



Our Congregation



News and views from Belsize Square Synagogue

EMBRACE THE LIGHT

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick

As we prepare to say goodbye to 2021 and reflect on the past year, I can't help but focus on the challenges of the pandemic and lockdown, as well as the cautious optimism of reopening.

Despite all the pain and suffering we experienced over the past eighteen months, many of us find ourselves still clinging to a general sense of hope and faith. Call it naive if you will, but I believe this outlook is woven into the fabric of the Jewish people.

Throughout history, the Jewish people has witnessed one devastating catastrophe after another. From the destruction of the temples in Jerusalem to the Crusades, from the Spanish Inquisition to the pogroms, and finally the Holocaust – each of these events saw mind-numbingly high numbers of casualties and a threat to the Jewish future.

Yet despite the pain and sorrow resulting from these events, the Jewish people held onto their faith and maintained hope in a better future. And no holiday embodies this sense of hope and optimism more than Chanukah.

The Talmud records a disagreement between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai over the proper way to light the Chanukah menorah: Beit Shammai says we should start with eight candles and remove one each day; Beit Hillel says we should start with one candle and add one more each



day. As is almost always the case, Beit Hillel wins the argument, but their reasoning here is uniquely beautiful and powerful: *Ma'alim BaKodesh VeEin Moridin* – we only increase holiness, we never diminish it.

Another way to look at Beit Hillel's ruling is to say that at the darkest time of the year, we light more and more candles in order to drive out the darkness of pain and suffering with the light of hope and optimism.

Last year, we were not able to hold our annual Chanukah Bazaar due to the pandemic, but this year, we are cautiously reopening our doors. While I would understand if not all of you are

ready to re-join us in person quite yet, the fact that we are allowing ourselves to return to some sense of normality shows that we are embracing the lesson of Chanukah and the story of the Jewish people: there may be times when we must hide in the dark, but a time will always come when we must embrace the light and help it grow.

MITZVAH DAY Sunday 21 November

Donations for Camden Foodbank (tins, fruit, veg, noodles, snacks, tea, coffee, shampoo, shower gel, washing powder and loo roll all welcome) can be left at the office on weekdays or during Cheder.

Volunteers required to sing at Wellesley Road Care Home.

Contact Jennifer or Adam in the synagogue office for more information.

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SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS



NAME: Hilary Curtis
JOB TITLE: Health researcher / artists' model

What's your favourite thing about your work?

I have two lines of work, so I'll cheat and take two. As a researcher, it's data analysis, making a coherent story emerge out of screeds of columns on a spreadsheet. As an artists' model, it's the appreciation at the end of a class.

What is the hardest part of your job?

Holding a pose is hard work and often painful. My left foot has a tendency to go numb.

If you could do any other job for one day, what would you choose?

I love to be outdoors in the country. I wonder if I could hack it as a shepherd?

How did you come to be a member of Belsize Square?

We wanted to be able to walk from Kilburn. But also, I grew up in Oxford where the Shul is independent so I was attracted to the only other (I think) independent one in the country, although it's very different.

What's your favourite festival?

Pesach has always been special in my family, with seders hosted by my grandparents, then parents, now brother and most recently online.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

Right of centre (not my politics), near the back. I like to see other people in front of me.



NAME: Frank Joseph
JOB TITLE: Physics Teacher

What's your favourite thing about your work?

By day I am a physics teacher and Assistant Headteacher at a secondary school. At other times I am Chair of Education at Belsize Square, as well as sitting on the Board and the Executive. At Belsize I enjoy working with really interesting people from very different professions. It never ceases to amaze me, the range of talent and skills we have in our community. Although committee meetings can occasionally be a little dull, it is fascinating to see how people come at a problem from different perspectives. I am also amazed at the time and effort put in by many members of our community to make our synagogue such a special place.

What is the hardest part of your job?

It's just a time thing really. We do loads for our young people at Belsize, but so often an idea pops up that can't be followed through. Volunteers are always welcome to support our Cheder and Youth Activities!

If you could do any other job for one day, what would you choose?

There are people in my family who think I would have made a good doctor, but we will never know!

How did you come to be a member of Belsize Square?

Through my wife Nicole (who is a doctor!). Her grandparents were refugees from Germany before the war and naturally found a home at Belsize Square. That tradition has been continued by Nicole and me along with our two sons Sam and Jonah, and Nicole's parents Barbara and John Horwitz.

What's your favourite festival?

It has to be Pesach. Seder night means a big family gathering at my parents' house with my mum's famous roast lamb.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

Upstairs – we are looking forward to attending more often in the run up to Sam's Bar Mitzvah and beyond.

NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS

Dear Fellow Members

With the arrival of winter time upon us and with the shortness of the light, Mrs Klopstick has decided to cut a bit down on her sporting eggivities up till spring again images. Instead, she will be concentrating much of her energies on combetting global warming. In this respect I fully bag her up. This is, of cause, not so much for us olden goldies, but more for our gross grandchildren. Hear in Abernein Mansions we are making sure that every inmate insulates themselves sorrowly.

Just because one tree court fire last year, the health und safety officer from Camden Consul has degreed that we cannot have a menorah again in our communal garden. This means that each inmate will have to make do with their own individual menorum. We are all well equipped with very highly sensitive smoking alarms. But this means that every time Mrs K undertakes baking, frying, grilling oder roosting she sets off this alarm. I then have to run round our flat opening the French doors to the balcon und all other widows, before waving a kitchen cloth or towel at the censor.

I have tried to disencourage my wive from yet again making Berliner Pfannkuchen (doenuts in Englisch) for everyone in this building. Apart from me having to be a won man fire brigade, constantly with towel in hand, the end product is never what was intended. I have heard it sed by some inmates "Cannonballs again!" As far as

Mrs K is concerned this is her tradition from witch she will not be dislodged.

Won much loved tradition at Belsize Square that is no longer on the menu, is the Chanukah Bizaare. Of cause, with so few members no longer in manufacturing, there is no more a sauce for donated products. I know that there is a Chanukah Market plenned, but I wander if it could include something like a bring und goodbye sale. I wood be more than happy to donate some of Mrs K's obsolite sports equipment. This includes a pole walt pole that is now too short for her, some dump bells that are too light und an aqualong, phase masque und flappers heartly used.

Olden age brings with it some loss from mamory und confusion. It is not dementia or altzeimers, it is just the way things go, like shortage of herring und vision. Twin spinsisters Amelie und Gertie Koenigsburger hat not been to Belsize Square since the first lock up, so decided to attend a Schabbas service. There taxi dropped them off at the top of the road. On entering the building they were greeted by a nice man who told them the service was not until the next day. Luckily the synagogue Chief Executor, Mr Lee, was just coming round the bend when he noticed the two ladies looking confused in the doorway of St Peter's church. According to the ladies the nice man told them he was the church virgin.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick

ASK
FRITZ

I have received more requests then I can even remember about passwords. The mane question is how to remember them without riding them down. My advise is to keep won or too, no more und to also keep them symbol. Just change one letter in your name. For a sample I use eyether 'klopstink' oder 'flopstick' und so far I have not been hagged once.



HOLOCAUST EDUCATION PROGRAMME Peter Bohm

All being well, we are planning to resume our Holocaust Education Programme for schools (generally aimed at Years 9 and 10) in or around February 2022. We are hoping to be able to deliver it in the Synagogue.

If you are interested in assisting in any capacity (eg presenting part of the programme or helping on one or more days in any capacity, from providing refreshments to looking after groups of pupils), please contact Peter Bohm at hmdsynagogue@gmail.com.

If you know any students or younger people who may be interested, we'd be delighted to hear from them.

CHANUKAH TEA AND CANDLELIGHTING Sunday 28 November, 3pm

Join us for tea and lighting of the Chanukah candles on the first night of Chanukah.

Refreshments will be served and joining us will be children and their parents to sing and play Chanukah games. We will also be screening a recording from the 1970 Chanukah Bazaar and a prerecorded Cantorial Chanukah Concert.

Transport can be arranged if needed, please contact the synagogue office.





OUR NEW BEIT MITZVAH PROGRAMME

Cantor Paul Heller



Early October marked the start of our exciting new Beit Mitzvah programme, presenting a new and attractive format for our B'nei Mitzvah students.

The programme was developed over the first half of this year by a working group under the leadership of our Chair of Education, Frank Joseph, with the active participation of a group of tutors including Adam Rynhold, Joe Hacker and me, as well as our Head of Cheder Caroline Loison, and Rabbi Botnick following his commencement at Belsize. We brainstormed ideas for the course and the finalised version was presented to parents and the next cohort of B'nei Mitzvah candidates on 19 September.

The classes themselves started in the first week of October, with an average of 14 pupils attending. They are now well engaged in the new project. The core of the new format is the '5 Ts' [see box below]. The programme

is taught on Sundays by Rabbi Botnick, Cantor Heller and Marion Godfrey. Individual and group projects are led by our very capable teacher, Jeannie Cohen, who meets our pupils via Zoom on Wednesday evenings. And we are continuing with our successful programmes 'Joe and the Jews', led by Joe Hacker, and my 'Shabbat Chat' which will be returning in the spring.

We will be starting Shabbaton weekends, when participants will stay over at Belsize, and next year we also plan to have weekends away to enhance the experience of Shabbat, to have lots of fun and to enjoy some learning experiences together. Our students and their families will be assigned a peer family or student who recently celebrated a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, to help guide and support them through their preparations.

All this and much more was presented to parents and children at

the September launch and was received enthusiastically. We had in mind the outcome of a focus group that was a major synagogue enterprise some years ago. Its results and mission statement are an integral part of the new format.



Bar or Bat Mitzvah means 'Son or Daughter of the Commandment' and our programme's name is now Beit Mitzvah, House of Commandment. The origin of the new name is Beit Midrash, House of Study, which is one of the Hebrew names for a synagogue. We think that our new programme's name follows on very naturally from that.

More details can be read in our Beit Mitzvah brochure at this link: www.synagogue.org.uk/BeitMitzvah/Programme.pdf

BEIT MITZVAH SUNDAY SESSIONS THE FIVE T'S

- **TORAH** – RABBI BOTNICK WILL EXPLORE THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTIONS. ALTERNATE SUNDAYS FROM 10-11.
- **TEFILAH** – CANTOR HELLER WILL GO OVER RELEVANT LITURGICAL PIECES AND HOW THEY ARE CHANTED. ALTERNATE SUNDAYS FROM 10-11.
- **TARBUT** (CULTURE), **TZIONUT** (ISRAEL) AND **TZEDAKA** (ACTS OF KINDNESS). MARION GODFREY WILL COVER ONE OF THESE TOPICS EACH SUNDAY FROM 11-12.

'Triple Threat' Chocolate Brownies

Jessie and Lennie Ware

See article on page 7 A triple shot of chocolatey goodness, my doctor brother Alex says that it's more like a 'triple threat' to your cholesterol levels, but don't let that stop you from making them.

Get creative! Add whatever you like to your brownie batter. Generous chunks of white, milk or dark chocolate will all work well, as will roughly broken-up Oreos or any other chocolate confectionery. I generally add three things to mine, hence the triple threat. Experiment. Ultimately, whatever you choose will be delicious.

Makes: 9–18 brownies

• **Prep time:** 25 minutes

• **Cook time:** 40 minutes

200g/7oz unsalted butter,
cubed

200g/7oz dark chocolate,
broken into pieces

3 large eggs

275g/9¾oz caster or
granulated sugar

90g/3¼oz plain flour

50g/1¾oz unsweetened
cocoa powder

250–300g/9–10½ oz
ingredients of your choice to
add to the mix (white, dark
or milk chocolate, chocolate
biscuits, your favourite
chocolate bar), chopped

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C/170°C fan/375°F/Gas Mark 5. Line a 23cm/9in square baking tin with non-stick baking paper.
2. Put the butter and chocolate into a heatproof bowl set over a pan of barely simmering water (ensuring the bottom of the bowl doesn't touch the water underneath). Leave until they start to melt, then stir regularly until fully melted and combined. Remove from the heat and leave to cool a little.
3. In a large bowl, using an electric handheld mixer or stand mixer, whisk the eggs and sugar together on high speed until pale and almost doubled in volume. Add the cooled chocolate and butter mix and gently combine, using a spatula and figure-of-eight motion to fold the two mixtures into one another.
4. Sift the flour and cocoa powder together and then fold into the chocolate and egg mixture. Again, fold gently using a figure-of-eight motion until all is combined. It will appear dusty at first, but be patient and it will come together. Take care not to overdo the mixing: as soon as you cannot see any dusty flour mix, you are there.
5. Now add your extra ingredients and fold in, reserving a few to scatter over the top. Transfer the mixture to the baking tin, levelling it out and pressing any reserved ingredients into the top of the mixture.
6. Bake for around 35 minutes. The top should be just firm, but the middle should be slightly undercooked and gooey: it will continue to cook in the tin once removed from the oven.
7. Remove from the oven, place on a wire rack and leave the baked brownie to cool completely in the tin before cutting into squares and removing.
8. Store any leftover brownies in an airtight container at room temperature.

ONLINE HISTORY ARCHIVE OF 'THE BOYS' LAUNCHED BY THEIR GRANDCHILDREN

'The Boys' were five groups of orphaned Holocaust survivors brought to the UK between 1945-1948. In a landmark research project led by Philip Burton, a Belsize member and Vice Chair of the Holocaust charity The '45 Aid Society, with historical advisor Rosie Whitehouse, their grandchildren have created a comprehensive archive documenting The Boys' experiences after liberation, their journeys to the UK, the hostels that received them and people who cared for them.

The 700 young people were survivors of concentration camps who had lost their families, and although they are known as 'The Boys', the group included over 200 girls. Many of them settled in the UK, established successful businesses, married and had families of their own, while some emigrated to Israel, the USA, Canada and elsewhere. Little detail was known



Some of the first group of The Boys in Prague in August 1945 before departing for the UK

about what had happened to them in central Europe after their liberation. Some information was contained in Sir Martin Gilbert's 1996 book, 'The Boys: Triumph over Adversity' and some had written their autobiographies.

The '45 Aid Society gathered a young team of 'third-generation' researchers, grandchildren of The Boys. One of the principal team members was Belsize member Emily Burton, daughter of Philip and granddaughter of one of

The Boys, our late member David Herman. The group undertook extensive research in numerous archives, both in the UK and around the world. Thousands of hours were spent gathering information, painstakingly checking facts and statistics, creating interactive maps and captioning photos.

The archive has now been published online and is by far the largest single source of information about The Boys. It was launched in October with an excellent short film, 'Introducing the Archive of The Boys' which you can find on YouTube. The '45 Aid Society hopes the archive will be useful to many, including The Boys' families, educators, historians and academics, and anyone interested in their remarkable stories. The archive can be viewed at www.45aid.org/history/who-are-the-boys/the-boys-story/





Community News

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:

Paul Cooper & Sarah Samuels
Gale & Ernest Kochmann
Mottie & Maggie Kessler
Zoe Jankel & Symon Stern with son Max
Rita Dos Santos
Victoria Gill with son Che
Joanna & Geoffrey Baruch
Elizabeth Saul
Tania Kaczynski
Nick Cosgrove
Justin Bass & Nicola Gewirtz with sons Freddie & Oscar

BAR MITZVAH

Mazal tov to:

Sonny, son of Philippa Ross & Toby MacDonald, who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 6 November

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:

Richard Fisher, who died on 29 August

ORGAN DONATION LAW IN ENGLAND HAS CHANGED

Helen Grunberg

On 20 May 2020, English law regarding organ donation changed.

If you do **not** register to opt out, it is assumed that if you are not in an excluded group you agree to be considered for organ donation when you die. A decision to opt out needs to be recorded on the NHS Organ Donation Register.

In addition, it is vital that you discuss your decision with your family. They will have the opportunity to provide any additional or more recent information about your decision and this will always be respected.

If your family were to object to donation even though you have not opted out yourself, healthcare professionals will discuss the matter sensitively with them.

If you have concerns about religious restrictions regarding organ donation, Rabbi Botnick explains that Jewish law not only permits but strongly encourages – and possibly even demands – the practice of organ donation. If you'd like to learn more about the Jewish view on this topic, visit tinyurl.com/jewishorgans. A guide to organ donation and Jewish beliefs can be found on the NHS website tinyurl.com/42wy27zu and further information is also available from any of the major UK synagogue movements

In principle, Judaism encourages organ donation to save lives.

The copy deadline for the next issue of *Our Congregation* is 10 December 2021

SERVICE TIMES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm

Saturday mornings at 10.00am

You no longer need to book in advance.

You can also view online via BelsizeLive at synagogue.org.uk

Kristallnacht Service

Friday 5 November at 6.45pm

Kikar Kids

Saturday 6 November, 4 December and 1 January at 11am

Under 5s service in the crèche

Junior service for 5-9s in the library

Often followed by potluck lunch

Please contact Richard Pollins (rgpollins@gmail.com)

B'nei Mitzvah Activity

Joe and the Jews

Saturday 13 November at 9.30am in the Kiddush Room

ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP

For Zoom meeting details see News from the Square weekly email or email Claire on claire.walford@yahoo.com

Sunday 7 November

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Jewish Life, Deeper insights: Shabbat part 1

11.30- 2.45 David Stone, Emeritus Professor of Paediatric Epidemiology, University of Glasgow and Academic Director StandWithUs UK – Nahum Sokolow: Astounding facts that most people don't know

Sunday 14 November

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Jewish Life, Deeper insights: Shabbat part 2

11.30-12.45 Jonathan Paris, Political Analyst – Middle East Update.

Sunday 21 November

No Adult Discussion Group - 12.00-5.00 Chanukah Market

Sunday 28 November

10.00 - 11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Jewish Life, Deeper insights: Kashrut

11.30-12.45 Dvora Hachohen, Israeli Historian and Professor, Department of the Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology, Bar Ilan University – The Life of Henrietta Szold, Founder of Hadassah

Sunday 5 December

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Jewish Life, Deeper insights: Illness

11.30-12.45 Speaker TBC – please check weekly News from the Square email

Sunday 12 December

10.00 - 11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Jewish Life, Deeper Insights: Death and dying Part 1

11.30-12.45 The René Cassin Human Rights Shabbat Talk – The Right to Food

Sunday 19th December

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Jewish Life, Deeper Insights: Death and dying Part 2

11.30-12.45 Speaker TBC

Sunday 26 December

No Adult Discussion Group. Winter break till 9 January 2022.

WHY CHOCOLATE MATTERS

Michael Leventhal

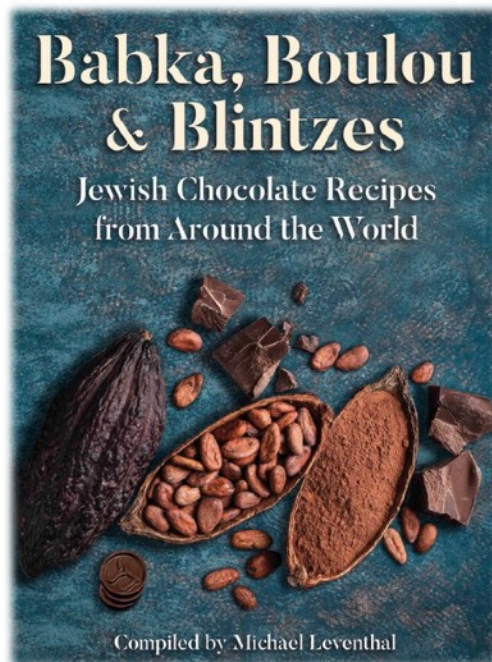
Chocolate matters. Every day, more than a billion people worldwide enjoy chocolate and every year more than three million tons of cocoa beans are harvested. But did you know that Jewish traders have had a 500-year-long relationship with chocolate?

The Jewish community has been involved in the global chocolate trade since before chocolate first arrived in Europe, and Jewish traders helped introduce chocolate to countries around the world.

Jews can't take any credit for discovering the secrets of the cocoa pod: the Olmecs were the first civilisation to use cocoa beans more than 5000 years ago. They were followed by the Maya, then the Aztecs, who believed that cocoa was a gift from the gods. It wasn't until 1502 that Europeans and the Jewish community were first introduced to chocolate when Christopher Columbus made his fourth voyage to the Americas. Columbus captured a cargo of cocoa beans but mistakenly thought they were almonds or goat droppings!

The Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal claimed in his book *Sails of Hope* that Columbus and as many as one-third of his crew could have been Jewish. Plenty of historians provide good evidence that, at the least, Columbus had Jewish ancestry. And at least three of his crew were certainly *conversos* – Jews pretending to have converted to Christianity to avoid persecution.

Once cacao beans were taken back to Spain, Jewish entrepreneurs played a key role in the creation and expansion of the chocolate market. At the time they were blocked from numerous occupations as a result of widespread anti-Semitic prejudice: the chocolate business was something the Jews were able and permitted to do and they embraced it. Time and time again in different countries their trading rights were withdrawn if they became too successful and generated too much envy. Following the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition, Spanish and Portuguese Jews were forced to flee



to new countries. Some took the skills of chocolate-making with them.

We can thank Jewish traders for introducing chocolate to France in the early 1600s, then Denmark, Holland, Portugal and England. In Belgium, for example, the abbot of Baudelo in Ghent is believed to have been the first person to take chocolate to the country in 1635 – but it was a Jewish immigrant named Emmanuel Soares de Rinero, who had settled in the province of Brabant, who was the first to be issued with a licence to manufacture chocolate.

It was also Jewish chocolatiers that expanded production to the French Caribbean. Benjamin D'Acosta de Andrade, a Jew from Bayonne, arrived on the island of Martinique in 1654. D'Acosta de Andrade cultivated cacao trees and became the first person to open a cocoa-processing plant in this French territory. D'Acosta left for the Dutch haven of Curaçao which consequently developed a thriving chocolate industry of its own. In Curaçao today, hot chocolate and panlevi sponge cookies are still served at a *brit milah*.

When it comes to chocolate's arrival in North America, we can thank the Sephardi entrepreneur Aaron Lopez. After he arrived in

Rhode Island in October 1752 he quickly became one of the colony's most important merchants. Lopez was involved in many trades and he became one of the key people responsible for bringing the chocolate business to America by importing cocoa.

In modern times, the relationship between the chocolate trade and the Jewish community is no longer as strong as it once was, but it is a shame to think that the enterprising association that existed over hundreds of years is in danger of being forgotten. The next time you take a bite of a rugelach at a Belsize Square Kiddush give a thought to the 500-year Jewish journey of this marvellous treat.

*Michael Leventhal is the publisher of Green Bean Books, and has compiled a fundraising collection of Jewish chocolate recipes, **Babka, Boulou & Blintzes** for Chai Cancer Care. You can buy it from Amazon or directly from Chai at www.chaicancercare.org/chocolate and help raise money for Chai's important work supporting Jewish people with cancer and their families.*



Jessie and Lennie Ware's 'Triple Threat' Chocolate Brownies. Recipe on p5



Mazel tov! Jewish Care loves celebrating. Whether it's a birthday, wedding, anniversary, bar or bat mitzvah, in fact any special occasion, we know how wonderful it is to mark life's big moments.

Choosing to ask for donations instead of gifts is a meaningful way to acknowledge your simcha and make it even more special.

Every donation made towards Jewish Care will help support the 10,000 people whose lives we touch every week.

To find out more please visit
jewishcare.org/celebrate
or call us on 020 8922 2600



Don and his wife Louise asked their family and friends for donations to Jewish Care instead of gifts for his 90th birthday

Belsize Square Synagogue presents...

Chanukah Market

on Mitzvah Day

Sunday November 21st 12-5pm

51 Belsize Square NW3 4HX

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| - Street food: noodles, crepes, bagels & Israeli salads | - Cosmetics stall |
| - Belsize Café: all day tea, coffee & homemade cakes | - Groceries |
| - Music & Magic | - Chanukah candles |
| | - Household bric-a-brac |
| | - Wrapping paper |
| | - Youth-run stalls |



SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square,
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Tel: 020 7794 3949

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SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

9.00am - 5.30pm

Fridays: 9.00am-2.00pm

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FUNERALS

During Synagogue Office hours phone 020 7794 3949
Evenings/weekends phone Calo's (Undertakers)
020 8958 2112

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR CONGREGATION

To the synagogue office or to alexantscherl@me.com

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Philip Simon: www.philipsimon.co.uk

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