



PURIM

A hidden presence

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick on the use of words – and a hidden word in the Book of Esther

Have you ever criticized someone not for what they said, but for what they didn't say?

We often see this when someone delivers a less-than-heartfelt apology: 'I'm sorry you were hurt by what I said.' Such words do not constitute a true apology. Rather they simply pass off responsibility to the person who was hurt. However, if one were to say, 'I'm sorry for saying something so hurtful towards you' – *that* would indeed be an apology.

In other situations, it might not be as important for someone to be so forthright in their language. For instance, when speaking to a relative after a death, one might consider it insensitive – or even hurtful – to keep reminding them of their loved one's death. Instead, when speaking with a mourner,

we often use more euphemistic language: 'I'm so sorry for your loss.' Everyone knows exactly what that 'loss' is, so there's no need to use more vivid or painful language.

The use and intentional exclusion of certain words can be both productive and harmful. Our early rabbis understood this dual nature of language and taught it through the metaphor of fire, which can be both productive – by providing warmth and healthy food – and harmful by threatening total destruction. The rabbis taught that the Torah is written as 'black fire upon white fire', that is, the black letters of the Torah and the white spaces in between are both seen as fire. It makes sense that the written words of Torah can be seen in that way, capable of inspiring passion and offering sustenance, while holding the potential to burn those who struggle with its teachings. But the rabbis also teach us that sometimes we need to look deeper into the Torah to understand what is not being said explicitly, but rather what can be understood through critical reading. In these instances, the white fire of the Torah can be even more profound than the black fire.

This philosophy stands out most dramatically in the Book of Esther,

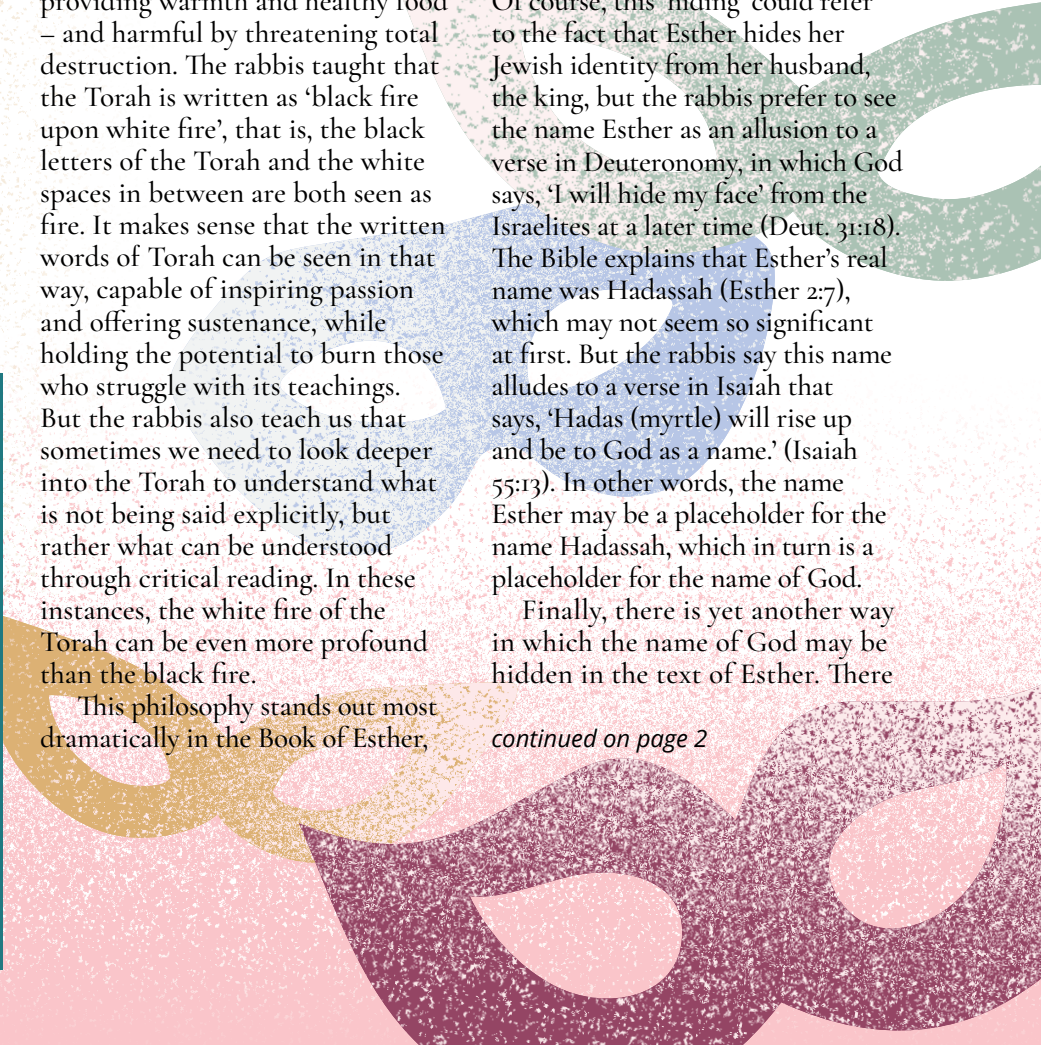
which we read at our Purim service and celebration, as the Book of Esther is the only book in the Bible that does not contain the name of God. So, if God's name isn't in the Book of Esther, why is this text included in the Bible? Well, drawing on the metaphor of black fire on white fire, the rabbis teach us that God actually is present in the text – just in hidden ways. In fact, the name Esther itself means 'I will hide.' Of course, this 'hiding' could refer to the fact that Esther hides her Jewish identity from her husband, the king, but the rabbis prefer to see the name Esther as an allusion to a verse in Deuteronomy, in which God says, 'I will hide my face' from the Israelites at a later time (Deut. 31:18). The Bible explains that Esther's real name was Hadassah (Esther 2:7), which may not seem so significant at first. But the rabbis say this name alludes to a verse in Isaiah that says, 'Hadas (myrtle) will rise up and be to God as a name.' (Isaiah 55:13). In other words, the name Esther may be a placeholder for the name Hadassah, which in turn is a placeholder for the name of God.

Finally, there is yet another way in which the name of God may be hidden in the text of Esther. There

continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Letter from Rabbi Botnick
- 2 Synagogue Snapshot
- 3 BoD update, BSS Board elections, Family Services for the High Holydays
- 4 My Sixty-year encounter with Poland
- 5 New Year Honours
- 6 Belsize Square's course for learning about Judaism
- 9 Deep Listening
- 10 What gives us comfort, New legislation and what we are doing
- 11 News from Abernain Mansions
- 12 Services, Synagogue help lines



SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS

Diana Gerald MBE

Chief Executive of BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity



What's your favourite thing about your work?

Knowing it makes a difference. BookTrust supports over a million children and their families every year to get the reading bug. We work particularly with families with under-5s, who are on low incomes.

Research shows 95% of

families know that reading is important but face practical challenges in their lives so only just over 40% are able to read a regular bedtime story. Our work at BookTrust helps provide books and advice to help make reading a regular routine. And I get to meet lots of children's authors and illustrators and they are the nicest people.

What is the hardest part of your job?

Seriously, the hardest thing is prioritising what we decide to do where there is so much need and limited money. I hate having to say no but it's part of the job. The fun hard part is not getting distracted into spending hours reading the piles of wonderful children's books which turn up all the time at the office!

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

Maybe a barista, as I drink so much coffee.

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

I decided to join a synagogue when my daughter was born. I wanted to find a synagogue where women have a real role, which would be welcoming to the realities of modern Jewish families (my partner isn't Jewish) and still include some of the rituals and tradition of my childhood – I was brought up in the United Synagogue. And ideally where I knew people already – and I have known Leah Hurst and her lovely family since I was 16. So, Belsize was the obvious choice.

What's your favourite festival?

Pesach. I love the family service and dinner. I value all the little traditions we have and carry on – playing with the interactive parts of the children's Haggadah I have had since I was a child, finding the afikoman, and the optimism of the story. And it brings lovely memories each year. I grew up in Brighton and one Pesach in the 70s we were singing songs loudly and possibly a bit tunelessly and the local policeman popped his head round the door to check nothing was wrong! He was very friendly and wanted to know more.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

Ideally next to a friend. But in practice I tend to be more of a high days and holydays shul-goer, and am always late so I end up at the back!



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

Good relationships with the police are so important for the Jewish community. The success that the Board of Deputies is having in this field was demonstrated at our last plenary meeting by the attendance of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley. He explained that the police had to operate within the law and especially with regard to the rights to freedom of expression and of assembly. These considerations must inform the way in which the police control pro-Palestinian demonstrations. Nevertheless, the influence of the Board of Deputies means that we do have a voice, and the police made sure that the designated routes for those demonstrations avoided synagogues.

At the same plenary, Penny Mordaunt and Lord John Mann, who head the Commission on Antisemitism, were seeking suggestions from the deputies that could be adopted by government, prosecutors, social media companies, educational institutions, trade unions and other stakeholders to help combat increasing antisemitism. This was a superb opportunity to explain our feelings, and views were heard from a range of deputies including a junior doctor, a university student and those involved in inter-denominational organisations.

All the work of the BoD needs to be funded and we will be approaching you to help contribute financially towards the Commission on Antisemitism, the Bring Them Home Now hostages campaign, the Optimistic Alliance interfaith initiative, the BoD@Work programme supporting Jews in the workplace, and the British Jewish Culture Month.



Invitation to nominate Candidates for Membership of the Board of The Belsize Square Synagogue (The Synagogue)

The ninth Annual General Meeting of The Synagogue (the AGM) will be held on **Monday 9 June**. Formal notice will be given in due course. The Board hereby invites the members of The Synagogue to nominate candidates for election to the Board for a period of three years commencing from the AGM. There are 16 vacancies.

Nominations must be in writing, addressed to the Hon. Secretary and submitted to the Synagogue Office by twelve noon on Friday **18 April 2024**. Each Nomination must be signed by at least five members of The Synagogue who are themselves entitled to vote at the AGM. Only valid nominations which are received by that date can

be considered. No member may sign more nominations for the Board than the number of vacancies (namely 16).

In accordance with the Articles of Association of The Synagogue, the following nine members will be retiring from the Board by rotation but are eligible for re-election if duly nominated:

John Abramson; John Alexander; Carol Cohen; Jeannie Cohen; Joe Hacker; Richard Pollins; Jimmy Strauss; Dilys Tausz and Justyn Trenner

From **22 April**, a list of the candidates duly nominated will be available for inspection at the Synagogue Office and the formal notice of the AGM will also include a list of those candidates.

FAMILY SERVICES FOR THE HIGH HOLYDAYS

A thank you from our chairman, Jackie Alexander

Last October, Belsize Square Synagogue ran our family services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for the second time. Just as we did the previous year, we subsequently invited feedback from the congregation in the form of a survey. On behalf of the Executive and the Board I want to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts and feedback about our services; your input is invaluable and we deeply appreciate your honest reflections, suggestions and encouragement. We want you to know that we have listened carefully to every comment that has been shared with us.

As was the case last year, your feedback has already helped us gain a clearer understanding of what worked well in the service and where we can make meaningful improvements. Everyone definitely appreciated the fact that our 2024 services were significantly shorter than those in 2023 – a result of last year's feedback. As we plan for next year's family services, we will be using your feedback to guide our

decisions. Some of the changes you can look forward to include adding explanations and/or translations to the family service prayer book and involving even more of our young people and as much of the Youth Choir as possible. We are aiming to make our services as inclusive and engaging as we can.

Your suggestions for new initiatives were very helpful too. We are considering offering teen discussion forums and a *mifgash* (encounter) next year.

Thank you, once again, for being such an important and active part of our special Belsize congregation and for helping us grow as a community. Together, I am certain that we can continue to create a service where all feel valued and connected. Of course, as well as thanking all of you, this article wouldn't be complete without thanking the team that have worked so hard to develop and lead these services. A huge thank you goes to Rabbi Botnick, Cantor Heller, Caroline Loison, Dilys Tausz, Jeannie Cohen, Joe Hacker and everyone in the office.

continued from page 1 **A hidden presence**

is a tradition to write the Megillah so that the first word of almost every column is 'HaMelech,' which means 'the king.' On the surface, each use of HaMelech clearly refers to King Achashverosh. But on a deeper, mystical level, each HaMelech might be a hidden reference to God, who is also known by this name.

So, is the name of God really absent from the Book of Esther? Technically, yes. But in reality, I don't think it is. One could easily read the story of Purim and conclude that God played no role in our victory over the wicked Haman. But the rabbis teach us not to be so quick in making this assumption. And more importantly, the rabbis are actually trying to teach us not to be so quick in assuming that God doesn't play a role in our lives today. Just because we can't see or hear God doesn't mean God isn't there. Rather, God is hidden in our world, and we are all tasked with figuring out how best to reveal God's presence. Who knows, you might find God in nature, in our traditions, or even in the words and actions of our everyday heroes.

Chag sameach!

ADVANCE NOTICE – STONE SETTING

The stone setting for Rabbi Rodney Mariner will take place at Edgwarebury Lane Cemetery on Sunday 13 July at 2.30pm

PURIM!
JOIN US FOR PURIM AT
BELSIZE SQUARE!
Thursday 13 March
5.00pm
TRIANGULAR PARTY
dinner, games, fancy dress
parade (with prizes), music
and Mishloach Manot
6.45pm
MEGILLAH READING
sketches, drinks and nosh
Belsize Square Synagogue
51 Belsize Square,
London,
NW3 4HX
020 7794 3949
www.synagogue.org.uk



EUROPEAN HISTORY

My Sixty-year encounter with Poland

Antony Polonsky is the former Professor of International History at LSE and of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University, USA. He is a world expert on the history of Eastern Europe and, in particular, on Polish-Jewish history. Here he reflects on his time spent in Poland, 60 years ago.

I first went to Poland in early 1965 on a British Council Scholarship to work on my doctorate on interwar Polish politics. Coming from apartheid South Africa, I was drawn to analyse the phenomena of nationalism and inter-ethnic conflict in Poland. In spite of the Marxist beliefs I then held, I

had roots in this area. Arlene was also awarded a British Council Scholarship to undertake research on Middle English and Old French at Warsaw University

We had high expectations of the new socialist Poland but we were quickly disillusioned. We accepted that in a country 'building socialism' there was an inevitable price to be paid in the form of a loss of freedom but believed that this only affected the intelligentsia, which was hostile to socialism, and that this loss of freedom was compensated for by the higher rate of economic growth compared to the capitalist West, and the greater degree of social justice and equality.

less efficient than that of the West, while a new privileged class had emerged under socialism.

It was the deep class divisions and the emergence of this 'Red bourgeoisie' that we first became aware of. We found accommodation in a pre-war apartment block in Mokotów, a part of Warsaw that had not been destroyed during the war, which housed high party functionaries. In the Poland of 1965 consumer goods of all sorts were in short supply and of poor quality. Meat was particularly scarce, but we were shielded from the worst effects of this, because once a week a woman from the countryside with a large black duffle bag and a set of scales would appear in our building and sell freshly slaughtered veal, beef and pork to the party high-ups who lived there, something from which we also benefited.

For the majority of the population, the all-pervasive shortages and poor quality of consumer goods led to an idealized picture of life in the West. The terror of the Stalinist years was now a thing of the past. People spoke very freely and took great pains to disabuse us of our political illusions. Jokes were all-pervasive, so that Poland was described as 'the merriest barracks in the Socialist camp'. Yet at the same time the high hopes that Władysław Gomułka, the new Communist party leader who came to power in October 1956, would usher in genuine freedom of expression had been largely dispelled.

The pent-up dissatisfaction came to the surface in 1968. Although



Warsaw in the 1960s

had rejected the rigid discipline and bureaucratic character of the Communist Party of South Africa and was attracted to what I thought was the independent 'Polish Road to Socialism'. As a result, the prospect of spending time in Poland came to seem increasingly attractive, the more so because my family and that of my wife, Arlene,

It soon became apparent to us that the loss of freedom affected the whole of society, that it was more far-reaching than in my native country and that it made serious and open discussion of the problems that Poland needed to confront almost impossible. The economic system, with its shortages and distortions, was clearly much

Israel's triumph in the Six-Day War was generally welcomed by the Poles, the victory was seized upon by nationalist elements in the ruling Polish United Workers' Party to get rid of their Jewish opponents, strengthen their position and challenge that of Gomułka. Although they failed, the regime became much more repressive. Their actions also led to the forced emigration of over 13,000 Jews.

Until this crisis I still believed that the communist system could be reformed from within but I was now completely disillusioned. I was alarmed that the Soviet Union and its allies could pursue policies which seemed aimed at the destruction of the state of Israel, for whose welfare and safety I was extremely concerned. In addition, I was disgusted that a faction of the ruling party could use crude antisemitic slogans in a bid for power and to discredit the student calls for democratization. I strongly identified with these calls and with Alexander Dubček's attempt to establish communism 'with a human face' in Czechoslovakia. It was particularly painful to me that the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party issued a statement in early September 1968 welcoming the 'fraternal intervention' of the countries of the Warsaw pact in Czechoslovakia.

I supported the developing opposition in Poland which led to the emergence of the Solidarity movement. I was shocked and surprised, like most Poles, by the relative ease with which martial law was established (I shouldn't have been – the other side had an army). I also now felt much more involved with Jewish life. A number of my friends believed that one of the reasons for the defeat of Solidarity had been its failure to make a proper reckoning with the chauvinistic and antisemitic currents in Polish life. They encouraged me to seek contacts within the Jewish world to alleviate the obvious gap between Poles and Jews insofar as these are separate and discrete groups, which is clearly not always the case. I thus became actively involved both in attempting to foster the emergence of a democratic Poland and in the effort to examine honestly the long and complex relationship between Poles and Jews. This led to the establishment of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies in Oxford and its yearbook *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*.

It is now sixty years since I first went to Poland. How far have my hopes been realized? Certainly, the democratic system seems well-established although it has come under strong pressure in recent years from more populist elements. On the evaluation of the country's Jewish past, there has been a greater willingness to recognize its dark aspects. However, there have also been apologetic attempts to argue that anti-Jewish actions were restricted in the past to marginal elements in Polish society and that during the Second World War, the overwhelming majority of Poles were sympathetic to the fate of their Jewish neighbours. Let us hope that in the next few years a more balanced approach to the Polish-Jewish past will prevail.

NEW YEAR HONOURS

We are delighted that two Belsize Square members were recognised in the King's 2025 New Year Honours List.



FRANK HARDING

Frank Harding was awarded an MBE for services to Holocaust memorialisation, having recently retired as a longstanding trustee of the Association of Jewish Refugees. Frank initiated the AJR's Blue Plaque scheme, creating

permanent memorials at UK locations with a strong connection to the Jewish émigrés who fled Nazi oppression – one such plaque is on the outer wall of our Synagogue. He has also been a trustee of the Wiener Holocaust Library, chaired the boards of trustees of the charities Paintings in Hospitals and the Otto Schiff Housing Association and he was also on the board of our synagogue. A former partner in KPMG, one of the world's largest accountancy and advisory firms, he has served as President of the International Federation of Accountants.



STEPHEN ALLAN



Stephen Allan OBE with his wife Hayley and a Rays of Sunshine child

Stephen Allan was awarded an OBE for services to the media industry and to young people. In his role as co-founder and chairman of trustees of the Rays of Sunshine charity he has played a crucial role in securing over 9,000 wishes for seriously and terminally ill children and in providing ongoing support in hospitals and hosting special events that have impacted the lives of over 80,000 children and their families. In his professional career, he has been widely recognised as one of the pioneers of media agencies and having been worldwide chairman and CEO of MediaCom, he is now executive chair of the digital marketing agency Brainlabs.

We send a hearty Mazal Tov to Frank and Stephen

Belsize Square's course for learning about Judaism

Our Synagogue's Introduction to Judaism courses, for people interested in conversion to Judaism or simply wanting to reconnect with our religion, are increasingly popular. Rabbi Gabriel Botnick tells us about the course, and Fabrizio Nascè relates his journey to Judaism and to becoming a proud member of our Synagogue.

RABBI BOTNICK

If you attended Shabbat services on 17 or 18 January, you might have noticed a lot more people than usual at Synagogue. That weekend, we held our biannual Shabbaton for those enrolled in our Introduction to Judaism classes. With more than 30 participants in attendance in addition to our regular shul-goers, it was a wonderfully busy Shabbat.



For years, Belsize has offered classes for those looking to become Jewish. Rabbi Mariner used to hold classes around his dining room table and Rabbi Altshuler kept the learning going. When I came to the synagogue, I too carried the torch, but also introduced a few changes. For starters, while the course is still designed to aid people who are looking to become Jewish, it now caters as well to those who already are Jewish but who wish to deepen their understanding of the tradition.

The course now caters as well to those who already are Jewish but who wish to deepen their understanding of the tradition

While in the past most people would take the course because they were going to marry someone Jewish, the class composition is now much more varied. Sure, we still have people who are looking to become Jewish before getting married, but we also have students who are single and on their own personal journey,

and others who are already married and feel ready to explore Judaism on their own terms. And while some are already Jewish, a growing number are looking to connect with recently discovered Jewish ancestry. With such a broad range of student backgrounds and aims one might think it a Sisyphean task to keep everyone engaged, but in fact this diversity only enhances our weekly discussions.

Somehow, word has started to spread about our course, so we've had to make additional changes to meet the needs and demands of our students. We now offer two concurrent classes, with one cycle commencing in November and the other in March. Both groups learn the same material, but alternate topics and instructors: one week, they learn history and theory with me and the next week they learn prayer and practice with Cantor Heller and Hebrew with Caroline Loison.

We also have a supplemental offering that we call the *Manhig* (guide) Programme. People who have previously gone through conversion at Belsize volunteer to mentor current students – sitting with them at services and hosting them for Shabbat or holiday meals. This has proven rather effective at assuaging anxieties of those preparing to sit before the Beit Din, and helping to teach the home-based practices of Judaism to those who don't have Jewish in-laws.

At around 30 weeks, our Introduction to Judaism programme is a big time commitment not only for our students but for the instructors as well, yet it couldn't be less of a burden. I always seem to have a bit more bounce in my step when walking home after teaching. And based on the popularity of the programme, I think the same goes for the students.

If you or someone you know would like to learn more or enroll in our Introduction to Judaism course, please feel free to call the office and ask for Claire – she's the miracle worker who's been pivotal in the programme's success.

FABRIZIO NASCÈ

I was born in Sicily to a culturally Catholic family and I was interested in religion since childhood. Independent studies and diverse connections led me to discover Judaism and I quickly felt drawn to its traditions, culture and the sense of belonging to a people with a shared history and covenant with God. Due to my background, I also developed an interest in early Christianity and interfaith dialogue that eventually led me to make Judaism my lifestyle.



My conversion journey started after the tragic events of October 7th. A sense of distance from the traumatised Jewish community made me seek a deeper connection. A phone conversation with Rabbi Botnick, during which I shared my journey to Judaism, led to an invitation to Shabbat services and to the Introduction to Judaism course.

The warmth I felt at the Synagogue was unlike anything I had experienced. People genuinely wanted to hear my story, and every member I met was remarkably down to earth and kind

The warmth I felt at the Synagogue was unlike anything I had experienced. People genuinely wanted to hear my story, and every member I met was remarkably down to earth and kind. The sense of welcome was palpable and at Belsize Square it seems to be a halachic requirement not to sit alone! The Synagogue's heritage and music create a uniquely special atmosphere. Cantor Heller and the choir have the ability to connect us to the liturgy in a deeply meaningful way – every note resonates with emotion.

I was understandably nervous, but this was one of the most significant days of my life

On the Course, I also had the chance to connect with other people on similar journeys. Sharing experiences and ideas, often over meals, is a central part of the process but what I liked most was making new friends, not just within the class, but also with those who had completed the programme or were about to start it.

My conversion was completed with an appearance before Masorti Judaism's Beit Din, which serves as the Beit Din for our own community as well. I remember Rabbi Botnick giving me a tour of the Sternberg Centre for Judaism before the meeting. I was understandably nervous, but this was one of the most significant days of my life. The Beit Din panel immediately put me at ease as we discussed my motivations for conversion, Sicilian-Jewish history, my knowledge of Jewish practices and rituals and my commitment to Jewish life.

Know from where you came and where you are going

Following the interview, I went to the mikveh. This marked a special moment in my conversion. The first part of the Mishnah in Pirkei Avot 3:1 echoed in my mind: 'Know from where you came and where you are going and before whom you are destined to give account and reckoning.' Immediately afterwards, the ark was opened for the recitation of the *Shema* and *Ve'ahavta* and I will always remember Rabbi Botnick's words at the end of the conversion process: 'Welcome to the family.'





Chag Pesach Sameach from everyone at CST

After everything we have been through lately, our Pesach will feel very special this year. The Haggadah tells us of persecution, redemption and hope for a better future. The story impacts us, because these things have continued throughout Jewish life: but here we are, facing the challenges together with courage.

At CST, our only mission is to give strength and comfort to British Jews. We do this so that you and your family can lead the life you choose.

Since that dreadful day of 7 October, CST has faced unprecedented demands and challenges, but despite it all, Jewish life has intensified and grown stronger than ever before. CST has been very proud of its part in making this happen, but we need you to continue supporting us too.

Over the last 18 months, many hundreds of men and women have joined CST following intensive security training. This means we can better protect our community, making it stronger and more confident.

Our commitment to you is constant. Thank you for placing your trust in us. The future remains uncertain, but together, we will keep on facing whatever lies ahead.

There are many ways you can support CST. You can contribute by becoming a volunteer, reporting antisemitism and donating to us.

From all of us here at CST, we wish you a

Chag Pesach Sameach



Report suspicious activity and antisemitism to CST at cst.org.uk/report

EMERGENCY National Emergency Number (24-hr) **0800 032 3263**

NON-EMERGENCY London **020 8457 9999** | Manchester **0161 792 6666** | Leeds **0113 237 1980**

Community Security Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales (1042391) and Scotland (SC043612)

BOOK

Deep Listening

Alex Antscherl dips into member Emily Kasriel's fascinating forthcoming book on this important skill

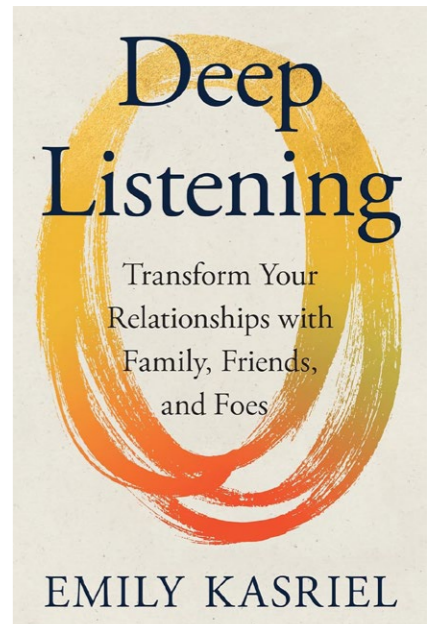
This book is both a practical guide on how to practise Deep Listening and a thoroughly researched and heartfelt pitch for why it is worth doing so. Deep Listening is the art of hearing a conversation partner respectfully, granting them space to open up freely, letting them feel witnessed and giving them the chance to crystallise their thoughts and ideas. You may not agree with their views after listening, but you will understand them far better.

There are elements of this approach in the practice of Active Listening, which is taught on many management courses. However, that is a transactional technique, often used for getting through a difficult conversation on a performance management issue with an ideal outcome already in mind. In Deep

Listening it is essential to see the other person as a multi-faceted human being, allowing strong, respectful relationships to be built. It's a transformational approach to communication.

The book includes a breakdown of the eight steps used in Deep Listening as well as numerous inspiring and interesting examples of its application in industry, journalism and politics.

At a time of such deep polarisation in global affairs, the impact of a refusal to listen to an alternative viewpoint is all too apparent. I can only hope that the skill of Deep Listening might be learned by those working in high-level international negotiations and perhaps even adopted by world leaders themselves. They could start by reading this book.



Deep Listening will be published on 22 May by HarperCollins and is available to pre-order now.

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

COMMUNAL SEDER

INTERACTIVE ★ INSPIRING ★ DELICIOUS

SECOND SEDER NIGHT – SUNDAY 13 APRIL
6.45pm following the Service

Rabbi Botnick and Cantor Heller invite you for Second Night Seder

A Seder for the whole family including a three course dinner, all of the Pesach songs and thoughtful insights and discussion

£40 Members ★ £50 Non-members ★ £20 under 16s

Book via our website – www.synagogue.org.uk
E: office@synagogue.org.uk T: 020 7794 3949

JEWISH LITERARY FOUNDATION

JEWISH BOOK WEEK

The Wingate Prize Event at Jewish Book Week
8 March 2025

The winner or their representative will be in conversation with Belsize Square's own Emily Kasriel

Emily will also talk to the shortlisted authors and judges about how the shortlisted books explore themes of joy and resilience as responses to adversity

Tickets include celebratory sparkling wine/elderflower fizz to enjoy with the judges and shortlisted authors

BOOK NOW
<https://jewishliteraryfoundation.co.uk/events/9378>
25% off the ticket price with the code **wingateprize25**

WISE WORDS

WHAT GIVES US COMFORT?

Eve Hersov, Belsize Square Community Care Co-ordinator, reports on our post-Chanukah lunch which was attended by over 40 members, mostly aged over 80.

The delicious meal (including latkes!) was prepared by Claire Walford, and Marion Nathan (Head of the Keshet Committee) and her skilled volunteers laid beautiful tables and served the meal and drinks superbly. The gathering provided the opportunity for conversation, a bit of chat and song from the Ministers, and a dialogue about what provides us with comfort in these 'interesting' times. The result was this fascinating list, ranging from the intellectual to the day-to-day.

A fluffy pillow
Times like this – being together with other members
To be served and to feel special
A view looking out at greenery – a vista
Blue skies
Family
Egyptology programmes
Flowers on the table – especially roses and daffodils
Friday night dinner with family
Conversation with people interested in what interests me, who want to know what I think
Music – Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Chamber music
The Belsize Square Synagogue choir
A nicely laid table
Countdown
Friendship
Grandchildren
Great-grandchildren
Having connections
To be loved and to love

Radio 3
Lowering expectations and appreciating what we have here right now
Meetings like this – a good meal
I like speaking to my friends on the telephone
I like going to Brent Cross and going through the shops
Good health
Sliding into bed
Memories of when my mind was good and I did well at school and university
My cat
Listening to news
TV
60's music

Elvis
The seaside
The countryside
Travelling holidays
Cruises
Morning coffee looking at the views from our terrace over London
Watching sunrise and sunset
The birds flying in huge flocks
Chatting to children and grandchildren
Walking
Sleeping
Seeing videos of family abroad
Being happily married
Watching nature programmes

Being in the company of interesting people
Eating a good dinner
Looking at flowers
Having good help when we need it
Sunshine
Gardens
Good theatre
Bridge
Cards
Casinos
My spouse
Having a twin brother
Belsize Square Synagogue
Colombian coffee
Dark chocolate
Cushions behind my back
Phone calls to my friends and family



Some of the participants at the post-Chanukah lunch, where there was an exceptionally wide age range, from 1 to 97!

SEXUAL HARASSMENT, NEW LEGISLATION AND WHAT WE ARE DOING

Chairman Jackie Alexander on an update to our governance

I want to draw your attention to a new law which came into effect at the end of October 2024. The Worker Protection (Amendment of the Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 places a positive duty on all employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees in the course of their employment.

As you would expect, we have never condoned or accepted any harassment of anyone within the Synagogue, but we now have an additional legal obligation regarding sexual harassment. I wanted to inform you about the steps that we are taking. We are currently undertaking a risk assessment which we will review annually, as we do with all our risk assessments. In addition, with my HR professional hat on, I will be running a short training session for senior staff.

I am also writing this because I wanted you to know that should you see any sexual harassment within the Synagogue, please do contact Lee or me. Of course, this harassment can occur unintentionally, but if someone is upset we would like to know and see if we can put things right.

MEKHIRAT HAMETZ
SELLING YOUR HAMETZ
If you have *hametz* that you can't get rid of before Pesach and therefore need to observe the custom of 'selling' it, please contact Adam in the Synagogue Office by 8pm on Thursday 10 April. He will send you the relevant form.

NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS NW.3.

Dear Fellow Members

Two southend und twenty fife did not make an awe species start with the knew US president Egon Musk propositioning the lout mouse racist Robby Thompson as our neckst Prime Minister. He should mine his own business, consentrait on his Taser car company, his ex-twitter und putting himself on the Moon.

Now away from politics, live at the mansions is flowering nicely with Mrs Klopstick having ridden a knew Purim Spiel on a modern pento seam. Esther is plaid by a man, Dr Dolphy Hincklebaum, und King Ashuvarious by Mrs Blumenkohl. Haman (schtomp, schtomp), is also to be a femail part. My wive put herself foreword for this roll. As she did the orditions, she of cause got the part. Of all sings, Mrs K wanted me to play Queen Washti, but I am not a dreck artist, so hear I put my food down. As always, I was happy to implant myself behind the scenery.

Already sings are auf kicking for Pesach. We have new inmates, a Mrs Hewig Witzig und a Miss Gertrude Marbel who are identifiable twins. The problem is that they are both the same age und the youngest pear in Abernein Mansions at eighty three. The big question is not who will recipe the Manishtanu. This they can do alternativity, but wood we be two ultra-unorthodox if we secreted two aphicomens, so that both laddies have chance of a rewort? Maybe the Rabbi wood kindly redirect us in this metter.

I am suffering mixed motions und don't know weather to be prout oder engrly with my wive. Inspite of her promise, two weeks ago she mate an immergency flash to Obergurgl in Austria. Her friend Lotte Wrinklestein had a nasty fall und could no longer take part in the Maccabi Winter Games Senior Laddies Giant Shalom. Of cause, Mrs K took her plaice und inspite of her leg of draining, she came forth. I suppose I should just be sankful that all her bones are still in the right order.

With the best of intentions
Fritz Klopstick

ASK FRITZ

Quiet a few members have ridden to me asking how to come over feeling down harded about the present und future. My answer is very simple. I go by the song from the late grate Bing Crosby, "Eggcentuate the positive und illuminate the negative, but don't mess with Mister Jim Levene." This advise I give myself every morning over my moosely.

Home is where the heart is

NEW RESIDENTS WELCOME

Outstanding residential, nursing, dementia, respite & rehabilitation and end-of-life care

In-house services include:

- GP, Pharmacy Technician
- Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Clinical Psychology
- Audiology, Dietitian, Speech & Language Therapy



Find out more

Scan the QR code, visit nightingalehammerson.org or email ResidentsServices@nightingalehammerson.org

NIGHTINGALE HOUSE LONDON SW12 8NB | 020 8673 3495
HAMMERSON HOUSE, WOHL CAMPUS LONDON N2 0BE | 020 3838 8090



RESIDENT MARY, 107, A GREAT-GREAT GRANDMOTHER IS HAPPY TO CALL HAMMERSON HOUSE HER HOME.

"I'm happy here and I can relax, knowing I will be looked after really well. I enjoy the Jewish atmosphere and everyone is jolly. I particularly like the concerts and the quizzes, I do really well in the quizzes."



Live better for longer at home with reach

BY NIGHTINGALE HAMMERSON
A TRUSTED NAME IN THE OLDER JEWISH COMMUNITY



Reach is a digital platform offering individuals and those who care for them free practical advice to age well. Our expert guidance focuses on improving health and social connections.



For guidance and support whenever you need it

nightingalehammerson.org/reach/practical-advice

SERVICES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm
Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Kikar Kids – Junior Shabbat Service

Saturday 2 March, 5 April, 3 May
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

PURIM

Thursday 13 March at 6.45pm. Megillah reading followed by Purim entertainment

PESACH

1st Night: Saturday 12 April 6.45pm
1st Day: Sunday 13 April 10.00am
2nd Night: Sunday 13 April 6.45pm
followed by Communal Seder
2nd Day: Monday 14 April 10.00am
7th Night: Friday 18 April 6.45pm
7th Day: Saturday 19 April 10.00am
8th Night: Saturday 19 April 6.45pm
8th Day: Sunday 20 April 10.00am including Yizkor

SHAVUOT

1st Eve: Sunday 1 June 6.45pm
1st Day: Monday 2 June 10.00am
2nd Eve: Monday 2 June 6.45pm
2nd Day: Tuesday 3 June 10.00am including Yizkor

CHEDER AND BEIT MITZVAH

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

End of Term Sunday 30 March
Start of term Sunday 27 April
Half Term Sundays 25 May & 1 June

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:
Ana & Ariel Hems | Noam Sarfati & Michaela Carlowe
Patricia & Paul Trijbits with daughter Lea
Lorraine & Melvin Robinson | Susanna Freudenheim
Michael Cohen | Sally & Spencer Jay | Sophie Brown
Agnes Fisher | Eleanor Fisher | Maude Fisher
Hannah Steinmatz | Maya Golan with daughter
Alexandra

SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square,
London NW3 4HX

020 7794 3949
office@synagogue.org.uk
www.synagogue.org.uk

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

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

PESACH OFFICE HOURS

The Office will be closed
on Monday 14 April,
Friday 18 April and
Monday 21 April

SHAVUOT OFFICE HOURS

The Office will be closed
on Monday 2 June and
Tuesday 3 June

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

CANTOR

Dr Paul Heller
cantor@synagogue.org.uk
07949 078366

BIRTH

Mazal tov to: Kate Samuelson & Tom Brada on the birth of their daughter Bella

BNEI MITZVAH

Mazal tov to:
Dina & Ilya Berdnikov on the Bnei Mitzvah of their daughters Liza & Masha on 8 March
Richard Sherwood & Fiona Murphy on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Daisy on 29 March
Tim Solnick & Sarah Bailey on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Dash on 5 April
Lynne Serfaty & Emmanuel Breuillard on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Amos on 26 April

DEATHS

Neil Danziger on 27 December
Michael Berman-Wald on 11 January
Raymond Altbach on 28 January
Marion Stenham on 12 February
Jacques Van Vlymen on 17 February



CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Lee Taylor
lee@synagogue.org.uk

CHAIRMAN

Jackie Alexander
chairman@synagogue.org.uk

CHEDER AND YOUTH

Caroline Loison
caroline@synagogue.org.uk
020 7794 3949

COMMUNITY CARE CO-ORDINATOR & BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE

Eve Hersov
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
May/June issue is
31 March 2025

Contributions to
alexantscherl@me.com or
the Synagogue office