

# OUR

## CONGREGATION

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News and views from  
**Belsize Square Synagogue**

### THE HIGH HOLYDAYS

# The reason and way to connect

**Rabbi Gabriel Botnick** encourages us to take a more relaxed approach to the High Holyday services

Ever since I was a young child, I have loved going to synagogue on the High Holydays. Not so much for the religious or spiritual experience – I only learned to appreciate this aspect of the holydays well into adulthood. I also didn't love my parents forcing me into an itchy woollen suit or constraining necktie, but I still loved going to shul on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I loved sitting with my family in the balcony, where I had a perfect view not only of the rabbi and cantor, but the choir and organist as well. Best of all, I had a perfect vantage to see which of my friends were sitting where, whose hat and jewellery was the most ostentatious, and who dozed off during the rabbi's sermon – all sights that brought me much joy.

But despite these decidedly non-religious aspects of attending High Holyday services, my favourite memories are of standing between my parents, singing beautiful and familiar melodies in an unfamiliar tongue, and just feeling like I was connected to something much bigger than myself – to the hundreds of other Jews in the synagogue, the millions of other Jews around the world, and the myriad generations that came before me who all enjoyed the same experiences.

In short, there are many reasons to come to synagogue on the High Holydays. Some people come for the music while others come for the sermon. Some people come to connect with their friends while others come to disconnect from the demands of life. There's no one reason to come to shul on the holydays and no reason is better – or more legitimate – than another.

In Judaism, we often speak about the three kinds of relationships we enjoy – with others, with God, and with ourselves. The only reason for coming to synagogue that matters is the one that helps you connect on a deeper level with any or all three of these relationships. But just coming to synagogue isn't always enough to effectively achieve the connection you seek. You may very well arrive at shul with the best of intentions, but end up feeling lost in the liturgy, turned off by the language,

or befuddled by the rituals. But this does not need to be the case.

If you find yourself in services feeling more distant from God, others, or yourself compared to before you walked through the doors, then try mixing things up. Don't worry about doing the holydays the 'right way'. Don't worry if you're on the wrong page or if you fail to bow at the proper time. Those things don't matter – they're only there to help you in your quest to connect. Instead of giving in to feelings of foolishness or inadequacy, try using those moments to empower yourself by finding your own way to connect. Flip through the pages of the machzor, find a passage that resonates with you, and take some time to meditate on ways to embody the themes of that text. Close your eyes and allow yourself to get swept away by the singing of the cantor and choir. You could even come prepared by bringing along a beloved book that might help you achieve clarity of thought.

There's no one right way to 'do' High Holyday services, just as there's no one right reason to show up in the first place. My only wish for you is that, by joining us at Belsize for the High Holydays this year, you'll find your own, meaningful way to deepen your connection with the relationships that matter most.

*Shanah Tovah!*

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# Rabbi Emeritus Rodney Mariner

Paul Burger

How does one begin to summarise, in just a few paragraphs, the life and impact of a Rabbi, spiritual leader, teacher, guide and friend? Rabbi Emeritus Rodney J. Mariner z"l was the much-loved and longest serving spiritual leader of Belsize Square Synagogue. Having served previously at Alyth Gardens and Edgware and District Reform Synagogues, Rabbi Mariner, known to all of us as Rodney, was appointed as Belsize Square's third Rabbi in 1982 and served until his retirement in 2011. One of the very many remarkable things about him was how this unassuming Aussie, who ended up at Leo Baeck College after a year's study in Israel, took on the role and came to personify what was then the very quirky German-Jewish refugee identity of BSS. His respect for the history of our Synagogue as a remnant of the Holocaust, his dedication to the German *Liberale Einheitsgebetbuch* (Unity Prayer Book) as a guide and his deep commitment to preserving the special musical scores that were heroically brought from Berlin to Belsize Park, could easily have one believe he was of German-Jewish origin himself.

For so many of us, Rodney was a teacher, a confidant, an eloquent speaker, a storyteller, someone with whom we shared our highest and lowest moments, but above all, a mensch. My family joined Belsize in 1995 when we were seeking a friendly community where our kids would be Bar and Bat Mitzvah. Rodney quickly sought out our son Ben and me at the end of the very first service we attended while looking around at various shuls and enquired as to what had brought us there. His warmth, humour, charm and informality were immediately evident, and our shul-shopping quickly came to its end.

Years later, when I was BSS Chairman, Rodney and I

had numerous major issues to tackle together, including the refurbishment of the synagogue to allow us to hold High Holyday services on site, wrestling with the egalitarian question, completing the purchase of new cemetery lands, supporting the nursery programme, and more. None of them were easy, and deep thoughtful discussions ensued about each. While we were not always in full agreement, I recall that after long consideration Rodney found the strength to tell me how deeply he regretted the difficult time he had given me. It was but one sign of the giant soul and capacity for self-reflection residing within the tall, elegant frame of a deeply spiritual, intellectual, warm human being – a man who always knew how to find precisely the right word, exactly when it was called for. I used to tell Rodney he was our 'big-game' player – always at his best when the occasion was most challenging.

Rodney, together with his beloved Sue, was involved in so very much of what Belsize has become over the years. He, and they, sat on countless shul committees – possibly every shul committee, with the exception of finance. He was interested in absolutely every aspect of communal life. We often spoke about the independence of BSS and the benefits and shortcomings of not being associated with other synagogues. We both worried about programming for our youth and not being part of a wider community to strengthen our kids' Jewish experience. We discussed possible partnership with Masorti's Noam youth movement and held inconclusive discussions, which only came to fruition many years after we had both moved on from our roles. He was deeply interested in our cheder programme and the youth choir – even if he was known to refer to some of our younger members as 'ankle-biters'.



Rabbi Mariner took great pride in the growth not only of our community but of our cheder, which more than quadrupled in size during his tenure. He was invested in the expansion of the community and in broadening our appeal to younger members, as he had inherited an ageing community, many over the age of 65. I've been told by both Rodney and many of his students that his evening classes in Judaism, hosted at his and Sue's home around coffee and biscuits, were an exceptional experience of learning, questioning, and bonding – and strong friendships were retained with many of those he guided through those important moments. He was extremely dedicated to the preparation of Belsize Square's set of siddurim and machzorim, including editing and formatting them, with the help of Sue at his side – something I know brought him joy. The care involved, with his dedication to ensuring the English pages mirrored the Hebrew pages precisely and that the font should be consistent and clearly legible, are only a few signs of his painstaking attention to detail. And beyond Belsize, Rodney took immense pride in serving for more than two decades

as the Convenor of the Reform Beit Din, a role for which it was said he was deemed the only appropriate candidate.

But it was Rodney – the complex yet straightforward, frank, honest, and forthright man, with the smile that reached as high as his eyes, and the distinctive voice that always stood out whether in a service or a meeting – whom I cherished as a friend more than anything. As I'm sure so many who came into contact with him would agree, he taught me so much. He is the only Rabbi who reassured me that it's alright to question belief in G-d, even as he himself very much appreciated the idea of G-d. I first had that conversation with him decades ago and yet I still marvel at his level of honesty. We often spoke of the community and our history and I was surprised when he agreed with me that what matters most to our members is the attachment to cultural Judaism. Of course he agreed: one of his early jobs as a young teenager was selling popcorn at a Melbourne cinema! His knowledge of film was astounding, as was his knowledge of music. I knew he loved opera, but I was rendered speechless when, upon learning of my years working closely with Leonard Cohen, he began to recite lyrics and speak with complete fluency about Leonard's life and career.

## MOVING TRIBUTES TO RABBI MARINER

Rabbi Mariner's funeral on 18 August and the Shiva prayers were marked by extraordinarily moving accounts of his life and work by his wife Sue, presented with astonishing composure. The Shiva prayers on 19 August can be viewed on BelsizeLIVE.

The funeral itself was conducted by Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue and Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism. He was a close friend of Rabbi Mariner and has a deep connection to our Synagogue as his grandfather was our founding Rabbi, Dr Georg Salzberger. His address drew our attention to Rabbi Mariner's challenging upbringing and his determination to follow what he

Rodney was a man capable of questioning anything and everything. Yet more importantly, I found him to be a man who was prepared to change his thinking or amend his point of view after reflection. As his sermons so clearly indicated, he was always curious and thoughtful, yet mostly he was concerned about how we as a community could best serve our membership. He cared deeply for the older members; he knew intimately the personal history of hundreds of members of all ages; he showed great interest in what we could provide for our children and youth; and he was always eager to ensure that we preserve the traditions of our founders while moving forward with the times.

We will forever be indebted to Rodney for the immense impact he had on our community. He spoke of how his entire life revolved around our community and how his many friends were almost exclusively drawn from Belsize Square. I know that my wife Ossi and I, like so many, already miss Rodney, but will always remember his wisdom, honesty and warmth. We offer our condolences to Rodney's children Elyce and Simon from his first marriage to Cheryl, and we grieve for your loss, Sue – even as we grieve for our own. יהי זכרו ברוך

described as 'a thread of Judaism that was very frail and slender at some points in his life'.

Sue Mariner had said that the Synagogue had become his family and the whole of his world. Rabbi Wittenberg said, 'I think that many of us rabbis in this room, we get that.' He noted that Rabbi Mariner had been able to celebrate his second Bar Mitzvah in June this year, and that the parsha was Bechukotai: If you walk in My ways – 'and Rodney absolutely did'. And he had died on erev Shabbat Nachamu – the Shabbat of Consolation. 'He comforted the congregation – and so he found love in the bond of life.'

## LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY FROM SUE MARINER

Dear Friends,

I wish to thank each and everyone of you for your loving messages following Rodney's passing.

I would normally find a way of thanking you individually but there are so many letters, messages and emails, the task is just too overwhelming for me to undertake.

I was moved by the tributes, the reminiscences and the fond memories you have of Rodney, some of them really made me laugh. One correspondent remarked, 'I always wondered how Rabbi Mariner remained on the Bima on Yom Kippur from Shacharit until the final blowing of the Shofar – not even a comfort break, how did he manage that?' Another reminded me of a joke Rodney told, the writer reckons 43 years ago, about a three-legged chicken and there were many references to the Chelm stories which he loved so much.

But more movingly, you wrote of so many instances of a comforting presence following a medical diagnosis or a bereavement; he made himself accessible whenever he was needed.

And the final category of messages was 'Rabbi Mariner Bar (or Bat) Mitzvahed me, married us, attended the Brit of our son, blessed our daughter in shul, conducted the B'nei Mitzvah of our children, buried my parents, conducted the Chuppah for our children...'

I am conscious that it is not only me who has lost a very special person and that the wider community are grieving too. Rodney would not want people to be sad but he would be chuffed to be remembered so fondly.

I am grateful for all the beautiful words, the warm and loving sentiments and that so many hold him in their hearts.

Sue

## SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS

### Carol Cohen

Senior independent assessor for the College of Policing, Belsize Square's Head of Security and member of the Synagogue's Executive



#### What's your favourite thing about your work?

When I stepped down as Director of Security for the Community Security Trust 9 years ago, I knew I wanted to do something different. Almost immediately I was recruited by the College of Policing

as a Senior Assessor. I assist with many aspects of leadership development within policing nationally, as an independent community member who understands the complex world of policing and can give unbiased views. This is particularly important with the current challenges facing policing. I really like the diversity of my colleagues and the candidates, the professional environment I work in, visiting Constabularies and training centres around the country, and especially helping officers develop into future leaders, which policing today needs so badly.

#### What is the hardest part of your job?

In comparison to being in charge of Jewish Community Security, I have to admit I struggle to think about the hardest part of my current work! But if pushed I would say the most challenging thing for me is the intense concentration I need when I am assessing a senior

candidate. During an exercise I must not get distracted for up to 4 hours, so I have to be extremely disciplined to concentrate and I don't find that easy!

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

I'm very fortunate because I enjoy the job I do, but if I could do any job I'd quite like to be a Judge at Crufts!

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

My grandparents were founding members, then my parents were members and my brother and I grew up in the BSS community. Four other girls and I were the first ones to be Bat Mitzvah, many years ago now. I love this community: we are unique in comparison to other synagogues. I'm so pleased to have returned to my spiritual home after many years.

#### What's your favourite festival?

Now that I'm retired from the CST I can look at festivals as a time to enjoy. For 26 years the Chagim were a demanding and intense work period for me, mostly running security operations and working very long hours under considerable pressure. Now I can say that Rosh Hashanah is my favourite festival. I love the services in shul, the meals with family and friends and the optimism of a new year.

#### Where do you like to sit in shul?

Middle to left, habit more than choice. That's where my mum would always sit, so I'm carrying on the tradition.



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

At the end of June, one of our congregants was concerned about an event that was being put on at the Southbank Centre to discuss a 'free Palestine' and did not know whom he should approach to make a complaint. This is exactly the sort of matter that your deputies can assist with. As there was a plenary meeting the following Sunday, we were able to pose a question about it to the Executive (this can be viewed on YouTube).

The Executive was unaware of the event and promised to look into it and take appropriate action. We also spoke privately to Andrew Gilbert, chair of the Board's Security, Resilience and Cohesion Division, and showed him details of the South Bank Centre programme for 28 July: 'Contextualising Space for Liberation – a discussion on the practical, ethical and spatial challenges of envisioning a free Palestine'. Andrew told us that we could not object to cultural events, but that he could raise the issue, to make sure that the event contained no antisemitic content. We have advocated for the Board to have a high-level meeting with the Arts Council to discuss their use of public funding for similar events. We will report further on this in the next issue of *Our Congregation*.

Please continue to raise issues of concern so that we can ensure that action is taken by the Board.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

# BSS Cheder at The Maccabi GB Community Fun Run 2024

**Caroline Loison, Head of Cheder and Youth, reports on enthusiastic participation in this event**

Participating in a Fun Run isn't just about running; it's about community, joy and personal achievement. On Sunday 23 June, Belsize Square Synagogue's Cheder took part in the Maccabi GB Community Fun Run 2024 and had an amazing time, while raising funds for BSS to mark the Shul's 85th birthday.

The weather was absolutely perfect – blue skies with the sun shining high above the StoneX Stadium in Mill Hill. Surrounded by thousands of our fellow Jews representing a huge variety of Jewish organisations including Yad Vashem, Jewish Blind & Disabled and Camp Simcha, 40 of our Cheder pupils and their family members took part in this special event.

As we gathered under our fabulous new BSS banner, the excitement began to build. A short walk down the charities tunnel, picking up keyrings, hoodies, pens and lots of other freebie merchandise along the way, took participants to the various starting points for the walks and runs.

Most of our participants had registered for the 5km walk but some braver participants had chosen to register for the 5km or 10km runs. As the start signal sounded, walkers and runners set off at their own pace, soaking up the atmosphere, enjoying conversations with fellow participants and appreciating the beautiful scenic route (or just the athletic track and spectator stands in some cases!).

Along the way, there were cheerful volunteers offering water as the temperature rose to 26°C, and spectators dotted along the courses offered encouragement. Every participant received a beautiful medal and their sense of accomplishment was palpable, as was the collective joy at having participated in such a wonderful community event.

Huge thanks to all of our participants – and Cheder would like to wish BSS a very happy 85th birthday!

Participants enjoying the sunshine



## COMMUNITY NEWS

### NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:  
Leslie Fisher | Dylan Krikler | Oliver Needleman  
Max Needleman | Annett & James Davidson with children Ilana & Ellie | Jocelyn Davidson | Katya & Matthew Krik with daughter Rachel | Donna & Justin Michaelson with sons Harrison, Oliver & Spencer

### BIRTHS

Mazal tov to:  
Alexa and Robert Jakobi on the birth of their son Louis Rolf  
Ben and Farnaz Ari on the birth of their son Shia Kareem

### BNEI MITZVAH

Mazal tov to:  
Elly Livingstone & Isabelle Picheloup on  
Sacha & Leah's Bnei Mitzvah on 7 September

### DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:  
Inge Nathan who died on 30 June  
Henry Carlton who died on 10 July  
Alan Farkas who died on 11 July  
Valerie Gewirtz who died on 23 July  
Clarice Been who died on 2 August  
David Myers who died on 2 August  
Rabbi Emeritus Rodney Mariner who died on 16 August

**Ben Uri**  
Research Unit

Ben Uri proudly represents the community within Britain's mainstream museum sector.

**Benuri.org** and **Buru.org.uk** are now Europe's leading research portals on the Jewish, Refugee and wide Immigrant contribution to British visual culture since 1900.

**Benuri.org & Buru.org.uk** open 24/7 to suit you.  
Gallery exhibitions open every Wednesday to Friday at Boundary Road, London NW8.

**LEARNING**

# How to lead a purposeful life: Taking inspiration from Jewish texts and beyond

Emily Kasriel introduces an upcoming event on 24 September where she will be in conversation with Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg.

How to lead a more purposeful life is a question that many of us ponder, but few probe and grapple with quite like Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg. It's a subject that's at the heart of his book *Listening for God in Torah and Creation: A Weekly Encounter with Conscience and Soul*. Rabbi Wittenberg writes of God's question to Adam: 'Ayekhah? Where are you?' (Gen3:9).

'Most of us spend much of our lives hiding in the thickets of our habits and routines, evading the 'Where are you?' which, whether or not we believe it comes from God, life aims ever more unerringly at us as we grow older. We try not to hear the question, and struggle to know how to answer ... Sooner or later the question strikes home: Where are you in your life?'



If you come to shul on the evening of 24 September, expect a host of unexpected insights and erudite thinking on

this topic from Rabbi Wittenberg. The Rabbi will draw on his vast knowledge of Torah and Talmudic sources, philosophy and English literature to provide illuminating and inspiring ideas on how to find and live a more purposeful life.

For example, he reflects on the biblical plague of darkness that was so severe that 'lo kamu ish mitachtav – no one could rise up from their low place'. He examines this low place as a metaphorical and psychological darkness. I was moved by this passage:

'The art, though, as we may well know from being low ourselves, is not to imagine that one is bringing in the sunshine, but rather to step down towards the darkness and encourage our companions to rediscover their own light ... We never fully fathom the inner reality of other people's lives, or even the depths of our own. Yet we can and must endeavour to recognise each other even in the darkness, acknowledging the pain its long hours bring.'

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg is no stranger to Belsize Square. As many people know, his grandfather, Dr Georg Salzberger, was the first Rabbi at our Synagogue. Rabbi Wittenberg recalls that, as a teenager, he didn't want to squander the opportunity to ask his rabbinical grandfather questions, grappling with moral issues even at that age, such as, 'How come Jacob is supposed to be such a good person when he cheated his brother so shamelessly?'

Rabbi Wittenberg leads the New North London Synagogue. Look out for further details of the event in News from the Square emails.

## THE BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE PRAYER BOOKS

Edited and translated by Rabbi Rodney J Mariner

Belsize Square Synagogue's prayer books for Shabbat and the Festivals are designed to help worshippers to appreciate all aspects of its services. In addition to the order of prayers and the relevant Scripture readings for the Festivals, each volume features a selection of passages for study and contemplation.

The books are now a fitting memorial to the dedicated work of their editor, our late Emeritus Rabbi.



**PART I SHABBAT EVENING AND MORNING (2012)**  
£30.00 plus £2.50 P&P

**PART II FESTIVALS EVENING AND MORNING (2014)**  
£40.00 plus £4.50 P&P

**PART III NEW YEAR EVENING AND MORNING (2012)**  
£30.00 plus £2.50 P&P

**PART IV DAY OF ATONEMENT (2012)**  
£40.00 plus £4.50 P&P

The Prayer Books can be collected from the Synagogue Office, but will not be available for collection at the High Holyday services.

**SPECIAL OFFER**  
UNTIL 15 SEPTEMBER 2024  
**FULL SET OF FOUR BOOKS @ 25% OFF - ONLY £97.50!**

**YEMIN ORDE**

# Resilience in a year of crisis

Susan Weijel and Racheli Yaso update us on the work of Yemin Orde Youth Village and of the wonderfully insightful way in which they help young people who have been traumatised by displacement.

Israel has been at war for over nine months. Many members of the Yemin Orde community – graduates, staff members, their husbands and wives, and brothers and sisters of youth in the Village, have been called to the reserves. We worked hard to maintain a consistent schedule of school and extracurricular activities throughout the year and all the staff members in the Village took on different, sometimes multiple, roles, doing their best to fill in for those who were called up or were otherwise unavailable. Despite the seemingly endless challenges since

community. Therapy is focused both on understanding and avoiding triggers that initiate anxiety, such as social media, as well as learning how to find calmness when anxious or stressful feelings arise, and building long-term emotional resilience.

**ECO-FARM**

The Eco-Farm continues to be a gathering place for the youth, a chance to connect to the land, work in the fields and greenhouses and take the goats out to pasture. Our youth continue to market the produce to families in the area and to sell spice plants from our greenhouses



October 7, thanks to the dedication and creativity of our incredible team we have continued our mission to provide a safe haven for at-risk and immigrant youth, and life in the Village has continued.

**THERAPEUTIC CARE**

Currently, close to 50% of the youth in the village are from the Former Soviet Union. Most of them came to Yemin Orde to escape the war in Ukraine and they are now living in a country at war for the second time in their short lives. To provide them with an important sense of security, we have brought in additional therapists and added programmes to strengthen their sense of

to decorate tables at events. The importance of the Eco-Farm has been especially evident this year as we have harnessed the therapeutic potential of the setting to process the events of October 7 with workshops for both staff and youth.

**TIKKUN OLAM ACTIVITIES**

During this difficult, dark period, the youth of Yemin Orde took it upon themselves to bring light to people and communities around

Israel. In a play on words, we called this project Yemin Or ('Or' means light in Hebrew). The entire Village dedicated a day to Tikkun Olam – 'Repairing the World' – and the youth were placed in different locations around the country to volunteer at different projects: organizing food packages for families in need, visiting children in Carmel Hospital and more. In addition to this, the Village places great emphasis on Tikkun Olam showing the youth that their contribution to society is necessary and meaningful, especially since October 7. Therefore, throughout the year, our youth visited wounded soldiers at Tel HaShomer Hospital, helped farmers who were left short-staffed due to the war and assisted in other ongoing projects in the community.

**GRADUATE SUPPORT**

Our graduate liaisons are a critical link between graduates and the village. When the war started, we contacted all our 700 graduates serving in the IDF, both those called to the reserves as well as more recent graduates in compulsory service, to offer support and to ask if there was anything they needed. Despite the many challenges this year has presented since October 7, over 50% of the 2024 graduating class plans to participate in Mechina gap-year leadership programs next year. The graduating class is highly motivated to serve the country, and we encourage them to take a year to invest in themselves and grow as future leaders.

It is with a spirit of determination and resilience that we continue to serve our country and community with the hope that we remain a light in these dark times. The contribution from Belsize Square Synagogue is so valuable to help us continue to ensure the safety, resilience and growth of the youth at our Village, despite the instability in the world.

**For more information on our charities, please visit their websites:**  
**Beit Uri** [www.bet-uri.org.il](http://www.bet-uri.org.il)  
**ASSAF** [www.assaf.org.il/en](http://www.assaf.org.il/en)  
**Yemin Orde** [www.impact-israel.org/about-us/yemin-orde-youth-village](http://www.impact-israel.org/about-us/yemin-orde-youth-village)

**WISE WORDS**

**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE THIRD AGE**

**Eve Hersov**, Community Care Co-ordinator, shares some sage advice from our older members

At a lunch earlier this summer organised by the Keshet committee for senior members of Belsize Square, I recollected to the guests how one of our oldest members told me nine years ago to 'make younger friends', because this member found that she was outliving her peers. It has been a piece of wisdom that

I've adopted personally and often repeated to others. I wanted to hear from the assembled members what other wisdom they had to share on life in what we sometimes call 'the third age'. Put together, it makes an excellent list of new 'commandments'.

- 1 Seek younger professional advisors.
- 2 Look after your appearance.
- 3 Do voluntary work. You meet new people while doing something that has purpose.
- 4 Keep busy and do what interests you.
- 5 Never put off till tomorrow what you want to do today.
- 6 Keep your sense of humour.
- 7 Keep your brain going. The u3a (University of the Third Age) has classes and lectures and trips that are stimulating for your mind and for your social life.
- 8 Don't regret what you can't do. Rejoice in what you can do.
- 9 We are role models for our peers and for other generations so think about what you want to convey by your behaviour and decisions.
- 10 Old age is not for cissies!

I took the opportunity to share my view that as we age we need to conserve our energy and use it to sustain ourselves as best as we can. It can be helpful to pause and reflect on choosing carefully what works best for us, and the example it sets to others. I encouraged everyone at the lunch to bear in mind that ageing well requires us to be flexible and adaptable, as inevitably we may suddenly have to face various challenges that are unexpected, new and uncertain. We need to be able to accept help and support, and appreciate that in doing so we are not relinquishing independence but demonstrating strength without any loss of dignity.

One of our widowed members who came to the lunch summarised her thoughts and gratitude for the meal afterwards, 'It was good to be with other people and to eat with other people; to have someone to talk to and to be served beautifully prepared food. It was lovely to be valued and to belong.'

The delicious lunch was prepared by Claire Walford and served by members of the Keshet committee, organised by Marion Nathan.

**NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS NW.3.**

Dear Fellow Members

This year all the Hi Holidays, the days off Ore, are constrained in October, starting with Roshoshono und completing with Simchas Torah. A very busy month for the Rabbi, Cantor, quire und parking warders in Belsize Square. Especially for Yom Kipper, I like to ware my white couple. Only today I have found out that it was put in wash together with Mrs Klopstick's red jogging pants. The couple is now brite pink und quite unaprotionate for synagogue. So, to make amens my wive offered to replace it by cutting off won of the cubs of her almost white braziers. Sankfully, I stopped her just in time, as in any case it wood have been far two large.

Again this year the big screen will be instilled in our communal lunge for those who are too inform to travel to synagogue, but want to watch all the servicing on Belsize Alive. Of cause we are all hoping that piece will soon rain in Israel und their will be an end to knife grime, femine, droubt, vile fires, melting ice gaps und especially now with all this marskt rotters burning hotels und throwing brigs at the police. The list goes on at-info-night-time. I don't even menschen perlution und wasser kwality. But still we hear in the Uokay should be sankful four all the many small mercenaries. Across much of the Glope things are infanantly verse.

Although I don't like to rewheel in this kolumn my political leapings, I have to admit the prospect of corporation from our Prime Minister, Sir Keith Starmer with hopefully the knew US presitent, Camilla Harris fills me with wormth. She with a Jewish husband und he with Jewish wive. To alleviate herself from the hole term-oil of glowball cornflics, Mrs K has throne herself onto her excorsize bike vile watching the Olympic Games. I lost interest when it was no longer just four ameaters. Who nose what undelectable drucks are now being in jested by those who prefor to sheet?

With the best of intentions  
Fritz Klopstick

**ASK FRITZ**

I have bean unindated by so many co-respondents expressing their fierce over the future. Sum are worried to go outside, in case anycartists shout und harris them in the street. In this reschpekt I take a leave out of Mrs Klopstick's book. She leds all bad sings go over her hat und then she rices above them.

**MAZAL TOV TO OUR CALLOT**



At Simchat Torah, for the first time our Synagogue will be honouring two women in the same year with the special aliyot that mark the end and recommencement of the Torah reading cycle.

Our Callah Torah will be Claire Walford, honoured for her extensive voluntary work in so many roles within

the congregation, including adult education, catering and membership of the Synagogue Board.

And our Callah Bereshit will be Caroline Loison, honoured for her work as our Head of Cheder and in engaging our young members with so many exciting activities.

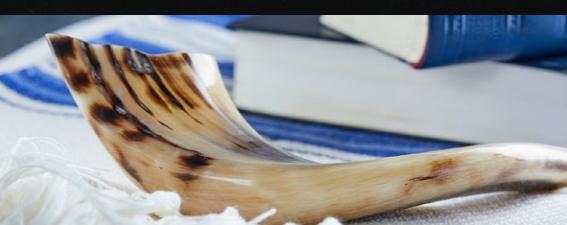
Mazal tov to Claire, Caroline and their families.

**Selichot**

Our Selichot service with **Cantor Heller** together with **Ben Wolf** and the **Synagogue's Professional Choir**

**Saturday 28 September**  
**7.30pm: Havdalah and Fish & Chips Supper**  
**8.30pm: Selichot Service**

Email [Adam@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:Adam@synagogue.org.uk) to book for supper



**VIENNA: FIN DE SIÈCLE**

BSS Israel Committee presents  
**85th Anniversary Concert**

An orchestra of talented young professional musicians from London, with one of Israel's most sought-after sopranos

**PROGRAMME**  
**Gustav Mahler**  
 Songs of a Wayfarer  
**Kurt Weill and Erich Korngold**  
 Selected songs  
**Johannes Brahms**  
 Symphony no. 2

**The Wallace Ensemble**  
 Soprano: **Shira Karmon**  
 Conductors: **Benjamin Wolf and Philip Keller**

In aid of the three outstanding Israeli charities that BSS supports: Yemin Orde, ASSAF and Beit Uri

**Sunday 22 September, 7pm**  
 at Belsize Square Synagogue

Email [adam@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:adam@synagogue.org.uk) to book. No charge for tickets. Donations requested.

Credit: Georg Buxhoefer

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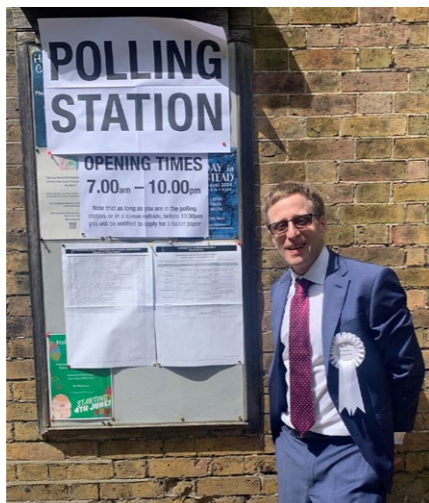
## GENERAL ELECTION

# My own bid for freedom

Belsize Square member **Jonathan Livingstone** reflects on his experience as an independent candidate for the Hampstead and Highgate seat in the recent general election

My favourite Jewish holiday is Pesach – which is not surprising, given that I was born on the second Seder night. Being free is central to Jewish belief and in view of the struggles of many leaseholders with leases that bind them to their homes, I came to the decision to highlight this issue by running in the general election as an independent candidate on a leaseholder rights platform. I'm so glad that I did decide to stand, as the campaign was a really positive experience.

Shortly before the election I participated in a hustings, but there were no Jewish community hustings in the constituency and I was also disappointed that a hustings for secondary school pupils was cancelled as too few candidates had accepted invitations to take part. We are living in populist times with many people feeling that politicians do not listen to them, so it is important that those standing for office should make themselves available to be scrutinised by voters. I was disappointed at the



lack of early and full debate on those leasehold issues, as well as many other topics. I did knock on a few doors, but I focussed my campaigning efforts on street stalls and distributing flyers outside tube stations as I felt these were less intrusive and safer ways to campaign.

I spent most of election day at polling stations, but sadly I didn't manage to get to the most important one to me, our shul hall, which was a polling station as usual.

That night, I really enjoyed the count. Thankfully my guests had all read the regulations on not being disruptive, including the formal ban on fireworks and paper canons! The most interesting part of the count was being able to read the comments that some voters chose to write on their ballot papers. A memorable paper showed a cross in the box next to my name, but also added the name of the Russian anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny.

The Hampstead and Highgate and Holborn and St Pancras counts took place in the same building, so there was a large media presence as Sir Keir Starmer was standing in our neighbouring constituency. A huge cheer greeted his arrival at the count and the section where the Hampstead and Highgate count was still being finalised emptied very suddenly as everyone jostled for the best viewing position. I took the advice of a fellow candidate to raise my profile: I shifted a pace to one side to be visible on the broadcast feed! After being announced as the winner, Starmer made some brief remarks before he and his security team made a dash for the exit, with the media pack in close pursuit. But the night had dragged on and thankfully the Hampstead and Highgate declaration followed soon afterwards.

I am extremely grateful to everyone from our shul who supported my campaign. I was delighted with my vote tally of 373 – one fewer than the number of years that the First Temple stood.

## CAMPUS LIFE

# The Jewish student experience post-October 7th

Leeds University undergraduate **Talia Antscherl** and Queen's University Ontario, graduate **Joshua Hurst** share their personal views



### TALIA ANTSCHERL

This past year it's seemed impossible to talk to any Jewish family or friends over a certain age without getting asked questions about my safety on campus at university. Each time, I've had to reassure my various anxious aunties that I honestly feel there is no threat. Having just finished my first year at university, it is true that I can't really measure if there has been

a rise in antisemitism on campus since October 7th compared to previous years. Nevertheless, I genuinely feel that being Jewish at uni does not put me in any more danger than anyone else.

Having said this, I understand my privileged position compared to others who present as more visibly Jewish (e.g. wearing a kippah), who say they have felt more uncomfortable. It's never my intention to police the legitimacy of anyone else's fear. In the wake of 'free Palestine' graffiti sprayed on the Hillel House at Leeds, it's not unreasonable that some people feel more on edge.

However, I feel it's necessary to draw attention to the role played by some Jewish students themselves, as well as pro-Palestine protesters, in increasing tensions on campus. I'm not very involved with JSoc, largely because I am uncomfortable with their handling of anti-Zionism on campus. I feel they've over-emphasised the link between Judaism and Israel, and are intolerant to any criticism of the state from other students. This doesn't align with my own views on Zionism, and alienates some Jewish students from the Society. There is a lack of effort from JSoc to increase tolerance of a diversity of opinions, instead opting for poking fun at pro-Palestine protests.

Ultimately, while both JSoc members and pro-Palestine protesters have done little to reduce tension, the situation is far from dangerous. The majority of students are not massively involved in protests and do wish to promote tolerance. Even the protesters are, for the most part, at odds with the university administration rather than with Jewish students.



### JOSHUA HURST

My time at university was strange in many ways; a first year filled with promise and opportunity in 2019–20 was followed by two years of Covid restrictions and online classes. My fourth and final year was the most enjoyable, while also seeing the politics of the Middle East trickle onto campus.

I studied at Queen's University in Canada and until my final year I wouldn't have had much to say regarding my experiences as a Jew on campus. I connected with Jews from many different parts of the university, despite us being few in number. Most of the people I surrounded myself with weren't Jewish but were great people. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Canada because of them.

Israel only began to be discussed in the weeks following October 7th. On campus in November, there was one protest in support of Palestine, and the next day there was a protest in support of Israel. Both were peaceful and calm but passionate. There was an instance where the Queen's University flag in the middle of campus was replaced with a Palestinian flag, but that was taken down after a few hours. None of this made me particularly uncomfortable as a Jew.

As much as I have been tempted to base my opinion on Israel on information from sites like Instagram and Twitter, unfortunately the best thing social media does is show the worst on both sides! There is just so much hatred and bigotry when people begin to disagree.

Social media gives people the opportunity for 'virtue signalling'. In the same way that many young people posted a black square on their Instagram page in support of the Black Lives Matter campaign in 2019, many people, including a large number I considered friends, posted the 'All Eyes on Rafah' image a few months ago. Many of them had never commented on the Middle East before and while I understand that their motive was the desire to protect innocent lives, it did make me slightly uncomfortable as a Jew. Are Jews not innocent as well? Why weren't these people posting anything after October 7th?

What made me more uncomfortable was the back-and-forth that followed. It seemed like an endless cycle of people simply trying to prove which side was worse, instead of discussing the issue in a way that could benefit everyone.

## A 'SUBLIME' FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

American actor Adam Dannheisser, who plays Tevye, the lead of the critically acclaimed production of *Fiddler on the Roof* at the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, is a cousin of Belsize members Paula Zeff and her brother Peter Dannheisser. The musical's run has just been extended and tickets are available until 28 September.



Photo by Marc Brenner



### GREETINGS FROM THE EDITORS

*Alex Antscherl and David Horwell wish all readers of Our Congregation I'shana tova and well over the fast.*

*Please send us your contributions for future issues – news, reviews and interviews on topics that you care about. We would love to hear from more of you in 5785.*

## SERVICES

**Friday evenings** at 6.45pm  
**Saturday mornings** at 10.00am

### Kikar Kids – Junior Shabbat Service

Saturday 7 September, 5 October & 2 November  
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](mailto:rgpollins@gmail.com)  
for more information

## HIGH HOLYDAYS 5785 / 2024

### High Holydays and Yomim Tovim Services

#### SELICHOT SERVICE

Saturday 28 September  
Havdalah and Supper  
at 7.30pm  
Service at 8.30pm

#### ROSH HASHANAH

##### 1st Eve

Wednesday 2 October  
Service at 6.45pm

##### 1st Day

Thursday 3 October  
Service at 9.30am

##### 2nd Eve

Thursday 3 October  
Service at 6.45pm

##### 2nd Day

Friday 4 October  
Service at 9.30am

#### KOL NIDREI

Friday 11 October  
Service at 6.45pm  
(fast commences  
at 6.02pm)

#### YOM KIPPUR

Saturday 12 October  
Service at 10.00am  
(fast ends at 7.03pm)

#### SUCCOT

##### 1st Eve

Wednesday 16 October  
Service at 6.45pm

##### 1st Day

Thursday 17 October  
Service at 10.00am

##### 2nd Eve

Thursday 17 October  
Service at 6.45pm

##### 2nd Day

Friday 18 October  
Service at 10.00am

#### SHEMINI ATZERET

Wednesday 23 October  
Service at 6.45pm

##### Day

Thursday 24 October  
Service at 10.00am

#### SIMCHAT TORAH

Thursday 24 October  
Under 5s party at 5.00pm  
Family service at 6.45pm

##### Day

Friday 25 October  
Service at 10.00am

## CHEDER AND BEIT MITZVAH

**Sunday mornings** 9.30am–12.30pm

Enquiries to Head: Caroline Loison  
[caroline@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:caroline@synagogue.org.uk)

Start of New Term Sunday 8 September  
Half Term Sunday 27 October & Sunday 3 November

## ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP

Meetings take place on Sunday mornings in term-time. Programme will be in the News from the Square emails every Thursday. For further information, please contact Claire Walford [claire.walford@yahoo.com](mailto:claire.walford@yahoo.com)

## SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

### BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square,  
London NW3 4HX

020 7794 3949  
[office@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:office@synagogue.org.uk)  
[www.synagogue.org.uk](http://www.synagogue.org.uk)

### SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

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

### The office will be closed from 12.00pm on:

Wed 2 Oct to Mon 7 Oct  
Fri 11 Oct to Mon 14 Oct  
Wed 16 Oct to Mon 21 Oct  
Wed 23 Oct to Mon 28 Oct

### SYNAGOGUE LIBRARY

Open to members during  
office hours

### RABBI

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick  
[rabbi@synagogue.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:claire@synagogue.org.uk)

### CANTOR

Dr Paul Heller  
[cantor@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:cantor@synagogue.org.uk)  
07949 078366

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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### CHAIRMAN

Jackie Alexander  
[chairman@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:chairman@synagogue.org.uk)

### CHEDER AND YOUTH

Caroline Loison  
[caroline@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:caroline@synagogue.org.uk)  
020 7794 3949

### COMMUNITY CARE CO-ORDINATOR & BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE

Eve Hersov  
[eve@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:eve@synagogue.org.uk)  
07944 574676

### 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

Copy date for the  
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issue is 9 October 2024  
Contributions to  
[alexantscherl@me.com](mailto:alexantscherl@me.com) or  
the Synagogue office

## HIGH HOLYDAYS 5785 / 2024

### High Holyday Tickets & Information

As usual, in advance of the High Holydays members of the congregation will receive a pack with all the information required for the services, together with their tickets. Application for tickets is now only required for non-members.

Application forms for non-members' tickets, prayer books and transport requirements/volunteer provision are all included in the pack.

Please contact the Synagogue Office if you would like to discuss any aspect of these arrangements.



# Shana Tova

*The Rabbi, Cantor and their families,  
Honorary Officers, Members of the Board  
and Staff extend their best wishes to all our  
members for a healthy and peaceful New Year.*