



January/February 2024
Tevet/Sh'vat/Adar 5784

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS
NEWS



Choosing dialogue and understanding

At the Nosh 'n' Drosh on Shabbat 18 November, LJS members were privileged to hear from Mohamed Abu Jafar and Yuval Rahamim from the Bereaved Families Forum, one of our Yom Kippur Appeal charities. Both speakers had hoped to come in person, from Jenin and Tel Aviv respectively, to be with us, but as this was no longer possible, we listened to them via Zoom following an introduction from Rabbi Danny Smith.

Both Mohamed and Yuval had themselves suffered terrible losses: Mohamed lost his 17-year-old brother in 2002 when he was killed by Israeli soldiers at the school gate; Yuval was 8 when he lost his father during the Six-Day War. Yet both men chose to convert anger, revenge and despair into actions of hope. Their mission is to humanise, not demonise, the other.

There are about 700 Palestinian and Israeli bereaved families in the organisation. Among the many activities are educational programmes, and in particular the Youth Summer Camp.

Since 7 October and the deep trauma of the war, the tendency has been for both Palestinians and Israelis to become more nationalist. However, the Bereaved Families Forum remains undaunted in promoting communication, mutual respect and compassion as the way forward.

Mohamed Abu Jafar (left);
Yuval Rahamim (right)

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Services: January and February (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 or Saturday morning service congregants are invited to Kiddush either in person or via Zoom. The link is shown on screen with clear instructions.

This information is correct at the time of going to press. The weekly e-newsletter, Shalom LJS, provides updated information.

Please note that Rabbi Igor Zinkov returns from leave on 15 January.

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
Friday 12 January	Co-led by Mark Gelfer and Student Rabbi Matt Turchin
Shabbat 13 January <i>Va-era</i>	Mark Gelfer, Bar Mitzvah
Friday 19 January	
Shabbat 20 January <i>Bo</i>	Service followed by the launch of LJS member Bryan Diamond's book on Claude Montefiore – see page 4
Wednesday 24 January 7.00pm	Tu Bi'Sh'vat (New Year of Trees) Seder at the LJS
Friday 26 January	Co-led by Seve Solomons, Bar Mitzvah
Shabbat 27 January <i>B'Shallach</i>	Seve Solomons, Bar Mitzvah Service followed by Nosh 'n' Drosh with Avi Dabush, CEO of Rabbis for Human Rights – see page 4
Friday 2 February	
Shabbat 3 February <i>Parashat Yitro</i>	Naming and Blessing of Charlotte Lacrampe
Friday 9 February	
Shabbat 10 February <i>Mishpatim</i>	Service led and sermon given by Rabbi Rachel Benjamin
Friday 16 February	
Shabbat 17 February <i>Terumah</i>	Service followed by Nosh 'n' Drosh with speakers from Sufra, Food Bank and Kitchen – see page 4
Friday 23 February	
Shabbat 24 February <i>T'tzavveh</i>	Sermon given by Philippe Sands – see page 3
Friday 1 March	Co-led by Layla Grant, Bat Mitzvah
Shabbat 2 March <i>Ki Tissa</i>	Layla Grant, Bat Mitzvah

Congratulations

We are delighted to announce the following births:

Sebastian Noah Hernandez Kirk was born on 3 November 2023, the firstborn son of Claudia Hernandez and Ben Kirk. Mazal tov, too, to Sebastian's paternal grandparents, LJS members Jennie and David Kirk, and great-grandparents Ann and Bob Kirk.

Lev Alexander Zinkov was born on 14 November 2023, the firstborn son of Rabbi Deborah Blausten and Rabbi Igor Zinkov. Lev is pictured here at one day old!



Drop-In for Asylum-Seeker Families

The next LJS Drop-Ins for asylum-seeker families are on **Sunday 14 January** and **Sunday 11 February** from 2.00–4.00pm.

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

Philippe Sands: Shabbat 24 February



We are honoured that the renowned and distinguished international lawyer and writer, Philippe Sands, is delivering the sermon during the Shabbat morning service on 24 February. He will be speaking on the subject 'Law as Hope'.

Bereavements

We offer our sympathy to those who mourn:

Anthony Roberts, uncle of Collette and Danielle

Oliver Simon, husband of Sue, father of Amanda, Mark and Vanessa, brother of LJS members Tim Simon and Merula Frankel, and of Elizabeth

Juliet Vogel, wife of Peter, and mother of Paul and Julian

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

Membership Renewal Time

The past year has been another incredible year for the LJS. We have accomplished so much, from the achievements of the return to pre-pandemic attendance at High Holy Day services, to the downright boring, such as the installation of shiny, new, energy-efficient boilers which keep us warm, maintain the fabric of the building and mitigate exorbitant energy price rises.

Rabbis, trustees, staff and volunteers have poured their energies into the work of the synagogue, to create a spiritual place and a safe space for each one of us just to be; to teach and allow us to learn; to continue to work on 'Tikkun Olam' to make the world a better place; to meet and have fun; and to provide succour in this dark era following the 7 October atrocities in Israel.

We are each responsible in some part for input into synagogue life, and it is how we create and continue our diverse and cohesive community. The support of each LJS member and friend is hugely valued whether you primarily attend High Holy Day or Shabbat services, or are involved in other LJS activities.

In 2024 we will be embarking on exciting plans both to increase our member numbers and to provide you, our current members, with a wider range of thought-provoking and fun activities specifically designed to suit different interests and ages.

Your membership renewal will shortly be dropping into your inbox or through your letterbox; please take a moment to respond. In recognition of the impact of current times on members' incomes, we are freezing membership fees at last year's level.

As ever, if circumstances are harder for you, please contact us. Conversely, if you feel able to now increase your previously reduced fees or are able to make a donation to subsidise the fees of others, please get in touch.

Benita Hart, Chair of Council

Forthcoming Events

Book launch: *Claude Montefiore* by Bryan Diamond

Shabbat 20 January, after Kiddush

Everyone is welcome to join us for Kiddush following the Shabbat morning service on 20 January, after which there will be the opportunity to hear LJS Member Bryan Diamond speak about his recently published book on Claude Montefiore, one of the three founders in Britain of Liberal Judaism. Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton and Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein will also tell us about Claude Montefiore's work as a scholar, communal leader and philanthropist. To buy a copy of the book please go to: www.bryandiamond.co.uk

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 27 January at 1.15pm

With Avi Dabush, CEO of Rabbi for Human Rights

Avi Dabush, CEO of Rabbi for Human Rights, joins us on Zoom to tell us about his experience as a survivor of the massacre on 7 October at his home in Kibbutz Nirim, 3km from the Gaza border. He will explain about his work as leader of an important organisation, and share his thoughts and ideas. This is an extraordinary opportunity to hear from someone so bound up in the current conflict, and we hope many of you will attend.

Shabbat 17 February at 1.15pm

With speakers from Sufra Food Bank and Kitchen

Sufra NW London is a local charity established in 2013 to address both the causes and consequences of impoverishment in the community. Based on St Raphael's Estate, Sufra's Community Hub provides a lifeline for people in crisis, including families living in extreme poverty and people who are vulnerable, homeless and socially isolated.

Do join us to hear about the important work undertaken to provide guests with food, to empower them to learn new skills and improve their wellbeing, and to help them find work and become financially stable.

Purim celebrations

Saturday 23 March

At 11.00am there will be a L'Dor va-Dor Shabbat service led by Rabbi Elana Dellal, Rabbi Igor Zinkov and students from Rimon. At the same time there will be a Koleinu service (alternative, informal service) held in the Rabbi John Rayner Prayer Room led by Rabbi Alexandra Wright.

The evening of Saturday 23 March is Erev Purim, and we will be celebrating this festival at the LJS. Please save the date and watch out for further information nearer the time.

Communal Seder

Evening of Tuesday 23 April

The ever-popular LJS Communal Seder will be held at the LJS as usual on the second night of Pesach. Please save the date!

Czech Scrolls

Shabbat 18 May

Many LJS members will know that we have a little Torah scroll which was rescued along with many others after the deportation of the Jews from Moravské Budějovice. At the Shabbat service on 18 May we will be marking the 60th anniversary of the arrival in the UK of the Czech scrolls, including the one which belongs to the LJS.

Honouring Rabbi John Rayner

Monday 8 July

Please save this date. There will be a conference in honour of our highly esteemed and much loved late Senior Rabbi, John Rayner CBE, to mark the 100th anniversary of his birth.

LJS Tour to Lithuania

23–28 July 2024

Join Rabbi Igor Zinkov for an exciting and illuminating trip to Vilnius and other Lithuanian sites, including a 'shtetl'. The trip is being planned by LJS member Sue Bolsom, and you can visit www.ljs.org/event/lithuaniatour2024 to view the outline itinerary, register for priority booking and to receive the full brochure in early 2024.

Council Report

Benita Hart, our Chair of Council, summarises key points from the November and December 2023 meetings.



At the beginning of a brand new year, I am happy to report on decisions and discussions held at the end of last year which move us into short and longer term planning for the future of the LJS.

In addition to two Council meetings, we held an Awayday, which was truly 'away' ... we travelled to the farthest reaches of Hendon! As noted previously, we had designed this to ensure we brainstormed along specific future paths, and that we came through it with the information needed for proper planning. Yes, it was exhausting, but hugely enjoyable and exhilarating to work together towards a unifying goal. The 'icebreaker' routine at the beginning of the day, which had been thought unnecessary as we know each other well, proved great fun as we each related something previously unknown about ourselves.

Budgets current and forecast were debated, with the 10-month 2023 review showing the projected operating deficit down by £195,000, which is a substantial reduction. A moment to celebrate, but also to acknowledge that this has primarily been made possible by generous donations, clearly not a sustainable position to be in when budgeting for the future. The 2024 budget is also showing a projected operating deficit, something we continue to mitigate against both through tighter and realistic budget controls, and via increasing income.

Reviewing security measures is now a routine feature for our office staff, and this is reported on at each Council meeting. Of equal importance is the need to provide reassurance to members and guests of the methods we use to ensure ongoing security with the support of CST, local police and our local business partners. One key area is that we now require registration for each main event other than religious services,

and those attending receive an email listing the process and requirements, such as allowing bags to be searched. Huge thanks to our staff, security people and volunteers for the ongoing vigilant service they provide.

Continuing the debate to rationalise all non-religious events and, vitally, to understand the *raison d'être* of each planned event, it was decided that the booking of LJS internal events will be centralised. Each event has to be confirmed before individuals proceed any further with arrangements, so that all proposed internal events – whether from the Rabbis, Senior Management Team, Council members, Committee Chairs or individuals – must in the first instance come to Honorary Officers, then to Council, where appropriate. There is now an Event Enquiry Form, available from the office, to facilitate this first step.

We welcomed Anastasia Maximets who has just joined our staff as Communications, Marketing & Fundraising officer. Alongside her we have Romy Salant, who is an experienced marketing professional and who will be working with us on a freelance basis for a few weeks.

It was further agreed that as we have a male-dominated portrait gallery lining the main staircase, the portrait of Lily Montagu will be joining them in the near future – shuffle along chaps!

And lastly, you might be interested to hear that our Chanukkiyah was invited to Lord's Museum! They are currently holding a celebration of the Jewish Community and Cricket there, and to mark the last night candle-lighting of Chanukkah, Rabbi Alex officiated at a ceremony attended by around 100 guests. Council dutifully followed along, and happily took advantage of the invitation to hold the December Council meeting in a meeting room in Lord's Pavilion after the ceremony. A lovely little treat to mark the end of the year.

Benita Hart, Chair of Council

Ten Weeks

Rabbi Alexandra Wright considers the ten weeks following 7 October 2023 through the framework of the Torah.

Simchat Torah

I am carrying an image in my head – a dream-like vision of a young man holding a Sefer Torah, his shoulders enveloped in a white tallit. His face is luminous, his eyes radiating a gentle kind of rapture. And in the dream, there is no sound, just the vision of a surging throng, moving as one, as if in slow motion, the young man embodying the joy of the festival of Simchat Torah.

In minutes, the dream will become a nightmare of murder, abduction, sexual brutality and terror. A nightmare that has continued for ten battering and exhausting weeks.

Bereshit

Israel and the Jewish world feel shaken to their bones. We are bewildered, many feeling isolated by the silence around them. David's lament over the death of Saul and Jonathan replaces the traditional Haftarah: 'Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights ... Tell it not in Gath, do not proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon ...' The blood of the slain, the blood of beloved and cherished children, parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters.

Noach

The ancient myth of the destruction of the world is a mirror of the violence and brutality in our world. Yet, a glimmer of hope, reflected in the rainbow as Noah emerges from the ark and finds its truth in an interfaith vigil hosted by Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel and in prayers for healing, life and peace.

Lech L'cha

The shadow of grief has become darker as the war rages. Sirens warn of rockets throughout Israel, buildings crumble like ash in Gaza. God's summons to Abraham to leave his birthplace for the land which God will show him brings not comfort, but heartache. Famine, abduction, rape and war.

Vayera

We enter the week of the *sh'loshim* – thirty days since October 7th. We turn to prayer and rituals to help us in our response as a way of processing the searing sadness of grief.

Tol'dot

With the birth of Esau and Jacob, trouble is unleashed into the world. God's prediction to Rebekah that 'Two peoples are in your belly; two nations shall branch off from each other ... one people shall prevail over the other' (Genesis 25:22–23) leads us to ask, can two people ever live together in amity and peace?

Vayetze

There is rivalry between Leah and Rachel, one conceives and gives birth to sons, the other remains barren. Yet Rachel transforms her resentment into an attachment and connection with her sister. 'Through my inward struggles with God, I attached myself to my sister and prevailed over hatred and bitterness.'

Vayishlach

There is a pause in the fighting. We watch nightly as some of the hostages are released. 'Hope is not ephemeral, it is not weak ...' says Rob Rinder in a lecture. 'In moments of emptiness, darkness, what can we say? The [Arab-Jewish] village [Neve Shalom-Wahat-al-Salaam] gives us the very essence of what it is to hope – the sacred task of encounter, of listening to each other's stories.'

Vayeshev/Chanukkah

The origins of Chanukkah present very real dilemmas and questions for us this year. There is a poignant significance in watching two women, a Jew and a Muslim, light the shammash together in our own synagogue.

Mikketz

The West is turning against Israel's war on Hamas. What kind of settlement will emerge from conflict? How can peace and stability be established throughout the region? And the terrible legacy of Netanyahu's government erased? Can Israel ever overcome this trauma and rebuild its defence, its welfare and prosperity? And the Palestinians – they too need security, welfare and prosperity. Today, *eyn chazon* – there is no vision, but perhaps tomorrow, the fog of war will clear, and a new structure of existence will be established for both nations.

Alexandra Wright, Kislev 5784

Gillian Smith, a member of our Social Action Committee, outlines the LJS's involvement in the EcoJudaism pathway, the principles behind this initiative, and how they translate into action.

LJS members may be aware of the term EcoSynagogue, an initiative recently re-named EcoJudaism to better encompass the scope of the project.

What is EcoJudaism? According to its website, www.ecojudaism.org.uk: **'EcoJudaism promotes the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment across the Jewish Community in accordance with the principles of the Jewish faith.'** The website explains how we have a responsibility to care for the earth and leave it to our children in a state of wholeness and health.

This is a unique initiative with rabbinic and senior communal leadership spanning the whole Jewish community. EcoJudaism offers regular workshops, email support and signposting, website resources, guest speakers and events.

EcoJudaism aims to engage all synagogues to register for, and participate in, an environmental audit which offers communities a pathway to meaningful, tangible and measurable change.

Each aspiring synagogue must complete the environmental audit curated by EcoJudaism to be deemed an EcoSynagogue. The audit is rigorous but also flexible, recognising that every community will have different challenges; it is holistic, highlighting that changes to the synagogue buildings (if any) comprise merely part of the wider project. Three levels of achievement have been established, recognised by bronze, silver and gold awards, awarded pursuant to a points system. Change which is strategic/systematic attains more points.

EcoJudaism feels very much aligned with the values of the LJS – indeed, a significant number of other Progressive synagogues and many United, Masorti and other synagogues have already progressed to EcoSynagogue status – and the LJS Council has determined to support this initiative.

The Social Action Committee is specifically tasked, in partnership with our Rabbis and the executive

team, with steering the LJS's journey towards recognition as an EcoSynagogue.

The EcoSynagogue audit is split into sections; you cannot move from one section to the next until the first has been completed. Only once we have successfully completed all the sections will the LJS be eligible for recognition as an EcoSynagogue. The sections are entitled (1) Management, (2) Prayer & Teaching, (3) Lifestyle, (4) Land, Buildings & Consumables and (5) Community & Global Engagement.

So far, at the LJS, we have completed the actions required by (1) Management, hence the need to have regard to the principles of EcoJudaism in relation to all decision-making is now embedded in the procedures of every committee. We are also fulfilling our obligations regarding (2) Prayer & Teaching.

The LJS now needs to complete the section on Lifestyle which requires the involvement, indeed engagement, of the community. For example, we have to assess if the LJS: encourages members to calculate their personal carbon footprint and to take measures to reduce it where necessary; hosts activities and/or events that facilitate the recycling and/or reuse of goods (e.g. clothes swap events or 'give and take' schemes); encourages public transport options, walking or cycling to services and events; encourages members to reduce their personal energy consumption in their homes and workplaces.

The full range of 17 questions can be found at: <https://ecojudaism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Environmental-Audit-Information-Pack-2023.pdf>

The Social Action Committee is keen to get feedback from members and ideas to enable us to meet our objectives, and also to recruit more volunteers. We welcome and urgently need the community's involvement in our quest to adhere to EcoJudaism – a pressing issue of our time.

Please get in touch with Gillian Smith or Harriett Goldenberg via the office (office@ljs.org).

The Power of Volunteering: Spotlight on our LJS Award Winners

Gaby Lazarus leads and co-ordinates volunteering activities at the LJS. Here she tells us about the magnificent work of three of our key volunteers, which we hope will be an inspiration for all our members.



On 14 January 2024, the Jewish Volunteering Network (JVN) is holding its annual Volunteering Awards; 90 individuals or teams nominated by 37 charities – including our LJS nominees **Bob and Ann Kirk, and Maria**

Snider – will be invited to receive JVN awards acknowledging their commitment and the impact that they have made to their communities.

This is a unique cross-communal celebration that honours the volunteers, with the focus on *them* rather than the charities that they give their time to.

All the nominees are winners, and one ‘outstanding’ nomination from each of the four categories will be revealed at the event itself. Bob and Ann are nominated for Lifetime Achievement and Maria Snider for Volunteer of the Year. The other two categories are Team of the Year and Young Volunteer of the Year.

For the second year running I was invited to join the independent panel of six judges who select the ‘outstanding’ volunteer from each category. Obviously, the judges cannot vote for any nomination within their organisation or that they have a personal connection to. We were charged with individually scoring the 90 applications against a strict set of detailed criteria. Not an easy task when each nomination was a humbling and inspiring example showcasing the power of volunteering: the satisfaction it gives to those who volunteer, the positive impact it brings to so many people’s lives and the gratitude with which it is received.

I regarded my role on the judging panel as a privilege, giving me the opportunity to step back and appreciate the effectiveness – and effect – that volunteering has within the Jewish community and beyond. Every volunteer is indeed a winner.

Let me share our LJS nominees’ extraordinary volunteering journeys with you:



Jewish Museum,
Photo John Holloway

Ann and Bob joined the LJS in 1939 and 1949 respectively and married here in 1950. Ann started as a teaching assistant in the Religion School in 1947, then became

a teacher until 1971 (teaching staff were not paid until the mid-1970s). From 1971–75 she was Technical Editor of ‘*Pointer*’, a ULPS (Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues) literary quarterly. When the community moved back into the newly rebuilt LJS in 1991, Ann joined the Shabbat Coffee and Greeter rotas and was also part of the embroidery team that created the seats for the new Sanctuary. Together with Rabbis Andrew Goldstein and Pete Tobias, Ann edited the Liberal Judaism Haggadah and Children’s Haggadah, as well as co-editing ‘*New Ideas*’, an educational magazine for Religion School teachers. Ann was involved with and ran Restaurant Tuesday for 20 years.

Bob served as Treasurer of the Synagogue Society (a social group) from the mid 1950s, and as Religion School administrator and supply teacher from 1960 to 1972. He became Chair of Education from 1972 to 1978, and Chair of the Services Committee from 1975 to 1981, a post he resumed in 1990. Bob held various official positions at Leo Baeck College from 1969, including four years as Chair 1978–82. He set up the Shammash rota in 1991 in the newly rebuilt building and was active on the rota until the age of 92 in 2017. From 1992 Bob has been a Marriage Secretary for the LJS. He has been a lay reader since the 1970s, a member of Council from 1968 to 1981 and from 1985 to 1998, joint Treasurer from 1992 to 1998, and President from 2007 to 2013. Bob served as Registrar of the ULPS Evening institute and later as its Chair, from 1962 to 1970.

Together, Ann and Bob were founder members of the LJS Members’ Choir, singing for 30 years. They were joint editors of the monthly LJS newsletter from 1992 to 1998. Ann took on the role of LJS representative of the ULPS Council (which later became Liberal Judaism) for about 30 years

and was succeeded by Bob for a further similar period. They have helped organised numerous events and concerts, still participating in services, notably providing first-hand testimonies for our Kristallnacht memorial services.

In addition to their LJS volunteering, Bob and Ann have both worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the Holocaust, and to share their personal experiences of the Kindertransport. Since 1992 they have spoken to thousands of children in non-Jewish schools, on behalf of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, Holocaust Education Trust and Holocaust Learning UK.

In 2019 they were both awarded the British Empire Medal for Holocaust Education; in 2022 they were both voted Vice-Presidents of Liberal Judaism; and in 2023 they were featured in the Holocaust Learning UK film 'Kindertransport' which was screened at our Kristallnacht commemoration service last November.



Maria's volunteer journey began 20 years ago, when she was recruited into the newly established Bereavement Support group, which she is still a part of, meeting every four to

six weeks with calls and home visits in between.

Maria also volunteers for the Shabbat Coffee Rota and the Video and Tea group. Two years ago, she started cooking, serving and socialising for Restaurant Tuesday, taking on the role of lead co-ordinator of the team while the co-ordinator was temporarily absent.

For the last 10 years Maria has been on the PAM (Phone a Member) group. Establishing friendships through phone contact especially around the festivals, the team was particularly active during the pandemic, responding to community needs.

Maria also bakes for and helps set up the KIT (Keep in Touch) tea parties twice a year.

Around 25 years ago Maria provided essential support in transforming the existing informal parent/baby drop-in group at the LJS into a structured 3-morning a week nursery with a professional lead; Maria was the link between the nursery teacher and the LJS, ensuring a smooth transition and growth, and that all materials and equipment were provided.

We are indebted to ALL our LJS volunteers and recognise with gratitude the immense contribution that they make to our community life. We are fortunate enough to have an army of over 200 active volunteers, but we always need more helpers to sustain the diverse array of activities, events, and support that we pride ourselves on offering.

In January we are embarking on a fresh volunteer drive aimed at our 50 to 75-year-old members, and we are also reconnecting with the volunteers who rose to the unique challenge of helping during the pandemic.

The LJS is built on the foundations of our volunteers who are at the heart of our community. Volunteering embraces the Jewish value of *Arvut Hadadit* – each person within the community taking responsibility for another. You *can* make a difference; a little of your time can go a very long way, will benefit others as well as being rewarding for you, too.

Gaby Lazarus

If you have been inspired by Bob, Ann and Maria, please take a positive step and contact volunteer@ljs.org to let us help you start YOUR journey – there is something for everyone to get involved with.

There is no better feeling than giving your time to contribute to the wellbeing of those around you, while at the same time meeting new people and perhaps acquiring new skills.

For an overview of the volunteering opportunities on offer, please click on: <http://tinyurl.com/32sust8j> or look out for this brochure available at the LJS:



Community

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 **16 January** and **20 February**. 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 screenings:

24 January: *On the Town*

28 February: *Passport to Pimlico*

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 8 February: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë

Please note there is no session in January.

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

Singing for the Mind

Singing for the Mind is 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.

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.

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.

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

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.



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.

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: <http://tinyurl.com/5hbb22r8> 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.

Purim (spring) term classes

Tuesday classes run from 9 January to 26 March. There is no class on 13 February when it is half-term.

Wednesday classes run from 10 January to 27 March.

There is no class on 14 February when it is half-term.

Shabbat morning classes run from 6 January to 23 March.

There are no classes on 10 and 17 February when it is half-term.

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 afternoons 4.00 – 5.00pm; repeated 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 will have 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.

Please note that the course is held at 4.00pm and repeated at 5.45pm to help ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to attend.

Tuesday evenings 7.00 – 8.00pm

Classical Hebrew for Not Quite Beginners

Tutor: Susannah Alexander

This is a fun and supportive class which is a continuation of the Absolute Beginners class which began in September 2023. New students who would like practice in reading and understanding key prayers are also welcome.

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.

Gaining Confidence in Hebrew

Tutor: Dr Sally Gold

If you can read a little Hebrew, this supportive, informal class will help you to improve. We are looking at the Book of Ruth. 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 January and February

9 January: The Messiah and the Messianic Age

16 January: Exploring Kashrut (Jewish dietary laws)

24 January: (Wednesday): Seder Tu Bi'Sh'vat

30 January: Life Cycle: Early Life Rituals

6 February: Life Cycle: Education and the Coming of Age

20 February: Life Cycle: Marriage and Mixed Faith Blessings

27 February: Life Cycle: End of Life, Funeral and Mourning

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: Harriett Goldenberg

The theme for the term, which starts 13 January, is 'Who is a Jew?', and asks what it is to be Jewish.

The classes are led by the Rabbis and lay members of the class and will cover a range of ideas including *The Invention of Jews* by Shlomo Sands and the Legal Status of being Jewish, as seen through the British Courts.

For a full timetable with a list of subjects and class leaders, please contact Harriett Goldenberg: hgoldenberg@btinternet.com.

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.

Looking ahead

New course in March – Musar

A new Musar online course will take place on Tuesday evenings at 8.10–9.15pm on 5, 12, 18 and 26 March 2024. This course will be led by Rabbi Monique Mayer of the Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation. As a student of Musar, a 1,000-year-old Jewish ethical practice, Rabbi Monique Mayer believes it is the key to building relationships and creating sacred, relational community.

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 are not 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>

The Israel Abrahams Library

The Israel Abrahams Library at the LJS has over 6,000 books of Jewish interest covering prayer books, Bible commentaries, history, biography, philosophy, studies on Judaism and comparative religion, and books on Israel, art, sociology and literature. There is also a collection of DVDs including Israeli films, and some periodicals. The library regularly buys new books, and LJS members support it with generous donations. Please see page 14 for our latest acquisitions. The library is open on Shabbat mornings and during the week when the building is open. Please do pop in to browse, sit and read or borrow from our extensive collection. We look forward to welcoming you.

We now have an online catalogue: <https://www.librarything.com/catalog/LJSynagogue>

The link is on the LJS website www.ljs.org (under About Us/The LJS/Our library). To search the catalogue, go to ‘Books’ and make sure you are in ‘All collections’; then at the right, in the box ‘Search this library’, enter the author or title required, and press Enter on the computer.

Sally Van Noorden, LJS honorary librarian

New books in the Israel Abrahams Library

We aim to acquire new books for the library three or four times a year, and to select titles which reflect the variety of the collections. Recently we have purchased books ranging from modern Bible commentaries to liturgy and history. There is something for everyone in our latest choices, described here:

- *The Eco Bible*, volumes 1 (Genesis and Exodus) and 2 (Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), edited by Rabbis Y. Neril and L. Dee. These volumes explore how the Bible shows care for God's creation and what further developments can be encouraged.
- *The Women's Torah Commentary*, edited by Rabbi Elyse Goldstein. This commentary contains insights by women rabbis on the weekly Torah portions.

- *The Shofar: Its History and Use* by Jeremy Montagu. This is a scholarly book on the laws, traditions and development of the shofar.
- *Moshe's Children: The Orphans of the Holocaust and the Birth of Israel* by Sergio Luzzatto. This is the history of Moshe Zeiri, a Jewish carpenter, who rescued orphans and Jewish refugee children during the liberation of Italy.
- *Jews Don't Count* by David Baddiel – a study of why Jews tend to be excluded from the category of oppressed groups.
- *The Prophets* edited by Rabbi Michael Hilton and Alasdair Nisbet – essays written by LJS members.

New books are placed on the library borrowing trolley for one month before being shelved.

Sally Van Noorden, LJS honorary librarian

Wednesday 7 February at 7.00pm at JW3

The Magic of the Hebrew Language

A talk by Dr Avshalom Kor

Countless members of our community have studied with LJS members Nitza Spiro and her late husband, Robin, who are renowned for their pioneering work in Jewish education, including the creation of Spiro Ark. Every year a tribute event takes place in their honour, and this year the speaker is the distinguished Israeli linguist Dr Avshalom Kor who has chosen the topic, 'The Magic of the Hebrew Language'. We hope many LJS members will attend this special event at JW3: <https://www.jw3.org.uk/whats-on/annual-spiro-tribute-2024>

Here, Nitza, who runs very popular Shabbat morning classes as part of the LJS Learning Circle, shares some thoughts about her native language.

“ A language is a maze full of endless possibilities. Every turning reveals surprising treasures and insights into history, society, psychology, and politics as well as our personal stories and memories of childhood, school, family, friendships – the core of our experience. This is true of every language, but perhaps we can claim that Hebrew has additional and unique qualities. It has survived 3000 years, and is

cherished by people scattered all over the world. Throughout the ages other languages inevitably came into people's daily lives, but Hebrew, as the holy tongue, has preserved the identity of Jews and their deep connection with other Jews with whom they otherwise had very little in common; it is like the spine keeping the scattered limbs together.

Hebrew is a language of hope, with words like *Hallelujah*, *Jubilee*, and *Amen* taken on internationally. In Hebrew we optimistically do not 'fall in love' (why fall?) but connect to another person through love: *mitahev*. You do not 'convert' to Judaism – you are adopted by coming to live as part of the community (*ger*). One does not only 'fall in battle' – when it happens, the fallen leaves a hollow space which can never be filled and is called *khalal* ... The compassion and sensitivity of the Hebrew can be seen in the same word being used for 'mercy' and 'womb'.

Words taken from the Bible are used for new vocabulary needed in the modern world: an Israeli tank was given the name *merkavah* – a Biblical powerful chariot; *Shoah* is a major disaster in the Bible. Many Hebrew words are onomatopoeic, with their sound suggesting their meaning, and this helps to make learning Hebrew at any stage an easy, rich and enjoyable experience. ”

Rimon Corner

KT visit to Brighton

Danny Lang, who teaches the Kabbalat Torah (KT) students, tells us about a very successful visit to Brighton and to the Brighton and Hove Progressive Synagogue.

KT 1 and 2 had their first trip together on 4 November to the very lovely Brighton and Hove Progressive Synagogue. They were led by Rabbi Elana Dellal and myself, and joined by LJY-Netzer Movement Worker Mia Bogod.

The day began with a scavenger hunt in Brighton's warren of little stalls, shops and flea markets, The Lanes, looking for things like Hawaiian shirts, and watching wet dogs and seagulls eating an ice cream. We then ate a fabulous vegan sushi lunch and repaired to the pier, where everyone got splashed by huge waves and, as the rides were closed in the storm, side-stepped the prohibition of penny fountains on Shabbat.

The students watched a dog get rescued from the sea next to a giant blue doughnut (ask one of them!), and went up the amazing lift of the i360 observation tower overlooking all of Brighton and Hove. They then came back to the Shul for Havdalah, fun Netzer activities with Mia and yummy pizza. The fireworks were a bit of a washout, but the midnight movie selection was top notch once Rabbi Igor helped us get it working over the phone!

We are extremely grateful to the Brighton and Hove community for letting us stay in their amazing new building, chair Karen Katz for giving us such a warm welcome, and Rabbi Gabriel Kanter-Webber for agreeing to it all! Thanks also to Lindsay at the LJS for organising everything and for a great selection of train and movie snacks. We had a beautiful sunlit walk in the morning to Joe's brunch place in Prestonville, past the blue plaque of Bosie Douglas, Oscar Wilde's lover. The group returned home with an improved appreciation of seagulls, milkshakes, henna and Truman Burbank's similarity to a Levite priest.



We wish these young members of the LJS a very happy birthday in January and February.

January

Oscar Davidson-Kelly
Quincy Davies-Benjamin
Valentine Desmond
Zara Gale

Mark Gelfer

Samuel Johnson
Isaac Kane
Joel Langham McLellan
Eva Maigne-Senat
Theodore Maller
Eleya Mordehachvili

Bertie Morrison
Sacha Rosenthal
Ellis Simons
Seve Solomons

February

Rebekah Allen
Arthur Dreyer
Adam Elsner
Florence Fidler
Layla Grant
Alan Lach Stein

Raphael Lewis
Ari Mager
Ariana Rael Malbon-Arvanitakis
Clinton Newman
Liberty Newman
Jake Phillips
Leo Potel
Hayden Salasky Buxton
Jacques Sellier
Gabrielle Sinclair
Daniel Tahar
Elliot Tahar

‘Let’s Face the Music’

The LJS community experienced a real treat when we had a social get-together the evening of Sunday 5 November in the Montefiore Hall. ‘Let’s Face the Music’ was a celebration of the music of Irving Berlin, performed magnificently by singers Caroline Kennedy and Stuart Pendrid (*pictured*) with virtuosic pianist and arranger Iain Farrington (*pictured*). They presented the life of this Jewish émigré composer, going backwards through the years, recounting his story in delightful sketches, all of which naturally led into one of his songs.

An exceptionally tasty vegetarian buffet supper, including an enticing array of desserts, was prepared and served by Penny Beral and her team. During the supper interval a raffle was held with terrific prizes, and most importantly, £2,360.00 was raised for Magen David Adom; delightful though the evening was, and important as it was to raise our spirits, everyone present was keenly aware of what was unfolding in Israel and Gaza.

After the interval, Caroline and Iain gave us numbers from the Great American Songbook, interspersed with three terrific piano solos from Iain.

All in all, everyone had a glorious evening. Heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to making the evening such a success.



Photos: Mike Beral

The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

Patrons

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

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Caroline Villiers

Rimon Rabbi

Elana Dellal

Rimon Head Teacher

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(Calo’s)

Dates of key festivals in 2024

Purim: Erev Purim Saturday 23 March

Pesach: 23–29 April; **Seder Night** (start of Pesach): Monday 22 April

Shavuot: starts evening of Tuesday 11 June

Rosh Hashanah: starts evening of Wednesday 2 October; first day is Thursday 3 October

Kol Nidre: evening of Friday 11 October

Yom Kippur: day of Shabbat/Saturday 12 October

Sukkot: starts evening of Wednesday 16 October and continues till Wednesday 23 October

Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah: starts evening of Wednesday 23 October

Chanukkah: first candle is lit evening of Wednesday 25 December, the last candle the evening of Wednesday 1 January 2025

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

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

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