For further information and Zoom links please contact Martina at: chavurah.emunah1@gmail.com

The Out & About Club

The Out & About Club is a non-denominational club for elderly disabled people which meets at the LJS every first and third Tuesday of the month in the evening. It is a social club, and we organise regular talks, musical evenings and outings.

Contact Sonia Leanse or Jenny Nathan via the LJS office on 020 7286 5181.

Singing for the Mind

The weekly Singing for the Mind sessions are open to anyone with memory problems or in the early stages of dementia. 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.

Bridge Club

The Bridge Club meets at 2.00pm every Monday (except Jewish and Bank Holidays) and continues till 5.00pm, with a break for refreshments. 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.

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.

Council Report

Benita Hart, our Chair of Council, summarises key points from the September and October meetings.



Since my last report, we have had two busy and productive Council meetings where a wide range of projects have either begun, been reported on or completed. However, five days

before the October meeting, on 7 October, the indescribable assault took place on Jewish communities in southern Israel, rocking our sensibilities to the core and filling us with absolute horror and a deep anger. At the time of writing, the truly awful detail is filtering through of what took place in those terrible hours, the offensive on Gaza has begun and the dreadful repercussions across all communities both at home and abroad are only beginning to be grasped.

Within the context of the purpose of Council, the effect has been to concentrate our resolve in sustaining the resilience of our community, and to continue to work determinedly and creatively toward ensuring a strong and purposeful future.

Our planned Awayday in November is where much of this work begins and we discussed the outline of the day and expected outcomes: the brainstorming of ideas leading to the planning required both to grow our future membership and to increase our understanding of what our community, of all ages and backgrounds, may need from their synagogue to feel involved and fulfilled.

For a number of reasons, it was also agreed that as membership fees were increased by 5% in 2023, no further increase would be made in 2024.

A security review detailed our own procedures and ongoing close links with CST, the police and local businesses. We have a marvellous team who work closely together providing safety and security with care and consideration, and I am grateful to all who attend services and other events for their understanding and co-operation. I am also putting out a call for members to volunteer to assist this team particularly on

Shabbat mornings; full training is given. Please contact volunteer@ljs.org to find out more.

We discussed the beautiful and wonderfully well-attended High Holy Days from Selichot to Simchat Torah. The services were deeply meaningful, the music sublime and the numbers of members and guests attending returned to at least pre-Covid levels for the first time. For many guests, this was their first visit to the LJS and those I spoke with were truly delighted by their welcome, the services and the LJS itself.

In building matters, the annual legacy of our much missed past President, Martin Slowe, will be used to restore the cemetery's Prayer Hall in light of the fact that a recent survey has indicated that far more than the planned redecoration is required.

Also, the upgrade of the display cabinets in the front foyer, funded by another donor, will be completed within the next few weeks in time to house the new Lily Montagu exhibition.

Events planned to the end of this year include 'Let's Face the Music'; a Kristallnacht commemoration; the Friday Night Rock Service and the Multi-Faith Chanukkah event. Booking and/or registration links can be found within this newsletter and on the LJS website.

Attention was drawn to the very large number of events, and Council agreed to review their co-ordination, role and raison d'être in the near future.

Turning to LJS office staff, Council was informed that Ally is moving on to fulfil exciting new ambitions; we will miss her. We are delighted, however, to announce that Stephen Gershon will take on some of her duties in a permanent role, and notify you that the Communications & Marketing role has been advertised. We are also so pleased that Natasha, one of our caretakers, has been able to return to work.

I sign off with thoughts of strength, encouragement, resolve and support.

Benita Hart, October 2023

LJS Community Care

‘To occupy oneself with the needs of the community is as much a religious act as to study Torah.’ (Talmud)

Imagine this: Your partner is rushed to hospital, your family live abroad and you are on crutches; Social Services seem unavailable ... Who would you call for advice? **Contact LJS Community Care!** We are celebrating twenty years of helping congregants with a special service on Shabbat 4 November.

LJS Community Care, overseen by our Rabbis, is supported by our professional Community Care Co-ordinator Aviva Shafritz, assisted by Naomi Kramer, who work with our many volunteers in supporting congregants at stressful times and running our **eight different group activities**. We all face particular challenges at various times in our lives, and Community Care is available to support congregants when needed, in particular to reach out to those who are isolated, housebound, unwell or bereaved.

KIT – the Keep in Touch group – provides older and often frailer members of the congregation with home visits or a friendly phone call. This gives pleasure to the volunteers too, and new friendships can be formed. Other members of the LJS community visit on a more informal basis. The Keep in Touch Tea Party is renowned for the delicious food and its happy atmosphere, and is held twice a year for all senior members of the community who are specially invited. **PAM – Phone a Member** – is a contact group with LJS volunteers arranging to telephone congregants aged 85 or over who have given their consent. They are phoned three times a



Keep in Touch Tea Party

year; some people are especially called just before the High Holy Days. PAM is in close liaison with KIT, and Aviva is always available for any really difficult problems. Confidential ‘In Case of Emergency’ phone numbers are securely held at the LJS for the occasional emergency or in the event of serious concerns.

Singing for the Mind is a weekly singing group for people with memory loss. It meets on Thursdays at 2.00pm for refreshments, chat, and an hour of music and song. It is led by a professional song leader and a group of trained volunteers. **Video and Tea** is on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 1.30pm – 4.30pm. All are welcome – simply come along, no need to book. There is step-free access to the LJS so walking frames and wheelchairs are no problem. On arrival, attendees are offered soup and, following the film, there is a tasty tea. **The Family Support Group** supports the Rabbis, Education and Community Care team in discussing best pastoral practice in our congregation. **The Out and About Club** is a non-denominational get-together for older disabled people which meets from 7.00pm to 9.00pm every first and third Tuesday of the month. Members enjoy a variety of musical entertainment from Music Hall to Big Band, and invited speakers come to discuss a wide range of topics. **The Bereavement Support Group** has specially trained volunteers who provide ongoing help for bereaved members after the initial bereavement support given by our Rabbis. A new initiative has been the recent introduction of ‘Bereavement Coffee Mornings’.

Restaurant Tuesday on the third Tuesday of each month welcomes all LJS Members who enjoy coming to the Montefiore Hall to chat and enjoy a home-cooked, but restaurant standard, three-course meal with a glass of wine. Diners are often joined by one or more of the Rabbis and some synagogue staff.

All of us who are volunteers find what we do can sometimes be challenging, but always very rewarding and satisfying. We may help just once or twice a year, such as at the Keep in Touch Tea Party, or more frequently, for example, once a week at Singing for the Mind. We may befriend an individual or be part of a team.

We hope you will enjoy the service on 4 November when we shall be participating and recounting how we enjoy volunteering for LJS Community Care.

Rita Adler, Chairman of the LJS Community Care Committee

Lily Montagu: a brief introduction

As we commemorate 150 years since the birth of Lily Montagu, LJS member Dr Edward Kessler MBE tells us about her life and her seminal role in Progressive Judaism.



Lily Montagu was born in 1873. A daughter of Lord (Samuel) and Lady (Ellen) Montagu, Lily was interested in religious and social issues from a young age. Her father, the founder of the

Federation of Synagogues, was MP for Whitechapel. Alongside her sister Marian, Lily tutored working class girls in the East End, and together they founded the West Central Jewish Girls Club in 1893, the first educational and social club of its kind. Alongside her interest in social work, Lily was concerned to respond to an increasingly assimilated Jewish community, and was an enthusiastic service leader, tailoring services to the particular needs and interests of women and children.

In the second half of 19th century Britain, women's education opportunities were improving considerably, and both Cambridge and Oxford permitted women to take their local examinations. Evidence of a more meaningful and public role could also be found at the time in the Church of England. Within Anglo-Jewry, new opportunities also emerged, mirroring the changing role of women in wider society. By the 1890s, Jewish women began to serve as members of a variety of communal organisations, such as the Jewish Board of Guardians, and in 1902 a 'Conference of Jewish Women' was held in London, generating considerable public interest.

Since the Anglo-Jewish elite prided themselves on their Britishness and were willing to accord women greater communal responsibility, Lily soon began to take on the mantle of religious leader and came to prominence within the public sphere of Jewish life. For example, at the encouragement of Rabbi Simeon Singer of the New West End Synagogue, who was Lily's Bible tutor and a close family friend, she began to function as a lay preacher holding services for children on Saturday mornings. This also received the approval of the Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler.

Lily Montagu turned to Claude Montefiore and Israel Mattuck for inspiration, describing both as her teachers, and stated that she sought to implement

their ideas. It was Mattuck who persuaded Lily to serve as a religious leader at the LJS and at his insistence, she preached her first sermon at the LJS in 1918.

Nevertheless, the greater influence was that of Claude Montefiore, which began when Lily established 'The Club', and lasted until Montefiore's death in 1938. He greatly admired Lily's ability to 'get things done'. His influence can be seen throughout her writings and she reiterated many of his teachings, such as emphasising a personal relationship between the individual and God, which Montefiore identified as a feature of Liberal Judaism. She regularly called herself Montefiore's disciple.

In 1899, Lily published an essay in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, *The Spiritual Possibilities of Judaism Today*, in which she called for a new religious association to strengthen Jewish life. This provided the impetus for the creation of Liberal Judaism in 1902, then called the Jewish Religious Union. Although Claude Montefiore was the public leader, Lily Montagu took on responsibility for its religious and social activities, leading services, preaching sermons, and teaching Bible classes as well as serving as administrator.

During the next few decades, Lily Montagu helped form Liberal Jewish synagogues throughout the United Kingdom, and after Montefiore's death, she became President of the Jewish Religious Union (JRU), a position which she held for 23 years. She also helped establish an international JRU, becoming President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. She was instrumental, too, in bringing Jews who were fleeing Nazi persecution in Germany to safety in the UK in the late 1930s.

Lily Montagu died in 1963 and will be remembered most of all for helping to turn Liberal Judaism from a fringe movement into a leading denomination within Anglo-Jewry. The London headquarters of Liberal Judaism is called The Montagu Centre; let us reflect on the person after whom it is named.

Edward Kessler

Chanukkah and its lessons for political leadership



Chanukkah commemorates a historic event over 2,000 years ago, in the 2nd century BCE, when the land of Israel was under the oppressive rule of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV. He sought to

impose Hellenistic culture and religion upon the Jewish people, suppressing their religious practices and replacing them with Greek traditions.

The Chanukkah historical narrative is centred around the Jewish priestly Hasmonean dynasty – Mattathias and his five sons, also known as the Maccabees.

Their struggle for religious freedom and the eventual victory, recapture and re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem is at the heart of the Chanukkah story. This explains the name of the festival: the word ‘Chanukkah’ is derived from the Hebrew ‘dedication’.

However, if you read the Babylonian Talmud, the primary source and inspiration of modern Judaism, the only reference to Chanukkah begins with the question, ‘What is Chanukkah?’ as if they did not know:

‘What is Chanukkah? ... When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary by touching them. And when the Hasmonean monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that was placed with the seal of the High Priest, undisturbed by the Greeks. And there was sufficient oil there to light the candelabrum for only one day. A miracle occurred, and they lit the Menorah from it for eight days. The next year, the sages instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of *hallel* and special thanksgiving in prayer and blessings.’ (*Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 21b*)

The Talmud was written many centuries after these events. Interestingly, this text emphasises the miracle of oil and not the military achievement of the Maccabees. Moreover, no text mentions the miracle of oil before the Talmud. Why is there almost no connection between Chanukkah and the Hasmonean army victory in the Talmud? Why do rabbis ask about the meaning of Chanukkah if it was defined so long ago?

Perhaps they deliberately redefined Chanukkah to limit the role of war in Jewish collective memory. While the victory was celebrated as a triumph of religious freedom, the subsequent Hasmonean dynasty brought about a period of political and religious upheaval that had disastrous effects on the Jewish people. After the war, the Hasmonean leaders declared themselves not only political rulers but also religious leaders, a role traditionally held by the High Priest. This fusion of political and religious authority led to abuses of power and corruption of the priestly office. This divided the country and led to many years of instability. Perhaps this is why Talmudic rabbis were reluctant to give Hasmoneans ‘media coverage’ on the pages of the Talmud.

Reflecting on the many layers of Chanukkah meanings, Rabbi Steve Greenberg writes:

‘Every community and generation interpret Chanukkah in its own image ... For [some] Jews, it is ... about religious freedom from tyrants. For Israelis, it is about routing the armies of a dominating empire and winning back Jewish sovereignty. For traditional Jews, it is about a fight against assimilation. Hasidic Jews take another path and read the story allegorically as a story about seeking one’s inner life and rededicating oneself to that small burning candle. Indeed, every generation asks ... ‘Mai Chanukkah?’ – What is Chanukkah?’

What is Chanukkah for us today? As I write this article, the pain of Hamas’s terrorist attack on Israel is very raw. When such a brutal atrocity happens, Israeli society understandably looks for modern-day Maccabees to defeat Israel’s enemies, and the focus is on military victory. However, we should not lose sight of what the Chanukkah story teaches us – that internal divisions and corruption can also lead to destruction. I pray that this war will be the last so that there will be no more deaths of innocent people on all sides. I still hope that one day, Israelis and Palestinians will live in peace. Paraphrasing the prophet Zechariah (*Zechariah 4:6*), may this Chanukkah bring an understanding that long-term peace, success and happiness should be achieved ‘not by might, nor by power’, but by the spirit of the highest ethical aspirations and morality.

Rabbi Igor Zinkov, October 2023

A brief guide to lighting your chanukkiyah at home

The first candle should be lit on Thursday evening 7 December.

1 On each night of Chanukkah, place the chanukkiyah where it can be seen clearly, and on the first night place one candle in the holder for the shamash ('servant candle') and the candle for the first night in the holder on the far right.

2 Turn to one of the readings in the Siddur between pages 393 and 401 OR follow the simple service outlined here.

3 Light the shamash and recite this prayer followed by these blessings:

i)

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו
במצותיו, וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.

*Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheynu melech ha-olam,
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivvanu l'hadlik ner
shel Chanukkah.*

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign
of the Universe, You sanctify us by Your
commandments, and enjoin us to kindle the
Chanukkah lights.

ii)

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שעשה נסים
לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

*Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheynu melech ha-olam,
she-asah nissim la'avoteynu ba-yamim ha-hem
u'vaz'man ha-zeh.*

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the
Universe, You performed wonders for our
ancestors in days of old, at this season.

iii) **First night only**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקימנו
והגיינו לזמן הזה.

*Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheynu melech ha-olam,
shehecheyanu, v'kiyy'manu, v'higgiyanu laz'man
ha-zeh.*

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the
Universe: You have kept us alive, sustained us and
enabled us to reach this season.

4 Light the first candle. On subsequent nights insert a new shamash and an additional candle for each night starting at the right-hand side, but always light from left to right.



5 While lighting the candles the following is sung or read:

*Ha-nerot halalu anachnu madlikin al ha-nissim v'al
ha-t'shuot, v'al ha-nifla-ot she-asita la'avoteynu
v'chol shemonat y'mei Chanukkah ha-nerot halalu
kodesh; v'eyn lanu r'shut l'hishtamesh ba-hem, ella
lirotam bilvad, k'dei l'hodot l'shim'cha al nissecha
v'al nifl'otecha v'al y'shuotecha.*

We kindle these lights in remembrance of the
wonderful deliverance You performed for our
ancestors. During all the eight days of Chanukkah
these lights are sacred; we are enjoined not to
use them but only to gaze upon them, so that
their glow may move us to give thanks for Your
wonderful acts of deliverance.

*Ma'oz tzur yeshuati, l'cha na'eh l'shabbeach,
Tikkon beyt t'fillati, v'sham todah n'zabbeach,
L'et tashbit mat'be'ach v'tzar ha-m'nabbeach,
Az egmor b'shir mizmor, chanukkat ha-miz'be'ach.*

Rock of Ages, let our song
Praise Your wondrous saving power,
You amid the raging foes,
Were our safe and sheltering tower.
Furious, they assailed us,
But your arm availed us,
And Your word
Broke their sword
When our own strength failed us.

6 Eat latkes and doughnuts to recall the vial of oil that miraculously burned for eight days in the Temple; play the dreidel game and bet all your chocolate money away; watch the candles burn down.

7 Give tz'dakah (charitable donations) at this time of year when so many are lonely.

Chanukkah Sameach!



The Learning Circle

Adult education classes at the LJS

Our rich adult education programme includes Classical Hebrew classes at all levels, and opportunities for learning and discussion about Judaism and Jewish life. In November we continue the course on Yiddish which started in October, and we also continue a course, 'The Future of ...', with a range of distinguished speakers.

If you have any questions, such as which Hebrew class is the right level for you, or whether a class is online, in person or hybrid, please email: education@ljs.org and one of the staff will respond in writing or give you a call back.

If you would like to sign up for a course, please click: <https://www.ljs.org/form/Adult-Ed-Autumn-2023> for the registration form or contact education@ljs.org. Please note that registration is online only.

Courses are free for Members and Friends who have paid membership of the LJS. For non-members, termly fees are £120 or £360 per year. For individual lectures (not classes), the cost is £12 per session for non-members.

Sukkot term classes

**Tuesday classes run until 12 December,
Wednesday classes run until 13 December, and
Shabbat morning classes until 9 December.**

Note: Dates for short courses are indicated below.

Looking ahead: Purim term classes begin 9 January (Tuesday classes), 10 January (Wednesday evening classes) and 6 January (Shabbat morning classes).

Tuesday mornings 11.15am – 12.30pm

Tuesday Conversations

This friendly group is led by Rabbis Alexandra Wright and Igor Zinkov, and Dr Dov Softi, with the occasional guest speaker. Biblical and rabbinic texts as well as modern poetry and short stories are studied, and there are also sessions on Jewish art and music. New students are always welcome.

Tuesday evenings 5.45 – 6.45pm

Understanding the Geography of the Torah

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

This course focuses on understanding the structure of the five books of the Torah.

The class has the opportunity to examine key Torah portions, adhering to the weekly Torah portions which are read at the LJS. Students will read the Torah portions, understand their meaning, and be able to see them in light of the bigger picture of the Torah.

This course is suitable for those who can read Hebrew and have a basic understanding of biblical Hebrew, grammatical structure and basic knowledge of biblical Hebrew words.

Tuesday evenings 7.00 – 8.00pm

Classical Hebrew for Absolute Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

If you know absolutely nothing about reading Hebrew but want to learn, this class, which began in September, is for you. Using Jonathan Romain's *Signs and Wonders* (available for purchase from the LJS), this class enables you to unlock the mystery of the Hebrew letters and start reading. Absolutely no previous experience is required, just regular attendance of this friendly and supportive class.

Understanding Biblical Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

Participants in this course will follow the book *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* (available for purchase from the LJS) which focuses on understanding biblical and siddur (prayerbook) Hebrew. Participants also read key Torah portions to increase their understanding of the Bible as well as their Hebrew vocabulary. Suitable for those who can read basic Hebrew.

Gaining Confidence in Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Sally Gold

If you can read a little Hebrew, this supportive, informal class helps you to improve. We are reading the Abrahamic narrative in *Bereishit* (Genesis). Your reading is guided and at your own pace, and questions about the language and texts encouraged. Your confidence will grow with your skills and understanding, and you will be on the path towards greater enjoyment and participation in synagogue services, using the Siddur and Bible, and life-cycle events.

Tricks, Tests and Tears in the Story of Joseph

Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright

When Joseph's brothers appear before him, they still do not recognise the younger brother they sold into slavery seventeen years earlier. He tests them to find out whether or not they have changed since they threw him into an empty pit. The build-up to the reconciliation is beautifully conceived. If you read Hebrew (even slowly) and want to build up vocabulary and a little bit of grammar, please join us for our rich discussion around the nuances of this story.

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 are 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.

Syllabus for November and December

7 November: Exploring the Jewish bookshelf: rabbinic literature

14 November: Exploring the Jewish bookshelf: liturgy and prayerbook

21 November: Jewish history overview

28 November: Synagogue and home: home rituals and prayers

5 December: Exploring Chanukkah

12 December: Presentations from students

Wednesday evenings 7.00 – 8.00pm

Classical Hebrew for Elementary Level Students

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

This is a fun and supportive class for students who have completed a year of Beginners' Hebrew or can already read a little Hebrew but would like to learn more. We explore the texts that are the cornerstones of the Jewish year.

Shabbat mornings 9.45 – 10.45am

Women in the Bible

Tutor: Nitza Spiro

In this course we examine key female figures in the Bible, analysing their characters and roles in the context of psychology, sociology, politics and literature, often making comparisons with ancient texts of other cultures in that area and era.

Our discussions are in English, with texts read in Hebrew, enriching participants' vocabulary and understanding of grammatical structure. Members of the group receive weekly guidance of words and topics to think about prior to each lesson, making the learning more effective.

Should be of interest to men, too!

Learning with Texts

Facilitator: Michael Romain

This term we are approaching current issues and how our Jewish values and teachings may affect our approach to them. In November and December, we will look at the following topics: veganism and vegetarianism, assisted dying, fashion, polyamory, and Jewish attitudes to crime and punishment.

The classes are led by the Rabbis and lay members of the class.

For a timetable with a list of subjects and class leaders, please contact Michael Romain: romain@netgates.co.uk. We welcome new members.

Understanding Biblical Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Dov Softi

Participants in this course follow the book *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* (available for purchase from the LJS) which focuses on understanding biblical and siddur (prayerbook) Hebrew. Participants also read key Torah portions to increase their understanding of the Bible as well as their Hebrew vocabulary. Suitable for those who can read basic Hebrew.

Please note this course commences at 10.00am to allow parents of Rimon children to attend Tefillah.

Autumn short courses

We continue our Sukkot term short courses:

Tuesday evenings 8.10–9.30pm in person at the LJS and online

The Future of ...

Facilitator: Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton

Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton, our Scholar in Residence, has put together a new course 'The Future of ...':

7 November: *The Future of the Rabbinate* – Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris

14 November: *The Future of the Yeshiva and Jewish Study* – Rabbi Lev Taylor

21 November: *The Future of Anglo-Jewry* – Dr Jonathan Boyd

28 November: *The Future of Liberal Judaism* – Rabbi Charley Baginsky

The 30-minute presentations will be followed by discussion.

Thursday evenings at 7.00–8.00pm online

Yiddish for Absolute Beginners

Tutor: Osian Evans Sharma

Classes continue 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30 November.

Over a millennium, the Yiddish language grew from a regional Judeo-German dialect to the most common language for Jews around the world. With an introduction to conversation, grammar and literature, you can gain access to the treasures of Yiddish culture, stretching from Hasidic folktales to revolutionary anthems, kabbalistic melodramas to modernist poems.

The LJS Chavruta

What is Chavruta?

Chavruta, which means 'companionship', is the study among small groups to uncover the meaning of specific texts. In doing so, we hope that our students gain a greater understanding of the passages and can apply it to their own lives. In studying together this way, long-standing friendships are often formed between study companions. The original concept has been adapted by Rabbi Igor Zinkov into a modern format for LJS Members and Friends. The LJS Chavruta encourages intriguing debates on applying traditional texts to our own lives using many of the different influences in our society, such as modern and classical literature, poetry, and music.



How it works

All participants are split into groups of 3–5 people. Each month, you receive a few texts and questions for study companions to discuss. Meetings can be virtual or in person and last for around an hour. For safeguarding reasons, in-person meetings can only be held at the LJS. There is no need to read texts or prepare anything in advance. The texts will be read and discussed during the session at a convenient time for each group. Conversations aren't limited to the study sheet and questions provided, and discussion into other areas, texts and topics is encouraged. After the first two sessions, each group will have a feedback session with Rabbi Igor, and participants can continue studying within the same group, or join up with other study companions.

The LJS Chavruta Registration Form

The LJS Chavruta is only available to Members and Friends of the LJS. The registration form helps us to match you to your best study companion. Please only provide as much information as you would like. The aim is to make Chavruta rewarding and enjoyable for everyone taking part.

Click here to register: <https://tinyurl.com/ljschavruta>

Rimon Corner

Rimon Teacher Danny Lang recounts a memorable visit to the Aga Khan Foundation.

On 23 September a group of Kabbalat Torah (KT) visited the Aga Khan Foundation in King's Cross led by Rimon Hebrew teacher Russell Harris, a translator and teacher of Arabic, who also works at the Foundation during the week.

The Foundation is special because as well as housing a university, offices, a library and an archive, it has six gardens, five of them terraced, reflecting the Ismaili commitment to nature. We saw them in the glorious September sunshine, enjoying the calm and peace of the fountains and beautiful designs in each one while taking in breathtaking views over London. Russell used the gardens to explain different examples of Ismaili Muslim culture and beliefs.



In the downstairs terrace overlooking the large courtyard garden, we learned how not all of the gardens would feature plant life, but many would share features pertaining to the Persian culture of Iran. The Aga Khan hails from Iran, where his followers throughout the centuries have seen it as a spiritual home.

We noticed the splitting of spaces into four areas either through lines marked on the tiling or other design features, which could be seen in the split canopy of trees in the courtyard and the roof terrace. Fountains are a reminder of the sacred and important role of water in Islam and in the designs of great buildings in the mostly dry and warm environments where Islamic culture historically took root. We also saw many artworks and designs using Arabic script, particularly of prayer from the Quran as well as Persian script quoting poetry. Russell explained the importance of geometric forms, particularly the six-sided star and the hexagon, as well as beautiful calligraphy in cultures where images of living things are proscribed.

We finished our visit with a look at the Quran exhibition Russell had been involved in mounting in the gallery area. We saw beautiful examples of Quranic verses brought to life using many techniques, both ancient, like brush calligraphy, and modern, like the wall decorations reproduced and sold throughout the world to be hung in Muslim homes.

Danny Lang

We wish these young members of the LJS a very happy birthday in November and December.

November

Daniel Bomfim-Austin
Samuel Cooper
Harrison Gold
Sidney Gold
Otto Goldsmith
Yuri Gorelik
Sidney Gruber
Noah Maigne-Senat
Max Salasky Buxton
Kerensa Sheldrake
Leora Sternberg
Stella Sternberg-Wilson
Leo Weinberg

December

Emmanuel Baum Appignanesi
Ari Cohen
Beatrice Cohen
Dean Cumerlato
Lyla Cumerlato
Ambrose Davies-Benjamin
Alberto De Castro
Sophie Gold
Arthur Grant
Alexandra Jacobs
Leonore Lachner
Jasmine Lang
Tara Moran
Noah Mordehachvili
Alice Osband
Elio Parisi-Mills
Oren Penchina Neidle
Dylan Shorthouse
Winter Simon
Joseph Sinclair
Benjamin Tombs
Finlay Tyler
Lauren Warshaw
Elijah Yechiel

Photo Gallery

Nisa Nashim guests

Members of Nisa Nashim (NN), the Jewish Muslim Women's Network attended Karen Maxwell's Bat Mitzvah on 9 September. The two co-founders of NN, Laura Marks and Julie Siddiqi, are our guest speakers at this year's multi-faith Chanukkah celebration.

From left to right: Anna Hussain, Julie Siddiqi, Laura Marks, Karen Maxwell, Liz Arif-Fear, Amanda Bowman (VP Board of Deputies), Rukhsana Yaqoob



Vache Baroque musicians

The Selichot service on the evening of 9 September was preceded by a most beautiful concert given by the musicians of the group called Vache Baroque – five singers and theorbo player. They sang and played exquisitely, and the pieces they performed included ones by the Jewish composer Salamone Rossi (c.1570–1630). The concert was in memory of former LJS member Andy Stoller.



Konstantin Benkovich

After the Erev Shabbat service on 13 October, members had the opportunity to have a very tasty supper followed by an absolutely fascinating talk by Konstantin Benkovich, a Russian-born international activist whose installations are manifestos of resistance to dictatorial power and control. Konstantin presented slides of many of his artworks and they sent powerful messages and provoked a stimulating Q&A session.



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

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The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

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