

# BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square, London NW3 4HX



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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<b>Chairman</b>	Jackie Alexander
<b>Hon. Secretary</b>	Annette Nathan
<b>Hon. Treasurer</b>	Jimmy Strauss
<b>Rabbi Cantor</b>	Rabbi Gabriel Botnick Cantor Paul Heller
<b>Director of Administration</b>	Lee Taylor
<b>Office Hours</b>	Mon-Thur 9.00am to 5.30pm Friday 9.00am to 2.00pm
<b>Regular Services</b>	Friday Evening 6.45pm Saturday Morning 10.00am

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<p><b>What type of community is Belsize Square Synagogue</b></p>	<p>The Synagogue occupies a distinct and significant position in Anglo-Jewry. While Belsize Square Synagogue is a traditional congregation, we encourage &amp; support a pluralistic approach to Jewish practice and ideology.</p>
<p><b>What form do Services take. For example, can my whole family sit together?</b></p>	<p>Services and Torah readings follow a traditional format. Men and women sit together, there are three different choirs (professional, community, and youth) and an organ is played during services. Prayers are led by our professional cantor, the rabbi, or members of the congregation.</p> <p>The service is almost entirely in Hebrew, with sermon and explanations from the Rabbi in English. Men wear kippot (head coverings) and tallitot (prayer shawls), and women may do so if they wish.</p> <p>We read the Torah in accordance with the triennial reading, i.e. the Torah is read over the course of three years, as utilised in many progressive congregations around the world.</p> <p>Services are usually of shorter duration than in Orthodox synagogues.</p>
<p><b>Do women have an active role in Synagogue life?</b></p>	<p>Women are members of our Board and Executive and take leading roles in our communal organisation, having equal status with men.</p> <p>Women are able to participate fully in our services including being called to the Torah (aliyot), leyning (Torah reading) and leading prayers.</p> <p>Shabbat candle lighting is a regular feature of participation at the commencement of the Friday Evening Service.</p> <p>Girls are encouraged to celebrate Bat Mitzvah on the same basis as Bar Mitzvah for boys.</p>
<p><b>Is the Synagogue inclusive?</b></p>	<p>Belsize Square strives to be an inclusive congregation that meets the needs of all members including LGBT+ individuals, people living with disabilities and Jews from diverse ethnic backgrounds.</p>
<p><b>Are Services held at regular times?</b></p>	<p>Shabbat Eve Services: 6.45pm to 7.45pm</p> <p>Shabbat Morning Services: 10.00am to 12.00pm, followed by Kiddush</p>
	<p>Festival Services also commence at the above times, with the exception of the High Holyday Services and Family Services which may vary. Two days are observed for all Festivals.</p>

<p><b>Are Family events or special Services held?</b></p>	<p>Services and special prayers for Marriages, Baby Blessings, Wedding Anniversaries, Yahrzeits and other family occasions are arranged on request. A communal Passover Seder is held in our hall.</p> <p>Special Services include:  <b>Communal Services:</b> Selichot  <b>Memorial Services:</b> Kristallnacht, Tisha B'Av, Holocaust Memorial Day  <b>Family Services:</b> Simchat Torah, Chanukah, Purim</p>
<p><b>Can adults join a choir</b></p>	<p>We have established a "Community Choir" in addition to our professional adult choir and any member may participate. The choir is frequently involved in Services and occasional social performances.</p>
<p><b>Is there community involvement</b></p>	<p>We encourage the use of our premises by other Jewish and local organisations for our mutual benefit and place high priority on good relationships within the Anglo-Jewish and local non-Jewish community.</p> <p>We are represented on the Board of Deputies of British Jews and are affiliated to the European Board of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.</p> <p>Belsize Square is proud of its ties with the Israeli Embassy and has deep connections with Israel.</p>
<p><b>Are there religion classes for children</b></p>	<p>Religion classes for children of school age and pre-school are held every Sunday morning from 9.45am to 12.00pm. There is a small annual charge for books and administration.</p> <p>Children have the opportunity to join the Youth Choir, which regularly takes part in Bar and Bat Mitzvah Synagogue Services and performs at outside functions.</p>
<p><b>Are there facilities for very young children at the Synagogue?</b></p>	<p>Special Services for children are held on the first Shabbat of each month.</p> <p>'Kikar Kids' (square in Hebrew) commences at 11.00am with two services. One for 0 – 5 years olds and one for 6 – 11 year olds. They are followed by a "mini-Kiddush" and occasionally a pot-luck lunch. The children sing prayers, songs and have a chance to become familiar with the Torah and rituals.</p>

	A registered Nursery School (Keren's Gan) for 2½ – 5 year olds is available to members and non-members and is owned and operated independently of BSS but meets daily on our premises.
<b>What are the arrangements for Bnei Mitzvah?</b>	<p>Bnei Mitzvah can be arranged for boys and girls from 13 years of age onwards, after a period of preparation which takes place during our Shabbat Morning Service. Tuition is given and classes are held weekly during term time.</p> <p>On the anniversary of Bnei Mitzvah, the boy or girl is invited to take part in a Shabbat Service.</p>
<b>What affiliations does the Synagogue have?</b>	Whilst we have an "independent" status, we are members of the European section of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. We avail ourselves of the Masorti European Bet Din.
<b>Are there opportunities for young people to participate?</b>	On High Holydays, separate Children's Services are held in which they participate and the Adult Mincha Service on Yom Kippur is conducted entirely by younger members together with the Youth Choir. Young people are encouraged to join the Youth Choir and many go on to learn how to lead Prayers and Leyn and/or chant Haftarah.
<b>Can children join youth clubs or other activities?</b>	<p>Clubs are available for various age groups and meet regularly on the Synagogue premises under the guidance of trained youth leaders.</p> <p>Supervised club weekends away are held for all age groups at regular intervals, as well as holiday and summer school activities in the Synagogue.</p>
<b>What social life is there?</b>	Regular communal events are held such as dinners, concerts, educational classes and other ad hoc events, allowing members to meet one another.
<b>Is there adult education</b>	<p>Our Sunday morning discussion group is one of the longest-running and most popular adult education activities.</p> <p>The Rabbi and Cantor hold monthly lunch and learn sessions after services.</p>
<b>What provision is there for social welfare and care of the needy?</b>	<p>A <b>Community Care Co-ordinator</b> is available whenever regular attention is required.</p> <p>Special arrangements are made for those with financial hardship and a flexible attitude is taken towards subscriptions for deserving cases.</p>

	<p><b>Belsize Square Befrienders</b> is a group of dedicated members providing help for members in need.</p> <p>A <b>Bereavement Counsellor</b> is also available for immediate or long term assistance.</p> <p>The Synagogue subscription includes a payment for ground fees to a Burial and Cremation Scheme through which arrangements for burial at Edgwarebury Cemetery or Cremation at Golders Green Crematorium are possible. Funeral charges are NOT covered. Special arrangements, including cremation, can be discussed and advice given.</p>
<b>Is there a Burial Society?</b>	We have a Chevra Kaddisha, (group of volunteers) that tends to all of the needs of our members' family's needs at time of death.
<b>How is security arranged while the premises are in use?</b>	<p>A Security Committee arranges for cover to be available at many internal functions. Volunteers, both men and women below the age of 65 years, are asked to undertake security duty on a rota basis. Members, who have undertaken the Security Training Programme, act as supervisors. The Religion School arranges its own security from amongst the parents, also on a rota basis.</p> <p>Professional guards are also present at all Services and events to support our volunteers.</p>
<b>Are the premises open for hire?</b>	<p>Our Hall is for hire and can accommodate 300 seated for lectures or 150 for dinner. Our kitchen is kosher, dairy only.</p> <p>The Synagogue seats 600 and accommodates all services including on High Holydays. Purpose-built classrooms are used for the Religion School and all meetings and functions can be held on Synagogue premises.</p>
<b>What are the types of membership and where can I obtain subscription rates?</b>	<p>Membership is available to all people of the Jewish faith over the age of 18 years. All have equal rights. A family subscription includes children under the age of 18. Special rates are available for students.</p> <p>Subscription rates are reviewed annually. They can be obtained from the Synagogue Office.</p>
<b>Where can I obtain more information and to whom can I address questions?</b>	<p>Our Synagogue staff will be able to answer most of your questions or refer you to the most appropriate Official or Minister.</p> <p>Telephone: 020 7794 3949 E-mail: office@synagogue.org.uk</p>