



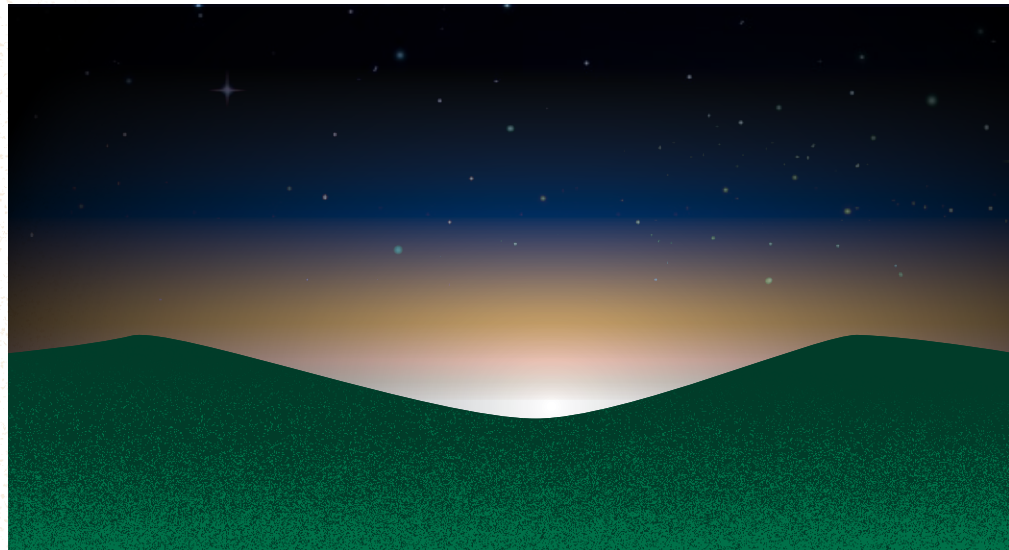
THE FIRST WINTER

Light in the darkness

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick encourages us to recognise optimism in the light of the Chanukah candles

According to the Talmud, God created humankind on the sixth day following Rosh Hashanah. As that first autumn progressed, Adam noticed that the days were getting shorter – that there was a decreasing amount of light in the world – and he worried that the world was coming to an end, and so he observed an eight-day period of mourning. But then, shortly after midwinter, he noticed the days began to lengthen once more and that this must simply be the way of the world, so he observed an eight-day period of celebration, lighting candles each day to contribute even more light to the world. And thus, Adam laid the foundation for what would eventually become our celebration of Chanukah.

Of course we do not understand this story to be factual, yet it still speaks to a profound truth in life: that light and darkness – joy and pain – ebb and flow independently



of our own actions. And just as every night is followed by the dawn of a new day, so too all periods of darkness eventually give way to brighter days.

This truth applies to each of us individually: dark clouds of depression at some point give way to renewed feelings of happiness and hope, and highs of elation in turn are supplanted by struggles and pain. It is therefore paramount – especially when all hope seems lost – to remind ourselves of this cyclical nature of life.

And this truth also applies to us collectively: our people will experience periods of safety and prosperity as well as periods of worry and strife. The very recent past has reminded us far too well

of this fact, and so now, more than in a long time, we must remind ourselves that this too will pass.

This year, like last, many of us may have struggled to decide whether to position our Chanukah candles in the window where they could be seen by others (and therefore draw attention to ourselves as Jews) or to place them somewhere more discreet inside our homes. So, I encourage you to consider our sages' portrayal of Adam that first winter following Creation: do not allow yourself to become overwhelmed by the prospect of darkness, but celebrate this celestial reminder that brighter days are awaiting us. Why not hasten their arrival by contributing as much of our light as possible?

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SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS

Rose Prevezer

Rabbi, creative producer and consultant



What's your favourite thing about your work?

I work with organisations and individuals across the arts to expand their engagement with Jewish life and culture. I am also the founding director of the charity LABA UK, an online Jewish house of study and culture

laboratory, which uses traditional Jewish texts to inspire the creation of art, dialogue and community. I love being able to work and dialogue with artists of all disciplines, witnessing their creative processes and helping them tap into or expand on the Jewishness in their practice. It is a thrill to see completed work that is both inspired by and prompts further questions and conversations around Jewish ideas or identity.

What is the hardest part of your job?

I think that like most freelancers, it's the uncertainty of where the next job is coming from. And as with most working parents, it is also the constant struggle for time and childcare so you can do your job. As for most charity directors, there is the constant worry around fundraising. This is a challenging time for our Jewish community and support for the arts may not be understood as a key

priority. But it is vital that we continue to invest in creative projects that make visible the diversity, vibrancy and vitality of contemporary Jewish life, enable Jewish artists to tell Jewish stories, and help ensure the continuation of a thriving Jewish culture in this country.

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

There is an empty shop on Abbey Road, very close to our home, and I often fantasise about turning it into a children's bookshop. Ignoring all the obvious challenges of being in retail, it just seems like a really lovely way to spend a working day.

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

Twelve years ago, I married the man who would one day become Belsize's rabbi!

What's your favourite festival?

Very nerdy 'rabbi' answer here! It's Yom Kippur. When done right, and you've spent Elul and the period of the High Holydays engaging in the spiritual work of teshuvah, Yom Kippur is a powerful coda, with the final service, Neilah, being a joyous release. When we lived in Los Angeles, our spiritual home was the IKAR community. On Yom Kippur hundreds of people would be singing and dancing around the bimah at the close. And then they would follow with a Disco Break-Fast! Surprisingly restorative after all the fasting.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

Front row, far left facing the bimah – with easy access to the stairs for quick getaways with a crying baby or a chattering child.



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

At the November Plenary Meeting, the Deputies received the Board's plan for the 2024-27 triennium. The Board's five key priorities for the next three years will be

- To fight antisemitism
- To stand up for peace and security in Israel and the Middle East
- To defend our religious freedoms
- To make our community more united, inclusive and outward-looking
- To celebrate our faith, heritage and culture as British Jews

To achieve these aims, the Board's plan is to enhance its reach, relevance and impact throughout the country. After 264 years, the Board of Deputies has many strengths, some of them

untapped. With around 300 Deputies representing 200 synagogues and Jewish institutions, the Board aims to use its 'network of networks' far better and to unleash its potential.

As your Deputies, we hope that our reports in *Our Congregation* go some way to explaining what the Board does. If you feel that you can help us deliver the Board's plan through your contacts or personal knowledge, please let us know so that we can build upon your expertise. What is good for the Board of Deputies is also good for us all, especially when the Jewish community is under such pressure as a result of world events.

The full plan can be seen on the Board's website: www.bod.org.uk

Finally, congratulations to Dilys Tausz, who has been appointed Chair of the Board's Constitutional Committee. This entails attending Executive meetings, not only to advise on constitutional issues but also to highlight matters of legal significance. Dilys becomes the second BSS Deputy to take up a significant role, joining Deborah Cohen whose election to the Board's Communities and Education Division was announced in our last issue.

THE CHANUKAH MARKET



The Chanukah Market on 1 December was busier than ever

Music and Machzorim – Peter Goodman and Philippa Strauss



A happy snapper



Maoz Tzur – the Belsize Square Youth Choir, conducted by Sofia Swenson-Wright



The Three Bageleers – Helen Lehmann, Suzanne Goldstein and Sally Goodman – just one portion of the magnificent food offering

A big thank you to everyone who organised, worked at or attended the Chanukah Market – profits were up on last year!

My Jewish music connections with Belsize Square

Geraldine Auerbach MBE will be honoured at our Shabbat Shira service on 8 February. Here she recollects her long association with music at our Synagogue

As an organiser of ten Jewish Music Festivals and then the director of the Jewish Music Institute at SOAS, University of London, I am honoured to have been asked to participate in this year's Shabbat Shira – the Shabbat of song – at Belsize Square Synagogue.



Geraldine Auerbach addressing 'Simcha on the Square' in 2006

When I devised and arranged a Jewish Music Festival for B'nai B'rith back in 1984, Belsize Square's clergy and members were heavily involved from the beginning. Many current members will remember Judith Unikower, Steffi and Ben Lachman, Gerald and Marion Hellman and Alice Frank, who were among the many who contributed, and Sue Straus (who later married Rabbi Mariner) participated in events with the children's choir.

Each week on Shabbat during the month-long Jewish Music Festivals, a different synagogue would share their particular brand of synagogue music. The services were just as important to me as the concerts and recitals that made up the festivals. Arnold Horwell was a driving force in making sure Belsize Square was the first to book a dedicated synagogue service. Belsize, as we all know, places great importance on its musical heritage. It is one of the few living embodiments of the German *liberale* movement. In their quest for more splendid and

harmonious worship, the Berlin *liberale* community built the magnificent synagogue on Oranienburger Strasse, opened in 1866. They employed their star composer, Louis Lewandowski, to create majestic music for cantor, choir and organ. Lewandowski's emotional music is now sung in all varieties of Jewish worship around the world, but it is at Belsize that he is central and venerated, along with his Vienna mentor Salomon Sulzer. The music of prayer is the kernel of the music of the Jewish people and to hear it in its own setting is truly special.

Belsize cantors and rabbis featured heavily in my activities. Cantor Louis Berkman was the soloist in Ernest Bloch's *Sacred Service* at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, St John's Wood, in the first festival in 1984, when he also performed in excerpts from Samuel Alman's 1912 grand Yiddish opera *King Ahaz*. Berkman was the soloist in Ronald Senator's *Kaddish for Terezin*, which we premiered in Canterbury Cathedral in 1986



Composer Malcolm Miller and Minister of Culture Chris Smith with their shofars in 1998

with Rabbi Hugo Gryn as the narrator, and in 1990 he was the soloist in Bloch's *Sacred Service* at our Clifford's Tower commemoration in York Minster.



Cover of the *High Holyday Music* CD. The beautifully embroidered Torah mantle can be seen in the display case in the Synagogue entrance

the beautiful Belsize embroidered 'tree of life' Torah mantle as the cover image. The recording featured the Synagogue's choir, cantor Larry Fine, soprano Sue Heimann (who still sings in Belsize's professional choir), David Lawrence (organist, who still occasionally plays at Belsize), and conductor Ronald Rappoport.

Belsize's Activities Co-ordinator Henny Levin joined me for the 1998 festival, conjuring up a memorable event at the Western Marble Arch Synagogue called *Blow Your Own*. This was an attempt on the world record for the biggest shofar orchestra. Malcolm Miller had written a fanfare for shofarot to open the festival. Dozens of people, young and old, including several from Belsize, learned the music and brought their horns. Even Chris Smith, Minister of Culture, joined in when he opened the festival at St John's, Smith Square. Later we learned that the record for the biggest shofar band had been taken by a group of Americans filling a stadium, so we didn't stand a chance for the world record. But the whole event was great fun for everyone who took part, and brilliantly organised by Henny.

In 1998, we also presented a programme created by Neil Levin of New York called *Shattered Sounds – Vanished Voices*, commemorating the stirring sacred music traditions that had flourished for centuries among Jews in German-speaking lands, which Kristallnacht had brought to a sudden end. Appropriately, Louis Berkman was again one of the cantors and this time Rabbi Rodney Mariner was chosen as the narrator; Rodney reprised this role when we mounted *Vanished Voices* again ten years later at the Barbican Centre Concert Hall.

In Rabbi Altschuler's time I was invited to be part of Belsize's Music Committee and was happy to help present some important events. In 2013, I was instrumental in seeing that Belsize Square Synagogue choirs were able to participate in the Kristallnacht 75th anniversary Solemn Remembrance in Westminster Abbey, together with Rabbi Altschuler and Cantor Heller. Then in February 2014 I organised a study afternoon at Belsize on Jews in Music in Berlin before WWII. This included talks by experts about Lewandowski, on Berlin cabaret, on composers banned

Cantor Larry Fine was an appropriate choice as one of the soloists in 1990 when we celebrated the centenary of Sulzer's death at St John's, Smith Square, following which we brought out a recording, *Viennese Synagogue Music in the Age of Schubert: Salomon Sulzer and his Contemporaries*. We then produced a CD and cassette of *The High Holyday Music of Belsize Square Synagogue*, using

by the Nazis, and a report on the Belsize choirs' visit to Berlin. I was the co-founder of the European Cantors' Association (ECA) and it is pleasing that Belsize Square's current cantor, Paul Heller has been an active member, regularly attending ECA conventions in European cities.

Finally, going back to 2000, a young man called Benjamin Wolf applied to us at the Jewish Music Institute for a JMI Millennium Award. He planned to complete his piano concerto 'L'Chaim'. We paired him with a mentor, the composer Malcolm Singer, and gave him a grant to complete and give a performance of his work. When I asked Ben recently how come someone with an Oxford double first had landed up as a professional in Jewish music, including as Director of Music at Belsize, he said, 'I think it was the JMI Millennium Award that led to my research and my subsequent jobs.' So that is another connection between me and music at Belsize Square Synagogue, and a very satisfying legacy.



Ben Wolf was supported by the Jewish Music Institute

CHOIR Shabbat

FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY 6.45PM

SATURDAY 8 FEBRUARY 10.00AM

Join us on Shabbat Shira to thank and honour our Professional, Community & Youth choirs who help make our liturgy so special and unique.

In memory of Henry Kuttner z"l

Belsize Square Synagogue
51 Belsize Square, London, NW3 4HX
www.synagogue.org.uk

For a delicious fried Chanukah treat, try this recipe from Silvia Nacamulli for Italian mini doughnuts, taken from her fabulous book on *Jewish Flavours of Italy*.



SILVIA NACAMULLI'S Precipizi-Struffoli MINI DOUGHNUT PYRAMID

Photo credit Jennifer Balcombe

Precipizi is an old Jewish dessert made for Hanukkah that hails from Ancona, in Central Italy. The original recipe is parve (dairy-free) and made with lots of mini fried doughnuts arranged in a single layer, glued together in a rectangular shape with honey, left to dry, then cut and served in chunks. After trying to make the dessert this way a few times but never quite succeeding, I created my own version, as I love the idea and the name of this dessert. I make mine with doughnuts that are olive-sized or slightly bigger, and I like to serve them piled up as a pyramid instead, similar to struffoli, a Christmas dessert from Naples (after all, Hanukkah often falls around Christmastime). This dessert is a beautiful marriage of old Jewish traditions presented in a modern way and inspired by traditional Italian cooking.

I add ricotta and lemon to the dough for extra flavour, as well as to combine the tradition of frying on Hanukkah with the one of eating dairy. This dessert can be eaten straight away, shortly after coating it with honey, or left to set, for a few hours, for the doughnuts to absorb the honey. Both versions are delicious!

Preparation: 15 minutes,
plus 15–20 minutes resting time
Cooking: 10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 180–200g plain white flour (ideally '00' type)
- 2 tablespoons caster sugar
- grated zest of 2 unwaxed lemons
- 1 large egg, plus 1 yolk
- 20g unsalted butter, melted
- 50g (3 tablespoons) ricotta
- pinch of sea salt
- about 300ml sunflower, groundnut or corn oil, for frying
- 80g (6 tablespoons) runny honey
- grated zest of 1 unwaxed orange
- 1 teaspoon orange blossom water
- icing sugar, for dusting

You will also need a tray or large plate, lined with baking parchment.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 First, make the dough. Mix 180g (6oz/scant 1½ cups) of the flour with the sugar, lemon zest, egg, egg yolk, melted butter, ricotta and salt in a bowl with your hands (or in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook) for 4–5 minutes until the dough is soft and malleable but not sticky. If it's too sticky, simply add more of the flour. Wrap the dough in clingfilm and put it in the fridge to rest for 15–20 minutes.
- 2 Remove the dough from the fridge and divide it into four pieces. Gently roll each piece on a clean surface or on a pastry mat, using your fingers to form a thin rope about 20–25cm (8–10in) long and 1.5–2cm (½–¾in) thick, then cut each rope into small 1cm (½in) pieces about the size of a hazelnut and put them on the lined tray or plate. You should have a total of 70–80 pieces.
- 3 Heat the oil in a large, heavy-based saucepan or frying pan to 170°C/335°F (if you don't have a thermometer, test the oil is hot enough by dropping in a cube of bread: it should float rather than sink, and sizzle immediately on contact with the oil). Once it's hot, add a batch of the dough balls – you need to cook them in two or three batches. They should sit in one layer in the oil. Fry for 1½–2 minutes, turning them often with a metal spoon so they fry evenly, until they turn lightly golden. Remove them from the oil with a slotted spoon and place them in a sieve to drain the oil. Repeat with the remaining batches of dough and transfer each drained batch to a plate or tray lined with kitchen paper to help absorb any excess oil.
- 4 Warm up the honey, orange zest and orange blossom water in a large pan and add the fried dough pieces. Stir until all the dough is coated, then remove from the heat. Transfer with tongs or a spatula to a cake plate and create the shape of a pyramid. Leave to set (or serve straight away), dusting the mini doughnuts with icing sugar before serving.

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RECENT EVENTS

JAZZ IN THE SQUARE



The Ralph Freeman Quintet played a great programme of jazz classics and new compositions by BSS member Ralph (at the piano) on 10 November

RABBI WITTENBERG INTRODUCES HIS NEW BOOK



A large audience attended Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg's presentation on his new book, *Listening for God in Torah and Creation*, on 14 November. He was interviewed by Emily Kasriel

SUPPER Quiz

Sunday 2 March 7.00pm

Do you have what it takes to beat last year's champions?
Then gather your friends and join us for Quiz Night at Belsize Square Synagogue!
Show off your knowledge and have fun in a friendly competition.

NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS NW.3.

Dear Fellow Members

Now we are on the thrashold of the new year, I hope this will proof to be much better then the won that is in our behind. Already for us in Abernein Mansions, sings are looking upwords.

As a special confession, each inmate who wants it has bean given a plod of the communal garden to make there own plantation. Our new gardener, Manic Slobowitz, has advised us to avoid salad wetchtables witch attreck schlucks, schnails und other wormin. I have therefour decided to play save und just grow rude wetchtables only. I will have a row each from hoarse reditches, parschnips, potatoos und carotten. Mrs Klopstick sinks I should be more embitious und plant truffles, but I don't have the right composture for this.

My wive is not really interested in hautikultur und will be devoting her time to the Hempstead und Golders Green Jewish Ladies Rugby Leak Team. The Royal Free Hospital will kindly be supplying a small medicinal team from E und A to attend each metch. I am acceedingly proud of Mrs K. She is not only well beyond her age in what she undertakes in sport, but also is a four runner in wimen's inmanspationce. She openly eggpresses her condemnation where authordocks Jewish laddies have to be sepregated in schul und hopes they will never be mate to ware a burger. She will be outspeaking wareever wimen are impressed threw out the world.

Unfortunately I have to ride this kolumn befour the eggitement of Chanukah und the Chanukah Markt. I am sure it all passed away perfektly. So, from hear I can only look foreword to Purim und Pesach, but I will uncover that in the next addition. Of cause, we are still in the grasp of winter und with global warning still bringing icy whether, we hear are all very sankful for Belsize Alive. Not having to go out und slash around on the ice und snow is a blessing for us olden goldies.

With the best of intentions
Fritz Klopstick

ASK FRITZ

I have bean approached by sum nameless members who have more money then cents. They have asked me what I sink about investiture of these bits of coin. I sink it has something to do with Elon Mask, witch makes me very conspicuous. My reply is simple: don't touch them with a bath pole.

SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm
Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Shabbat Shira – Choir Shabbat

Friday evening and Saturday morning services,
7 and 8 February, to honour the synagogue's choirs

Our 85th Anniversary Shabbat Service and Kiddush

Saturday 1 March

Kikar Kids – Junior Shabbat Service

Saturday 4 January, 1 February & 1 March 2025
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

CHEDER AND BEIT MITZVAH

Sunday mornings 9.30am–12.30pm

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

Start of Term Sunday 12 January
Half Term Sunday 16 & 23 February
End of Term Sunday 30 March

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

COMMUNITY NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:
Susan & Andrew Usiskin | David Robson &
granddaughter Romy | Beverly & Luis Montagni
Minahil Naveed & David Preiskel | Gideon Bresler with
daughter Bleiz | Jenny & Dion Rabinov with daughters
Elise & Cara | Fabrizio Nascè

BIRTHS

Albie Rembiszewski, son of
Perla Rembiszewski & Tom Cousins
Raphael Rembiszewski-Beckett, son of
Gina Rembiszewski & Stephen Beckett
Zadie Morgenthau, daughter of
Daniel Morgenthau & Frankie McCoy

BNEI MITZVAH

Mazal tov to: Nicole Horwitz & Frank Joseph on Jonah's
Bar Mitzvah which will take place on 1 February

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:
Viviane McGrath on 24 October

DO YOU NEED A BABYSITTER?

Contact caroline@synagogue.org.uk for
details of some of our young people who
will be happy to help, or to be added to the
database yourself.

SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

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SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

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

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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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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Contributions to
alexantscherl@me.com or
the Synagogue office

A MESSAGE FROM SUE MARINER

Dear Friends,

I am planning an evening at Belsize Square on 22 June entitled 'Remembering Rabbi Mariner'. My hope is that it will be light-hearted, as I think Rodney would have wanted it to be.

I would like to include a slide-show and so I am asking if you have any photographs of your simchas, or of any event for that matter, which include him, and that you would be happy to be shown. Please send them to: rodmariner@aol.com. Please may I suggest no more than two photos per occasion as I have one or two that I will include!

Thank you for your help in what I hope will be an entertaining evening, one of poignant reminiscences and happy memories.

Sue