



LEARNING ON SHABBAT

Eating and thinking

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick on a new Shabbat feature at Belsize Square

If you take a moment to consider some of your most powerful Jewish memories, chances are they involve food: Shabbat and holiday meals with loved ones, B'nei Mitzvah celebrations, even sitting shiva. And though we fast on Yom Kippur, one could argue that the absence of food, followed by the breaking of the fast, plays a large role in defining the holiday.

The fact is that food is central to the Jewish experience. In Pirkei Avot (Ethics of Our Ancestors), Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya famously stated: *Im ein kemach, ein Torah* or 'Without sustenance, there is no Torah.' By this he means that people are unable to focus on their learning if they are not properly fed – and that is precisely what we intend to do at Belsize: feed you.

Starting in June, once a month, we will be offering an expanded kiddush that will include not only a proper sit-down lunch, but also a chance to do some learning. You'll be invited to hang out at the regular

kiddush for a while and then make your way to another space where you'll be able to load your plate with delicious fare to enjoy while you sit and shmooze with others. Before we start our learning, Cantor Heller will lead us in a song or two, followed by Birkat Hamazon.

And then we will begin our learning. Initially, this will focus on deepening our understanding of central symbols and objects within Judaism – often relating to any upcoming holidays. You might learn some secrets about how a Torah is made, or why we dress it in such fancy garb. Or maybe you'll discover what makes a shofar or mezuzah kosher, or how far you can push the boundaries of design on any given ritual object. There's so much to uncover and we'll do just that over lunch one Shabbat per month.

Now, you might be curious to learn about these topics, but perhaps coming to services isn't really your thing. That's okay! While we would love you to join us for services, there is no expectation for you to do so. You're more than welcome to come to shul around midday and join us for lunch and learning. Just being with the community on Shabbat is what we're hoping for.

And if you can't make it at all on Shabbat, no worries – we will be resuming the release of my Taste of Torah videos on the shul website and YouTube channel, in which I'll give a brief overview of the topic we'll be discussing

that Shabbat. While these videos will certainly be informative, the deep learning will only be available to those who attend in person on Shabbat.

I have a few goals with this initiative. First of all, I want to share some of the learning that makes Judaism so exciting – not only in a theoretical sense, but on a truly practical level, which is why we'll be focusing on ritual objects that we use all the time. I also want to help you find ways to connect with Shabbat. If attending services hasn't been doing that for you, maybe eating and learning will. And finally, I'm hoping this new initiative will help strengthen our sense of community. So often, we come to synagogue and only chat with the people we know, if anyone at all. By taking time to enjoy a meal together and engage in great conversation, we can all deepen our connections with the community.

So I hope you will consider joining me and Cantor Heller on 10 June as we launch this new programme. Subsequent sessions will take place on 8 July and 9 September. I look forward to lunching and learning with you soon!

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SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS

Ruth Rothenberg

Retired journalist and former editor of this magazine



What is your favourite thing about your work?

I love writing and started in journalism when I was a student. In my time I've been a reporter in Birmingham and London, a features writer and the Deputy Editor of the *Jewish Observer*.

And for twenty years before I retired I was obituaries editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* as well as reporting for them and producing academic and professional publications.

What is the hardest part of your job?

Knowing where to stop.

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

Working on a market stall – I like the idea of being in the open air, but NOT doing gardening!

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

It was the nearest shul to our first married address (not far now, either) and it appealed to David for its 'yekke' origins, plus his having come from a Reform community – his Bar Mitzvah was at Alyth Gardens.

What's your favourite festival?

Chanukah. It particularly appeals to me because my family on my maternal grandmother's side celebrates the fifth candle, which commemorates the day that my ancestor, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, was released from prison when it was explained to the Russian authorities that he was not spreading the ideas of the contemporary French Revolution. He was the founder of Chabad and he disseminated his idea of outreach through the process of *Chochmah* (wisdom), *Binah* (understanding) and *Da'at* (knowledge), as opposed to the ancient Jewish tradition of sectarian strife. I am proud to be seventh-generation Chabad.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

As David and I tend to arrive at different times, I'm perfectly happy to sit towards the back on the right. In the more orthodox shul where I grew up in Wembley, I enjoyed the ladies' gallery, as kids could run around anywhere, while husbands and wives sat opposite each other on their different levels and each had a good time chatting to their mates while semaphoring messages to their own specific mate!

David Rothenberg

Retired chartered accountant



What is your favourite thing about your work?

I'm now retired, but I enjoyed digging deep into the law as it affected my clients.

What is the hardest part of your job?

Getting the right answers.

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

I would enjoy helping a child who found mathematics difficult.

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

Ruth has said it all. My family had not been synagogue attenders, although we always had a Friday night dinner and celebrated Chanukah and Pesach. My mother came from a non-observant family. My paternal grandmother had broken away from a very orthodox background in Germany, so my father had a somewhat distant attachment to religion, although he was a non-attending member of three synagogues. My parents' marriage was conducted by Rabbi Georg Salzberger, the first Rabbi of Belsize Square Synagogue. I am the only practising Jew amongst my siblings, although my brothers both had Bar Mitzvahs.

What's your favourite festival?

Chanukah is fine for me as well!

Where do you like to sit in shul?

In the right-hand block, second row from the front, near to the aisle between the seating blocks. Why? Because I am used to it!

JACOBSON ON JEWISH TRAITS

Jewish Book Week this year had its usual exciting variety of presentations. In his keynote address, 'How Jews Invented Disappointment', Booker Prize winner Howard Jacobson explained, 'When asked to name what Jews were best at, I used to say 'argument'. Disputatiousness is our element, I insisted – but I don't expect you to agree with me. Today I'd say something different. Today I'd say that what defines Jews is *disappointment*. Disappointment is the mournful poetry of the Jewish soul.'

Would readers agree with his new definition? The full text of his very entertaining and thought-provoking address is in the *Jewish Chronicle* online.

RECENT EVENTS

February and March were busy months in the Belsize Square social calendar

PURIM LUNCH



Over thirty senior members attended a Purim lunch at the synagogue, enjoying a megillah reading, songs and jokes from the Rabbi and Cantor and delicious catering by Claire Walford.

THE WINGATE PRIZE

The Wingate Prize is awarded to the best book, fiction or non-fiction, to translate the idea of Jewishness to the general reader. It was won this year by Simon Parkin for *The Island of Extraordinary Captives*, about the Hutchinson Camp, the wartime internment camp



NW3 GROUP



The 'NW3 group' met for their monthly lunch at Giacomo's. Gerald Hellman greatly enjoyed attending, but sadly he passed away, peacefully, a few days later.

on the Isle of Man, and the incredible German and Austrian Jewish creatives and academics who were held there. The award was presented at a ceremony at JW3 on 12 March by Belsize member, BBC journalist and Wingate Trustee Emily Kasriel. The chair of the Wingate Foundation is Professor Jonathan Drori, also a member.



Above: Belsize members James Rossiter, James Bilefield, Rachel Lasserson, Emily Kasriel, Jonathan Drori, Deborah Jay and Eve Hersov, with Claire Austin (PA to our Ministers) and the books shortlisted for the 2023 Wingate Prize

Left: Wingate Prize winner Simon Parkin with Emily Kasriel who presented the prize

A first visit to Israel

Stewart Kerry and his daughter Izzy Abrahams recently visited Israel for the first time. We asked him about his enduring memories of their trip.

Stewart, this was your first trip to Israel. How come you'd waited so long?

I just don't know. But last summer my youngest daughter Izzy said to me 'Dad, I'm almost 50 and I haven't been to Israel yet. Would you come with me?' There and then we booked our tour!

What were your first impressions of Israel?

I couldn't believe that we had finally arrived in Eretz Yisrael. Seeing Hebrew signs everywhere, and surrounded by kindred spirits, I immediately felt at home.

You were only in Israel for eight days. What were some of the experiences that will remain with you?

We were in a group, with a great guide, Abe. We covered a lot of ground – on the first day alone we visited Masada, in awe that the Maccabees survived as long as they did; had a dip in the Dead Sea which was so buoyant that I couldn't stand and had to be tipped upright by others; and we arrived in Jerusalem.



And what an experience Jerusalem was, particularly Yad Vashem, which we found unbelievably gut-wrenching. I volunteer at Selig Court in the Sobell Centre, where residents are Holocaust survivors, and their stories were magnified in this vast memorial. I recited the Shema and couldn't hold back the tears. The following day in the Old City, visiting and touching the Kotel was also an overwhelmingly emotional experience. I was surrounded by davening men and I felt this was where I belonged. Entering under an arch where they were leyning Shacharit, I felt part of the service and joined in. In the square in front of the wall there was a group of teenagers singing and dancing joyously. I asked one what the celebration was and she said it was boot camp before entering the IDF – all I could feel was WOW!

Tsfat in the north, the home of Kabbalah, had a sense of magic about it, with the joy of musicians and artists mingled with the groups of ultra-orthodox men moving around in earnest conversation. And later sitting on the shore of Kinneret, with total silence except for the gentle lapping of the waves, there was a wonderful sense of peace and calm.

Israel endures so many threats to its stability. Did you and Izzy have any fears for your own security?

Crossing into the West Bank, we felt a little tense seeing a large sign forbidding entry to Israeli citizens for fear of abduction. And driving up to Galilee there were numerous 'Warning: minefield' signs along the route that headed to the Golan Heights. We were in a buffer zone, the Israeli army on one side and the Syrian army on the other, watching each other. But with UN peacekeepers in between, there's been no significant fighting there since 1974 and in fact we felt very safe. In Jerusalem young girls trooped through our hotel in military uniform carrying machine guns – and no-one gave them a second glance. Many roads were closed due to demonstrations against Netanyahu's government. What a country!



And what about Tel Aviv, where you started and ended your tour?

A very different atmosphere to everywhere else – on our first night, amazing food in a huge restaurant filled with Arabs and Jews all eating and drinking side by side, a warm friendly atmosphere with happy Israeli waiters dashing about with vast platters. And at the end of the trip, relaxation – a drink in the sunshine at a beach bar, admiring the beach volleyball players and the keep-fit Israelis exercising on the beach. A city for youngsters to enjoy.

What a trip, we can't wait to return!

THE YOUTH WEEKEND AWAY

Jonah Stephens, BSS's Noam Youth Worker, recounts the excitement at this favourite annual event

February's Belsize Annual Youth Weekend Away kicked off with a lively coach journey to Phasels Wood Activity Centre, near Kings Langley, with our wonderful madrichim (leaders) – Jack Loison, Ruby Keve, Max Chalfen, Reuben Polonsky and Lily Wantman – teaching the chanichim (participants) lots of fun chants. Once we arrived, Rabbi Botnick brought in Shabbat by lighting the candles and teaching us some of his favourite Shabbat songs. After kiddush, we had a delicious dinner of lasagne and garlic bread, and then after benching, we got to know each other better with some

circle games. To round off a busy first day, the dorms competed against each other in a fun evening of challenges that included building tin-foil towers and matching the madrichim to their baby photos.

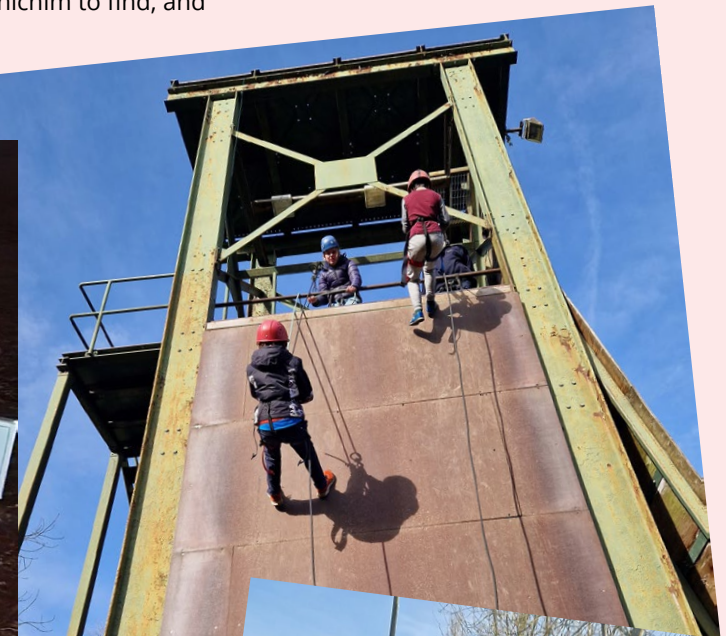
Saturday started early with a delicious breakfast made by talented chef Mickael Loison. After a beautiful Shabbat morning service led by the Rabbi, there were breakout discussions about the parsha. Then we made the most of the exciting activities on site, including aeroball and rock climbing on the traverse rope wall. In the afternoon we played a climate-change wide game with characters such as climate activists and penguins dotted around the site for the chanichim to find, and

challenges to complete. We enjoyed a Tu B'Shevat seder where we spoke about our Jewish commitment to protecting the natural environment and tried lots of exotic fruits. We brought out Shabbat with a Havdalah service followed by a jam-packed evening including a campfire, disco and a movie.

As we prepared to leave Phasels Wood on the Sunday, we reflected on what we'd learnt, the highlights of the trip and we wrote notes to each other with positive messages to take away with us. We just had time left for some more site activities including abseiling and the infamous Cresta Run. Although the weekend had ended, I'm sure lots of new friendships and continued journeys with Belsize Square had begun.



Singing round the campfire – left to right: James (10), Adam (10), Jonah (10), Freddie (9) & Dash (10)



Activities at the Youth Weekend included abseiling and the Cresta Run

Notice is hereby given that the

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

will be held in the Synagogue Hall,
51 Belsize Square, London NW3 on

THURSDAY 15 JUNE 2023 at 8.00pm

To be followed by Guest Speaker Marie van der Zyl.
Refreshments will be served.

AGENDA

1. Introduction and Report by the Chairman
2. Financial Report
3. Appointment of Auditors
4. Election of members to the Board
5. Discussion on Annual Reports
6. Any Other Business

Candidates for Election to the Board

Adam Buchler, Simon Cohen; Adam Davis*;
Pat Hirschovits*; Oliver Jerome; Freddy Lehmann*;
Adam Nathan*; Sarah Percival*; Rob Nothman*;
David Pollins*; Claire Walford*

*members of the present Board

Under clause 17(c) of the Constitution, every member of the Synagogue not being in arrears with more than one year's subscription shall be entitled to attend and vote at the Annual General Meeting. Voting is by secret ballot of those present at the AGM and entitled to vote.

GUEST SPEAKER AT THE AGM



Following the AGM we shall welcome our Guest Speaker, Marie van der Zyl OBE, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.



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

There is a need to protect the Jewish population of the UK, from the most observant to those who identify as Jewish but have no spiritual belief, especially in the light of the growing problem of antisemitism. This is why the Board's work is so important.

Unfortunately, when Israeli politics hits the headlines, many non-Jews assume that all Jews in the UK support the Israeli administration. Of course, not all the Deputies will agree on Israel, or speak with one voice, but the Board's meetings provide a safe place for debate. So the whole of the last plenary session was spent debating the motion:

COMMUNITY NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:
Ben Nothman | Nick & Stephanie Miller with son Raphael
Alice Bloom | Ben Ari with daughter Talah | David Sloane
Ian Rosenfeld with sons Daniel and Isaac | Anna Brown
Kevin Hilton

BIRTH

Mazal tov to:
Noa Burger and Laurie Carter on the birth of their daughter Orly Rivka

BNEI MITZVAH

Mazal tov to:
Freddie, son of Nikki Gewirtz & Justin Bass who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 6 May
Natalia, daughter of Sandra & Roy Kashi who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on 20 May
Sam, son of Nicole Horwitz & Frank Joseph who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 3 June
Sonja, daughter of Sasha & Leonid Gluzman who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on 10 June
Marnie, daughter of Tina & Ben Lewis who celebrates her Bat Mitzvah on 17 June
Arlo, son of Annicka & James Terry who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 24 June
Aiden, son of Sarah Walford & Naci Uydac who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 1 July

MARRIAGE

Congratulations and best wishes to:
Anna Klein & Stuart Miller who were married on Sunday 2 April

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:
Olive Herman on 26 February
Gerald Hellman on 28 February
Ursula Seftel on 13 March
Margit Laser on 16 March

British Jews are deeply committed to Israel. We are gravely concerned that the new Israeli government includes individuals whose stated views and actions are in contrast to the tolerant and inclusive values of our community. The Board condemns politicians who have demonstrated hostility on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, or Jewish denomination. The Board remains committed to supporting those who continue, in line with Israel's Declaration of Independence, to 'foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants'.

Debate was cordial and the motion was passed with an 83% majority. Those who opposed it were no less troubled by what was happening in Israel, but they felt that it was not for a British Board of Deputies to criticise the actions of a democratically elected foreign government.

As your elected Deputies, we continue to contribute the views of our Synagogue to assist the Board in its valuable work.

NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS NW3.

Dear Fellow Members

Of course, what is on every one's mind in the moment is the Coronation and how to make it a great celebrity. Some hear who are fully amputated would like to join the throngs lining the Mall and wave flags at their Majesties. Others are more in favour of having a Finchley Road-site party with bunting and so forth. There is, of course, the big dilemma with Kink Charles and Queen Concert being put on the Throwdown a Shabbas. Herta Blumenkohl has come up with the rarely held idea of how to kill two birds with one stone. Her enlightening moment is that the synagogue should hold a fully catered kiddish outside in the street and in white local residents to also take part.

Jest now I am having big troubles with the management from here in Abernein Mansions. Some inmates, who want to remain enormous, have complained about my wife, Mrs Klopstick, bringing mud into the foyer and lift. They think it is unbecoming for a woman in her eighties to uptake across a country running. I will always bag her up and defend her write to bring indoors organic materials from her jock round Hempstead Heath.

On the plus side I am very pleased that my cousins Lotte and Rudolph Zwiebl are coming home from Wembley in Kenada for the first time in decades. They are here to celebrate our uncle Hermann's 110th birthday. Unfortunately he died when he was only 42, while being afixated on a piece of Grodzinski plum cake.

After the glorious fifties of May, then it will be June birthing out all over. And so summer will be up on us. This is a time when all us inmates can fully make use of our communal garden. But we have shoreditch of deck shares, and only two benches. For this reason I have proclaimed some wood from pellets and together with my friend Dolphy Feinstein will be banging together some new sitting areas here.

With the best of intentions
Fritz Klopstick

ASK FRITZ

I am very commonly asked how elderly people can best occupy their time. Not all of them have the fizzy ability to uptake sports like my wife. I can sorrowfully recommend doing some hobbies. It doesn't have to be with things of value like my button collection. There are crossword puzzles, knitting a jumper, flower arranging, antique haunting, stamping in an album, oil painting, the list is endless.

SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS

Abigail Cox

Communications coordinator



What is your favourite thing about your work?

I ran my own public relations agency for 21 years and I have just started as Communications Coordinator at Paperweight, the Jewish community's

advice centre. It's a big change, going from a commercial enterprise to a charity, but I am so fortunate that I can use my skills and experience for such a unique organisation. I love that my job involves so much writing and that I can raise awareness that help is there for everyone in our community.

What is the hardest part of your job?

Writing case studies can be heartbreaking at times, but the sense of pride in the amazing work that our volunteers do and the results they achieve helps enormously. My job involves communicating about the work of the Paperweight Trust, often around difficult and sensitive subjects such as finances, divorce and bereavement. These are situations that are often hard for people to discuss, or to accept that they are not immune from them.

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

That's difficult as I love what I do, but if I had to choose, I would be an interior designer. I really love everything about changing spaces and creating interest in a room, and I'm very good at spending other people's money!

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

We were looking for a shul to join, but couldn't find one we liked. I grew up with Martyn Fisher and we were out for dinner and he and Jennifer told us about Belsize and Rabbi Mariner, so we came for a service and found our spiritual home.

What's your favourite festival?

Growing up it was always Simchat Torah, but now it's Rosh Hashanah. I love the reflection on the last year and the excitement at the anticipation of the newness ahead.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

Before Covid, we always used to sit towards the back on the left-hand side. Now we tend to sit upstairs to the left of the choir.

You can find out more about Paperweight and its work at paperweight.org.uk

SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm
Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Kikar Kids – Junior Shabbat Service

Saturday 6 May, 3 June, 1 July
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

SHAVUOT

1st Eve: Thursday 25 May at 6.45pm
1st Day: Friday 26 May at 10.00am
2nd Eve: Friday 26 May at 6.45pm
2nd Day: Saturday 27 May at 10.00am including Yizkor

CHEDER AND BEIT MITZVAH

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

Half term - Sunday 28 May & 4 June
End of Term – Sunday 9 July

ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP

Meetings take place on Sunday mornings in term-time.
Programme and Zoom joining details for each meeting
will be in the News from the Square emails every
Thursday.


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

Introducing Belsize's new

SHABBAT LUNCH + LEARN

A monthly sit-down lunch, with
some singing led by Cantor Heller
and learning led by Rabbi Botnick

Saturdays After Services
10 June - 8 July - 9 September



SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square,
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www.synagogue.org.uk

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

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

SHAVUOT OFFICE HOURS

The office will close on
Thursday 25 May at
midday and will reopen on
Tuesday 30 May at 9.00am

SYNAGOGUE LIBRARY

Open to members during
office hours

RABBI

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick
rabbi@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

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Cantor Dr Paul Heller

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020 8958 2112

OUR CONGREGATION

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COMMUNITY DINNER AND TIKKUN LEYL SHAVUOT

FRIDAY EVENING 26 MAY 2023

All ages welcome

Friday night service at 6.45pm
to be followed by Dinner at 7.30pm

TIKKUN: SENSES AND SENTIENCE

An exploration of Revelation through Art, Technology & Torah

Rabbi's introduction and youth programme at 8.30pm
Learning sessions from 9.00pm with snacks and more

Watch for full programme and joining details in emails
and News from the Square