



CHANUKAH

A few of our favourite things

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick on what makes this time of year special

Every holiday contains an element of nostalgia, memories of past celebrations with family, friends and community. But there's something truly special about the memories associated with Chanukah, and there are a number of reasons why this may be.

First, there's just something cosy about wintertime and Chanukah is the only holiday we celebrate during this season. Almost everyone loves cuddling up in a warm jumper with a piping hot cup of tea or cocoa. There's also the mystical feeling of being in a darkened room illuminated by the warm glow of candles.

And as children, it's a rare treat to stay up past dark, with the added excitement and anticipation of exchanging gifts and the joy of spinning the dreidel (*sevivon* in Hebrew) with your loved ones.

And the food! Nothing beats the aroma and flavour of deliciously crisp latkes (*levavot*). But then there are also the doughnuts (*sufganiyot*) and the chocolate *gelt*.

In short, while Chanukah itself might be a rather minor holiday, it has understandably come to occupy a significant place in our collective conscience because of all the wonderful memories associated with it. And each year offers a chance to create new memories and establish new traditions.

Last year I had my first experience of Belsize's Chanukah Market. I had no idea what to expect and couldn't believe how truly wonderful it was. The food! The music! The food! The knick-knacks! Have I mentioned the food?! As wonderful as the event

was, I realised that what was truly special about it was the nostalgia that was on offer: sweets and treats from the continent, a love of which has been passed down for generations; familiar festive songs; affordable gifts that can bring a bit of joy to our loved ones; and most importantly, the warm embrace of community.

Judaism is a religion deeply rooted in memory – sometimes those memories are more theoretical and academic, other times they're more visceral. What makes Chanukah special is not so much a deeply religious experience, but rather those deeply held memories that have come to define so much of who we are: a people that values family, friends, tradition, and – of course – food!

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Henny Levin



Photo credit: Ham and High

Henny Levin passed away at the age of 74 on 4 October 2022, the morning of Kol Nidre, after a short illness. She had been at the heart of our community for decades, having been born to parents who were married in our synagogue.

Henny's early life was tough. Her parents were refugees and for the first few years of her life they lived in a one-room flat. Her mother, who died when Henny was only 15, was seriously ill for years and Henny became responsible for the household chores and cooking meals. On leaving school, Henny studied at the London College of Fashion, and the skills that she learned there stood her in good stead for some of her later activities. She married young and she and Manfred had two daughters, Julia and Tanya. But tragedy struck in 1984 when Manfred died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of just 43.

Her active involvement in the synagogue began a few months after Manfred's death, when Rabbi Mariner asked her if she would like to become a classroom assistant for the Cheder reception class. Her flair for administration and organisation was

revealed and she ultimately progressed to become the Administrative Head of the cheder.

When the shul created a new full-time post of Activities Co-ordinator, Henny was the obvious choice to fill it. She left an unsatisfactory job with a charity and began her 25 years in the Synagogue Office, which she regarded as the best years of her life. She worked together with Rabbi Mariner on virtually all aspects of Synagogue life, particularly the Befriends Group, children's weekend camps, Communal Sedarim and the Cheder, as well as one-off events. For the five years before her retirement in 2012 she was Synagogue Administrator. In this post, essentially the Chief Executive, she helped Rabbi Mariner's successor, Rabbi Altshuler, and Cantor Heller to settle into their new posts. In addition to her administrative duties, Henny worked with Sue Leon to create the synagogue's Holocaust Memorial Day education programme for local schoolchildren. She ran sessions on Jewish symbolism and this year, for the first time, she told students the Holocaust story of her own uncles.

Henny's creativity and practical skills played a large part in her success both with the cheder and with the synagogue. As Sue Mariner related at the Shiva prayers, when Henny's daughters were cheder pupils in 1979 she created the costumes for a production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, bringing her sewing machine to the synagogue and making them on the spot during rehearsals. And at the other end of her career, she made the super-sized tallit with its macrame tzitzit that hangs over the reading desk on Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah – such a fitting tribute to her over the festivals last month.

Henny was at the centre of our community . . . she was the person we repeatedly turned to when we wanted things done

Her place in our community is very ably summed up by Steven Bruck, who was Synagogue Chairman at the millennium. 'Henny was at the centre of our community, organising events, finding and encouraging volunteers, being there when members needed us at good times and bad. She was there for the youngest at the religion school and at the end when loved ones passed away; truly cradle to grave. Her knowledge of the membership was encyclopaedic, her commitment and enthusiasm seemed unlimited and she was the person we repeatedly turned to when we wanted things done.'

Henny married her second husband, Michael Levin z"l, in 1991, gaining a third daughter, Naomi, as well as two sons. Henny and Michael enjoyed life, including much travel, and they were a regular presence in shul with members of their family.

After her retirement, Henny continued to do abundant voluntary work for many charities including our own Kesher Social Action Group, reaching out to elderly and vulnerable synagogue members as a tele-friend. She was a keen and active member of a B'nai B'rith Lodge and sang in both the shul community choir and the Zemel Choir. Anyone who's ever been to a Belsize Chanukah Market will fondly remember Henny's stall full of jams and chutneys, made from the produce of her allotment.

Rabbi Mariner spoke movingly at her funeral – indeed, at times he appeared to be as moved himself as were the congregation. Many of the most affecting words were from Henny's own account of her life, from which much of this obituary is also drawn. But he concluded: 'The memory of a life who made such a difference to the quality of the lives of so many others, a woman who was indeed the beating heart of her refugee synagogue community, will always be called to mind whenever her name is mentioned. *Zichronah livracha*. May her name continue to be a blessing to all who knew and loved her.'

COMMUNITY NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:
Jonathan & Danielle Goodman | Peter Petzal
Gary & Sophie Freedman | Penelope Grant
Janine Turkie & Raymond Singer | Jamie Bott
David Kelin & Julia Heller | Alicia Watts
Eyal Goldberg & Yael Lifshitz | Faye Gale
Leonid & Sasha Gluzman | Nikki Gewirtz
Rachel Keating

BIRTHS

Mazal tov to:
Shelly & Joe Hacker on the birth of their son Noah

BNEI MITZVAH

Mazal tov to:
Isabella, daughter of Julia & Mike Chalfen, who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on Saturday 26 November

Abi, daughter of Daniella & Michael Taub, who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on Saturday 10 December

Sevie, daughter of Khristina Belkina & Jonathan Lawrence, who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on Saturday 17 December

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:
Susan Karmel who died on 16 August

Marianne Hellman who died on 30 August

Susi Mattes who died on 13 September

Mark Eisenthal who died on 14 September

Henny Levin who died on 4 October

Ilse Feldstein who died on 23 October

Peter Koppel who died on 25 October

MAZAL TOV TO OUR CHATANIM



This year, 5783, for the first time at Belsize Square Synagogue, we celebrated Simchat Torah with a *Callah Bereshit* (Bride of Bereshit), Sue Leon, and a *Chatan Torah* (Bridegroom of Torah), Stewart Kerry, rather than two *Chatanim*.

KEIR STARMER VISITS BSS



Belsize Square welcomed Sir Keir Starmer, Leader of the Opposition and MP for our neighbouring constituency of Holborn and St Pancras, on 20 September. He visited the synagogue to learn about the High Holydays and to wish us Shanah Tovah, spending time with Rabbi Botnick and his wife, Rabbi Rose Prevezer.

SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS

Peter Strauss

Software engineer and baritone



What is your favourite thing about your work?

I work as a software engineer for IAG, who own airlines like British Airways and Iberia. I love problem-solving and the teamwork required. There are a lot of similarities

between the methodologies used in coding, which we call *pair programming*, and the method of learning Torah, also usually in pairs, called *chevruta*. I currently work in an innovation department, taking start-up companies with an aviation focus and helping them to develop a proof of concept to pitch to senior airline executives, in the hope that IAG will invest further in them. I love doing this because I get to work with cutting-edge technologies, helping people with ideas to realise their vision. I'm also able to gain some insight into the future of our industry.

What is the hardest part of your job?

Focus! My desk looks out over Heathrow's northern runway. I sometimes must remind myself that I am not being paid to watch aeroplanes all day and that I have work to do.

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

I'd have loved to be an opera singer. I'd take my pick from one of the following roles – the Count from the Marriage of Figaro, Giorgio Germont from La Traviata or Baron Scarpia from Tosca. Although it would take a lot longer than a day even to get rehearsal-ready!

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

I was born into Belsize. My great-grandparents were founding members and my family have continued to be involved ever since. I feel fortunate to have such a long association with this community. Worryingly though, both my grandfather and father have been Synagogue Treasurers. I want to reassure you all now – I won't be!

What's your favourite festival?

My favourite service of the year is definitely Selichot. I often think of it as a 'choral prelude' to the High Holydays. A short service kicking off at 10pm in a darkened Synagogue. The Cantor and choir sing some of the most recognisable tunes from the High Holyday services, and with apologies to Rabbi Botnick, there is no sermon either! It is a short but particularly moving service for me.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

I like to sit upstairs, singing from the choir loft. I have always loved singing at Belsize Square. Having first joined the Youth Choir under Sue Mariner when I was 10, I have since 'graduated' and now sing in the Community Choir, occasionally moonlighting in the Professional Choir. However, I still enjoy joining the Youth Choir once a year at Mincha on Yom Kippur.

NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS NW.3.

Dear Fellow Members

To meet with the editorial debtline, I am riding my column between Roshoshono und Yom Kipper. I hope I am not breaking sum law und this is aloud.

It seems like only won month ago the sad occasion of the Queen's funeral took plaice. All but won from us in the Mansions watched the ceremony und page-entry on the television. The won who did not, was mine own wive Mrs Klopstick. Not only did she kew for eleven hours to see the late Majesty lying in a state on the catapult, but she arrived their at the same time as King Charles, his sibling und brotherlings were their holding a virgil. Then on the Monday she with fellow members of her Golders Green und Hampstead Jewish Ladies Arschery und Long Bow Club went to Windser to see the coffin being interned.

As in the passed, for the High Holidays a big screen was up put in the communal lounge hear, for those who wanted to take part in BelsizeAlive among fellow members. So this year Mrs Klopstick und I decided to join our fellow inmates downstairs instead of from our own flet. Unfortunately, there was a argument over where won can buy the white pents warn by the Rabbi und sum members. Dr Fleischstein said that they ware defiantly cricket trousers, but in my opinion they wear two white, so I sort the warers must be from a boweling club. Mrs K sort they were similar to her Jewjitzu trousers. Then Mrs Bluhmenkohl chirped in that

they were identical to those she wore when she worked in the Challah kitchen for Grodzinskis.

When it came to prostraining ourselves on the floor, by the time all from us hat managed to go down, the congregation was up again. Then by the time we were bag on our feet, the service was almost over. A part from this, I think I can speak from all Abernein Mansioners to offer our highest prise to Cantor Powel Heller und the Kwire for the outstanding voices und music. That is, accept perhaps for the adoption of one treatment from the musical Oklahoma. I don't think Lewandowski oder Sulzer ever met Roger Hammerstein in person, oder saw his show. Especially on the days from Or, I believe it is impotent to stick to our traditional service. Those who shoes to attend oder watch on screen, wish to join in. I too like to ambillish the Kwire with my renditions. Unfortunately, by popular demand, I am now only aloud to sing by mousing the worts, but not making a sound. Apearently I sing the wrong tune in the wrong quay.

Talking of mousing the worts, for Yom Kipper with so many hear short of herring we are trying to engage someone who can sign in Hebrew. This has spoked another argument, weather the signing should be in Aschkenazi oder Sephardi pronunciation.

With the best of intentions
Fritz Klopstick

OUR CENTENARIANS



ASK FRITZ

I have been bumbarded with requests for advise on how to preserve energy as costs go threw the roof. Apart from the obvious, to repaire the roof, I suggest several practicable things. In the daytime switch everything off und go und sit in Brent Cross oder O2 Senta. In the evenings visit wealthy relatives und friends, oder learn britch und join a club. I am very lucky as Mrs Klopstick enjoys the cold und dark. So I just rap myself from hat to tow in kitchen foil und then in a puffing jacket.

Henry Rockwell celebrated his 101st birthday on 24 October 2022. Born in Berlin, on coming to London he attended Mill Hill School and went on to study engineering at North London Polytechnic. He became a mechanical engineer and ran his own business. Now living in a care home, Henry retains a healthy curiosity and enthusiasm for engaging with people.

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE LIBRARY

Joan Arton on new plans for the shul library, which she now runs with Debbie Garvin and Ruth Sands.

Retreat into the world of books. This library provides a comfortable space where you can acquire knowledge at your own pace, revisit familiar authors and laugh as you turn the pages of Jewish jokes.

Over the years, hundreds of books have been generously donated by members of our community. From the timeless classic to the contemporary avant-garde, from novels and novellas to politics or poetry – the collection has it all.

Come and join us on 4 December at the Chanukah Market for the opening of the Synagogue's very own lending library. You are guaranteed to find something that interests you.

The library will be open to members during Synagogue Office hours and to non-members by appointment with office staff.

THE BELSIZE CHANUKAH MARKET IS BACK!

**SUNDAY, 4 DECEMBER,
12.00PM – 5.00PM**

Our afternoon of unique retail therapy, sensational street food, foot-tapping music and entertainment

From speciality continental groceries to children's stalls and face painting; cappuccino to home-made cakes; and klezmer to an expert mentalist!

Bring your friends and family

Everyone welcome,
including non-members

BSS KIDS PREPARING FOR SUKKOT



SUMMER OF SPORT

The 21st Maccabiah

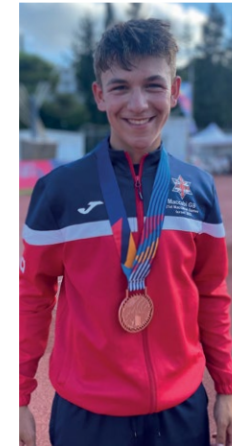
The Maccabiah – often known as the Jewish Olympics – took place in July this year, with 10,000 Jewish athletes from 64 countries going to Israel to compete in 42 sports, ranging from high jump to wheelchair basketball, weightlifting to chess (well, what did you expect at a Jewish sports event?). With the Maccabi World Union's focus on strengthening the connection of young Jews to the State of Israel, there is much emphasis on the Junior games where 15–18-year-olds compete.

We are honoured at Belsize Square to be home to two of these young athletes, Luc Levene and Otto Terry, as well as to Rob Cohen who was involved in the organisation of the event. Cricketer Otto and footballer Luc have kindly shared these superb photographs and some of their memories of taking part.



‘It was an incredible experience from start to finish. From the opening ceremony with Joe Biden in attendance, our semi-final against Israel's National Under-17 team to our bronze medal play-off against Argentina, where we came back from 3-0 down to win 5-4 after extra time with only nine men! I made lifelong friendships and hope I will get the chance to experience it again one day.’

Luc Levene



‘It was a privilege to play in the Under-18 GB cricket team this summer in Israel. We were thrilled to come home with a bronze medal, but in truth the games were much more than the sporting competition. It was a unique opportunity to spend time in Israel, with Jewish kids from around the world, and to learn more about our history and culture.’

Otto Terry



Otto at the crease, batting for the U-18 GB boys cricket team
Left: Luc and the GB U-18 boys football team

SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm
Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Kristallnacht

Friday 11 November at 6.45pm
With guest speaker Karen Pollock CBE,
Chief Executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust

Kikar Kids – Junior Shabbat Service

Saturday 5 November, 3 December, 7 January
11.00am in the crèche for under 5s
11.00am in the library for 5–9-year-olds
11.30am Kids Kiddush

Often followed by a potluck lunch

Contact Richard on rgpollins@gmail.com for more information

ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP

Meetings continue weekly on Sunday mornings at 10.00am.

Some sessions are on Zoom only and some in person at the Synagogue, with an online option available.

There are no meetings on 20 November and 4 December.

For further information, please contact Claire Walford claire.walford@yahoo.com.



20th November 2022

We ask for your help to make this winter brighter for refugee children, our homebound elderly members and Camden & Barnet residents in need.

Who will you help?

The environment, residents of Camden & Barnet, and Belsize Square members

How can you help?

- Donate those toiletries we all collect when we have been on holiday
- Donate canned/boxed food

Bring them to the Synagogue Office and we will ensure they get to the people who need them most on Mitzvah Day.

Contact the office for more information

SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES



BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square,
London NW3 4HX

020 7794 3949
office@synagogue.org.uk
www.synagogue.org.uk

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Thu: 9.00am–5.30pm
Friday: 9.00am–2.00pm

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