

Our Congregation



News and views from Belsize Square Synagogue

Tu B'Shevat Rabbi Gabriel Botnick

withstand any challenge. But what are

the metaphoric roots that provide us

One of the strongest foundations we

holidays, rituals and

with a strong foundation can

with this stability?

This month, we celebrate the holiday of Tu B'Shevat, which is known as the New Year of Trees. In Judaism. we're not allowed to eat the fruit of a tree in its first three years, so rather than trying to remember exactly when

we planted a tree, we can use Tu B'Shevat to mark its birthday. Whether you plant a tree 10 days before Tu B'Shevat or 10 months before, either wav according to our tradition – that tree will turn one on Tu B'Shevat.



literature. For instance, by celebrating Shabbat and holidays with family and friends, we are able to pause to reflect on our lives and to connect with those we love. This fortifies us. allowing us to stand strong

in the face of adversity.

enjoy is our tradition - our

Tu B'Shevat is often marked by planting trees or engaging in other eco-friendly activities. While these customs are beautiful and meaningful, I'd rather focus on the deeper symbolism of the day.

Trees are mentioned throughout our tradition for many reasons, one of which is to compare them to people. The rabbis teach that just as a tree with strong roots can withstand the most powerful winds, so too a person

Another way to understand our metaphoric roots is provided by the rabbis in Pirkei Avot (3:17), where it says, 'A person who possesses great wisdom, but lacks good deeds, is like a tree with many branches, but few roots: a light wind can easily uproot it.' In other words, if you spend all your time and energy advancing yourself (for intellectual or material gain) and not helping others, then you'll be left vulnerable when trouble comes your way. However, if a plant roots in the

fertile soils of community, you will withstand the strongest of winds.

I want to propose that this month we take the opportunity to consider how we would like to plant our own roots. For you and your family, that might be celebrating more Shabbat or holiday meals together, or even introducing one or two new traditions. Or you might want to think of ways to volunteer and support the wider community. You could even strengthen your foundation in the Jewish tradition by watching our Taste of Torah videos or attending an adult education class or discussion.

No matter how you choose to plant your roots this year, I want to encourage you to take small, gradual steps toward growth. It is better to make one small commitment and see it through than to take on too much and have to give up. Try to find the one thing that will help you grow and strengthen your roots in the coming year. After all, it takes a long time and a lot of patience for a sapling to become a mighty oak or a towering cedar.

A MESSAGE FROM ASSAF

ASSAF, the Aid Organisation for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel, is one of our synagogue's chosen charities, supported every year with our Israel Dinner and other fundraising initiatives. They have sent us this message:

Dear Belsize Square Synagogue,

Greetings for 2022! This new calendar year is a great opportunity to shine a spotlight on the children of asylum seekers, all participants in ASSAF's Youth Club - and their dreams:

'My dream? To have the ability to support my family. To make my mother not work as hard as she does now'

'My dream? I would like to study programming to make money and then use that money to help people'

'My dream? To build schools in Sudan, so that the children there can study and receive an education like all the children of the world'

The children of asylum seekers were born in Israel, they live in Israel and are an integral part of Israeli society and – like any child – they deserve the right to dream of a better world, even in the darkest of times. As our partner, we want to thank you for being a part of the light that helped uncover injustice and brought support for our efforts to create a dignified future for asylum seekers in Israel.

From us all at ASSAF, Happy New Year!

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SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOT



NAME: Judith Sciamma

JOB TITLE: Formerly CEO and owner of asset management company (retired); currently

cookery blogger at www.cakesandtips.com

What's your favourite thing about your work?

What I liked most about my job was the trust that investors placed in me as an asset manager. I was very honoured when I was chosen to manage a portion of their assets. In my new job, I like it when people try the dishes and realise how simple it is to eat healthily and tastily.

What is the hardest part of your job?

The hardest part was the increasing amount of regulation. I found it too much, and it was at the expense of creativity. If there are too many constraints, all asset managers end up doing more less the same thing, because there isn't much room left for differentiation. In my new job, the difficult part is to make complex dishes very simply, so people want to try them. I need to remove all the fluff and just keep the strategic steps!

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

I did choose another job: I make cooking videos! It's my way of ensuring that the culinary heritage shared by my Sephardic grandmothers is passed on to my children. When we cook, the devil is in the detail. Each dish has its little tricks that must be respected, to preserve its taste and texture.

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

We went to a bat mitzvah, years ago, and marvelled at the choir and musical liturgy. But it was the congregation who won our family over: everyone's kindness, care for one another and good heart.

What's your favourite festival?

Yom Kippur. I like the powerful aspect of reflecting on yourself, collectively.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

Not in the front! On the left-hand side, in the back . . .

THE DAY AN ANGEL DIED – IDA NUDEL 1931–2021 Harry L Davies

Ida Nudel, the Angel of Moscow, as we called her, or the Angel of Mercy as she was known in Moscow, died in Israel on 14 September 2021 in her 90th year. She had earned those titles because of the selfsacrificial work she did in supporting her fellow refuseniks in the Soviet Union and her fight for freedom, beginning in 1970 and lasting 17 years. Even after she arrived in Israel in 1987, she continued to help Russian immigrant children and to campaign for human rights.

This remarkable woman was a Jewish heroine in the tradition of our matriarchs and the great Biblical women of worth. To look at her, small in stature, it was difficult to believe how much courage, determination, and passion she could generate, in the face of extreme harassment, ill-treatment and injustice by the Soviet regime.



Under house arrest in 1978, she famously flew a banner from her window, 'KGB, give me my visa'. This resulted in a sentence of 4 years in Siberia, potentially a death sentence, but she never abandoned her will to survive and her attempts to fight for herself and others. Her famous companion during that time, and who emigrated with her, was her dog, Pizer. Released from Siberia, she

was banished from Moscow, but remained unbowed.

My regret was that my late wife Sheila and I did not get to meet Ida on our three Moscow visits in the 1970s, as she was either under arrest or in Siberia, but she was one of the prime activists who were supported and sustained in the campaign to help the Jewish refuseniks. Belsize Square set up their Soviet Jewry Committee in 1972 and can

be proud of their work over the following 15 years, which was continued by the Israel Committee in their help for Russian refugees.

Ida Nudel fought for freedom and the right to be a Jew – the theme of our festivals of Pesach, Chanukah and Purim, and in our times the theme of the refusenik years. She was a heroine and an inspiration.

NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS

Dear Fellow Members

By the time you reed my kolumn it will be the year too southend und twenty too. So far the twenties have been quite texing, with the corona wires waryant, global warning und economic cat-as-trophy. Let us hope that this new year will bring visit an improvement on all fronts. Und speaking of fronts, Mrs Klopstock's knees, Helga, who is exceptionally well endowed in this department, made us an unsuspected visit for Chanukah. She is well noun for her very fine stollen (a German fruit und nuss cake) und kindly gave won to us at a very reasonable price.

But I didn't know wear to put it, becourse a phew months ago I found that their was no more room in our food lager for even won single tea back. I didn't know that every other week from the beginning of the year 2021 Mrs Klopstick has been buying things she dozent like und I don't eat. This encludes baking beans, pine apfel shunks und cornered beef. She has been saving them all for Belsize Mitzvah day. She didn't think how I was going to bring 76 heavy kens to the synagogue office. In the end, she burrowed a chopping trolley from Waitrose und wield it there her selve.

I paid a quiet short visit to the Belsize Square Chanukah Market. I said hallo to everyone becourse I couldn't see who was what under there masques. I was their around lunge time und it was busy with everthing crimped into the won aria. Mrs K was unable to attend as she was in

draining for her usual sharity Boxing Day triathalon.

Despite everything going peer-shaped outside, the first knight of Chanukah in Abernein Mansions was a jolly affair. Everyone sang Maoz-Tzur in their own tune, in their own key, all at the same time. The noise was so lout, it set off the fire alarm und even woke old Mrs Fleischbaum who normally can sleep through a sunder storm. The highlight for me und Mrs K was a rare call from Florida Keys on Zoon from our retired New York lawyer son, Melvyn. My wive was a little out put because he didn't buzzer to get out of his jackuzzi. So it was difficult to have a proper conversation over the noise from his bubbles.

We hat an unpleasant insident last week in our local public convenience store run by Mr und Mrs Gupta. I was shatting to both of them, when two men worked into the shop without masques. Mrs Klopstick, who was hoovering around by the door, immediately challenged them over there leg of phase covering. The smaller won lunched into worts of abooze, witch Mrs K took to be auntie-semitic. She is won hundert procent sufficient in self offence und marchall arts und straight away took up her karachi position. I think this so startled the men, they left the shop without farther ado. Unfortunately they hat come to repair the Guptas' leaking freezer.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick



I have hat two requests for adwise on the same seam from members. They are asking me if it is OK to be a vegan und Jewish. Are the two things compactable? It is, of cause, possible to cut away from shopped liver, salted beef und even piggled herring. The problem is how do you come over the lag of schicken soup, which in my humble opinion comes a very closed second to the Talmud in importence to Jewish every day live. Of cause, as the schicken itself is vegan, this still maybe aloud.



THE BELSIZE SQUARE CHANUKAH MARKET

A scaled-down version, fitting for our times, of the traditional Belsize Chanukah Bazaar was held on Sunday 21 November 2021.

All the Belsize favourites were there, including multiple stands selling enticing food from falafel to chocolate brownies.

There was a good turnout and members were entertained by music from the community choir and some wonderful upbeat guitar and singing from our Rabbi, accompanied on the harmonica by by Michael Zur-Szpiro.



Dennis & Marion Nathan with Monica Bohm



Rabbi Botnick with Michael Zur-Szpiro

THE 2021 KRISTALLNACHT COMMEMORATIONS

Lilian Levy

Kristallnacht, 'The Night of Broken Glass', was commemorated with two services at Belsize Square Synagogue. The first was the Association of Jewish Refugees' annual commemoration on 4 November. The connection between the AJR and our Synagogue dates back to the AJR's founding in 1941 by some of those same refugees from Nazism who had established the community that ultimately became Belsize Square Synagogue.

This year their Service was ably led by Rabbi Gabriel Botnick for the first time, with Cantor Heller singing the memorial prayers beautifully. Michael Newman, Chief Executive of the AJR, welcomed a large congregation comprising mostly second and third generation 'refugees' - but also still some of the first generation. It was also good to be able to welcome the Israeli Ambassador, Her Excellency Tzipi Hotovely, as well as representatives of the embassies of Germany, Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

One of those first-generation participants was Peter Summerfield,

born in 1933, who spoke movingly of his early memories of life in Berlin and of his escape from Germany with his parents and twin brother. The speaker from the Generation 2 Generation organisation was Judith Hayman, whose mother and aunt arrived from Austria thanks to a permit arranged by the Quakers. All her other relatives perished in the Lodz ghetto.



Peter Summerfield's address at the AJR Kristallnacht service

The beautiful six-branched Holocaust memorial candelabra, presented to our Synagogue 50 years ago by sisters Gertrude and Louise Ehrenwerth, was lit by six participants in the service, each of whom had a connection to Kristallnacht.

On the following day, our Friday evening service was the Synagogue's own Kristallnacht commemoration. The speaker was Peter Bohm, organiser of the Synagogue's annual Holocaust Education Programme for Schools. Peter's parents met and married in the UK, the only members of their respective families who had been able to flee Germany, and Peter spoke movingly of the "grandparents I never knew".

After two days during which our thoughts dwelt on the horrors of Kristallnacht and its aftermath, it was a delight to listen to the beautiful voice of Sonny MacDonald chanting the Erev Shabbat Kiddush. This gifted young man, whose Bar Mitzvah took place on the following day, touchingly brought the congregation's thoughts to a future of hope for our young Jewish people and of a better world for us all.

CARE HELP FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Michael Newman

Thanks to funding received by the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) from the Claims Conference following their negotiations with the German government, Holocaust survivors and refugees living anywhere in the UK are eligible to receive up to 24-hour care to help alleviate their welfare needs and to enable them to live in dignity, comfort and security in their own homes.

Through the Homecare scheme, the AJR, and the community partner organisations with which it works, including Belsize Square Synagogue, is able to substantially defray care costs from an £8.6m ring-fenced fund, which is part of an overall allocation of £10.4m to support UK Jewish Nazi victims. Other funding is available to contribute towards the costs of food, medicine and transport,

and also for help with dental and hearing problems, minor home adaptations and the purchase of 'white goods'.

With the number of hours of care awarded based on assessments and a person's war time experience, AJR Homecare can allocate at least 100 hours per week of care to those with the highest needs.

Although there is a means test to be eligible, the value of a person's home is not taken into consideration and each individual refugee can hold £500,000 of assets (or £1 million for a refugee couple). Equally, any income from pensions, whether private, reparations or social security, is disregarded. This assistance is exclusively for those who experienced Nazi oppression and

most refugees and survivors in need of support would be eligible. However, non-refugee or non-survivor spouses and descendants are not eligible.

As part of the registration process and in any follow up assessment, the AJR will also check whether the applicant is eligible for any missing reparations provided by the Claims Conference and ensure that the applicant is receiving the maximum available support from their local authority.

Once funding is approved, the survivor and their family will continue to be supported by the AJR's team of dedicated and professional social workers.

(Continued on facing page)

THE NIGHT OF BROKEN GLASS

Peter Bergman

It started then. Broken windows, burnt books.

The humiliation, the degradation, the beatings, the killings.

The world watched.

The signs were clear.

They did nothing.

Nothing.

We are better than this.

In the coldest, blackest, most dreadful place on earth children stand over a pile of bricks, hold hands and sing.

The sound permeates the ground and flies to the sky.

Voices that shouldn't be . . . that defy the concept.

A victory at an awful cost.

We are better than this.

The sorrow is dull now, the anger at the futility remains.

Millions of lives unfulfilled, songs not written, inventions not invented, laughs not laughed.

People defined by their birth and murdered for it.

The blind, narrow, awful obscenity of a rancid thought.

Words hurt, words defile, words degrade and dehumanise.

And eventually words kill.

It happened then.

And it happens now.

We are better than this.

Those who see but do nothing.

Those who shout into buckets in a virtual world and thrive on conflict.

The selfish, the malicious, the thoughtless, the bigoted.

You are all to blame.

We are better than this.

The victims of atrocities change.

Those responsible are not born evil, they are a failure of the human spirit, an abomination that starts with a cruel word and ends in horror.

Blindness to the cruelty of man to man and man to nature is destroying the beauty so many cannot see.

We are running out of time in so many ways yet are accelerating to disaster.

We are better than this.

We live in a paradise that is rotting at the edges.

The potential for lives well lived and deeds well done is so often derailed and destroyed.

Those who saw but did nothing still stand and shake their heads.

It's not their problem.

But it is.

And next time they may be the victims.

We are better than this.

Never forget.

Peter Bergman is a Belsize Square member and former bookseller. He wrote this poem in the aftermath of the October anti-semitic daubings in the Belsize area and in anticipation of the commemoration of Kristallnacht.

(continued from p4)

With around 325 refugees and survivors already supported through AJR Homecare and more than 50 new first-generation clients registered during the current year, we are confident in our support of this unique community but we want to ensure that everyone with a need is provided for. As it can take a few weeks to obtain approval from the Claims Conference, we are

reaching out to refugee and survivor and partner organisations to encourage them to register members now, so that any help can be provided immediately when needed.

A recent article in The Observer will give you a flavour of the Homecare programme and how it can help: https://tinyurl.com/AJR-Homecare, while readers of the AJR Journal may have read about Homecare

and Claims Conference assistance in recent editions. Any questions or referrals are always treated in strictest confidence and can be sent by email to Rebecca Webb at rebecca@ajr.org.uk or Leah McKay at leah@ajr.org.uk, or directed to Belsize Square Synagogue's own Community Care Co-ordinator Eve Hersov at eve@synagogue.org.uk.

Michael Newman is Chief Executive of The AJR.

Community News

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:

Dan Colman & Morag Deveney

Jeremy Dahan & Sasha Maisel

Andreia Costa with daughter Alva Diana

Katie Kremer & Joshua Segal

Sam Waller & Sarah Douglas with children Edie & James Deborah & Daniel Sobel with children Boaz, Toby & Abigail Paul Epstein & Laura Binns with children Amelia & Izobel

BAR MITZVAH

Mazal tov to:

Abe, son of Claire Levin & Paul Cohen who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on Saturday 8 January

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of: Lilli Krieger who died on 25 November 2021 Bela Heller, mother of Cantor Paul Heller, who died in Bogota, Colombia on 12 December 2021

STONESETTING

The stonesetting of Howard Shaw will take place on Sunday 16 January 2022 at 1.45pm at Edgwarebury Lane Cemetery

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SHABBAT Friday 7 January

Guest Speaker – Dr Adrian Wayne

The Pandemic and Mental Health Fallout

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SHABBAT Friday 28 January at 6.45pm

A Service to commemorate the anniversary of the end of the Holocaust To include Mazkir for those who died Al Kiddush HaShem

PURIM 2022

Erev Purim - Wednesday 15 March

6.45pm Maariv

7.00pm FULL Megillah reading by members of the Community

SECOND NIGHT SEDER SATURDAY 16 APRIL

Rabbi Botnick and Cantor Heller together with their families invite you to join them for 2nd Night Seder at the Synagogue following the Service at 6.45pm

Members – £30.00 Non Members – £35.00 Children under 13 – £15.00

Please contact the Synagogue Office either by telephone on 020 7794 3949 or office@synagogue.org.uk if you wish to attend.

YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Wednesday 5 May
TO CELEBRATE ISRAEL'S 74th BIRTHDAY

- \bullet Music and dancing with Shir, London's leading Jewish band
- A special guest to be announced
- · Superb dining provided by Belsize's own chef, Adam Nathan

Help support our deserving chosen Israeli charities – Yemin Orde, Assaf & Jaffa Institute The copy deadline for the next issue of Our Congregation is 12 Feb 2022

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

Kikar Kids

Saturdays 8 January, 5 February and 5 March 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)

Religion School

Sunday mornings 9.30am-12.00pm Enquiries to Head: Caroline Loison Term Commences on Sunday 16 January Half Term 13 & 20 February

ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP

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

Sunday 9th January

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler - Jewish Perspectives - Respecting parents

11.30-12.45 Dora Koranyi - Co- founder of Qesher - Stories of Jewish Budapest: From Affirmation to Persecution and Revival

Sunday 16th January

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler - Jewish Perspectives on Illness

11.30-12.45 James Marlow - Foreign Affairs Specialist and Newspaper Reviewer for GB News - Israel News Brief update - New Government, Syria Iran and Internal Issues

Sunday 23rd January

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler - Jewish Perspectives on Dying

11.30-12.45 Harry Freedman - Leading author of popular works of Jewish culture and history - Leonard Cohen, The Mystical Roots of Genius.

Sunday 30th January

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler - Jewish Perspectives on Mourning

11.30-12.45 Lord Ian Austin of Dudley- Trade with Israel.

Sunday 6th February

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler - Jewish Perspectives - Fasts

11.30-12.45 Speaker and Topic TBC

Sunday 13th February

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler - Jewish Perspectives - topic TBC

11.30-12.45 Speaker and Topic TBC

Sunday 20th February

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler - Jewish Perspectives - Topic TBC

11.30-12.45 Rabbi Lee Wax - Training Coordinator at Jewish Women's Aid - Domestic Violence in times of Covid-19 - TBC.

Sunday 27th February

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler - Jewish Perspectives - Topic TBC

11.30-12.45 Dr Saul Zadka - Journalist and Middle East Analyst - Jews of Burma TBC.

BABIES AND BOOKS

Alex Antscherl

The annual Belsize Baby Blessing was held on Saturday 13 November 2021 to welcome newborns who'd arrived in the previous 12 months. Six Belsize families took part and the congregation was delighted to see Emma and David Pollins with Leo, Fay and Ran Levin with Eden, Rob and Juliette Cruickshank with

Barnaby, Philip and Andreia Levine with Alva Diana, Gráinne McLoughlin and Spencer Bright with Dáithí, and Leah and David Droznika with Zachary.

After the Rabbi's blessing and some lovely explanations of how the babies' names had been chosen, each family received a gift bag

containing a Belsize Bear teddy, a picture book from PJ Library, a packet of biscuits and information about Kikar Kids. our children's Shabbat services.

For anyone not familiar with PJ Library, read on! It is an organisation that gives away children's books on Jewish themes to children aged 0-8. Families subscribe for free to receive a high-quality, award-winning book

every month. The chosen titles celebrate Jewish culture, values and traditions. PJ (standing for Pyjamas!) Library helps encourage children to enjoy bedtime stories and build their own library of special books. Any family where someone identifies as Jewish and is raising children can sign up.

aged 7-8). The books are deliberately and carefully selected to suit families with any level of Jewish engagement, education or observance. Perhaps unsurprisingly, PJ Library

originated in the USA. It started with Harold Grinspoon, a Jewish philanthropist, giving away 200 books

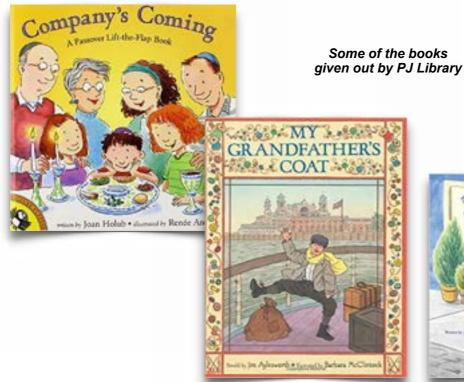
> to children in his local Western Massachusetts area in 2005. Since then, it has expanded across the world and now provides books to 670,000 subscribers in 30 countries, still sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, PJ Library also supports parents

with reading tips and online resources, which help encourage their children's reading and engage in meaningful, age-appropriate conversations about Jewish values at home. And as well as providing books PJ Library has two podcast series of stories and an online streaming radio station that plays Jewish kids' music.

To find out more and to sign up, visit pilibrary.org.uk.



Each month a new book is sent out to thousands of children in the UK. Some of them are timeless Jewish classics and some are modern interpretations. The genres cover traditional tales, biography, history, humour and much more. The only topics deliberately avoided, due to the age of the participants, are the Holocaust and the death of loved ones. The majority of books are illustrated in full colour (except some of those aimed at the oldest children.





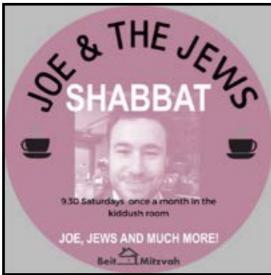


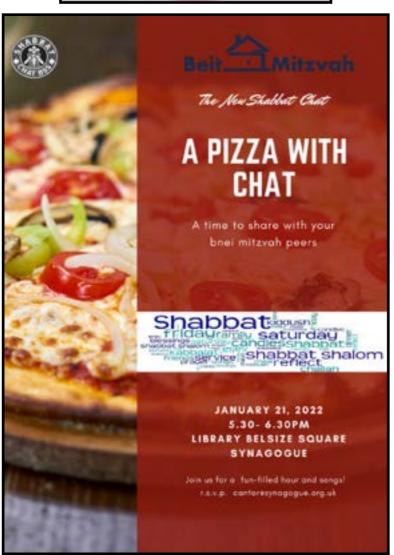


FRIDAY 14 JANUARY AT 6.45PM

This year the Shabbat of Song will honour our professional choir in memory of the late Henry Kuttner. Join us in thanking the choristers who make our services special and unique.







SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square, London. NW3 4HX

Tel: 020 7794 3949

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SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

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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

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Philip Simon: www.philipsimon.co.uk

THE BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE