



 Bromley
Reform
Synagogue

SHALOM

WELCOME

INFORMATION FOR
NEW MEMBERS

www.bromleyshul.org.uk

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Welcome to Bromley Reform Synagogue (BRS).

We hope you will find the information in this leaflet useful. If you have any questions about the synagogue please phone, email or visit www.bromleyshul.org.uk

Reform Judaism takes the view that each generation must seek the answers to its own contemporary problems and questions within the Jewish tradition but not taking that tradition always at face value. For example, the role of women in the world has changed substantially, and so women in Reform Judaism play a full and equal part in religious life.

We see ourselves as standing firmly within the tradition of the biblical prophets who denounced obsession with ritual minutiae derived from the Torah when this was divorced from ethics and social justice.

Membership of the Synagogue is open to anyone who is Jewish, subject to an initial conversation with the Rabbi and acceptance by the synagogue board. Associate status is also available for non-Jewish partners. Children up to the age of 21 are automatically covered by the family membership (including single-parent families or those where the children are Jewish even though only one parent is eligible to join).

Keep in touch with the synagogue

through our Highlight newsletter and e-Light e-letter. These are great ways to communicate with the community so please contact the editors if you have something to say or a service you would like to advertise.

To receive all our communications, please make sure the Shul office has your up-to-date details.

Learning for all ages is one of the most important parts of life at BRS. We always welcome new courses run by or for members which could include anything from Torah study to Yoga. Please contact the synagogue office if you have suggestions or would like to run something.

The Cheder – Jewish school for children aged 5 to 13 years is held at the synagogue on Sundays in term time from 10.00 to 12.30.

The children learn to read and write Hebrew and Jewish studies which include: following and understanding the services, Jewish texts, festivals, customs, traditions, songs and games. After bar/bat mitzvah our young people are encouraged to stay on as paid helpers in the Cheder or Gan.

The cost of the Cheder is included in the membership fee.

The Nursery (or Gan) runs on Sunday morning alongside the Cheder from 10.00 to 12.30 in term time.

It is open and free of charge to synagogue members and non-members for children from 1–5 years old. You may bring your child as frequently or infrequently as you like. It's a great place to meet other parents and make friends.

Parents and carers must stay with their children during the Gan.

Adult Education programmes are usually open to all and free of charge. Information can be found in Highlight, e-Light and our website.

Browse our well stocked library – both for reference and borrowing. To borrow books just sign out in the book provided.

Classes for different levels of Hebrew are run and we can also arrange free tuition for any members who would like to improve their reading.

It's not all about religious ritual. There are many different social and recreational activities, including quiz nights, book groups and fun parties for all ages.

Social activities are also a great way to raise funds for BRS and we are always looking for new suggestions!

Most events are open to all. If you want to join up with other members for a social activity you are welcome to place an advert in Highlight or e-Light; just contact the editor.

We do not currently have an active social issues group – we would greatly welcome volunteers to run this group.

The Caring Community is a group of volunteers who provide support to the sick and elderly – hospital and home visits, help with transport to and from the synagogue, support in the event of bereavement or other family crises, shopping, cooking, keeping company – whatever is needed. If you would like to receive any support or offer it to others please contact the synagogue office.

The Rabbi is always available for private discussion and advice on issues that may be troubling you.

Our Social Centre is open every other week for the more senior of our members. Activities, lunches, talks and general conviviality characterise the centre. Please contact the office for details if you would like to attend or be a helper.

The building is fully accessible. It is open only for specific activities, meetings and services, but it is possible to have access at other times. Please contact the office.

The synagogue is managed and administered by an elected board, which normally meets once each month. Members may submit items for discussion.

Board members are elected at the AGM in March, and all full members are entitled to vote, or to be nominated to the board (and will be very welcome!). Day to day activities are managed by a number of sub-committees such as Education, Ritual and Religion etc. All of these greatly welcome participation from members – just contact the office or speak to the person named in Highlight. It's a great way to find out more about how the shul runs. We also have a president, and a number of vice presidents. These are honorary positions.

Annual membership fee is fixed each year by members at the AGM.

This subscription is our only source of income (apart from other donations from members) and is required to pay for the Rabbi, Head Teacher, teachers and synagogue administrator. It also pays for the cheder, maintenance of the building and all the activities and services provided.

In cases of need, the Subscription Secretary has discretionary powers to make reductions and these cases are treated in the strictest confidence. It is a matter of the greatest importance to us that nobody should be excluded for financial reasons.

Members who are tax payers are strongly encouraged to pay under Gift Aid as this adds around 25% to the amount received by the synagogue. If you are a higher-rate tax payer you are encouraged to notify HM Revenue and Customs as this reduces the cost to you considerably (a saving or repayment which the synagogue invites you but does not require you to donate to the shul).

The Jewish cycle of life.

Birth – Baby boys are circumcised on the 8th day after birth. We can help you make the arrangements. A Mohel of the Reform and Liberal Association of Mohalim, who is medically qualified and experienced, performs the actual ceremony. A separate fee is charged for his service.

When a child, male or female, is a few months old, a service of thanksgiving is normally arranged, when the parents can bring the child into the synagogue and read prayers of thanksgiving. If it has not been done already, a Hebrew name is given to the child.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah (B'mitzvah) – At the age of 13, children are expected to mark their b'mitzvah in the synagogue. The expectation and the ceremony is the same for boys and girls.

The ceremony follows a 12 month intensive study period both within and additional to the cheder.

At the start of the b'mitzvah year parents and child will be given help with understanding what is involved and the synagogue provides all the tuition required free of charge.

The parents are expected to attend services with their child for at least 12 months prior to the b'mitzvah ceremony.

The synagogue facilities are available for a reception/party.

Conversion to Judaism – For those interested in converting to Judaism, separate classes apply, lasting a period of at least 12 months.

Our kitchen and all our synagogue functions observe Kashrut as part of our tradition. Guidance is available. If in doubt, please ask. The hall can be hired and outside caterers may be used, but they must observe our Kashrut requirements.

Religious weddings are arranged with the Rabbi. The synagogue is registered for the performance of marriages.

Both partners must be members of the synagogue before the Chuppah can be performed.

No charge is made for use of the Chuppah but there is a charge for the choir, if required.

Burial – Full members are automatically entitled to the services of the Jewish Joint Burial Society (JJBS), which can arrange traditional or woodland burial, or cremation. Burial is usually in the Western Cemetery, Cheshunt. We can arrange burial together for couples of whom one is not Jewish (there is a charge for the non-Jewish partner). Shiva services (prayers with the family following a bereavement) are organized and prayer books are available at the synagogue. We have a memorial wall on which plaques to the departed may be dedicated, and a memorial book in which their names and other details may be entered. Children of full members are fully covered for burial until their 21st birthdays. Different rules on funeral benefit apply to members who join after a certain age.

Services are held for all major festivals and the High Holydays as well as for every Shabbat. Times and other details are listed in Highlight, e-Light and the website.

No special seat allocation or reservation is made for anybody. Members may sit wherever they wish and there is no segregation of the sexes, enabling families to sit together.

We greatly welcome children of all ages in services. A box of toys is provided for young children. We understand that children may not be quiet all the time and would rather have them with a bit of noise than not have them!

Our services are conducted in Hebrew and English. Congregational participation is encouraged and we strive to make services clear and comprehensible for all.

All men must wear a head covering. Jewish men may wear a tallit. Jewish women may wear a tallit and kippah if they so wish. Apart from this there is no dress code other than to dress with modesty and decorum.

Both men and women take part in services and may read from the scrolls. For each service a volunteer warden arranges participation by congregants. If you would like to participate, please contact the office in advance or the warden on the day. Specially designed family services are held regularly.

Our choir is made up of volunteers who are very keen to welcome new singers. It meets regularly to learn new tunes and to practise familiar ones.

Large print prayer books are available.

Parking. Please read the signs carefully as the rules vary from one side of the road to the other!

Everyone is welcome to attend our religious services.