



MARCH/APRIL 2023 | NISAN/IYAR 5783

News and views from **Belsize Square Synagogue**

PESACH

The call of the Seder

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick on how to find a personal connection to the lessons of Passover

In every generation, we are obligated to see ourselves as if we went out from Egypt.'

This line from the Passover Haggadah is a pretty difficult one to grasp. Thank God, the vast majority (if not all) of us have never tasted the bitterness of slavery or felt the sting of a whip on our backs. So how can we see ourselves as if we went out from Egypt?

Sure, the Haggadah may be trying to teach us empathy for those who are suffering. But if that were the case, why not just say that explicitly? While I do believe that empathy is one of the major goals of the Passover Seder, I think this line is speaking to something different. But before we can address what that might be, we must first understand what it means to 'go out from Egypt'.

The Hebrew word for Egypt is Mitzrayim, meaning 'a narrow place' or 'dire straits'. Whenever the Torah speaks of Egypt, it uses language of 'going down' – as in one goes down to Egypt. This phrasing stands in stark contrast to the way we speak of Israel and Jerusalem – as we say one who moves to Israel has 'made Aliyah' or has 'gone up' to Israel. Therefore, Israel represents the pinnacle of ideology, while Egypt represents the pit of despair.

But Egypt represents more than just despair. Egypt represents alienation, as our ancestors were strangers in this foreign land for hundreds of years. Egypt represents disorientation, as our ancestors knew not where to turn to find salvation from their enslavement. And Egypt represents ignorance and juvenescence, as our ancestors did not yet know about freedom, education, Torah, or God.

In other words, when our ancestors went out from Egypt, they did not just leave slavery, they left behind feelings of alienation, disorientation, ignorance, and despair. And they did not just travel to the promised land, they embarked on a journey towards community, purpose, understanding, and faith.

While it might be difficult to see ourselves as if we went out from a place of servitude, each of us can surely relate to having found ourselves at one point or another in a metaphorical Egypt – a time when we've felt like an outsider, lost, or unaware. The Passover Seder is an opportunity for us to reflect on our past year and consider any metaphorical 'Egypts' we may have left behind since the last time we

were humbled by the act of eating Matzah – the 'bread of affliction'.

And the Seder is also an opportunity to consider any symbolic 'Egypts' in which we might currently be standing. Here, the task is more pressing – the Passover Seder is a call to ask ourselves how we will find the strength to leave behind these new, modern-day Egypts. Will salvation appear in the guise of family or community? Will it come to us through new insights we uncover in an article or a book? Or will we find the strength to leave behind our Egypts through our traditions and faith?

No matter where you happen to find yourself this year – in the straits of your own, personal Egypt or the heights of your spiritual Mount Sinai – I encourage you to take the charge of the Haggadah seriously this year: strive to see yourself as the recipient of a sacred promise to be brought into the Promised Land.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Letter from the Rabbi
- 2 Annual Israel Dinner
- 4 Ordinary People
- 5 Holocaust Memorial Day at BSS
- 6 Community news and updates
- 7 News from Abernein Mansions, Synagogue snapshot
- 8 Services, Synagogue help lines

ANNUAL ISRAEL DINNER

Belsize Square's partner charities

Anthony Gee introduces the charities to be supported by our Annual Israel Dinner on Yom Ha'atzmaut, 26 April

BEIT URI

We are delighted to welcome Beit Uri as the newest charity to be supported by our Synagogue.



Beit Uri is a residential home for over a hundred residents with complex cognitive and physical needs, based in Afula. The village has a recognized school programme with over forty children aged 6-21. The home often relies on the generosity of donors to make up shortfalls in funding to cover essential therapeutic programmes that transform the lives of its children and help them to develop in a loving,

nurturing environment. Their well-developed therapeutic programmes help to address the specific needs of each child and include music, horseriding and light therapies. These programmes are not funded by the Ministries of Education and Social Services and are therefore supported by charitable donations such as ours.



YEMIN ORDE



Yemin Orde Youth Village is home, school and safe haven to 440 at-risk and immigrant youth from around the world, including recent arrivals from Ukraine. They provide individualized therapeutic care and full-time academic tutoring to those in need of extra supportive services. Additionally, the Village's 'Informal Educators' provide mentoring to troubled youth 24 hours a day. Graduates remain

connected to the Village long after they leave. This sense of safety and lifelong support is one of the unique elements that makes the Youth Village a model of excellence in Israel. At Yemin Orde, the young people find a home, a family, and a future.



ASSAF



ASSAF is an Israeli NGO that believes that the refugees and asylum seekers knocking on Israel's doors should be embraced and supported. Their aim is to promote their rights in their encounters with the state authorities. This includes providing

advocacy and support to those in need: thousands of men, women and children who are conducting a daily struggle to overcome memories of the traumatic experiences they have escaped, and who are living in Israel without status or access to basic human rights. ASSAF want to see an Israel that treats people who had to run away from their country in fear for their lives with justice and respect.





CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 75TH BIRTHDAY

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

ANNUAL ISRAEL DINNER

Yom Ha'atzmaut Wednesday 26 April 2023 6.30 - 10.30pm

Hosted by Rob Nothman

Reception followed by dinner catered by Adam Nathan

Exciting Guest Speaker to be announced Entertainment by The Belsize Klezmer Band

Appeal in aid of our three partner charities -Yemin Orde, Assaf and our new charity, Beit Uri

Tickets £80 Book by 15 March for £60 Early Bird tickets

www.synagogue.org.uk/payment

ONLINE STUDY WORKSHOP

Tuesdays 8.00pm 18 April - 23 May

The forty-nine days between Pesach and Shavuot are marked with the counting of the Omer.

For one hour each Tuesday evening, starting 18 April we will learn Pirkei Avot together, The Ethics of the Fathers – a text traditionally studied during the Omer.

To register and get the Zoom link email: cantor@synagogue.org.uk

Belsize Square Synagogue is delighted to present a Family Puzzle evening with the Happy Puzzle Company

Bright? Creative? Logical?
Good at Critical thinking?
Amazing at problem solving?



then this is THE **EVENT** for you!

Join us for dinner and some 'puzzling'

When? Sunday, 23 April from 5.30pm

Who? Families and friends (Non-members welcome!)

Where? BSS Hall

Cost? £20 per adult / £15 per child (under 16) Family ticket for £63 for 4 people comprising 1 adult / 3 children or 2 adults / 2 children

How to book? www.synagogue.org.uk/payment or call the Synagogue office on 020 7794 3949

Our Congregation | March/April 2023 | Nisan/Iyar 5783 3

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

'Ordinary People'

I attend Tonbridge School in Kent where I am currently one of a very small number of Jewish students. Last term, Judaism and Jewish life came to the fore both for me and my school. Before Rosh Hashanah, for the first time ever, a teacher sent out an informative whole-school email about a Jewish holiday. This was a small step, but it has led to great strides.

Mr Ben Katz, the teacher who sent the email, had joined our school last September. We soon met and started talking over the idea of founding a Jewish Society, open to everyone. I suggested that we should do a chapel talk to the whole school, about or related to Judaism, and he immediately proposed we do one for Holocaust Memorial Day. We decided to divide it into two parts: first, he

The theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day was 'Ordinary People'. Here eighteen-year-old Max Freudenheim, the son of Belsize members Adam and Victoria Freudenheim, introduces the speech about Holocaust Memorial Day that he gave at his school. And we also mark the two Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations at our Synagogue.

would speak about the Holocaust and the other genocides commemorated by that day, and then I would talk about the theme for this year – Ordinary People.

A few days before the talk, we realised that we needed to choose a song with which to walk down the aisle before the talk started. I knew that my grandfather would give me a good suggestion and we used 'Zog Nit Keynmol', the Jewish Partisans' Song created in 1943 in the Vilna Ghetto. So, nervous, excited, and proud all at once, Mr Katz and I strode in to a Hebrew version of a song that was a symbol of Jewish resistance against the Nazis, with 800 students and teachers looking on.

Here, slightly abbreviated, is my speech.



Every year a theme is chosen for Holocaust Memorial Day; this year the theme is 'Ordinary People'. Ordinary people were perpetrators and bystanders. Ordinary people were rescuers. And ordinary people were victims.

My grandfather was born in Germany, and he and his family fled the country shortly before the second world war began. They, unlike so many others, were lucky enough to escape and found safety in the USA.

Today, in light of the theme of Ordinary People, I'm going to focus on the perpetrators and bystanders, the ordinary people who actively assisted or just allowed these genocides to happen, and also those ordinary people who did not simply stand by and look on as people were murdered.

One of the scariest things about the Holocaust and other genocides is 'the banality of evil', a phrase coined by Hannah Arendt when watching the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Evil acts don't have to be committed by evil people, but they can simply be the consequence of ordinary people obeying orders. It seems difficult to argue that Eichmann was not an evil person. However, it is evident that ordinary people did play their parts in perpetrating genocides simply by obeying orders. Ordinary people were policemen rounding up victims, secretaries typing the records of genocide, doctors carrying out selections. But more recently, ordinary people were also teachers turned concentration camp guards in Bosnia and neighbours brandishing machetes in Rwanda.

Most people when a genocide takes place are bystanders. They do not take an active role in perpetrating the genocide, yet they do not step up as rescuers. They let the atrocity of genocide happen around them, while they sit around doing nothing to prevent it.

However, not everyone just stood by. Many did intervene to save and rescue people. They are often portrayed as extraordinary in their bravery, yet many describe themselves and their actions simply, emphasising that it was their circumstances that gave them the chance to save others. They risked their lives and livelihoods to help others. Sir Nicholas Winton, a young stockbroker, rescued 669 children from Czechoslovakia, bringing them to the UK, thereby sparing them from the horrors of the Holocaust. He said: 'Why are you making such a big deal out of it? I just helped a little; I was in the right place at the right time.' Another example is Léon Bronchart, a French railway worker, who helped his Jewish neighbours, hid a Jew, and refused to drive a train containing political prisoners. For his brave acts he was named Righteous Among the Nations.

Almost 30,000 Righteous have been recognised by Yad Vashem. This number demonstrates how many ordinary people did such extraordinary things. Thankfully, all of us here today are safe from the horrors of genocide. But we must not rest on our laurels. We are all ordinary people who can be extraordinary. Speaking up against hatred, challenging prejudice and standing up to persecution are things everyone can do to make a difference in today's world.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY AT BELSIZE SQUARE

'Ordinary People' was also the theme of the two International Holocaust Remembrance Day commemorations at our Synagogue – our Erev Shabbat service on the day itself, 27 January, and the Association of Jewish Refugees' annual Commemoration on 23 January.

At the AJR's event, the main contribution was from 92-year-old Lia Lesser, who was among the children on Nicholas Winton's last Kindertransport train out of Prague in July 1939. She spoke of the many 'ordinary' participants in genocide through the ages, but also, most eloquently, of the many 'ordinary' people, such as Winton and Miss Hall, her host in rural Wales, whose humanity had prompted them to rescue as many threatened people as they could.

Also speaking at the AJR's commemoration were the Czech Ambassador, Her Excellency Marie Chatardová, who stressed the importance of education in her country to 'avoid erasure of the past', and Laurence Winton who described his grandfather as 'not extraordinary or a hero', but rather as 'ordinary but determined'.

Our Ministers contributed movingly and beautifully to the AJR event, and those sentiments also applied to their Erev Shabbat service, when Rabbi Botnick related the attitudes of the Egyptians under Pharaoh, referred to in that week's Parsha, to those of ordinary people in subsequent history, including in Nazi Germany. He drew those attitudes together as the inability to share empathy with the oppressed – and expressed the need to develop that sensitivity in humanity to avoid repetition of the horrors of the past.

'Never Forget'











AJR's Guest Speakers Lia Lesser, Ambassador Chatardová and Laurence Winton

Left: Belsize Square's Yad Vashem six-branched candelabra, memorial to the six million victims of the Holocaust. The candles were lit for both services.



Above: Cantor Heller and Rabbi Botnick lead the service at the AJR's Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration

Left: AJR memorial candle lighters and Commemoration participants. L-R Kitty Balint-Kurti, Michael Newman (AJR Chief Executive), Tulip Siddiq (MP for Hampstead and Kilburn), Laurence Winton, Lord Eric Pickles (UK Special Envoy for post-Holocaust issues), David Treitel, Lia Lesser, Rabbi Botnick



Invitation to nominate Candidates for Membership of the Board of The Belsize Square Synagogue (The Synagogue)

The seventh Annual General Meeting of The Synagogue (the AGM) will be held on **Thursday 15 June**. Formal notice will be given in due course.

The Board hereby invites the members of The Synagogue to nominate candidates for the Office of Chairman and for election to the Board for a period of three years commencing from the AGM. There are 15 vacancies.

Nominations must be in writing, addressed to the Hon. Secretary and submitted to the Synagogue Office by twelve noon on **Friday 14 April 2023**. Each Nomination must be signed by at least five members of The Synagogue who are themselves entitled to vote at the AGM. Only valid nominations which are received by that date can be considered. No member may sign more nominations for the Board than the number of vacancies (namely 13).

In accordance with the Articles of Association of The Synagogue, the following eight members will be retiring from the Board by rotation but are eligible for re-election if duly nominated:

Adam Davis; Joe Hacker; Pat Hirschovits; Frank Joseph; Freddy Lehmann; Adam Nathan; Sarah Percival; Rob Nothman: Claire Walford

From **17 April**, a list of the candidates duly nominated will be available for inspection at the Synagogue Office and the formal notice of the AGM will also include a list of those candidates.



Our regular report from our Board of Deputies representatives **Deborah Cohen, Peter Strauss** and **Dilys Tausz**

First of all, congratulations to Marie van der Zyl, the BoD President, and her predecessor Jonathan Arkush, who were both awarded OBEs in the King's first New Year's Honours list for their service to Faith and to Integration. The BoD has made a great stride in integration itself, having contributed to the ten-year campaign against the activities of Stephen Sizer, an Anglican minister who was recently found by a Church of England tribunal to have engaged in antisemitic activity and conduct that 'provoked and offended' the Jewish community over a sustained period. The tribunal accepted the evidence of the BoD, a vital contribution in improving the relationship between the Church and the Jewish community.

The Board's links with Parliament continue. A delegation has met Sir Keir Starmer to discuss the key topics of interest to, and the concerns of, British Jews.

With few Holocaust survivors still alive, the BoD has produced Legacy Boards to ensure that remembrance of the Shoah is indelibly and symbolically observed. More than 150 boards have now been distributed. The BoD's Yom HaShoah UK Legacy committee has now launched its 'Legacy from the Holocaust' project, which asks us to make three pledges: *Zachor* – To Remember; *Haggadah* – To Tell; and *L'Chaim* – To Life. The memory of the Shoah being so close to the heart of our own community, Belsize Square's Deputies urge members to use this incredible resource in the Holocaust education programmes that the synagogue runs so successfully.

COMMUNITY NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to: Sasha Crocker | Daphne Price | Catherine Agonis

BIRTH

Mazal tov to: David & Natalya Kendall on the birth of their daughter Cleo

BNEI MITZVAH

Mazal tov to:

Grace, daughter of Marie Claire Green & Ian Rogers who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on 11 March Maisie, daughter of Sasha & Adam Buchler who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on 25 March Miranda, daughter of Danielle Tinero & Allan Rosenberg who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on 29 April

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of: Alice Frank on 14 January David Price on 25 January Yvonne Alweiss on 4 February

COULD YOU WORK WITH OUR CHEVRA KADISHA AT TIMES OF LOSS?

Cantor Paul Heller invites you join our Synagogue's burial society

Here at Belsize Square we are fortunate to have a community that is committed to supporting the laws and customs relating to death and grief – honouring those who have died and giving support to those who have suffered loss.

We are called to fulfil the commandments and to praise those who voluntarily contribute to the holy work – serving on the cemetery committee, working with the Chevra Kadisha (burial society), attending funerals and shivas, or participating in our Bereavement Support Group. We are eager that more of our members should be involved in our burial society and I would welcome hearing from you if you might be interested in joining any of the groups I have mentioned.

Please contact me at cantor@synagogue.org.uk

NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS NW.3.

Dear Fellow Members

I have always sort of this time of year as being the months of the two peas - Purim und Pesach. It also youth to be a very profiterole time for our local dentist, Herr Erik Plark. This was when Mrs Klopstick wood make Haman Taschen for pea won und Matzo Balls for pea two. Sank goodness she has now given up her kitchen con-cuckschens. Insthead she has taken up sumsing that also goes very hard und this is poetery. Now we have clay all over the kitchen, ware befour was always flower und poppy seats und then matzo mail und egg schells. I don't no witch is verse.

This year the now retired classisch actor Hermann Grippe will signal handed give his rendition of the Purim Spiel in our communial lunge. He will take up the rolls of Esther, Mordachai, Haman und Ashevarious changing his voice aproportionally for each part. I just hope their is no repeat from last year when on the first menschen off Haman old Dr Schulz banked his Zimmer frame onto Mrs Fleischmann's good foot. At first, we sort that her cry was a reaxtion to the name Haman, but when she continued screeching, the Megillha hat to be pawsed vile her foot was plundered into a bucket of ice wasser.

Mrs Klopstick is much down in the damps at the moment as she strained her angle vile training. I can say without fear from contraception that we have heartly ever hat a cross wart, but the utmostfear in our flett is very tenth at the moment.

To bring up her mute I have booked her after Pesach on a Version Atlantik flite to Miami to visit our retired New York lawyer son Melvyn who we never here from. Perheps this will bring him off his sun launcher und at the same time she can show him how his telephone werks.

With the best of intentions Fritz Klopstick

ASK FRITZ

I have bean asked by a number from our older members what to do about muckers if attracted in the street. Unless you are complacent with marital arts, like jewgitsue, it is best to be complacent und give them what they want. In most cases it will be money for drucks oder en eyephone. If you have en old obsolute phone keep that in your pocket und the real won in a beg round your neck unter your shirt oder blowse. Also have two valets oder perses. Have little money in won und en old credit cart. The other wiz the proper cart und more money in a secretive place secluded in yourself.

SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS

Pat Hirschovits

Secretary and domestic engineer of sorts



What is your favourite thing about your work?

I enjoy working because it ensures I am active during the day rather than lolling around, as I worry I might. Mostly, I work for the main director of a property company that has

expanded considerably over the years. Working with other people, a day rarely passes without some sort of a laugh – definitely healthier than a moan.

What is the hardest part of your job?

It's getting up 'early' in the morning! But then it does ensure I do get up – always a positive move. Apart from that, I guess it's 'switching off'. But I'm fortunate to have five amazing grandchildren and they certainly help.

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

I would probably want to be a doctor or a lawyer – being Jewish, I am obviously expert in both...

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

I was born into Belsize Square. My parents, both German refugees, were early members. Among many of the questions I regret not having asked was precisely what, or who, made them join BSS. They did not live in the area or anywhere nearby, so why? Our sons grew up in Belsize as well and were teachers in the cheder; our younger son particularly made some good friends at the shul and then married a fellow member, so he married into it!

What's your favourite festival?

Different festivals produce different feelings for me. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur take me back to my childhood, but Purim is wonderful because you see the kids having fun, which to me is very important. We need to cater for the young, for they are our future.

Naturally I also enjoy the Chanukah Market (is that a 'festival'?) which I help Annette Nathan and Cheryl Davis to organise. It's great to see so many of the community rolling up, having a good time and supporting us in so many ways. It's what community is all about.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

Ha ha! That's a no-brainer. In the 'German' section on the right side of the shul of course! Well, it's not German any more, and I'm not actually sure it ever was, but it feels that way because we are just short of putting our towels down on the seats during the High Holydays.

Our Congregation | March/April 2023 | Nisan/lyar 5783

SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Kikar Kids - Junior Shabbat Service

Saturday 4 March, 1 April, 6 May 11.00am in the crèche for under 5s Service 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

PURIM

Erev Purim Monday 6 March

5.00pm Family Pizza Dinner, Fancy Dress Parade, Purim Spiel, Youth Choir 6.45pm Evening Service, Megillah reading, magic and more!

PESACH

1st Eve: Wednesday 5 April at 6.45pm
1st Day: Thursday 6 April at 10.00am
2nd Eve: Thursday 6 April at 6.45pm
followed by Communal Seder
2nd Day: Friday 7 April at 10.00am
Shabbat Chol Hamoed Pesach
Eve: Friday 7 April at 6.45pm
Day: Saturday 8 April at 10.00am
7th Eve: Tuesday 11 April at 6.45pm
7th Day: Wednesday 12 April at 10.00am
8th Eve: Wednesday 12 April at 6.45pm
8th Day: Thursday 13 April at 10.00am including Yizkor

CHEDER AND BEIT MITZVAH

Sunday mornings 9.30am–12.30pm Enquiries to Head: Caroline Loison caroline@synagogue.org.uk

Term ends Sunday 26 March Term commences Sunday 16 April

ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP

Meetings continue weekly with two sessions on Sunday mornings from 10.00am, the first with Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler and the second usually with an invited guest speaker at 11.30am.

All meetings in the current term will take place on Zoom.

Programme and Zoom joining details for each meeting will be available in the News from the Square emails every Thursday.

There will be no meetings on 2 and 9 April.

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

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

PESACH OFFICE HOURS

The office will close on Wednesday 5 April at midday and will reopen on Friday 14 April at 9.00am

RABBI

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick rabbibotnick@ synagogue.org.uk

To book an in-person, video or telephone appointment with Rabbi Botnick, please email his PA Claire Austin: claire@synagogue.org.uk

CANTOR

Dr Paul Heller cantor@synagogue.org.uk 07949 078366

RABBI EMERITUS

Rabbi Rodney Mariner rodmariner@aol.com or 07956 352267

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Lee Taylor lee@synagogue.org.uk

CHAIRMAN

Jackie Alexander chairman@ synagogue.org.uk

CHEDER AND YOUTH

Caroline Loison caroline@ synagogue.org.uk 020 7794 3949w

COMMUNITY CARE CO-ORDINATOR & BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE

Eve Hersov eve@synagogue.org.uk 07944 574676

CHEVRA KADISHA

Helen Grunberg 020 8450 8533 Cantor Dr Paul Heller

FUNERALS

During Synagogue office hours phone Synagogue

Evenings/weekends phone Calo's (Undertakers) 020 8958 2112

OUR CONGREGATION

Editor: Alex Antscherl Associate Editor: David Horwell

Design and layout: mavendesign.co.uk

Copy date for the May/June issue is 10 April 2023 Contributions to alexantscherl@me.com or the Synagogue office

SECOND NIGHT SEDER

THURSDAY 6 APRIL

Rabbi Botnick and Cantor Heller invite you to join them for:

Second Night Seder at the Synagogue following the Service at 6.45pm

Members £30.00 Non-Members £35.00 Under 16s £20.00

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

