

# ShabbatUK Sweeps the Nation!

In what is now thought to be the largest mass participation event ever organised for the Jewish community in the United Kingdom, Shabbos *parashas Noach* saw an estimated 100,000 people from *kehillos* across the country and the religious spectrum taking part in ShabbatUK. Over a hundred communities across the country joined millions of other Jews in 350 cities worldwide in celebrating "a Sabbath like no other" in association with the international Shabbos Project. Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis invited Jews around the country to celebrate Shabbos in a way they never have before by harnessing all the goodness and uniqueness of a traditional, authentic Shabbos.

The program triggered widespread media interest, as well as messages of support from leaders of all three main political parties. Welcoming the project, Prime Minister David Cameron said, "Shabbat is a wonderful opportunity for people to come together and share in traditions that date back thousands of years. ShabbatUK highlights how Jewish communal life continues to thrive in Britain today. I wish everyone taking part *Shabbat shalom*."

Deputy PM Nick Clegg said, "Whether you're taking part in one of the mass challah-making sessions happening across the country, attending

an event organised by your local synagogue, lighting Friday night candles or inviting others to celebrate in your home, the experience will bring families, friends and communities together."

The event allows Jewish communities across the country, from Plymouth to Aberdeen, to come together and share Shabbat," said Labour leader Ed Miliband.

*Kehillos* from Glasgow to Portsmouth organised 600 community-wide events including communal meals, explanatory prayer services, incredibly popular challah-making events, celebratory *kiddushim*, afternoon *shivrim* and activities for adults and children, and *Havdalah* parties. One thousand families hosted people in their homes and many more took part in events in their local communities. In *shomer Shabbos kehillos*, people were encouraged to invite less-affiliated neighbours or business associates to join them to experience an authentic Shabbos. Members of Vine Street Shul and Beis Yisroel Beis Hamedrash in Manchester each arranged the learning of the whole of Mishnayot Shabbos by their members in honour of this special Shabbos.

**Challah Makes**  
The project kicked off on Thursday evening with 7,000 people across the country

taking part in Challah Makes in 26 nationwide locations. The flagship event at Allianz Park sports stadium in NW London, organised by Rebbeztzin Joanne Dove of SEED and Dalia Cramer of U.S. Women, attracted over 3,000 attendees alone, with each one making and plaiting her own challah to take home. The Chief Rabbi addressed the crowd briefly and Rabbani Yemima Mizrahi expounded in her unique way on the spiritual potential inherent in *ha'frashas challah*. The Rabbani led the participants in *benching* the person standing next to them as a way of bringing *achdus* to the Jewish people, and managed to achieve the only few moments of complete silence of the entire evening as she encouraged everyone to *daven* for themselves, their family, *Klal Yisrael* and Eretz Yisrael, at this auspicious moment. Rabbani Mizrahi, Mrs. Cramer and Mrs. Zahava Taub, wife of HE the Israeli Ambassador, were honoured with *taking challah* with a *brachah* from specially prepared large batches of dough. Participants were encouraged to donate at least part of their dough to be baked on site and distributed via charities such as GIFT and Jewish Care to needy families and to communal organisations.

Director of GIFT Michelle Barnett described this as "a great result!" North Manchester also held a sell-out *challah* make, and there were other successful events in Essex, Leeds, Chalfont St Giles, and in NW London, where the event in King David School Hall, Manchester, attracted over 1,000 women from across a wide spectrum of the community. The ladies of the community who enthusiastically participated were inspired by the guest speaker Louise Leach, who spoke about her spiritual journey "from Fame to Flame," and were entertained by the Caroline Pakter Choir. Each lady received a mixing bowl with ingredients, and the evening was a mass *ha'frashas challah* ceremony, before the finished loaves were taken for baking. Yesheurun Shul held a Bowdon Shul.

**Fantastic Friday Night Participation**  
Over Shabbos itself, there were as many different events as there were communities participating. *Shuls* were packed for *kabbalas Shabbos* with some communities reporting as many as five times the usual number of *mitpallelim*. A number of other *kehillos*, such as Newton Mearns, Glasgow, held communal *licht bentschen* events, with several generations of families lighting candles together. In Meade Hill, Manchester, as part of the programme organised by Rabbi and Rebbeztzin Yanky Prijs, some grandmothers lit Shabbos candles for the

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Rabbi Dovid Tugendhaft, rav of Nishmas Yisroel shul in Hendon, NW London, speaking towards the end of the shul's well-attended Seudah Shlishis held to mark ShabbatUK

first time, together with their granddaughters. This last year, Kasher *kehillos* followed by a capacity audience *seudah* with guest speaker Rabbi Y.K. Rubinstein.

Many *kehillos* focus on the participation of children and young people throughout the Shabbos. Whitefield *shul* Manchester encouraged the children to cooperate with a parade, for younger children and special entertainment during the meal. Teams of young people from youth movements were drafted in to help with youth programming in many *shuls* over Shabbos, with some young people walking over during the day. UJS organised a sell-out free Friday night dinner for UJWS students and staff at Chalfont St Giles. Rabbi Shalom across the country hosted students and ran events throughout the weekend.

One of the largest communal events took place in Norricle Lea Synagogue, Hampstead Garden Suburb, where the *shul* hosted over 700 people for Friday night dinner. One participant writing in the *Jewish News* said that she truly felt what it means to be involved in a community. "I had an insight into what it meant to be fulfilled by Shabbat."

Hale in South Manchester opted for a different model and encouraged families to experience a "normal" Shabbos in their own home, shared with family and friends. Many people committed themselves to full *shemiras Shabbos* inviting guests, arranging hot plates, and more via the *shul* and learning the relevant *halachos*. One family had 46 people for the Friday night *seudah*. The programme did not stop with the *seudah* as many communities laid on *Oneg Shabbos* programmes as well.

**Special Shabbos Day**  
ShabbatUK continued during Shabbos day, with *shuls* offering *shivrim*, guest *baratzanim*, hot or themed *kiddushim*, and communal Shabbos lunches. A family in Norwich hosted some other Jewish families and the event snowballed into a community event, necessitating a last minute request for materials to help with songs and tefillos. Bidefield *shul* used the *shuls* as a catalyst to launch a new Young Professionals group. A number of *shuls*, such as Enfield and Finchmore Hill in North London and Etz Chaim in Leeds, had the *davening* led firstly by youth, whether home-grown or "imported." As Yisroel in Borehamwood led Rabbi Joseph Grunfeld, National Director of SEED, to give a *shur* after *Kiddush* *shuls*. This was followed by a *shur* African themed lunch in south of Chief Rabbi Warren Weinstein of South Africa who

initiated the Shabbos Project. Golders Green, led by Rabbi Shimi and Rebbeztzin Ruthe Shimi, held their Shabbos lunch in Jewish Care, with the patients and staff eating "Sitting with the elderly and Kasher members... really is all about what community

The afternoon continued with a plethora of learning and social activities. In Newcastle, a wine tasting, relevant with a review of the wine, was a popular event, while other communities set up rooms for those who wanted to read, chat, play *Bames* or *Southgate* and Northampton. People for *Minchah*, followed by *shivrim* for men and women, programme, and separate children's activities. In Leeds, the afternoon featured choice of four different Shabbos options, held at the United Hebrew Congregation, in an event that attracted nearly 200 people.

The communities in St. Johns Wood and Maids Vale in St. Johns Wood Synagogue, Saatchi, Spanish & Portuguese, Anshei Shalom and Naima across Shabbos - including Shabbos lunch at St. Johns Wood followed by afternoon activities and speakers for all age groups. One participant said afterward, "I've never kept Shabbos before. Inviting people to eat, such a welcoming community - there's nothing like this in my native country."

An Shabbos drew to a close, *kehillos* joined together once again for *seudah shelishis*. Nishmas Yisroel, led by Rabbi Dovid Tugendhaft, held a successful and inspirational *seudah shelishis* to mark ShabbatUK. Barneet Synagogue, led by Rabbi and Mrs. Barry Lerer, challenged those members who do not usually keep Shabbos to do so this week and received over 100 commitments. The *shul* helped to provide hotplates and Shabbos urns and invited those "taking the challenge" for Shabbos lunch and a communal *seudah shelishis*. A Barnet member commented, "From the moment I arrived in *shul* on Shabbos morning, until *shul* on *Havdalah*, I felt so I left to be part of the whole ShabbatUK experience."

*Seudah shelishis* in Newcastle was particularly special as a large contingent walked over from Gateshead to join the local community. Guest speaker Rabbi Gershon Miller, *Mashgiach* of Gateshead Yeshiva, delighted and inspired the audience with suggestions for gaining an appreciation of the true inner value of Shabbos. Western Marble Arch Synagogue hosted a large group

of *Binet Akiva* leaders, together with Rabbi Dr. Rafi Zelig, dean of L.I.B.E. The culmination of their highly successful *seudah shelishis*, at which there were not enough chairs to go around - "a rare yet lovely problem."

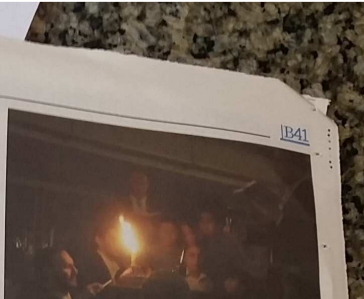
**Saying Farewell**  
Shabbos went out with a bang in a number of communities, both impromptu and organised. *Havdalah* was paired with fireworks and, in some places, even up their *Shabbos* and organised a fireworks programme with family, whilst Borehamwood and at their *Havdalah* and fireworks a musical *Havdalah* followed by a concert, as did a number of other *shuls*, including Shomer Hadass in NW London and Pinner in Middlesex.

Manchester held a Grand Finale Concert for the whole community, although many *shuls* also ran their own events earlier in the evening. The "Evening of Jewish Music and Melody" took place in the Hilton Suite, Prestwich, and featured the guest appearance of *Binet Akiva*. The event was packed with people soon after the concert was scheduled to begin. The atmosphere created by the music and singing was really stirring, and formed a fitting climax to the whole of the weekend.

Perhaps the impact of ShabbatUK can best be summed up by another BGSS member who said, "We had the most wonderful *Havdalah* service to end the most inspirational, spiritual, special, emotional 25 hours. I haven't missed my phone, laptop or other electronic devices and thoroughly enjoyed properly spending time with family and friends without any distractions... I am hopeful that this will be the start of many Shabbats spent concentrating on the important and valued things in my life."

Rabbi Dovid Eisenberg, Rav of Prestwich Hebrew Congregation, observed, "ShabbatUK was a very successful weekend in which thousands of Jews who do not normally engage with Shabbos got a taste of the great *matanah* we have from Hashem every week."

Chief Rabbi Mirvis, who visited and spoke in several *kehillos* over Shabbos, said, "ShabbatUK saw British Jewry at its best. Through engaging with Shabbos in an enjoyable and uplifting manner, tens of thousands of people now appreciate all the more how relevant and meaningful Jewish tradition is in our modern age." National ShabbatUK Director Rabbi Daniel Gross added, "What Jews across the U.K. have achieved this weekend is unparalleled in our community's history. The astonishing sense of unity and pride that ShabbatUK has generated will change the face of British Jewry forever."



The Hilly United Synagogue rounded off a successful day's programme for ShabbatUK with a communal *seudah*. L-R: Senior Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence, Assistant Rabbi Michael Latner, Guest Chazan Shimon Cramer, who lead the *davening* over Shabbos.



Rabbi Moshe Feldman and pupils of Broughton Jewish Cassell Fox Primary School at the school's special ShabbatUK assembly on Friday morning.



A Musical Journey Through Shabbat" was the climax to Wainstead and Woodford Synagogue's celebrations of Shabbat UK. Rabbi Fleischer performed with Rabbi Crainer and his son David. Rabbi Weissman and Rabbi Orgel. The community was entertained after an extra special Shabbat, which included a Friday night Carlebach service as well as a whisky tasting event at Seudah Shlishis.



At Enfield and Winchmore Hill United Synagogue, Rebbeztzin Sufrin arranged a *parshas* Noach themed backdrop, including inflatable giraffes, for the Shabbos programme. Hasmonem pupils and members of Ezra Youth Movement (L-R) Yossi Tatz, Kovi Rubenstein, Dovi Leirett and Avi Reikman assisted Rabbi Yitzchok Sufin (C) with the *davening* and creating a beautiful *ruach* for the *seudos*.



Some of the challahs delivered to the GIFT warehouse from the Great Challah Make.