



### A QUESTION ANSWERED

Rabbi Gabriel Botnick responds to another current question

# A smoky problem

Dear Rabbi,

This summer, we plan to attend a few barbecues at friends' homes where we know that they will be grilling non-kosher meat. Is it OK to bring our own kosher or vegetarian food to be cooked on the same barbecue?

Sincerely,  
Curious Carnivore

Dear CC,

This is a great question — one that comes up often at this time of year, and in more situations than we might expect, so allow me to address your points before turning to the bigger picture.

The Talmud (Pesachim 76b) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 108) both explore whether or not it is permissible to eat kosher meat that's been roasted in the same oven as non-kosher meat. The worry is that the fat of the prohibited food might spread out and come into contact with the permitted food, or that the kosher meat could absorb the aroma of the forbidden food. Indeed there are many rabbis who hold that such a situation would render the kosher meat impermissible to eat; however, there are some rabbis who say that, while one should strive to avoid such a scenario, if the deed was already done then the kosher meat is still acceptable to eat. There are even some rabbis who say that, under certain conditions, there should be no issue at all, even if the foods were cooked this way on purpose.

But the rabbis were writing centuries ago and the realities of their worlds were different to ours today. So how does all this apply to your specific question?

Grilling on a barbecue is rather different to roasting in an oven. Juices released by foods on a barbecue don't spread out – they drip directly onto the flames below the grate, where they turn into smoke and steam and rise back up. If a barbecue lid is closed, then forbidden fumes could very well come into contact with your food and render it impermissible, but if the lid is left open, or if there is no lid, then this is no longer a concern.

Grilling kosher and non-kosher foods at the same time, on separate parts of the grate, with the lid open, could indeed be considered OK, but you would still have to be careful not to use the same spatula or tongs with the two foods, as that would directly transfer the juices and flavours between them. If you were to grill kosher food *after* the non-kosher food, you would also need to be careful not to have it come into contact with any residue left behind by the prohibited food.

Orthodox authorities say the best approach is to double wrap your own food in aluminium foil for the entire time it's on the barbecue. But you could also use a heavy-duty foil and make a sort of small tray to place on top of the grate. Probably the best approach would be to bring your own wire mesh grill topper and barbecue utensils. It might feel like a faff, but that would be the simplest and most straightforward approach.

However, all this having been said, you could still rely on the most lenient rabbinic rulings that say you don't need to overcomplicate the matter. This is, after all, the main reasoning behind sticking to vegetarian

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food at non-kosher restaurants. And if you're comfortable doing that, then there's no reason to make things awkward for your hosts when they've invited you round for what's meant to be a fun summer gathering. Similarly, you can rely on this approach if you happen to find yourself on summer holiday in a place where the cuisine is not the most conducive to keeping kosher.

Now, beyond the practicalities, there's a broader – and, I believe, more important – point to address: aren't these apparently trivial details of Jewish law just an exercise in nit-picking? Why should we even concern ourselves with them? For me, it's all about being mindful. Our sages often say the main thing that distinguishes humans from the rest of the animal kingdom is our

advanced cognitive ability. When an animal finds itself feeling hungry, it simply turns to the nearest food source and digs in – without much (or any) thought given to its fitness for consumption. But when humans are hungry, we don't eat just anything – we make sure it's not poisonous, stale, or otherwise bad for us. Jewish law then comes in and encourages us to think even more: sure, you could eat it, but should you? Our tradition asks us to pause even longer before we sate our appetite, so that we have time to think deeply – spiritually.

And that regular practice of pausing in order to be mindful is the key. It's what helps us become more fully human. It's what strengthens our resistance to even more of life's temptations. I know that if I'm able to resist the urge to eat any old sausage placed before

me and consider how best to cook up a kosher hot dog instead, then I certainly am able to avoid giving in to more difficult and destructive temptations in other aspects of life.

So kudos to you for asking your question, as it tells me you're already on the path towards that deeper mindfulness with which we're called to engage. I hope my answer helps you find the approach that works best for you. But no matter what you decide, you're already in a great place.

Sincerely,  
Rabbi Botnick

**If you have a question you'd like Rabbi Botnick to address in a future issue of *Our Congregation*, please send an email to [rabbi@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:rabbi@synagogue.org.uk) with the subject 'Ask the Rabbi.'**

## SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOT

### Tanya Magasiner

Director of Tax at The Office Group/Fora; member of Synagogue Finance Committee and new Board member



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

Usually when people ask me what I do, it's a conversation stopper! Tax is not a topic most people want to discuss. I started my career at the 'Big Four' accounting firms, but since moving into in-house corporate

roles, I have really enjoyed being part of a business, adding value, and helping it grow. I recently joined The Office Group/Fora, which provides flexible office and workspace experiences. It has a real energy about it and I am excited to be part of its next stage of growth.

I have been a member of the Synagogue's Finance Committee for three years. I am pleased to be able to use my financial experience to contribute to the operation of our Synagogue and I am looking forward to contributing more as a Board Member.

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

Tax is a technical subject, so an important part of my job is explaining complex ideas in a straightforward way and helping the business to understand their practical impact. Most people's attention span for tax talk is fairly limited, so communicating clearly and concisely has definitely become an important skill.

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

I love coaching and supporting young people as they build their careers and begin adult life. It can be such a difficult phase, especially when the world is changing so quickly. I have often wondered whether I should have studied psychology. Having said that, someone once advised me that it is never too late for a second career, so when I finally put away my tax books, I may decide to retrain.

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

I am originally from Cape Town, where I was a member of Temple Israel, a Reform shul. I have been living in London for 28 years and, about eight or nine years ago, after my father became ill, I felt that I needed to join a synagogue.

I had been to a service at Belsize Square with a friend and immediately felt a connection. My grandfather had escaped Berlin and made his way by boat to Cape Town. He was one of the original members of Temple Israel, and the services there were very similar to those at Belsize Square, so being part of this community feels both familiar and deeply meaningful.

#### What's your favourite festival?

Yom Kippur. I value the chance to truly switch off and reflect. The music and choir at Belsize Square are so beautiful that they help me detach from everyday stress and think more deeply about my life.

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

Centre, to the right of the aisle - I am not quite sure why it is always to the right! I like being in the middle of the shul, as I feel I get the full effect of the wonderful music.



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

## WHAT HAS THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES DONE FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

We have all been affected by the antisemitism crisis and below are the main examples of what the President, the Honorary Officers, the staff and volunteers have achieved over the past months, not only by providing help in the main conurbations where the majority of Jewish people live, but also in lesser populated regions. This has been achieved by talking with those in Government, both central and local, the police, organisations representing other faiths, and through our educational outreach programmes.

### OUR SUCCESSES

- Profiling what antisemitism is, how it mutates, how it has looked in the past and what it looks like now. We know that what is needed is Protection, Prosecution and Partnership
- Organising a rally to respond to the community's yearning to come together and to show unity at this time with other Jews and with non-Jews
- Testifying at a Home Affairs Select Committee Meeting on antisemitism
- Contributing to the Independent Commission to investigate anti-Jewish racism chaired by Penny Mordaunt and Lord John Mann, published in July last year
- Participating in a forum at 10 Downing Street which resulted in:
  - an extra £25m for increased police patrols in areas with large Jewish populations, to enhance security at synagogues, schools and community centres;
  - an additional £500,000 to be allocated to Barnet Council;
  - the fast tracking of hate crime prosecutions
- Achieving promises from the Prime Minister detailed in his speech on 5 May 2026 to:
  - provide £7m to tackle antisemitism in schools, colleges and universities and to ensure Holocaust education is taught in all schools;
  - commission independent reviews into antisemitism in education and the health services and rolling out training for staff;
  - make universities publish reports on the scale of antisemitism on their campuses as well as the specific steps they have taken to clamp down on it
  - ensure cultural venues will not receive public funding if they host activities promoting antisemitism

- Persuading the media that antisemitism is anti-Jewish hatred – racism, pure and simple. The President, the Chief Executive and Honorary Officers have appeared on TV, spoken on the radio and written articles for the newspapers to achieve maximum impact
- Close involvement in local councils by meeting with newly elected councillors

Finally, tribute must be given to those who have contributed to the BoD's first Jewish Culture Month. Activities have taken place round the whole of the UK and included the Ladino concert at our own Synagogue.

## AN IMPORTANT NOTE FROM BoD REPRESENTATIVE PETER STRAUSS

As we highlighted at the Synagogue's AGM in June, many of the vital activities outlined above are only possible because of the support provided by our community. We would therefore ask all our members to opt in to the £35 Communal Levy in their annual synagogue bill. While modest in amount, this contribution helps provide the resources needed for the Board of Deputies to represent and protect Jewish communities across the UK, strengthen security, combat antisemitism, engage with government and wider society, and ensure that our collective voice is heard at the highest levels.

At a time when these efforts are more important than ever, every contribution makes a difference. By choosing to support the Communal Levy, you are making a direct investment in the safety, resilience and future of Jewish life in the UK.

## THE JEWISH LIVING EXPERIENCE

a resource for education

**BoD representative Deborah Cohen introduces one of the Board's important initiatives**

The Jewish Living Experience is a mobile travelling exhibition, aimed primarily at school groups. It enables participants to gain an insight into Judaism as a living faith, with a lifestyle that has been sustained for over 5,000 years. Designed by education experts, the exhibition supports the teaching of Judaism in line with all agreed Religious Education and Citizenship curricula.

The Jewish Living Experience exhibition supports community cohesion, interfaith dialogue and Prevent agendas. At a time when community relations are tense, this free-of-charge resource is commended to anyone working in education as a great introduction for non-Jews to Jewish life. It could be a good addition to our Holocaust Education Programme for Schools.

**An introductory leaflet to the exhibition is available online at [bod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Jewish-Experience-Leaflet.pdf](http://bod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Jewish-Experience-Leaflet.pdf)**

# More Joy, Less Oy

Jewish Culture Month, a Board of Deputies initiative, ran from 16 May to 16 June, promising celebratory events to give us 'More Joy, Less Oy'. Belsize Square's contribution was our Ladino Music concert, on which we report on the next page. Here, **Eve Hersov** tells us about three of the other events that she attended

I started Jewish Culture Month with a screening of *Hester Street* at the Curzon Mayfair. *Hester Street* was the first feature film made by American director Joan Micklin Silver in 1975, which resulted in an Oscar nomination for actress Carol Kane. The black-and-white film follows the story of an immigrant, Yankel, in New York in the 1890s and shows how the arrival from Russia of his wife Gitl and his son creates tension for a man thoroughly captivated by becoming American and modern, whose wife speaks Yiddish and resists giving up her old-world sensibilities. Without giving away the plot twists, it is fair to say that Gitl has grit and the film makes her a feminist icon, who achieves the best of both worlds. The film screening was introduced by lecturer and film historian Dr Julia Wagner, who explained that this grassroots film launched Micklin Silver's career. It was shot on a low budget and had to be financed by her husband as no one in Hollywood was interested in funding a female filmmaker, let alone one wanting to explore the subject of Jewish immigration.

Next on my agenda was a trip to the London Archive for their exhibition about the medieval Jewish Cemetery that lies beneath the Barbican. It is a tiny but fascinating exhibition documenting the Jewish presence not only in the City's Square Mile but the history of Jews in this country including the constraints, persecution and expulsions over the centuries.

I found it incredible to think that a Jewish cemetery lies beneath the Barbican development and the City of London Girls School. I was captivated by the discovery of herring bones as well as stones from one of two mikvot. The exhibition can be toured in 10 minutes but is worth a trip as long as your expectations are not for something larger. The London Archive is a comfortable venue; very welcoming, with seating and self-serve drinks available to visitors.

My final event was entitled 'Milk, Memory and Cheesecake' and was organised in part by the Jewish Square Mile Foundation. Dr Maria Diemling talked us through Jewish cuisine in London from medieval times onwards. I was impressed with the recipe for Medieval Dairy Pie she found, which Ray Rinkoff (of Rinkoff Bakery in Whitechapel) produced personally for the assembled group and which was delicious. Rinkoff's more traditional modern cheesecake was also available for us to decorate in celebration of Shavuot.

A medieval cheesecake recipe

## JEWISH CULTURE MONTH



The ensemble singing *Adio Querida*

Soprano Julieta Kunik

**MILK, MEMORY & CHEESECAKE**  
A special afternoon for Jewish Culture Month with The Jewish Square Mile and Shoreditch Trust. Hear from Dr Maria Diemling who will take us on a journey through medieval Jewish flavours, customs and culinary traditions. With thanks to Meg Hepher, Jewish Square Mile trustee, who read widely about ingredients that were available in the 13th century and utilised them to create this recipe, expertly baked by Rinkoff Bakery.

**MEDIAeval DAIRY PIE** which would have been eaten at Shavuot

**INGREDIENTS:**  
PASTRY:  
200g wheat flour — it would not be inauthentic to use a mix of white and wheat flour.  
140ml water — use a little more if the mixture appears too dry.  
Pinch of salt.  
FILLING:  
300g fresh curd cheese — ricotta or cottage cheese (well drained) can be used as a modern-day alternative.  
2 eggs.  
4 tablespoons honey.  
3 tablespoons chopped, dried figs.

**METHOD:**  
1. Mix the flour and salt and gradually add water.  
2. Knead until smooth.  
3. Cover and rest for 30 minutes.  
4. Beat the eggs, then mix into the cheese.  
5. Stir in the honey and dried figs.  
6. Roll out the pastry into circle.  
7. Lightly smear a shallow pie tin with butter.  
8. Line the tin with the pastry.  
9. Spoon the mixture into the pastry-lined tin.  
10. Bake for approximately 40 minutes at 160°C (fan).

"TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD"

## An Evening of Ladino Song

Cantor **Paul Heller** reminisces on our very special concert on 17 May, part of Jewish Culture Month

Ladino is more than a language; it is an archive of memory. In its words and melodies live the stories of communities dispersed across the Mediterranean after their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, preserving a language and traditions that might otherwise have been lost.

Our programme traced that journey – from the Golden Age of Spain through exile and diaspora to the rich flourishing of Sephardic culture in Morocco, Turkey, the Balkans and beyond.

Superb vocalist Julieta Kunik, Cantors Yohel and Paul Heller, the bOYbershop Quartet (Matthew Pochin, Yoav Oved, Ben Wolf and Benjamin Seifert), accompanists Ben Wolf and César Durán, and the arrangements by Ben Wolf himself and by Alexander Knapp, brought that inheritance to life with care, conviction and enthusiasm.

We closed our concert with all the singers joining together for the Sephardic folk song *Adio Querida* – 'Open your closed door' – in a beautiful *cappella* arrangement by Benjamin Till. The ballad captures the pain of exile using an image of longing for what has not yet been opened. The evening marked the beginning of that opening for the 150 people in the audience and the 120 who joined online: a doorway into Ladino and all it still has to offer. Special thanks to our programme sponsors, the performers and the technical and office staff who helped make the evening such a success.

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## Penimah

פְּנִימָה · TURNING INWARD

A monthly journey through the soul's inner landscape

Each month we gather online to learn from the great masters of Jewish spiritual thought — then sit together in guided meditation, letting the teaching become lived experience.

DRAWING FROM THE MASTERS

**The Piaseczner Rebbe**  
Chovat HaTalmidim · Inner vision & the soul's voice

**Bachya ibn Paquda**  
Chovat HaLevavot · Duties of the heart & bitachon

**The Ramchal**  
Mesilat Yesharim · The path of character refinement

EACH SESSION · ONE HOUR

**I**  
OPENING  
Grounding & arrival — setting sacred space

**II**  
TEACHING  
One text, one idea, explored with depth

**III**  
MEDITATION  
Guided practice rooted in the teaching

**IV**  
CLOSING  
Brief sharing & integration

**LIVE ONLINE OPEN TO ALL**  
No prior knowledge required  
All are welcome

**7pm BST**  
9 JUN · 14 JUL · 11 AUG  
8 SEP · 13 OCT · 10 NOV · 8 DEC 2026

REGISTRATION & DETAILS  
cantor@synagogue.org.uk

## SELICHOT

SATURDAY 5 SEPTEMBER

8:00 PM  
Sushi Dinner & Havdalah

9:00 PM  
Choral Selichot Service  
led by Cantor Heller

Pre-booking for dinner is required - £20 per person

To book:  
www.synagogue.org.uk/payment or  
email: adam@synagogue.org.uk

There is no charge to attend the service

## NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS NW.3.

Dear Fellow Members

I am now two long in the toes to make a change of courier. Of cause, if I was much yunger I wood properly shoes a different pass. Won should always try to do sumsing youthful with won's live. Of cause, my passion for the world of buttons und fasteners will always be in my psycho. If I hat my time over again I would be a healthy visitor oder a doctorate off law, even somesing medicianal, possibly a farmercist. Of cause, it is now two late four me, but I would advise all yunsters to look in this way.

Hear in Abernein Mansions we have a large nummer of axe-doctors. Some were really quite immanent. It fills my breast with proudness that so many Jews have given there live to the advancement off medicianal pefessionship. We also have hear a grate cross-sanction of people who have extinguished themselves in work, witch is also empathetic.

Mrs Klopstick has demoted much of her live to helping others achief their fool potential. As I ride this column, she is in the borders from Mozanbeak und Souse Efrica leading a peddle board exposition up the Limpopo for Hempsted Jewish Ladies Exposition Clup. This is especially for those who are allergic to drowning und crocodiles to help them outcome their fierce.

Vile my wive is away peddling, I am going on a carpetry cause. I have plens to bilt a shet in the communal gardens hier to store part of my button collection but also ware I can tinkle around my ideas to approve the lifes of our inmates und other congregational members. My furst projectile will be a warking stick witch can also be youthed for water dividing. I believe won of the come-outs off global warning will be water shortages. So my dewise will unable those with my stick find knew water sauces. This is just won of the meny sings flopping around in my hat. Watch the space.

With the best of intentions  
Fritz Klopstick

### ASK FRITZ

We are now in the heats of sommer und my male box is filling full of requests how to protect won selve from the son but still get a ten. My advise is to always ware a het und not a biasball cab. Those who still want to be browned off should never schmear exposed bits with oil, butt rather put on a high factory cream. Even better to stay in the shadows.

## OUR CENTENARIANS

Community Care Co-ordinator **Eve Hersov** recently visited one of our community's centenarians

Post-Shavuot and bearing cheesecake, I paid a very belated visit to **Halina Steinmetz** to celebrate her 100th birthday with her. Halina resides near the shul at Rathmore House on Eton Avenue. She was very pleased to receive her Synagogue Honorary Life Membership certificate. She had, in fact, turned 100 on 5 October last year, but each time I visited her over the winter I kept forgetting to bring the certificate! Halina has no family and would love to receive more visitors. She was born in Poland where her father had a respected business related to publishing. A Catholic friend of the family volunteered to shelter both Halina and her older sister through the war. The sisters were students at an academic, highly regarded private Catholic school, and the Catholic family friend hid the sisters in plain sight. Halina spoke several languages and later worked for the Israeli embassy.



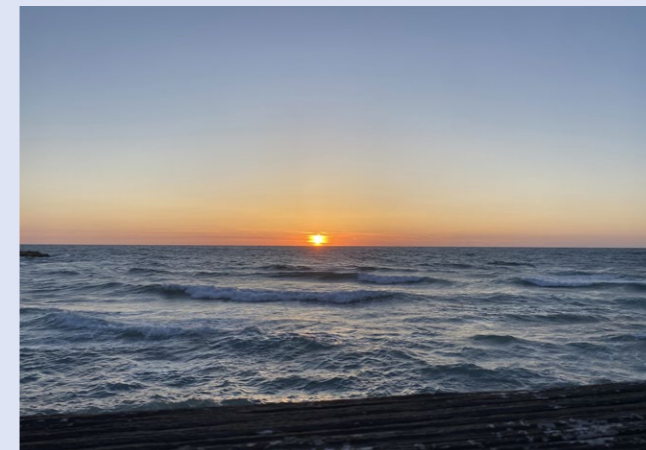
Eve Hersov presents Halina Steinmetz with her Honorary Membership certificate. Shavuot cheesecake is also in evidence.

## ALIYAH

# Diary of an Olah Chadasha

**Elaine Bernstein made Aliyah in March and has sent this account of a further episode in her life as an *Olah Chadasha* – a new immigrant to Israel.**

It was Shavuot and I was invited for lunch with friends of my sister in Kfar Vitkin, a 45 minute drive north of Tel Aviv. As an *Olah Chadasha*, the red carpet of welcome is ever present. They have three kids and their eldest son, who is in the army and currently stationed in Lebanon, was given leave to come home for the chag.



Sunset – Israel or Lebanon?

During a delicious lunch he asked me if I wanted to see photos from his mission there. I couldn't believe it – I thought it was all top secret. 'Yes!' I said. He showed me where their unit was stationed. They eat dry rolls and sleep on the floors of evacuated houses where there is no electricity or running water, not because the residents are poor, but because when they follow the IDF's instructions to evacuate, they understandably turn everything off.

He showed me photos of boxes of ammunition which they'd found, saying that these are ordinary residential homes, not the homes of Hezbollah. He showed me a view from the house where they were positioned, beautiful green countryside with red tiled white houses dotted here and there, and he told me in his best English that he couldn't understand why 'they don't just want to live in peace'. And lastly he showed me a photo of a beautiful sunset, and I thought, how crazy, we are at war and yet we all share the same view of the sunset every night, just seventy-five miles apart from each other.

## REMEMBERING

# Ruth Rothenberg

Our community lost one of its more recognisable members with the death of Ruth Rothenberg at the age of 85 on 30 May. On most Shabbat mornings, towards the end of the service, she would arrive to join her husband David at the front right side of the Shul, always wearing her trademark black leather beret.



But that was perhaps the least important feature of her involvement with Belsize Square. Ruth was a journalist by profession and after early jobs as a reporter and features writer, she was Deputy Editor of the *Jewish Observer* and then for many years reporter and Obituaries Editor for the *Jewish Chronicle*. So she was uniquely suited to edit *Our Congregation*, which she did single-handedly, untiringly and highly professionally from 1975 to 1988 and then again for five years until her retirement in 2020. In her Synagogue Snapshot, we asked Ruth about the hardest part of her job and she simply replied, 'Knowing where to stop' – a very true and fitting response for a woman with so many activities and interests that included classical music, opera and theatre.

We send our wishes for a 'Long Life' to David, their son and three daughters (one of whom is Belsize Square's Treasurer, Sarah Percival) and their grandchildren.

## SYNAGOGUE BOARD

Following the Synagogue's Annual General Meeting on 1 June 2026, the members of the Board are:

### HONORARY OFFICERS

Co-Chairs: Annette Nathan & Jimmy Strauss  
Hon Secretary: Rob Nothman  
Asst Hon Secretary: Adam Davis  
Hon Treasurer: Sarah Percival  
Asst Hon Treasurer: Nick Viner

### EXECUTIVE

Carol Cohen  
Frank Joseph

Simon Cohen  
Peter Goodman  
Joe Hacker  
Pat Hirschovits

Tanya Magasiner  
Adam Nathan  
David Pollins  
Richard Pollins

### BOARD

Jackie Alexander  
Joe Brookes  
Adam Buchler  
Jeannie Cohen

Michael Horowitz  
Adam Hurst  
Oliver Jerome  
Freddy Lehmann

James Rossiter  
Dilys Tausz  
Justyn Trenner  
Claire Walford

# Yemin Orde Youth Village

An update from Susan Weijel, Deputy Director of the Yemin Orde Youth Village, one of the beneficiaries of the funds raised by our Israel Charity Dinner in April

The past two-and-a-half years have been profoundly challenging for everyone in Israel, including the youth of Yemin Orde, many of whom come from complex backgrounds. This academic year began with renewed optimism and momentum, only to be disrupted by the outbreak of war with Iran on 28 February and the temporary closure of the Village. Once again, the Yemin Orde community responded with resilience, as dedicated staff provided a steady anchor, ensuring our youth felt safe, empowered and supported, and continued investing in themselves and their futures.

## THERAPEUTIC CARE

Our holistic therapeutic programme engages all youth in the Village through structured psycho-educational group work in their group homes, complemented by targeted individual therapies, available in Hebrew, Russian or French, for those requiring additional support. Through weekly socio-therapeutic group sessions led by each group's educator and social worker, our residents build emotional resilience and develop practical skills to navigate social dynamics, stress, and uncertainty - skills and tools that are especially critical

in the context of the ongoing war. The therapeutic framework also includes 12-step groups for addressing substance use and other high-risk behaviours, and psychodrama groups, introduced last year, offering a safe and creative space for emotional expression.

## ECO-FARM

The eco-farm continues to be a special place for learning, healing and connecting to Israel. A new initiative moved Hebrew lessons from the classroom into the fields, so 9th- and 10th-grade students work alongside their teachers, learning Hebrew through hands-on agricultural activity. One of our students, who immigrated from Ethiopia four years ago, arrived at the Village with social, academic and emotional challenges, as his family struggled to adapt to life in Israel. At the eco-farm, he reconnected with skills and knowledge from his past as a shepherd in Ethiopia, gradually taking responsibility for caring for the goats and guiding his peers in the fields. This role became a turning point, strengthening his confidence, leadership and sense of belonging. Today, he is more engaged in school, socially connected and, for the first time since immigrating, able to envision a positive future for himself in Israel.



After-school football



On the eco-farm

## ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Sports and arts provide vital outlets for energy, connection and personal growth. After-school sports include soccer, running, cycling, Thai boxing, yoga, Pilates and fitness preparation for IDF service, alongside art classes in ceramics, jewelry making, and watercolour. Each afternoon, the Performing Arts Centre is filled with music and activity, with the Yorde Band, dance troupe, drama group and informal music groups bringing energy to Village life.

## TIKKUN OLAM

Becoming active participants in Tikkun Olam (repairing the world), our youth learn that they always have something to give others. Different groups regularly volunteer in hospitals in Haifa, packing and distributing food baskets at a soup kitchen, distributing care packages to families in need, baking cakes and delivering them to soldiers on nearby bases and organizing games and fun activities for children in a daycare centre in Hadera and an absorption centre in Nof HaGalil. One of our groups was recently awarded a certificate of appreciation for longstanding support of a soup kitchen in the city of Tirat Hacarmel.

## GRADUATE SUPPORT

Graduates' Day powerfully reinforces the enduring sense of belonging that defines the Yemin Orde community. This year, 176 scholarships were awarded, many to graduates returning to their studies after reserve duty or periods of emotional strain, with the assurance that the Village would continue to stand

behind them. Since October 7, Yemin Orde has served as a vital support system for its graduates, maintaining regular, proactive contact; renewing scholarships; providing financial assistance, guidance, and access to professional therapy, and helping alumni navigate academic, military, and personal challenges. This commitment was reflected in the words of graduate Yitzhak Kaveda, who returned this year as an informal educator and shared, 'Real change happens when an adult believes in you and refuses to give up.' His journey, from a lost adolescent to an educator, embodies the long-term impact of a community that continues to support its members well beyond graduation.

As we look around us, we see challenging times not only for Israel, but for Jewish communities around the world. In this context, the continued support we receive from Belsize Square Synagogue is especially meaningful. Your generosity (extended even amid your own challenges) is a powerful reminder that compassion and solidarity endure, even in the most difficult moments. These acts of kindness are a source of light and hope for our youth, inspiring them to believe in a better future and to carry these values forward in their own lives. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and remain committed to nurturing a generation that will, in turn, contribute positively to the world.

**RECENT EVENTS**

# Tikkun Leil Shavuot

The combination of the erev Shavuot service, supper, cheesecake and more serious learning drew a large crowd to the annual Tikkun Leil

Shavuot on 21 May. This year's Great Belsize Bake-Off had an exceptional number of delicious – and original – cheesecake competitors. The judges tasted the cakes without knowing the identities of the pastry chefs, so it was a complete surprise when the winner was announced as our Co-Chair, Annette Nathan, who can now add this to her list of impressive achievements.

The evening took a more serious turn with its learning section, 'Learning to Honour Difference in a Fractured World'. We were given plenty to think about by Belsize member Emily Kasriel, who discussed the concept of 'Deep Listening' as a means of approaching understanding between parties with differing views. The theme was developed

further by international conflict mediator, psychologist and author Gabrielle Rifkind, who spoke about her approach to resolving conflict by empowering the parties to 'Agree to Disagree'.

The Tikkun concluded with Rabbi Botnick's session. He concentrated on the underlying theme of Shavuot by providing copies of the Ten Commandments to be read by all, and inviting the participants to pair up to discuss their views on which of the Commandments was the most important. This produced interesting differences of opinion, which fortunately were mostly resolved without the need for the conflict mediators.

Food for the stomach had moved on to food for thought.



Annette Nathan – cheesecake victor

No conflict between Emily Kasriel and Gabrielle Rifkind

## SENIOR MEMBERS' SHAVUOT LUNCH

A pre-festival lunch for our senior members was held on 19 May. Adam Nathan did the catering and we had delicious homebaked challahs from Dennis Nathan. The event was beautifully organised by his wife Marion, with a dedicated team of volunteers: Andrew Cowan, Penny Grant, Jonathan Hersov, Philippa Strauss, Jennifer Saul and Bilah Greenberg, plus Dennis and Marion, and with help from the Ministers and Eve Hersov, Community Care Co-ordinator. As ever we had wonderful support for the event from Adam and Lee in the office, plus Gordon and Yelena on the caretaking side.

In a short address to the guests, Rabbi Botnick explained the word play involved with the tradition of eating dairy for Shavuot, when we celebrate the Torah being given to us at Mount Sinai, and the Cantor led us in singing two songs. Then Eve set an exercise asking people to reflect on what events in their lives felt 'beshert', God-given, such as encounters with people or places, or moments that felt like 'this was meant to be'. Peoples' stories ranged from a Jewish teacher who changed Antony Polonsky's perspective on the society around him when South African-born Antony asked 'What is a revolutionary situation?' as they set out to study the French Revolution. The teacher said, 'Look out of the classroom window to see!'

Marion Summerfield spoke about not knowing what she wanted to do in life until encountering someone she knew on a bus who explained that she was studying radiography and that students got paid while they did their training. The idea of being paid during training appealed to Marion, who decided there and then to become a radiographer. Emily McLeish felt it was 'beshert' that Sheila Hayman, the great-great-grand-niece of Felix Mendelssohn, volunteered to provide help to Emily when she was ill, not knowing that Emily was a musician. Susan Antscherl related that her daughter was riding a stationary bike at the gym when she saw an ad for a flat that she thought would suit her mother. Susan went to see the newly advertised flat and agreed that it would be the perfect downsized home for her – and it is.



Cantor Heller leads the guests in singing

# Belsize of the Future



### Joe Hacker reports on the progress of this forward-looking exercise

Before diving headlong into Belsize Square's initiative to envision a new future, there had been important questions to ask:

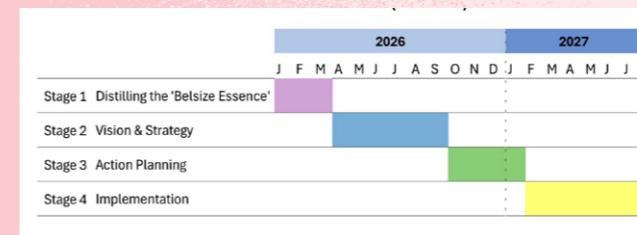
- Why did we need to envisage a future different to the present?
- What exactly was the problem we were trying to solve?
- If the answer was the Belsize of the Future (BotF) initiative, what exactly was the question?

To give the initiative focus and direction, last summer our co-chairs Annette Nathan and Jimmy Strauss helped craft the 'Chairmen's Challenge':

*The world today is tumultuous and unsettling. Not since the founding of our Synagogue 85 years ago has the future of humanity seemed so uncertain.*

*How do we build on the strengths of Belsize to ensure it strides into its second century as a welcoming and purposeful Jewish community, providing an anchor and inspiration for generations to come?*

That Challenge has been guiding BotF from the start and will continue to do so. This chart shows the expected stages of the initiative and, as you can see, we are approaching the halfway point in those stages.



Belsize of the Future (BotF) timeline

Stage 1 of the work produced the 'Belsize Essence', which tried to capture our core values. These have underpinned how we go about things at Belsize when we have been at our best as a synagogue. By engaging with the Belsize Essence when shaping the future, we will preserve the feeling of 'Belsize-ness', even as what exactly Belsize does continues to evolve.

The distilled Belsize Essence from Stage 1 is:

- Independent and Open-minded
- Welcoming and Inclusive
- Traditional yet Egalitarian

While Stage 1 required broad consultation with the whole community, Stage 2 needed a more intensive and detailed approach and thus lent itself to a smaller group. To this purpose, we assembled a team that brought together our senior leadership with eight members. We wanted a range of ages, lengths of membership, Jewish backgrounds, life situations and personalities to provide the breadth of perspectives necessary to produce robust discussion and to escape any 'groupthink'. Fortunately, most of those we approached were able and willing to commit their time and we are incredibly grateful to them for their wholehearted engagement with the process.

The Stage 2 team comprised:

Rabbi Botnick	Adam Hurst	Nick Viner
Lee Taylor	Ellie Horwell	Rachel Lasserson
Annette Nathan	Fabrizio Nascè	Sam Waller
Jimmy Strauss	Julia Soule	Vivien Lewis

The team participated in three facilitated workshops during May and June. The key challenges in those sessions were:

- Vision Session:** suspend disbelief and describe in specific terms what a thriving Belsize in 2040 would look like.
- Blockers Session:** take a sober look at the realities of today, including acknowledging the priorities that determine how Belsize currently deploys its resources (time, money, expertise, influence, creativity etc).
- Strategy Session:** find creative and ambitious ways in which to address the current reality, yet still work towards the vision from the first of these three sessions.

The team had to work through the discomfort of categorising many seemingly unrelated ideas to achieve a meeting of minds. And they then had to arrive at 'high level' outcomes, without the satisfaction of getting into detailed plans. Throughout the process they have shown great honesty and courage in sharing their thoughts, while showing great patience and being non-judgmental when listening to each other. They demonstrated mutual trust and respect and it has been a pleasure to work with them.

Stage 3, Action Planning, will require the process to open out again to the entire community. In September we will be able to share details of the outcomes from Stage 2 and we will invite the community to an interactive Action Planning session, most likely at the end of November.

Please email [botf@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:botf@synagogue.org.uk) if you have any questions or if you would like any further information about the Belsize of the Future initiative.

## **SERVICES**

**Friday evenings** at 6.45pm

**Saturday mornings** at 10.00am

### **Kikar Kids – Junior Shabbat Service**

Saturday 4 July, 1 August and 5 September

11.00am in the crèche for under 5s Service

11.00am in the library for 5-9-year-olds

11.30am Kids Kiddush

Contact Richard on [rgpollins@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:caroline@synagogue.org.uk)

End of Term Sunday 5 July

New Term starts on Sunday 6 September

## **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).

## **COMMUNITY NEWS**

### **NEW MEMBERS**

We extend a cordial welcome to:

Sherrill Maisel | Rafi Morris | Nicola Coleman & Jeff Gitter | Jody Williams | Caroline Copper together with children Sam & Sacha | Hannah Percival Frank Wharton | Roberta Sher | Robert Prevezer Emily Rosen | Wendy & Chris Mills

### **BIRTH**

Mazal Tov to Kevin & Maya Meyer on the birth of their son Zachary

Mazal tov to Hannah & Noah Libson on the birth of their son Rafi

### **BNEI MITZVAH**

Mazal Tov to Kate Weinberg & James Harding on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Elsie on Saturday 4 July

Mazal Tov to Laura Price & John Dick on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Freddie on Saturday 5 September

### **HONOURS**

Mazal Tov to Tim Levene on being elected a Sheriff of the City of London for 2026–2027

### **WEDDINGS**

Mazal Tov to Caroline Quest & Justyn Trenner on their marriage

Mazal Tov to Elizabeth Simun-Janson & Alex Simon on their marriage

## **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

### **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**

Lee Taylor

[lee@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:lee@synagogue.org.uk)

### **CHAIRS**

Annette Nathan and

Jimmy Strauss

chairman@

[synagogue.org.uk](http://synagogue.org.uk)

### **CHEDER AND YOUTH**

Caroline Loison

[caroline@](mailto:caroline@)

[synagogue.org.uk](http://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 September/October issue is 10 August. Contributions to [alexantscherl@me.com](mailto:alexantscherl@me.com) or the Synagogue office

# **OUR** CONGREGATION

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of *Our Congregation*. Some members have let us know that they would prefer to receive their magazine by email rather than as a paper copy. If you too would prefer to receive future issues by email, please contact [adam@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:adam@synagogue.org.uk). If we do not hear from you, we will continue sending your copy by post as usual.

### **DEATHS**

We regret to announce the passing of:

Ruth Rothenberg on 30 May

Raymond Cohen on 20 June

### **STONE SETTING**

The stone setting for Florence Benaiah, former Synagogue Secretary, will take place on 19 July at 1.30pm at Edgwarebury Cemetery