



TU B'SHEVAT

A New Year and a new Seder

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick introduces a new ritual for Tu B'Shevat

At the start of Mishnah Rosh Hashanah, we learn that there are not one, but four, New Year days in Judaism. We are most familiar with Rosh Chodesh Tishrei, which is not only the first day of a new month but also marks the anniversary of the world's creation – Rosh Hashanah. The first of Nisan marks the New Year of Kings. Every time a monarch is in power, when this day comes around, we add another year to the measure of their reign. The first of Elul is the New Year of Animals: any animals born after that day are considered for a separate tithe year from those born before. And of course, there's Tu B'Shevat, which marks the midpoint of the rainy season and is celebrated as the New Year of Trees.

Just as no single day can claim to be the one, true, New Year in Judaism, so too no single day can lay claim to the ritual of Seder. Of course, whenever people

hear the word 'Seder', most will automatically – and rightly – associate it with Pesach and the festive meal. But the word 'Seder' simply means 'order' and is used to describe any ritual meal that follows a prescribed order of blessings and traditions before the main course. Another holiday that is celebrated with a Seder is Rosh Hashanah, when – before reciting HaMotzi – we bless a number of symbolic foods, whose names are used in New Year-themed puns. This is the origin of our eating apples dipped in honey: that we may have a sweet year.

But more relevant to this issue of *Our Cong*, there is also a tradition of holding a Seder on Tu B'Shevat. In this ritual – instituted by the Kabbalists nearly 500 years ago – we begin the festive meal by blessing and consuming symbolic fruits, nuts and wine, each corresponding to a different season of the year as well as various planes of our spiritual existence.

For winter, we drink white wine (symbolising snow) and eat nuts and fruits with inedible exteriors (e.g. walnuts, pomegranates, oranges), representing seeds lying dormant and how we might retreat into our homes and close ourselves off from others.

For spring, we add a drop of red wine to a glass of white – representing the first blush of seasonal colour – and we eat fruits with pits or stones, but that are otherwise fully edible (e.g. olives, apricots). These fruits not only

remind us of how the ground is not yet fully thawed, but they also encourage us to identify parts of ourselves which we may be holding back out of fear of becoming too vulnerable.

The third part of this seder is based around a glass of wine that is equal parts red and white – reminding us of the vibrant colours of nature in the warmer months. At this point, we also eat a selection of fruits which are fully edible (e.g. figs, grapes) and represent the ways in which we might fully give of ourselves to others.

Finally, we arrive at autumn – for which we drink dark, red wine and consume no fruit. The hope is that, by the autumn of our lives, we have realized our full potential and embraced wholly our spiritual existence. For this reason, we have no need for the physical nourishment of fruit, as we aim to find total contentment through the Divine.

The Tu B'Shevat Seder adds no more than fifteen minutes or so to our holiday meal, but it leaves us with meaningful teachings that can come back to mind throughout the year as we marvel at the changing of the seasons and the natural world. While I certainly encourage you to try out this beautiful tradition on your own during one of your holiday meals (24–25 January), I also invite you to join us at Belsize Square on 20 January, when we will enjoy a communal Tu B'Shevat Seder during Kiddush, following our Shabbat morning service.

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SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS

Mandy Brass

Acupuncturist and researcher, Dimpleby Cancer Care, Guy's Hospital, London



What led you into your field of work?

In my mid-20's, I worked for Labour Friends of Israel, which was my dream job – except that I hated it. At the same time, I became unwell and was told I was either making it up, or it would take me up to five years

to get better. I went to see an acupuncturist and was better in six weeks. The experience was life-changing and led me to re-study and become an acupuncturist myself.

What is your favourite thing about your work?

I love the relationships I build and the diversity of people I meet. It's a privilege to work with patients with cancer at such a challenging period of their lives. Having the time to listen, to improve symptoms and quality of life is both uplifting and rewarding. I get the most pleasure from patients who tell me they don't think acupuncture will make any difference and are pleasantly surprised when it does.

What is the hardest part of your job?

I work in the NHS so it has to be the admin.

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

I love climbing and mountains, so I'd like to be a mountaineer and summit an 8000m peak. I don't mind which one but a trip to Nepal would be fun!

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

Phil and I both grew up in the United Synagogue but were more progressive in belief. When I was pregnant with Rudy, we tried out a few shuls and chose Belsize. The perfect mix of a recognisable service, sitting together and a friendly welcome to newcomers. I've even come to love the organ, which did take some getting used to at the beginning.

What's your favourite festival?

I think it's Rosh Hashanah. My whole extended family get together on the first day and it's a chance to eat, chat and catch up on the year's events. But then there's also Simchat Torah – I love dancing with the Torah! Sorry, I couldn't decide between the two!

Where do you like to sit in shul?

Facing the bimah, on the right, about halfway back.

AJR Kristallnacht commemoration

Helen Grunberg reports on the event organised by the Association of Jewish Refugees

On Thursday 9 November 2023, the AJR hosted a Kristallnacht commemorative service attended by more than 200 people at the beautiful Central Synagogue in London, W1.

Rabbi Barry Lerer of the Central Synagogue introduced the proceedings, followed by the CEO of the AJR, Michael Newman, who thanked the ambassadors of various countries for attending. Six people lit candles of remembrance. Chief Rabbi Mirvis spoke to the congregation and the chazan of Central Synagogue, Stephen Leas, sang the Memorial Prayer for Victims of the Holocaust.

Then Albert Lester, a refugee, spoke vividly about his traumatic experiences around the time of Kristallnacht. He and his sister and mother escaped to the UK when he was eleven years old and he had his Bar Mitzvah at the Central Synagogue. He is now 96.

Following Psalms 21 and 23 and prayers by the Rabbi and Chazan, we heard from another Kristallnacht survivor. Thea Valman from Vienna spoke of her dreadful memories of what happened before she managed to reach Liverpool Street Station. Rabbi Lerer then read the Chief

Rabbi's special Prayer for the Situation in Israel, followed by Kaddish and Adon Olam.

Later on we were told that the King had been in attendance immediately prior to the service and had met every Kindertransport survivor who was present and spoken to each of them personally. A plaque was unveiled to mark the occasion. Afterwards, the AJR provided a sumptuous tea for everyone.



Vera Schaufeld lights an AJR memorial candle

RECENT EVENTS

BELSIZE SUPPER QUIZ

Ben Hurst reports on the return of one of the most popular synagogue social events.

It was eyes on the prize for members, family and friends on 19 November as Belsize hosted its first Supper Quiz of the decade. Participants from 11 tables battled it out, with the winners ultimately being decided by just two points.

As the teams and organisers made their way through a delicious meal, the picture round had already arrived. With a mixture of classics and more recent productions, teams had to name 48 films and TV shows from just one frame of the scenery, without any of the characters showing. The main event started with another picture round, this time needing teams to identify famous figures – obscured by photos of various members of the community, The Young Ones and Where's Frank? both top scoring on 8. The rest of the first half consisted of a food round (Cordwainers and Einstein both using their Joker to hit 16 points), a numbers round (The Young Ones once again top with 8), and a Kosher round (Mechutunim and, yet again, The Young Ones scoring 8).

Heading into half-time, reigning champions Cordwainers (the winners in many previous years) led the league table with 34 points, with Einstein (33) and The Young Ones (31) following closely behind.

The second half began with 'What's in a name?', with Legless using their Joker to hit 17 points. Up next was the music round, with Simon Cutner's favourites from across the decade. The Young Ones, belying their team name and the age of their members, moved into joint first place with a well-timed Joker, securing 16 points. Finishing out the night were rounds on culture (Legs Eleven top scoring on 16) and Sport, where The Young Ones and Cordwainers both ended on 8 points.



With an exciting night of quizzing drawing to a close, the only thing left to do was to reveal the results. In the end, two teams were neck and neck, but Cordwainers lost their crown to the night's surprise winners, The Young Ones (Josh Rossiter, Raphael Rossiter, Peter Strauss, Isaac Sanders, Noah Getz Brzezinski and Ben Hurst – with some occasional assistance from Sam Sanders).

A big thank you to Adam Hurst, Simon Cutner, Sophie Cutner, Karen Sanders and Sam Sanders for their hard work in putting together an enjoyable and enthralling evening.

CHANUKAH MARKET

This annual staple of the Belsize calendar took place on 3 December.

All the usual delicious food was available, the stalls were crammed with goodies for sale and there was excellent musical and magical entertainment.



The Belsize Klezmer Band in full swing



...and Cantor Heller in full swing too, supported by Joe Brookes



Rabbi Botnick mesmerised by Belsize's mentalist, Jeff Salmon

Fashion City at the Museum of London, Docklands

Alex Antscherl learns how Jewish Londoners contributed to global style in the 20th century

There is a fabulous exhibition at the Museum of London, Docklands, telling the story of the huge number of Jews involved in the clothing and fashion business in our city from the 1860s to the 1960s. The exhibition traces how this history encompasses individual workshops in Bethnal Green and high-street retail chains that were household names. Background audio tells family stories of immigration and employment. Some of this was familiar stuff, especially to those of us whose grandparents and great-grandparents had been part of the mass of Eastern European immigrants working in the East End in the late 19th or early 20th century. Nevertheless, I didn't

culture. This change of focus is cleverly demonstrated in the exhibition by a representation of the Central Line tube, taking visitors from the East End to the West End. In Carnaby Street in the 1960s, multiple stores were owned and run by Jewish designers, from Mr Fish (who invented the kipper tie) to Lord John to the inventively named I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet. They dressed film stars and music legends from Sean Connery to David Bowie. And on high streets across the country, Jewish-owned fashion retailers from Moss Bros to Cecil Gee, Wallis to Chelsea Girl, were thriving.

The exhibition includes many fabulous examples of their work, including a mock-up of a Carnaby Street store. There are also stunning examples of couture gowns and suits by Jewish designers, including David Sassoon, and a fascinating feature that includes a handwritten letter from the late Princess Diana noting her huge enthusiasm for his dress designs.

The exhibition is enriched not just by the beautiful designs on show, but by plenty of video and audio content from archive Pathé newsreels to news interviews.

The exhibition is on until April 2024 and I highly recommend it for anyone with an interest in fashion or in the social history of Jewish Londoners.



Schneiders garment factory, Stepney, c1917



Rahvis evening gown, 1952



know that E. Moses' Emporium in Aldgate was the largest clothing store in the country in the 1860s. Nor did I know about the tailors' strike of 1889, when the trade unions, many with Jewish leaders, brought the industry to a halt, with the outcome of reduced working hours, meal breaks to be taken away from workstations, and an end to the practice of taking additional work home at night.

With the later influx of German and Austrian refugees in the 1930s came new developments in the Jewish influence on London fashion. This was seen in couture, but more notably in popular

Happy memories

Isaac Sanders on his very positive experiences during a more stable period

In January 2022, I embarked on an extensive Masa gap year programme called Aardvark Israel. This aimed to provide young Jewish adults like me with a transformative experience to explore and connect to the Holy Land. Beyond deepening my understanding of my Jewish identity, this opportunity allowed me to intern at a start-up in Tel Aviv, learn conversational Hebrew and Arabic, explore the diverse state inside and out, and most importantly, become acquainted with the area as a 'local'. After spending five months in Israel, my perception of the country has been changed forever.

I wasn't the only one drawn to this exciting journey. A total of around 180 individuals from various corners of the globe also participated. What set this programme apart from my previous experiences in Israel – be it a one-week school trip or the classic three-week Israel tour aged 16 – was the level of independence it gave me.

I chose to spend my five months in Tel Aviv (there was also the option of Jerusalem). As expected, those first few days of getting to know my flatmates and familiarising myself with the surroundings were slightly daunting. However, that initial apprehension soon transformed into pure excitement. It became evident that each day held the promise of an adventure. Within just a month, I had become a regular at a shawarma restaurant, conversing exclusively in Hebrew with the owner. I organised a weekend trip to Eilat with friends I had made, went on camel rides in the Negev, explored Haifa on a day trip, and took a tour of the Jaffa district during our 'Tuesday Tiylim'. Additionally, I started my internship at EcoMotion, where I was tasked with setting up a B2B

site for their annual innovators' showcase conference in May.

Fast-forward to May 25th, the slightly emotional final day of the programme, I can truly say that I had had an experience like no other. In fact, I had such an amazing time that I cannot do it justice by writing down my thoughts in an article like this. But what I can do is recommend this to anyone with even an inkling of curiosity of what it would be like to venture on a similar journey. Whether you are an extrovert or introvert, someone with a strong sense of Judaism and Zionism or someone who has never even thought about those aspects of their identity, I can firmly say that you will have an unforgettable experience.

Isaac, centre, and friends, by the sea in Jaffa



If you have any questions at all, whether about my own experiences or the challenges of navigating a foreign land with a sense of independence, please feel free to get in touch with me, Isaac Sanders, at isaacsands06@gmail.com

Many thanks to the Frieda Graumann Trust, funded and administered by the Synagogue, for their financial contribution towards this trip.

LORD PICKLES ATTENDS BELSIZE KRISTALLNACHT SERVICE

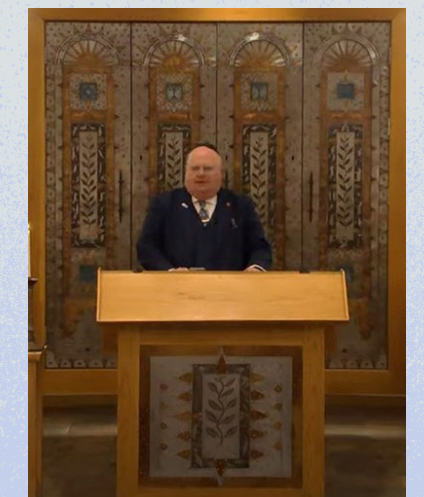
David Horwell

The Friday evening service on 10 November was our Synagogue's annual commemoration of Kristallnacht, this year made so relevant by the atrocities of 7 October.

We were pleased to have Lord Pickles, the United Kingdom Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, as our guest. In a measured and insightful speech, he singled out 9 November 1938 as the date of the first state-sponsored pogrom and drew clear parallels with the recent events in Israel.

Lord Pickles then spoke about the commitment in the recent King's Speech to building the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre next to the Houses of Parliament, to be a memorial to the murdered six million, to honour the many Jewish refugees who had sought sanctuary in the United Kingdom and to be the centre of the fight against antisemitism and genocide.

The Jewish community, he emphasised, is an integral part of the British identity and he expressed optimism that better times and peace – Shalom – will come.



NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS NW.3.

Dear Fellow Members

I see my plaice as uprising in every circomestances the spirits. Sehrfour I will not uncover what we in Abernein Mansions are sinking about the marshes threw London. Instead, I change the hole object und bring sum good news. Mrs Klopstick has withdrawn her abdication to stand as a Member of Parliament for Campden! Her tempts to start the Jewish Ladies Party has knot gone down so well in certain arias. She did ride to the Preacher of the House of Comments, Sir Linseed Oil, hoping he wood endorse her manny-festo, but he rode beck saying he hat to remain a dependent. The easeos of the party was on an auntie auntie seematic platform. Vile I applored her pro-ective etitude, I sink she is better rising this metter through her meny sports achievements.

Und on this node, I ken rewheel that she is all reddy plenning her next trip to the snow slops. In January she will again be taking part in the over seniors dawnhill shalom raze in Kitzbuhel. Hear she has to interveave in und out from a cereal of poles und from those from other countries.

Four aditorial raisons, I am having to ride this column before Chanukah, so I ken only report it in atwonce. Of cause, our celebration of the wictory of the McCabbies over the wastly larger Cirian army und more impotent, the wunder of the drip of oil keeping the light burning for ate days, is a perennial event hear with no wariations. Unfortunadely many of our inmates in Abernein Mansions are tune deaf, und even more are so short of herring they can't here that they are tune deaf. Still, we all join up to sing a hardy rendition from Mower Sewer every knight across this heppy festivule.

I regret to pronounce that Mrs K's tempt to make a menorah was unsucksessful. I don't know why she mate it with eleven branches for eleven kendalls, but the commune hear voted inamously knot to extent Chanukah a farther three days this year.

With the best of intentions
Fritz Klopstick

ASK FRITZ

I have bean asked if I can advice on how to come over a phoebia from spyders und other crawly creepies. Whether a vasp, oder a deady longlecks, like a pat, give it a name and your phoebia will instently varnish.

STEPHEN WIENER GIVEN THE 'PEOPLE'S CHOICE' AWARD AT JEWISH CARE'S ANNUAL VOLUNTEERS AWARDS

Stephen Wiener was presented with the 'People's Choice' Volunteer's Award by the Jewish Care CEO, Daniel Carmel-Brown at the annual Jewish Care Volunteer Awards celebration on 19 October.

Stephen has been volunteering for Jewish Care since retiring from his forty-year career at German multinational Robert Bosch, having been persuaded by his wife, Melanie, who has also volunteered for Jewish Care for many years. He volunteered first at the Leonard Sainer Dementia Day Centre in Edgware, entertaining the members with regular monthly sing-a-long sessions using his keyboard and voice and latterly, since COVID shut the Sainer Centre permanently, at Jewish Care's new Sandringham Campus in Stanmore. There he volunteers weekly as a tutor in the Explore! Computer and Technology Centre, advising members of the Day Centres, residents at the Care and Nursing-Homes and visitors on any difficulties with digital technology.

Stephen was nominated by a number of residents and members of the Day Centre for his caring attitude, technical knowledge and ability to teach people how to use equipment from mobile phones and laptops to smart doorbells. His patience and staying power in resolving difficulties for his 'clients' is very much appreciated.



Stephen Wiener receiving his award from Ivor Baddiel and Daniel Carmel-Brown

Stephen commented on his award to *Our Congregation*: 'It's lovely to be in a position to give something back to the community after 40 years of work, whilst feeling really useful and appreciated – that is my main 'remuneration'. I meet a lot of lovely people and hopefully leave them feeling more at home with new technology and with the knowledge that personal help is close at hand without any pressure. It also means I am able to keep up to date with new developments in technology myself. Our aim at Explore! Centres (currently in Stanmore and Golders Green Jewish Care centres but more coming soon) is not to 'do' the technology for the clients, but to teach them how to do it *themselves* – that's much more satisfying for them and for the staff and volunteers working at Explore!'

MARCH AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM

Alex Antscherl reports on a huge event for the UK Jewish community



In the largest event of its kind in a century, over 100,000 people marched peacefully through the streets of London on 26 November, organised by the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism. Such a number of people had not been gathered together in this cause since the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, when Jews and their allies, largely other working-class communities in the East End of London, refused to let fascist leader Oswald Mosley and his supporters pass.

The November march was notable for its quiet, law-abiding and unthreatening nature. There was a marvellous atmosphere of community cohesion, appreciated by the many Belsize members who took part. After filling Whitehall, the march ended at Parliament Square where there were stirring speeches from CAA Chair Gideon Falter, Robert Jenrick, immigration minister at that time, the Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis, security minister Tom Tugendhat, universities minister Robert Halfon, shadow cabinet member Peter Kyle and actors Tracy-Ann Oberman and Eddie Marsan.

THE SONGS OF SOLOMON

Salomone Rossi's 400th anniversary in the Square

Cantor Paul Heller on a remarkable concert at our Synagogue

On 11 November we felt transported to the court of Mantua in the 1600s, listening to the Vache Baroque quintet's beautiful singing, accompanied by a sixteenth century chitarrone, the astonishingly long-necked lute that you can see in our photo. In my opinion, our own sanctuary has acoustics for chamber music to rival those of any concert hall.

We heard some of the repertoire of 'The Songs of Solomon', the title amusingly given by the Jewish composer Salomone Rossi to his settings of Jewish liturgical music. In the early 1600s he was a highly respected composer, concertmaster and principal violinist in the court of Mantua, Italy. He worked alongside Monteverdi, at the end of the period of Renaissance music.

During my research on synagogue music and at the sixth Lewandowski Festival, I was introduced to the fact that Salomone Rossi is now being called the mentor of synagogue

choral music. At the concert, the director of Vache Baroque, Jonathan Darbourne, confirmed this, while explaining that Rossi's intention had been to recreate the music of the First Temple. Rossi was one of the earliest composers to introduce polyphonic (multi-voice) settings of Hebrew texts in synagogue music and his influence expanded the range of musical expression in Jewish worship. Choral compositions became an integral part of synagogue music and inspired composers such as Sulzer and Lewandowski.

Alongside selections of Rossi's choral and instrumental music, the programme was paired with settings of the same texts by other seventeenth century composers in their own vernaculars, including Heinrich Schütz, William Byrd, and Claudio Monteverdi.

It was a most enjoyable evening for the audience of over 100, which included many Belsize members.



The Vache Baroque singers accompanied by Jonatan Bougt on the chitarrone

SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm
Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Kikar Kids – Junior Shabbat Service

Saturday 6 January, 3 February, 2 March
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 Caroline on caroline@synagogue.org.uk
for more information

CHEDER AND BEIT MITZVAH

Sunday mornings 9.30am–12.00pm

Enquiries to Head: Caroline Loison
caroline@synagogue.org.uk

New Term Starts – Sunday 7 January
Half Term – Sunday 11 & 18 February

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.

COMMUNITY NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:
Joel Spungin with son Isaac
Frances & Gordon Rustin
Dina & Ilya Berdnikov with daughters
Katerina, Masha & Liza

BIRTH

Mazal tov to:
Sasha & Jeremy Maisel on the birth of
their daughter Aria

BNEI MITZVAH

Mazal tov to:
Ella & Daniel Hay on the Bar Mitzvah of
their son Jacob on Saturday 3 February
Sara & Darren Dein on the Bar Mitzvah of
their son Dylan on Saturday 24 February
Ellie Horwell Roche and Simon Roche on
the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Florence
on Saturday 9 March

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:
James Morris on 14 November
Stefanie Surkes on 22 November
Lys Kenley on 1 December

SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

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London NW3 4HX

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www.synagogue.org.uk

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

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

SYNAGOGUE LIBRARY

Open to members during
office hours

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video or telephone
appointment with Rabbi
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**SACRED
PATHS**
Exploring Hasidic
Mysticism
and Ethical
Wisdom

**Online course
starting 9 January**

Six Zoom sessions on
Tuesdays at 8.00pm

For login details contact:
cantor@synagogue.org.uk

This short course is designed
to introduce the rich world of
Hasidic thought, a mystical
and spiritual tradition within
Judaism