

# HIGHLight

Bromley Reform Synagogue newsletter

## BRS Appoints New Rabbi

Dear Members,

We are delighted to announce that Mati Kirschenbaum will be joining us as our Rabbi at Bromley Reform Synagogue on 1 July 2020. On behalf of all the members of our community, we would like to extend our warmest welcome and good wishes! Rabbi Mati has drafted an introduction message to you, below.

**Michelle and Kieron**

BRS Chair and Vice Chair

Dear BRS members,

Some of you may remember me from services I took at your community a few months ago. I enjoyed these visits to Bromley so much that I jumped at the opportunity to apply for the rabbinic position at BRS. I am thrilled to have been chosen to become BRS new rabbi this coming July, upon my rabbinic ordination at Leo Baeck College. I can't wait to meet you all in person as soon as the lockdown is over. For now, let me e-introduce myself.



I was born and grew up in Poland, but my life journey took me to Germany, Israel and India. During my rabbinical studies, I served communities in Germany, Poland, Israel and the UK. In Britain, I was a student rabbi at Radlett Reform Synagogue, Newcastle Reform Synagogue and at your neighbouring congregation - Kent Liberal Jewish Community (KLJC). My time with KLJC made me appreciate the beauty of your corner of the world. I am looking forward to moving to Bromley early this summer.

In my free time, I enjoy reading about the history of my area. I also love exploring it on long walks. Feel free to recommend to me your favourite walking routes.

I hope and pray that the current lockdown will end soon. I am aware that the period that follows won't be easy. Still, I am convinced that as a community we will find ways to support each other through it. I want you to know that I will be there for you in this difficult time. I am sure that together we will manage to get out of this Egypt.

With all good wishes.

*Moadim LeSimcha,*

**Mati Kirschenbaum**

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*Chag Sameach Shavuot to all our readers!*

*Please turn to page 4 for details of our online Shavuot celebrations*

## View from my (safely distanced) Chair

Usually I sit down each month and reflect about what has happened the previous month and what is coming up for the future. However we are now living in a situation when each day, each hour, something happens that has changed or could drastically change how we live.

Passover this year for most of us was celebrated in a different way. This year my family and I were meant to be in Jerusalem, but instead we spent it at home in Greenwich. We decided to combine our traditions and heritage and held a Seder with the customary songs including “*dayenu*” but adding in some Welsh tunes and the Persian practice of hitting each other with spring onions! Passover is one of our major festivals celebrating freedom and family as we remember the Exodus from Egypt more than 3,000 years ago.

This year the freedom that we all enjoy without really thinking about it was gone. We were not free to go out and shop as normal, to visit friends or share our Seder with family, and the BRS Communal Seder was cancelled. However, our Jewish tradition of tenacity in the face of difficulties did not stop our community from celebrating. Instead I have heard of many reports of community members getting together online, shopping for Passover staples for others unable to get out, and there was a kosher collection from north London arranged and distributed from the Shul. On the second night **Vicki Ashmore** arranged a “Cheder Seder” which started as just a little event for Cheder children and parents but which turned into a large group of 38 different households tuning in on Zoom to celebrate together. There were families, singletons and the more mature of the community all coming together.

It is very special to see the BRS community unite at this difficult time and, although it does not replace the personal contact we would prefer, online meetings and services have really helped try and maintain some sort of normality. Behind the scenes the Board have continued to meet regularly and more often, due to rapid changing circumstances, and the other committees have conducted their meetings online too. Especially busy has been the Religion and Ritual Committee under the leadership of **Stephanie Alberti**. Stephanie has been working very closely with **Kieron Hyams** to deliver superb online Saturday services. If you have not

yet subscribed to our YouTube channel and watched, I encourage you to do so. Every week there are different lay readers and technology has enabled us to stream from different houses to our YouTube channel all thanks to Kieron. The number of subscribers and viewers has continued to increase each week, which is a testament to our service takers. Although Kieron has a day job and family, he has committed a lot of extra time to enable us all to spiritually connect at a time when we really need it. Thank you Kieron.

By the time you read this Cheder will have resumed after the break to online classes every Sunday as usual. Thank you **Vicki Ashmore**, who has risen to this challenge and will be leading “HomeShul” with the support of **Danielle Woodward**, our Cheder Head. The Cheder day will be shortened but the teachers will still be teaching the curriculum and Hebrew. I would recommend that parents carefully read all emails from Vicki and teachers to enable the children to learn while at home. As a parent myself I am looking forward to learning with Ezra while he is in class, and he is really looking forward to seeing his friends.

The Covid-19 virus has brought a lot of difficulties and sadness and some within in our community have lost loved ones. This is distressing but it has been made worse as our usual process of mourning and saying goodbye has disappeared. The ability to comfort and physically reach out has dissipated and we are left in limbo with our emotions. “May their memory be a blessing” means so much more now as we look back fondly at our memories of that person and remember that our time with them was a blessing. Their memory and the actions they performed during their lives will inspire us, those they loved and those who loved them.

The Caring Community continually works at looking after the more elderly and venerable of BRS, they have been helped by many Cheder parents who have buddied up with these members. A regular phone call or some shopping really helps, so if you can help join this remarkable group or would like some help yourself just let us know. You can email: [chair@bromleyshul.org.uk](mailto:chair@bromleyshul.org.uk)

I will end with the exciting announcement that **Mati Kirschenbaum** will be joining us as our Rabbi at BRS on 1 July. On behalf of all the members of our community,

we would like to extend our warmest welcome and good wishes. I am delighted that Mati will be a part of our future, and I am positive that our journey together will bring comfort and joy. He has drafted an introduction message to you that you will find on the front page of this *Highlight*. Stay safe and well,



**Michelle Brooks Evans, Chair**

### Notice of Annual General Meeting of Bromley Reform Synagogue (BRS)

Notice is hereby given that the 2020 Annual General Meeting of Bromley Reform Synagogue will now be held on **Thursday, 7 May at 8 pm online via Zoom**. You can join the AGM by using the following link:

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://zoom.us/j/294085387>  
Meeting ID: 294 085 387

The agenda is as follows:

1. To acknowledge the Report of the Board has been sent out.
2. To receive the Treasurer's Report and approve the accounts.
3. To elect Chair, vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and other members of the Board.
4. To appoint an Auditor.
5. AOB.

By order of the Board of Bromley Reform Synagogue  
**Lisa Lewis**, Honorary Secretary  
**Michelle Brooks Evans**  
Chair of Bromley Reform Synagogue  
[chair@bromleyshul.org.uk](mailto:chair@bromleyshul.org.uk),  
07956 234309

Go to:  
<http://www.bromleyshul.org.uk/?p=13163> to read the Report of the Chair to the AGM in advance of the meeting.

## Online Cheder News: Welcome to HomeShul!

As I write this, we are about to embark upon one of the greatest social experiments mankind has ever known: HomeShul. Could it be done, we wondered. Is there any way on God's green earth that we'll be able to get our children to *actually* sit down for an hour of *virtual* Cheder? Well, right now I can only say that time will tell and, hopefully, I'll be writing June's Online Cheder News with a bit more of a clue. But, for now, I'm feeling positive, and I hope you are too. With your help, a bit of patience and a little bit of trial and error we will survive the online cheder experience together.

*So in case you were wondering how Cheder is now working...*

Our regular Cheder curriculum has changed for **HomeShul**. To start, Homeshul lasts one hour. We are focusing on Family Education with a single cheder-wide theme. This means that all classes will learn the same subject on the same day. Why? So that siblings can learn and do activities together, even if they are in different years. The focus is on FUN, with just a bit of Hebrew thrown in so that the kids don't forget it all come September.

So to keep it simple, here's what we're aiming for:

1. Each Cheder day is no longer than one hour long, including assembly with music.
2. Each day includes some Hebrew practice.
3. Each day includes a story.
4. Each day includes a Cheder-wide art activity that can be done either during the hour or after Cheder has finished.

And, best of all, when you thought HomeShul couldn't get any cooler, we have our almost-Rabbi **Mati Kirschenbaum** teaching Kittah Chet!

So that's it. Well, that's not really *it*, but the rest is up to the Cheder teachers. But what else do we need from you?

1. **Check your emails!** Especially on Fridays, when your teachers will email you about what they'll need you to have ready on Sundays.
2. **Sign in on time!** HomeShul launched at 10 am on Sunday, 19 April and it runs for one hour. Here's the link to Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/7980647108>. Or go to Zoom, click join meeting, enter the meeting ID as 7980647108.



*Danielle and Vicki - two heads are better than one*

3. **Stay within earshot of your children** - we can teach them remotely, but need you to help if they can't find the page/the scissors/the mute button/are hitting their siblings/are hiding under the table etc etc etc
4. **Please have paper/pens/crayons/printouts ready** (or whatever your teachers have asked you to prepare for the lesson the previous Friday).

And that, as they say, is that. So on Sunday mornings, get your stuff together, switch on Zoom at 10am, sit the kids in front of the computer, make yourself a coffee and watch the magic happen. (Oh, and pray for us).

See you all onscreen on Sunday!

From your two Head Teachers (because two heads are better than one...)

**Vicki and Danielle**

**The Adult Hebrew classes that started before Pesach are continuing**  
**Beginners/Improvers**  
**Hebrew for Adults**



taught by **Sarit Chen**, who is an expert in GCSE Hebrew and teaches both biblical and modern Hebrew.

She is currently Head Teacher of the Cheder at South London Liberal Synagogue and teaches our Adult Hebrew course.

**Hebrew 1:** Hebrew for Beginners  
Thursday evenings  
until 4 June, from 6-7 pm

**Hebrew 2:** Hebrew for Advanced Beginners/Improvers  
Thursday evenings  
until 4 June, from 7.30-8.30 pm

To join us, email **Vicki**:  
[vickiashmore@icloud.com](mailto:vickiashmore@icloud.com)

## The Cheder Seder 2020



The online Seder, a.k.a. the Cheder Seder, was a combination of song, storytelling, questions and grape juice. 38 families and friends joined us over Zoom, including the young and the young at heart. All were ready with their Seder plates and printed packs of pictures, songs and prayers, allowing us to all sing and recite blessings together despite being physically apart. A rainbow of community members came together in song, and it was such a pleasure to see the Cheder children, their parents, relatives and grandparents.

We certainly made the most of the Pesach celebrations between our different homes. Over the course of the evening, we took turns reading from the Animated Haggadah. Those Claymation pictures gave the whole experience a 'Wallace and Gromit' quality that won't soon be repeated. We explained the Seder plate, found the afikomen and welcomed Elijah into our homes (thankfully he's an essential worker). Next year in Jerusalem, or Bromley, as long as it's in person!

**Rachael Ashmore**



AND Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

## Bikkur Cholim

We have a mitzvah to visit the sick – indeed Talmud tells us that visiting the sick takes away one sixtieth of their illness. I'm not suggesting that we go to visit and take away with us the tiny pieces of virus, but that we find creative ways to let those who succumb to the illness know that they are not alone, reassure them that they are held in the embrace of friendship and of community... A telephone call, a meal left on the doorstep, a flower delivered to them....

Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild

## Can we help you?

### Pauline Jeffree writes on behalf of the Caring Community:

In these unprecedented times our thoughts go to all the families, individuals and friends who are suffering from, or being challenged by, the effects of the Coronavirus. Do please let us know if we can help you in any way. We have a wide reaching team in place, whom we can call upon to help and support you.

Please contact: **Pauline Jeffree**  
Telephone: 07745 740114

## Studying with Rabbi Sylvia

We are pleased to announce three study sessions to be led by **Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild** looking at the week's parashah. The first will be held on **Wednesday, 29 April** and a further two will follow on **Wednesdays, 13 and 20 May**, starting at 8 pm and lasting an hour.

They will be conducted via Zoom and we must ask all of you who anticipate joining the session to register your intention in advance as, for security, only those who have done so will be invited to join.

Please contact **Michelle** at chair@bromleyshul.org and she will send you the link to use. On the night you will first enter the "waiting room" and Michelle will admit you. Please make sure you give us an e-mail address as Rabbi Sylvia will be creating a source sheet in advance.

For further information, please contact **Barbara** at a.bkurtz@talktalk.net or **Michelle** at chair@bromleyshul.org. Rabbi Sylvia can be reached on rav@levchadash.it

## SHAVUOT is coming and that means ... cheesecake!

No, actually it means the end of counting the Omer, thinking about the revelation at Sinai and the various harvests, reading the Book of Ruth ... oh, and cheesecake.

This year it also means an opportunity to get to know our rabbi-to-be, **Mati Kirschenbaum**, who will lead our evening service and Tikkun Leyl (study session) on **Thursday, 28 May** starting at **7.45 pm**. The service will be streamed, so you can use the usual link (<https://www.youtube.com/c/BromleyReformSynagogue>).

**8.15 coffee break** - collect your cheesecake and hot drink - link to cheesecake recipes to be advised in bulletins and e-light nearer the time.

**8.30 Tikkun Leyl**, study Torah with **Mati Kirschenbaum** on Zoom. Please let us know if you wish to join this session by emailing chair@bromleyshul.org.uk to register and obtain the Zoom link.

The **morning service** will be at 10.30 am on **Friday, 29 May**, led by **Marilyn Freeman**, with readings by **David Zerihan** and **Tracy Frankel**, and **Sally Rosebery** on song.



## The Book Group

### Outwitting History

Members of the book group are busy reading Aaron Lansky's book "*Outwitting History*", on how he rescued a million books, saved a vanishing civilisation and established the National Yiddish Book Centre in New York.

Instead of gathering in the Shul library to discuss it on **Thursday 14 May at 7.45 p.m.** the discussion will take place via Zoom. Please email **Judy Woolfe** to add your name to her list.

**Details: Judy Woolfe:**

jwoolfe@ntlworld.com or  
07989 091066 / 020 8464 8909.

## The Chief Rabbi's Prayer

The Chief Rabbi (Rabbi Ephraim Mervis) has composed this special prayer to be recited at home at a time of your choosing. In addition, Psalms 91, 121 and 130 can be added.

Eternal One,

We turn to You at this time of deep global concern, to bestow Your mercy upon all the inhabitants of our vulnerable world, which is now so seriously afflicted.

Almighty God, who sustains the living with lovingkindness, supports the fallen and heals the sick, grant consolation to the bereaved families and send a speedy and complete recovery to all who have contracted the virus, as the Prophet Jeremiah declared:

"For I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Eternal".

Bless with strength those who are suffering. Bless with resilience those in isolation. Bless with hope those who are despondent. Bless with wisdom all those who seek a cure and bless with compassion all those who offer comfort.

Bless the leaders of our nations. Give them and their advisors knowledge and foresight to act with wisdom and sincerity for the wellbeing of all whom they serve.

Bless the doctors, nurses, all healthcare professionals and key workers who tirelessly seek to heal and help those affected, while in so doing put themselves at risk.

Open our hearts in prayer and our hands in generosity to guarantee that the physical distance this virus creates between us will be bridged through compassion and kindness.

Almighty God of healing and hope, at this time of heightened global awareness of our mutual interdependence, enable all of humankind to appreciate the strength that comes from being united in concern and love, rather than divided with hate and prejudice. As we look to the future, may You endow all people with the capacity to build and sustain societies of unity, tolerance, harmony and peace.

O Eternal, our Rock and Salvation, lead us speedily from despair to hope, from fear to trust and from the dread of death to the celebration of life.

May this prayer of mine come before You at a propitious time.

And may this be Your will, Amen.

With thanks to **Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild** for forwarding this prayer to *Highlight*

## Techno Wizardry – Streaming Services

Our Editor was intrigued at how we've been streaming services during our period of social distancing. I warn you, once I pull back the curtain, it's actually quite simple! If you'd like to get involved in leading a streamed service, please let the Ritual and Religion Committee know via [rrc@bromleyshul.org.uk](mailto:rrc@bromleyshul.org.uk).

How we normally stream: when services are held in the Shul, we have a wall-mounted CCTV camera that is exactly the same as those outside the building. That camera and the Shul microphones are connected to an encoding box (an Epiphan Webcaster X2, if you're interested) that does all the hard work turning camera signal into a digital stream. Wardens start and stop the stream using ancient secrets passed down the generations. Rumour has it that it involves a button. We chose a 'one touch' solution as it needs little training and ensures we don't drop 'frames', as can happen with a software solution, where someone has to have their computer there, login, set up the stream and so on.

How we have been streaming from home: the Shul has invested in a paid Zoom account. Zoom is the industry leader in online video meetings. There is a free account, but that limits video meetings to three or more people for 40 minutes. We've been using Zoom for board meetings, rabbi recruitment, committees, services, shabbat candle lightings, sederim and even a shiva, where we had around 150 people online at once.

Meetings have a unique link, are encrypted, have a waiting room to vet attendees and we disable screen sharing by default. So we are safe from any of the annoyances you may have read about online. The service leaders join the meeting, and then I 'lock' the meeting room. Zoom is able to both record and stream video meetings. We use that streaming capability to link Zoom to our YouTube channel. I'm logged on during services but tucked away with my audio and video turned off. I start the service by starting our stream to YouTube and by playing a countdown timer on my screen which is shared to the meeting. The time means that people can join the stream before the service starts and

know that they're in the right place and that their video and audio are working. I control whether you see one person or several people during the service, and flick between those views based on who's doing what.

It's harder than you think: Full credit to those leading services. They're doing it in a way they're not used to and there is a certain amount of pressure when you have a camera trained on you and a 'live on YouTube' message in the corner of your screen. All the service leaders have a pre-meet to run through the video and audio controls, plus to make sure their internet connection is fast enough and they have good lighting in the room they intend to use with nothing incriminating in the background! If someone doesn't mute when they're not leading the service but makes a noise such as a cough or a scream, then Zoom will cut to them as it thinks they have something to say. The service leaders can communicate through the chat window during the service (normally it is me telling people to go on mute, look at the camera or just to smile!)

**Please let us know how we're doing:** do let us have any feedback on how you've found the services ([rrc@bromleyshul.org.uk](mailto:rrc@bromleyshul.org.uk)) – we're now up to 168 subscribers and have had more than 40 viewers (some of whom were couples and families, so the number of 'humans' watching could have been perhaps double that) to both our last couple of services. The viewing numbers do pick up about ten minutes into each service. Some people are fashionably late even when they can't leave their home!

Please do join our online Shabbat services. They start (quite) promptly at 10:30 am on our YouTube channel: Please subscribe to get a notification when we're online – sign in to YouTube, go to our channel and click on the 'subscribe' button. There is an online Siddur at: <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/408118/> You can also watch services on 'catch up' after the stream has concluded.

**Kieron Hyams**  
Webmaster

*Turn to page 8 for a screenshot of a Shabbat morning service under lockdown.*

### South London Community Support Service Can Help You!

The South London Community Support Service is jointly funded by Jewish Care and Nightingale Hammerson to help you find the support and care you or your family may need.

Jewish Care is the largest health and social care organisation serving the Jewish community in London and the South East. Together with 1500 dedicated staff and 3000 generous volunteers, we run over 70 centres and services, caring for more than 7000 people every week.

Nightingale House is one of the largest care homes in Europe. It is a leading provider of residential, nursing and dementia care to older members of the Jewish community. The Clapham home has a 170-year-old history and is renowned for its excellent facilities, dedicated staff and high quality care: [www.nightingalehammerson.org.uk](http://www.nightingalehammerson.org.uk)

#### We can help you:

Call us directly or ask a relative or friend to do so. We take referrals from local GPs or health or social care professionals. Our team comprises qualified community support practitioners and experienced and knowledgeable volunteers who can help you.

Call us now via Jewish Care Direct helpline: 020 8922 2222, please quote **Stephen Ison** to filter your call to our South London Community Support Service. For more information visit [www.jewishcare.org](http://www.jewishcare.org)

**Further information** can be found at [www.southlondonjewishservices.org.uk](http://www.southlondonjewishservices.org.uk), a website in partnership with Jewish Care and Nightingale Hammerson which provides information on local Jewish facilities, events and services.

nightingale hammerson

**JEWISH CARE**

## Social and Personal

**BIRTH** - A hearty mazal tov to **Marc and Emma** (nee Berger) **Baghdadi** on the arrival of baby **Aaron** on 31 March, a brother for Sasha. Congratulations also to the proud grandmothers, Mrs Laurence Baghdadi and Mrs Susan Berger.

**DEATHS** - We are very sad to report the death of our member, **Cyril Marks**, and extend sincere condolences to his wife Ruth, daughter Beverley and son Paul.

We are also very sad to report the death of our member **Susan Simmons** at her care home in Harrogate after a long illness. We extend sincere condolences to her husband Barry, brother Robin, and sons Ian and Niall.

**BEREAVEMENTS** - Sincere condolences to **Beverley Morris**, her sister Angela and brother Michael, on the sad loss of their mother, **Daphne Morris** on 1 April.

Sincere condolences also to **Julie Binysh** and her family on the sad loss of her mother, **Iris Shaw**, on 3 April.

May the memories of all our dear departed be for a blessing - *Zichrona L'vrcha*.

## Knitters, Stitchers and Natterers

**Pauline writes:**

Our Knitters, Stitchers and Natterers are continuing to work hard, producing cardigans, hats with their traffic light tops, teddy bears, blankets small, medium and large, and quilts for incubators.

**Can you sew?** Urgent NHS need Lewisham and Bromley hospitals and other organisations in the Bromley area urgently need more personal protective equipment (PPE), such as scrubs and scrub bags.

Local people can help by sewing these items at home, and we are seeking volunteers to sew. Please help if you can.

General information on Facebook; search: **For the Love of Scrubs**

To volunteer and for more local information please contact in the first instance

pauline.jeffree@btinternet.com

**Pauline Jeffree**, 020 8650 4860

## Greetings from Mohammad Fahili at the Clore Jewish-Arab Community Centre

My dear friends,

As I write, we all sit at home and wait nervously to know what our world will look like after the virus and how much we will personally be touched by loss. Amid the fear, there are the stories of generosity and kindness alongside the selflessness and dedication of medical personnel.

Here in Israel and across the world, too many people have lost their jobs, many who already live on or just above the poverty line. They worry not only about keeping their loved ones safe from infection, but also how they will support their families over time. Most of the clients at the Clore Jewish-Arab Community Centre fall into this category. Over the years, they have always known that they could turn to us in times of need and we have always been there to help. Since the Centre was forced to close a month ago, it breaks my heart that we cannot respond to their immediate needs in person.

We look forward to a time when we can continue with our mission to provide high quality and much needed services to the mixed community of Akko, as we have done for the past 35 years. Until that day arrives, I have made it known that I am available day and night for help in areas such as delivering food to needy families, guiding activities for families with children in overcrowded homes and helping to calm domestic situations before they become violent.

At the Centre, we are using this enforced hiatus to plan programmes for next year as well as our Arab-Jewish Summer Camp, which we will be ready to run as soon as the stay-at-home order is lifted. And we know that, when the families who are so missing our services return, they will not manage to pay and we will need to further subsidise them until they get back on their feet - we anticipate that this will take a long time.

Thank you, my friends, for appreciating the importance of our work and for your ongoing support for those whom we support - the most vulnerable in our society who have scant resources to address the current situation and its ramifications on their own.

To help us provide first-hand support for those who need us please visit our website - <https://ajcenter.org.il/donate>

*continued at foot of next column*

## Fancy Dress Parade



*These young people were all in disguise at our Purim celebration earlier in the year*

## Keeping in Touch

**Judi Sheffrin writes:**

Thanks to the gargantuan efforts of many in the community, most of our regular services, classes and meetings are continuing as usual during lockdown ... but online. Links to enable you to attend/join/view them are being sent out in regular bulletins from our Chair and Vice-Chair, as are notices about special events such as the rescheduled AGM.

It is therefore **vital**, if you are to make the most of your membership of this vibrant community - which has become, if anything, **more** vibrant during the past two months - that you are **signed up to receive e-light** and other emailed notifications. I know that most members are, but I am still surprised at least once a week to find out about people who are not. So long as you have internet access it is very simple:

Go to [www.bromleyshul.org.uk](http://www.bromleyshul.org.uk), and click on NEWS. This brings up a drop-down menu of which the second item is "Subscribe to our Newsletters". If you click on that, a simple form appears. Fill it in, hit Subscribe, and sit back. However, if you do not receive anything - or if you are a regular subscriber and you suddenly realise you haven't seen an e-light for a while - please tell us. We can't help you if we don't know.

I wish you and your loved ones well and safe during this frightening time.

**Judi Sheffrin**. [judishef@aol.com](mailto:judishef@aol.com)

*continued from col.2*

Finally, allow me to wish you and your loved ones all a healthy and safe holiday time - Pesach, Easter and Ramadan.

Your friend,

**Mohammad Fahili**

Director - Sir Charles Clore Jewish-Arab Community Center: +972 50 557 3797

## Shavuot - The Feast of Weeks by Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild

As we count each evening from Pesach to Shavuot – forty-nine days or a week of weeks (hence the name Shavuot or Weeks) – we say a blessing with the ending “*Who has commanded us concerning counting the Omer*”.

Counting the Omer comes from the biblical narrative which tells us (Leviticus 23:10-16)

“*Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf (omer) of the first grain you harvest. He will wave the sheaf (omer) before God so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. ... This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath and then present an offering of new grain to the Eternal’.*”

### Counting the days

From the barley harvest of Pesach to the wheat harvest of Shavuot we count the days. Biblical Jews were profoundly aware of the importance of these harvests – and the third harvest of the year at Sukkot, when the newly ripened first fruits would also be brought to the Temple. Regular rainfall could not be relied on, and there was no large river to provide the necessary irrigation – the whole agricultural endeavour was fragile and everyone knew it. So the counting of the days as the barley harvest began at Pesach until the wheat was ready at Shavuot marked a time of both anxiety and hope. The formula – this is day X of the Omer, which is Y weeks and Z days of the Omer – focuses us each night on exactly where we are in the cycle – will the barley harvest be successfully concluded? Will the wheat be ripe and ready?

### Anxiety and hope

That period of anxiety and hope resonated profoundly for the rabbis who rebuilt and reoriented Judaism after the destruction of the Temple and

our exile from the Land of Israel. The agricultural focus fell away and in its place we remembered the journey out of Egypt to Sinai – from our liberation from slavery to reaching a milestone towards redemption with the Covenant with God; from being frightened individuals chased out of a foreign land to becoming a people who would return to their own ancestral Land.

We are once again in a period of anxiety and hope. Our normal life and routines have largely vanished: the ability to meet friends and hug them, to pop out to the shops without fear of terrible consequences, to get on a bus or a train or go to a cinema or restaurant – suddenly all these are freighted with danger. Many of us know of people who have become seriously ill, or who moved from enjoying their life to their life ending in a matter of a few short weeks. The anxiety seems endless – and yet there is also hope. We have found the hope, as did our ancestors, both in marking the passage of time as we watch the Spring arrive with its blossom and its greenery, and in growing sense of community as we begin to understand how connected we are to each other, and as we forge ever closer relationships with each other – albeit with appropriate social distancing.

### The beginning not the end

Shavuot does not mark the end of anything – either agriculturally or theologically. It marks the beginning of the second major harvest of the year, or the giving and receiving of the Torah – something that can never be a single event but is in fact a process that continually unfolds. As Menachem Mendel of Kotzk said, “*The Giving of the Torah took place in the month of Sivan, but the receiving of the Torah takes place every day.*”

Maybe it is because it does not mark a clear and decisive event that Shavuot is often described as a “Cinderella festival”, one that it is hard to be enthusiastic about – apart from the cheesecakes and other delicacies. But in reality Shavuot is one of the major festivals of Judaism. Along with Pesach and Sukkot it was one of the three times Jews were meant to visit

the Temple in Jerusalem in order to thank God for the foods that would sustain life. In its rabbinic guise it is the moment when the



Israelites became a people; the moment when, meeting God, we accepted the Covenant for all time and all generations, we agreed to be God’s people and do God’s will. Shavuot celebrates and rehearses the foundational moment of Judaism – tradition tells us we were all at Sinai, all part of the Covenant acceptance.

### Unable to meet

This year we will not be able to meet in the synagogue and re-enact Sinai. There will be no greenery decorating the bimah and Ark to remind us that Sinai was filled with flowers when God and the people promised their faithfulness to each other. The drama of the liturgy will feel a little less so when mediated through our internet providers. But the message of Shavuot – of the recognition of the fragility of life, of the existential anxiety of human beings, of the fact we are all journeying together through difficult land towards a hoped for but unclear future – that message will be clearer than ever this year.

So let’s celebrate the Spring time, bless the fact that we reach another day, be grateful for the community in which we live and with whom we share this journey. And remember the leap of faith of both God and the Jewish people to stick with each other and travel into a hopeful future.

Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild

“*The Legacy of Anne Frank*” by Gillian Walnes Perry (see next page) is available in the UK and can be purchased in paperback from Amazon for £13.49. The Kindle edition from Amazon costs £10.44. See also Gillian’s letter to our Chair on the next page about her free downloadable talk on Anne Frank.

**An uplifting talk on 'The Life of Anne Frank' delivered directly to your inbox**

The following is an extract from an email to our Chairman

Dear Michelle

I hope you and your family are keeping well in these highly challenging times. I would love it if you could spread the word about this to family, friends and colleagues and through the BRS network.

As we are experiencing isolation from our friends and family, we can perhaps draw solace from thinking about the war time teenage diarist and Holocaust victim **Anne Frank**. How Anne coped with her two-year isolation whilst in hiding from the Nazis, facing the possibility of arrest and certain death every minute of the day. How Nelson Mandela and Audrey Hepburn's lives were greatly influenced by Anne Frank's diary. The astonishing effect that learning about Anne Frank has had on people in some of the world's most turbulent and violent regions. The dramatic impact on prisoners who learned to cope with their imprisonment easily thanks to Anne's story. The significant change Anne's story has made to millions of teenagers who have faced adolescent social problems and suicidal thoughts, and have succeeded in raising their spirits, thanks to Anne's diary, which they eagerly read.

Since I retired as Executive Director, as well as Co-founder, of the Anne Frank Trust I have been lecturing and speaking in the UK and the USA. I have converted one of my most popular talks, on 'The Life and Surprising Legacy of Anne Frank' into a richly illustrated slide show in a downloadable version, which comes with my narration. The 45-minute talk is equally inspirational for adults and young people age 10 and up, given by someone with a unique insight into this story. The cost of the downloadable presentation is a mere £3.50. Please send via Paypal to [gillianwalnesperry@gmail.com](mailto:gillianwalnesperry@gmail.com) along with your email address and code AFL for online delivery to you to download and enjoy. Or see the home page of [www.gillianwalnesperry.com](http://www.gillianwalnesperry.com).

I hope you find this talk entertaining, informative and, above all, uplifting.

Very warmest regards

Gillian

**Gillian Walnes Perry MBE**

Co-founder and Honorary Vice President  
Anne Frank Trust UK

**SERVICES - May 2020 - Iyar/Sivan 5780**

**Shabbat morning services will be continued in an online/streamed format only, beginning at 10.30 am. Please subscribe to BRS' YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/BromleyReformSynagogue/live>) for further information. Do not come to Highland Road.**

<b>Saturday 2 May</b>	<b>Acharei Mot-Kedoshim (8 Iyar)</b> Leviticus 16:29-17:7 Amos 9: 7-15
<b>Saturday 9 May</b>	<b>Emor (15 Iyar)</b> Leviticus 22:26-23:16 Jeremiah: 17: 19-27
<b>Saturday 16 May</b>	<b>Behar-Bechukotai (22 Iyar)</b> Leviticus 25: 19-38 Jeremiah 36: 6-27
<b>Saturday 23 May</b>	<b>Bamidbar (29 Iyar)</b> Numbers 1: 44-54 Hosea 2: 1-22
<b>Sunday 24 May</b>	<b>Rosh Chodesh Sivan</b>
<b>Thursday 28 May</b>	<b>Erev Shavuot</b> <b>Online service at 7.45 pm led by student rabbi <b>Mati Kirschenbaum</b>, followed by <b>Tikkun Leyl</b></b>
<b>Friday 29 May</b>	<b>SHAVUOT (6 Sivan)</b> Exodus 19:16-20:17 Ruth 1:1-22
<b>Saturday 30 May</b>	<b>Naso (7 Sivan)</b> Numbers 6: 1-21 Judges 13: 2-25



*Services under lockdown: The first Shabbat morning service after the coming into force of the restrictions on large gatherings was held in an almost empty synagogue on Shabbat Ha-Chodesh (21 March), but subsequent services have been led by members operating from their own homes, coordinated expertly by our Vice Chair and technical wizard, **Kieron Hyams**. In this screenshot we see (top left) scroll reader **David Zerihan**, (top right) prayer leader **Stephanie Alberti** and, bottom, **Judi Sheffrin**, who led the singing.*

## LEHRHAUS @ Leo Baeck College Home of Adult Jewish Learning

We are pleased to share with you our Lehrhaus programme for Spring 2020.

All our courses are taught by our outstanding faculty and specialist teachers whom we hope will entice you to join us.

The Lehrhaus is a non-profit adult learning programme. We aim to cover our teaching and administration costs only. Any surplus allows us to subsidise some courses where the minimum number of participants isn't reached or to support some learners with additional discounts.

We recognise that during these extremely challenging times, some people may be finding it difficult to pay the full fees for our courses. Please contact Jarek at [Jarek.lodzinski@lbc.ac.uk](mailto:Jarek.lodzinski@lbc.ac.uk), if you would like some help towards your fees. We are also pleased to offer a 20% discount to anyone who works for the NHS and would like to study with us.

### Lehrhaus in the Clouds (LIVE On-Line courses):

**Liat Aharonovich:** *ULPAN - Modern Hebrew* Beginners/Intermediate levels

**Rabbi Dr Rene Pfoertzel:** *Parashat Ha-Shavua* online. The Mishna states, *v'Talmud Torah k'neged kulam* (Pe'ah 1:1), study of Torah leads to all mitzvot. In a time of uncertainty like ours, we take comfort in our Tradition that gives us tools to structure our days. We will skim through the main themes of the parasha and then spend some time on a specific passage.

**Dr Jakub Kowalewski:** *Levinas and us: ethics, politics, religion and art*

The aim of this course is to introduce students to one of the most influential Jewish philosophers of the 20th century: **Emmanuel Levinas**. Levinas is best known for his 1961 book *Totality and Infinity*, which offers an original account of ethics grounded in a face-to-face relationship with another person. What is less known, however, is Levinas's contribution to other fields, including politics, religion, and art.

**Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton:** *Classical Greek – Beyond the Alphabet* This course is the continuation of a 6-week B1 course but new students are welcome. Students will be assessed by the teacher before entering this level.

**Dr Sandra Jacobs:** *"When Gods Were Men" – An Introduction to the Bible in Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting* The Hebrew Bible, a corpus of writings spanning at least 800-900 years prior to its canonisation, developed alongside the socio-cultural and political literary conventions of its host cultures. This online course will provide an introduction to Hebrew Bible in its ancient Mesopotamian context.

**Rabbi Robyn Ashworth-Steen:** *Wandering Jews* Come and journey with me as we look at texts and teachings around our identity as wandering Jews. What does it mean for us to be wandering? How does this identity impact upon our personal Jewish practice? What are the possibilities for us personally and collectively if we embrace our identity as wandering Jews? Using a range of texts and discussion we will bring ourselves to our study and wander together.

**Dr Alinda Damsma:** *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* – back by popular demand! This 4-week online course takes the student on an inspiring and exciting journey through the early Jewish mystical traditions: from the prophet Ezekiel's tantalizing vision of the divine chariot to the perilous heavenly journeys of the Talmudic sages. We will meet the mystics who contemplated mystical doctrines and engaged in esoteric practices.

**Rabbi Dr Frank Dabba Smith:** *The Warsaw and Lodz Ghettos: Archivists and Photographers as Witnesses and Recorders* This four session course will examine the efforts of the archivist **Emmanuel Ringelblum** and the photographer **Mendel Grossman** to bear witness and leave legacies of life in the Warsaw and Lodz Ghettos during the Shoah.

**Please go to this link:** [www.lbc.ac.uk/lehrhaus](http://www.lbc.ac.uk/lehrhaus) for details and information about all our courses. If you have any questions, please contact **Jarek:** [Lehrhaus@lbc.ac.uk](mailto:Lehrhaus@lbc.ac.uk)

We very much look forward to having you study with us.

All best wishes,

**Dr Jo-Ann Myers**  
Director of Jewish Education

## Pineapple Cheesecake for Shavuot

Serves 8

Approx. 250 Cals per serving



### Base:

9 Digestive biscuits  
2 oz polyunsaturated margarine  
A little ground cinnamon (optional)

### Top:

1/2 oz powdered gelatine  
4 fl oz pineapple juice  
6 oz pineapple pieces  
2 eggs, separated  
3 oz caster sugar  
15 oz fromage frais or Quark  
Angelica to decorate

### Method

Grease a 7-8" loose-bottomed cake tin. To make the base, crush the biscuits. Melt the margarine and mix with the cinnamon and biscuit crumbs. Press the mixture on to the base of the tin and leave in a cool place to set.

Meanwhile, sprinkle the gelatine onto the pineapple juice in a cup. Stand the cup in a pan of barely simmering water and stir until the gelatine has dissolved. Leave to cool.

Cut up the pineapple into small pieces, reserving a few for decoration. In a mixing bowl, beat the egg yolks and sugar until light and thick. Add the dissolved gelatine, the fromage frais or Quark

Beat again and stir in the pineapple pieces. Lastly, when it is on the point of setting, fold in the stiffly beaten egg whites. Pour on to the prepared base and leave to set in the refrigerator (about 2-3 hours).

Remove from the tin and slide the cake on to a serving plate.

Decorate with pieces of pineapple and angelica.

### Alternatives:

Lemon or orange cheesecake: use the grated rind and juice of two lemons or two oranges in place of the pineapple pieces and the pineapple juice. Strawberries, raspberries or kiwi fruit can be used to decorate.

*Source: Food Should Be Fun, Advice and Recipes for Healthy Eating The British Heart Foundation*

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