

HIGHLight

Bromley Reform Synagogue newsletter

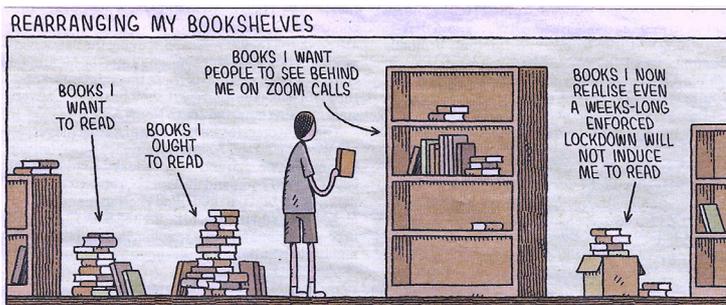
Spring is bustin' out all over



Our proofreader Judi Sheffrin has been capturing the advance of spring with her camera on her daily walks during lockdown. Here golden buttercups form the foreground of this view towards Crystal Palace.



Bromley's online Shabbat morning services received a very favourable review in the Jewish Chronicle on Friday, 15 May. The above service, held on Saturday, 16 May, was ably led by Joanna Biggin, top right, with John Posner, bottom, doing the Torah reading and Barbara Kurtz acting as choir and reading the Haftarah.



This commentary by Tom Gauld on Zoom viewing appeared in the [books] Review supplement to the Guardian on Saturday, 16 May.

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June 2020 - Sivan-Tammuz 5780

**IN CASE OF
EMERGENCY**
(in the event of a
bereavement)

Contact Janet Posner:
020 8650 7521
(Mobile:
07841 373 309)

or Stephen Weil:
020 8299 4141
(Mobile:
07764 475 209)

View from the Chair - in lockdown

Another month has passed with our Lives dominated by Covid, and we now have a new normal. I spent the first few weeks of the lockdown feeling like I was living in a dream and that I would soon wake up and that everything would get back to normal. This hasn't happened and the reality of the situation can be difficult. We are living our lives in our homes now, only connected by the phone or the internet. As you read this the lockdown might have changed, but our lives will continue to be affected for a long time to come.

In this time of isolation, while we are keeping our distance from each other, we must remember that when we reach out and give to others, we can receive great happiness in return. Donating money or *tzedakah* to those in need can help, but in fact any good deed from the heart, be it a smile or a phone call to reach out, can make all the difference. The story of "The Rainbow Fish" by **Marcus Pfister** demonstrates this perfectly. The Rainbow Fish is the most beautiful fish in the ocean, as his scales shimmer with the colours of a rainbow. When the other fish see him, they want shimmering scales too - but the Rainbow Fish keeps the beautiful scales to himself. His choice not to share soon makes him a very lonely fish. Eventually, he discovers that sharing his scales not only brings a smile to others, but results in him feeling happy as well.

This story teaches us that true happiness cannot be gained by money or material possessions but rather by what a member of the community shares with the rest. Now, more than ever, is a time for communities to pull together and for individuals to do what they can, where they can, however small that may be. Will you be the Rainbow Fish that shares your scales, whether it be your generosity, kindness, thoughtfulness, understanding or love?

Life at BRS goes on and all of our Shabbat services continue to be streamed every week via our YouTube account. We have a large number of people tuning in, so if you haven't watched do give it a go. Our lay readers are doing a brilliant job, and every week they bring us all together spiritually even though we may be far apart physically. BRS recently received

praise in the JC with a review of our online streamed services. The piece gave huge kudos to Stephanie, Judi and Larry, who all got a mention and, to quote from the article, are "accomplished prayer leaders", with "beautiful singing" and they found "comfort in Judi's closing rendition of Adon Olam". We believe we now have the most YouTube subscribers of any Reform synagogue in the UK!

With regard to the security aspect of our streamed services please see the note by Kieron, our Vice Chair and Webmaster, on page 6 of this *Highlight*.

Another success during the lockdown has been our Cheder and Gan. The new online format has been nicknamed "HomeShul" by **Vicki Ashmore**. Vicki has now taken over as Cheder Head teacher as **Danielle Woodward** has stepped down. Danielle has decided to concentrate on her day job in publishing. We thank Danielle for all her hard work in her role. Welcome back Vicki, and thank you to you and all the teachers for providing our children with a fun and informative online Cheder every Sunday morning.

Finally, a few things to mention. Firstly the Comms Group is looking for help with *Highlight*, e-light and our website. If you would like to be part of this team please let **Judi Sheffrin** know at judishef@aol.com. Also at the AGM held in May we had a report by the Donor's Trust. If any BRS member or their child would like to attend a RSY camp (it could be a day camp, summer camp, or even *madrachim* training) or to go to Limmud, but is in need of financial support, please get in touch. The whole process is completely confidential so if you would like to know more or apply please let me know.

Stay safe, making sure you look after yourselves and each other.

Michelle,
chair@bromleyshul.org.uk

Donating to the Board of Deputies

An Appeal from the Chair

Dear Members,

It is the time of year when we collect donations to support the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD). I know this year the world is quite a different place but I am sure you appreciate the BoD represents the Jewish community in this country. The UK government consults with the BoD on all matters affecting us. In these days of political turmoil, it is even more important than usual that our representative organisation should be strong and united.

The BoD needs funds to support its activities. Like all other charities in this current climate, it is in need of funds. We are requesting your Kind contribution for the current year. This is a voluntary donation and the sum is not fixed but the BoD has proposed £30 for each household. If you are unable to pay that amount then please consider a reduced donation. If you would like donate more, that will be most welcome.

If you wish to donate online, please use Sort Code 40-15-05 account No: 01862499 with ref your name and BoD. Or you can send a cheque **made payable to Bromley Reform Synagogue** to the Synagogue office at 28 Highland Road, Bromley, BR1 4AD to cover your contribution.

To save postage, we won't routinely acknowledge your payment but will do so if you request it. So, it only remains for me to thank you in advance for your contribution to the Board of Deputies, a most important organisation for all Jews of this country.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Brooks Evans
Synagogue Chair



YOM CHAGIGAH
Turning Crisis into Opportunity
and the RJ AGM
SAVE THE DATE
Sunday, 28 June
1.30 - 5.00 pm
CHAGIGAH@RJUK.ORG or
020 8349 5736



HomeShul News, June 2020

It's true what Prime Minister Johnson said: We are living through unprecedented times. A lockdown has forced us to find new ways to connect when we can't be together. At first, we may have thought that the 'new normal' could never live up to the way we were used to living our lives.

And in some ways, it can't. But it looks like, in our shul, miracles can happen. For example, a few months ago our shul had little online presence other than streamed services. Now we have community candle lighting every Friday evening, weekly online adult Hebrew classes, and the 2020 AGM. But, best of all, we have Homeshul. With over 60 of us tuning in every Sunday morning to learn and laugh together, I'm so happy to be HomeShullin' with you.

So what's changed, other than the obvious? We've tackled subjects we've not really covered at Cheder, like Counting the Omer and Lag BaOmer. Soon we'll cover topics including Hasheivat Aveida (returning lost property), and why the rainbows we've seen to support the NHS have a special importance to the Jewish people. Luckily our wonderful teachers are working flat out to make



sure our children are enjoying their time with us online. But we still need your help:

1. Check your emails on Fridays, when your teachers will email you about what they'll need you to have ready on Sundays.
2. Sign in from 9.45 am every Sunday morning on Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/7980647108>. Or go to Zoom, click join meeting, enter the meeting ID as 7980647108.
3. PLEASE stay within earshot of your children – we can teach them remotely, but we can't make them behave!
4. Have whatever your teachers have asked you to prepare ready for your lesson so that no time is lost looking for 'stuff'.

And, speaking of time, we do have less of it together, with Homeshul running for only an hour. But even that may change if our Homeshul continues, so watch this space... but rest assured the focus of HomeShul will remain – FUN learning and laughing in a Jewish environment, live and in real time. Together.

Vicki Ashmore,
Cheder Head Teacher

RSY-Netzer are proud to present... REMOTE SYNAGOGUE YOUTH

We know that the upcoming weeks and months may hold a lot of ambiguity and highly increased time at home, for you and your children. At RSY-Netzer, we have created a programme of online activities to engage your child/ren ages 5-16 for a few hours each day (Monday-Friday) during this time. We hope that this will give them a space to make friends, be mentally stimulated and have FUN, all whilst giving a little more structure to your time at home and some space to do your own things.

The activities will take place in year groups and will range across virtual active time, facilitated at-home arts and crafts, classic RSY games and much, much more.

If you sign your child/ren up to this virtual RSY-Netzer experience, we will keep you updated on *tochniot* (schedules) for each week, send you links for your child/ren to partake in activities and alert you of what fun things are coming up each day.

We want to reiterate that we are committed to playing a community part in the wellbeing and happiness of your child/ren, at all times and particularly now. We hope that this will be one impactful and joyful way of doing so and please do be in touch with any queries, questions or comments.

With excitement and hope for the future,

RSY-Netzer Movement Workers.

LEHRHAUS @ Leo Baeck College Home of Adult Jewish Learning Lehrhaus in the Clouds (LIVE Online courses):

Liat Aharonovich: ULPAN - Modern Hebrew
Beginners/Intermediate levels

Dr Jakub Kowalewski: *Levinas and us: ethics, politics, religion and art* (waiting list)

The aim of this course is to introduce students to one of the most influential Jewish philosophers of the 20th century: Emmanuel Levinas.

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: *"inūma ilu awilum: When Gods Were Men"* – An Introduction to the Bible in Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting (2 places left)

Dr Alinda Damsma: *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* – back by popular demand!! (3 places left)

Rabbi Dr Frank Dabba Smith: *The Warsaw and Łódz Ghettos: Archivists and Photographers as Witnesses and Recorders*

Dr Chani Smith: *Learn to leyn in 4 lessons* (waiting list)

"Leyn" is the Yiddish word for chanting the Torah portion according to traditional melodies, called *teamim* or cantillation accents.

Rabbi Dr Rene Pftzfel: *Reading troubling texts from Torah*

If some of the Torah narratives and laws seem straightforward to modern readers, many of them are puzzling and even disconcerting. How do we read and respond to these troubling biblical narratives and laws?

More courses to come soon!

Please go to: 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
All best wishes,

Dr Jo-Ann Myers
Director of Jewish Education

A Sense of Community by Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild

One of the questions I was asked recently was what would I want to be remembered about my time as a synagogue rabbi and it set me thinking a lot about the communities in which I have lived. The Bradford synagogue in which I grew up is the third Reform synagogue in the UK and its spirit and many of its traditions shaped me and have stayed with me. From the Lewandowski tunes to the close warmth of a small Jewish community of mainly German refugees who of necessity knew each other and looked after each other remains important to me. But there was more – the synagogue long predated the influx of continental Jews, and the rich colours and beauty of the building with its spectacular freestanding Ark set in a niche painted like the night sky had a profound effect on my young spirituality.

One aspect of this formal and elegant synagogue remains a touchstone for me: the beautiful scarlet bimah with its Persian carpets and shining white Ark and imposing reading desk with silver lamps on each side might be expected to say “this is holy space where only the important are allowed to be” and in some way they do say that, but there is an extra bit which adds to the message. The beautiful red almemar (reading desk) which was purpose built for the synagogue in 1870 holds a secret – there is a full-sized step built into the base of it that slides out with the nudge of a foot, so that young people can stand up there with ease, and the message to me always was “this is holy space and people of every age can participate and are welcomed”.

Small Jewish communities have one enormous advantage: everyone is needed and people rise to the expectation that they will take part to keep the community alive. I have always loved communities who are out of the mainstream for this very reason: they understand their part in the expression of Jewish life.

So in musing about what was most important to me in my rabbinate so

far and what will go on with me in my future career one word kept surfacing and it is “community”. The building of relationships which nurture religious identity and learning has always been my passion. The creation of networks so that people can meet and share and develop their Jewish lives, centring around a synagogue but growing outwards into the daily lives of the individuals is one of the things I am most proud of being part of...

There is a story about a child learning the Hebrew alef-bet and asking about the letter yod. ‘What is this small mark?’ The teacher replied, ‘It is the letter yod.’ The child then pointed to two yods together and said, ‘What shall I make of these two marks together?’ “These two yods together,” he was told, ‘spell out the Holy Name of God.’ Fascinated, the child looked very carefully in the Chumash to find these two marks together, these two yods that were the Name of God. And then he came across two other marks, one stacked on top of the other and asked about them too, to be told that this is a sign to mark the end of the sentence. “But they look so similar” said the child, “how do I know which is which?” His teacher said to him, “no, they are quite different. For when the two sit next to each other as equals, they are the Name of God. When one stands over the other and dominates it, then they are not the Name of God and everything comes to an end.’ The moral of the story is clear: when two sit next to each other as equals, they form the Name of God and bring the presence of God into the world. But when one seeks to raise themselves over another, then they are not the Name of God, and they stop any development of a better world.

The give and take of community is like this – when we work well together, seeing each other as valuable members of the community with different gifts and skills, different views and wants, then we bring God into the world. And when we place some people over others, see some as “the real community” and others as somehow less part of the community

(usually decided by who we know and who we don’t know, though sometimes by who is like us and who is not like us) then the holy work of the community comes to a stop.



Once we are comfortable in a community, it is tempting to try to keep it as we like it. New ideas, new practices, new tunes, new activities are unwelcome. But it is critical that we do not allow ourselves or each other to fall into this particular temptation, for that way lies ossification and the ultimate death of a community. I learned early on in my rabbinic life that the job of the rabbi isn’t really to innovate; more importantly, it is to create the conditions to encourage and nurture innovation. When members of the community have an idea they want to develop it is the work of the leadership to help. Some ideas never quite make it, some take time to nurture, some grow immediately and become part of the self-identity of the community and we forget that we didn’t used to do that particular activity until quite recently.

A Jewish community is more than a place for prayer, though that is at its heart. It is a place for gathering, for shared purpose, for organising support for each other as we all face life’s trials. It is a place of safety and for challenge, for learning and for teaching, for deepening our understanding about ourselves and enacting our life’s purpose.

For me as a Jew, as well as as a Rabbi, the building and nurturing of a community is a source of energy and a source of comfort. The words of Rabbi Tarfon speak in my mind “*Lo Alecha ha’Mela Ligmor, VeLo Atah Ben Chorin LeHibatel Mimena*” We are not expected to finish the work, but neither are we free to desist from engaging with it.

Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild

Lest we forget

Andy Garland visits a little-known synagogue in Ramsgate which is remembering the Jews of Klatovy

I'm trying to visualise six million people... I've just returned from what looks at first glance to be a very nondescript building in Ramsgate. Brick built, seemingly though not actually single storey, with simple wrought-iron railings perched atop a grey wall of concrete blocks. The only clue to its identity is in the white cement render of the porch parapet, with its angular point at the top vaguely reminiscent of the Star of David. For this is the Thanet and District Reform Synagogue. It couldn't be in more marked contrast to Ramsgate's better known Jewish landmark, the Grade II-listed Montefiore Synagogue, with its white Regency-style plasterwork and a recent complete renovation.

Although it is not generally open for public worship, there is the opportunity to visit on pre-booked occasions, courtesy of the Montefiore Endowment; the organisation that exists to preserve and develop the legacy of Sir Moses Montefiore, once described as the most famous English Jew. He was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1837 following visits attempting to relieve persecuted Jewish communities in Palestine, Rome, Morocco, Russia and Turkey.

I'm visiting the Thanet and District Reform Synagogue to hear about another Jewish community for a radio series marking Holocaust Memorial Day. 2020's remembrance took on extra significance as it also marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Tragically, this community had no one of Sir Moses' stature to stand up and fight for them, for they were the Jews of Klatovy in what is now the Czech Republic. It was home to a group of around 300 Jews in the early part of the 20th century, who in 1942 were rounded up and deported to the death camps.

Quite by chance, more than 1,500 handwritten Torah scrolls from Czechoslovakia survived for years in a disused warehouse near Prague before being rescued and brought to the UK and distributed to synagogues across the world, including Ramsgate.

Rabbi Cliff Cohen takes up the story: "We felt we should do something to remember those Jews because they

a l l died,



there's no one else to remember them. "We commissioned an artist to create a bronze tree at the back of the synagogue with 278 leaves. On each leaf, written by hand, is the name of one of the Jews of Klatovy. It's a small town, no bigger than Ramsgate and has one large comprehensive school and that site was used by the Nazis to round up the Jews.

"When we arrived, the mayor of Klatovy arranged for one of the teachers at the school to tell us the story and that's how we got the information and then we had to decide what to do with

it. It took us six or seven years to do so. "Most of them died in Auschwitz but seven survived, so there were just seven Jews left in Klatovy after the Holocaust. All gone now, of course, and no real memory there because of the post-war changes in the country."

It's hard to imagine six million people ordered to their deaths. The Klatovy story is a small part of a bigger whole, but think how many people live here in Kent. Now picture ascending in a hot-air balloon high above the county and looking down on not a soul. Then imagine going even higher to see the whole of Surrey and higher still, the whole of Sussex. All empty and deserted. Onwards and upwards, Hampshire too, bereft of life, and finally include Dorset in your view, devoid of a single human.

And that, my friends, is how you visualise six million people.

Andy Garland

Senior Broadcast Journalist –
Programmes at BBC Radio Kent

This article first appeared in the April issue of Kent Life magazine

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

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

Further information can be found at 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

DEATH - We were very sad to learn of the death of our member, **Trudy Amiel-Fry**, as we were going to press and we extend our deepest condolences to Trudy's daughters, Stephanie and Alex. May Trudy's name be for a blessing.

A message from the Caring Community

To all our members, families and friends we are thinking of you: keep alert, keep safe and keep well.

Please do not hesitate to contact the **Caring Community** if there is any way we can help you:

Ring **Pauline** on: 07745 740114 or email: pauline.jeffree@btinternet.com

"The JC heads south of the river" (nice review, but an important correction):

Kieron Hyams writes: We were flattered to be the subject of the JC synagogue review by the Secret Shulgoer (15 May, p. 35). It's amazing how far they'll travel when all the orthodox shuls are closed! It was a lovely review of our online streamed services, and huge plaudits to Judi, Larry and Stephanie, who all get a mention. We believe we now have the most YouTube subscribers of any UK synagogue.

However, there were some important factual inaccuracies in the article which we want to clear up with our members. As you know, while we use Zoom for the service leaders (and only the service leaders) to join and run the service, congregants cannot join via Zoom and instead watch via YouTube. Importantly, this means that there is absolute anonymity for congregants, and their names are most definitely not visible to any other attendees, or the service leaders.

Being charitable, the author probably had a brief of stereotypical points about online services that the editor asked to have covered. We just want to offer reassurance to members. **We take online (and indeed offline) security very seriously.** In case you missed the article and wonder what was said, go to: <https://www.thejc.com/comment/blogs/secret-shulgoer-online-bromley-reform-synagogue-1.499853?highlight=Bromley>

Hard-hit Families – An Appeal from Mohammad Fahili



My dear friends,

Following on from my message last month, I am very pleased to report that Israel's response to COVID-19 seems to have been successful and the country is opening up.

As I wrote, we anticipated that our families would be very hard hit economically and, unfortunately, this has been the case. We are determined to help them get back to work, but they cannot take this path unless their children are safe in our care. And this is the root of the paradox they find themselves in: they need to work to support their families but they cannot afford to pay for their children to attend our already subsidised day care. Since there are now so many families in this situation, we simply cannot help them all.

And so I turn to you, our faithful supporters. We have spent any reserves we had on salaries for our day care staff and improvements made prior to the pandemic, naturally assuming that our normal income streams would continue. However, these dried up practically overnight, which has made it extremely challenging for the Centre to reopen and stay open unless we receive urgent funding. We have reached out to several agencies for financial support from which we are still waiting to hear back.

My friends, in these unprecedented times, I appreciate that there are so many worthy causes asking for our support. Thank you for including the hard-working people of Akko in your giving plans.

For how to donate, please visit our website: <https://ajcenter.org.il/>
Your friend,

Mohammad Fahili

Director - Sir Charles Clore Jewish-Arab Community Center

Ask The Rabbi!

Our rabbi-to-be introduced himself in last month's *Highlight* but we'd like to print a longer profile of him when he joins us, or perhaps a series.

Please send questions for him, whether personal, e.g. "What made you want to be a rabbi?" "What's your favourite cheesecake?" or theological, e.g. "What do you believe about X?" or practical, e.g. "How do you plan to meet the needs of everyone in our community when there are only so many days in a week and so many rooms in the shul and there is only one of you?" to comms@bromleyshul.org.uk by 15 June. Generations of rabbis have battled with that last one, so we know it's tricky.

Introduction to Judaism

John Posner restarted his *Introduction to Judaism* course online via Zoom in May. The June dates will be **Sundays, 7 and 21 June.**

Please contact John by email (john.posner@talk21.com) to receive an invitation to join the course.

The Book Group

Judy Woolfe reports that the Book Group meeting on Thursday, 14 May went very well indeed with 12 people participating via Zoom.

The next meeting will be on **Thursday, 9 July** via Zoom (or possibly at the shul?) at 8.00 pm

The book will probably be '*Waking Lions*' by **Ayelet Gundar-Goshen**, who is an acclaimed young Israeli novelist.

This novel is a crime story with a focus on ethical issues and has been described as a window to a secret world.

Details: Judy Woolfe:

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

Susan Simmons 14.11.1933 to 21.4.2020

Newer members may not have met Susan, as she was ill for the last 12 years of her life, but these words spoken by her husband and sons on 23 April provide a flavour of what we have all missed.

Husband Barry believes that he and Susan were the luckiest of people. “We met at a badminton club in February 1957. Six months later [en route] to watch the tennis at Wimbledon, I proposed to her. It was love at first sight and this love lasted for the next 63 years. We married in London on 29 July 1958 and went to live in Beckenham, where we stayed, on and off, for the greater part of our lives.

Susan got the greatest pleasure from and took the most pride in the achievements of our sons, Ian and Niall... watching Niall in a procession through Cambridge on his graduation and Ian receiving his medical degree in Manchester, and then seeing each of them making a success of their lives, Ian with his lovely wife Mandy and Niall, surrounded by friends, in Brisbane... watching our grandchildren, Emily, Joe, Max and Ellie, grow into delightful, responsible, mature adults, giving her so much of which to be proud... Susan spoke often of the time when, surrounded by relatives and friends, she received her Doctorate at the Barbican in London.

Mostly, I think of the deep and abiding love we had for each other, how very special she was and how very, very much I am going to miss her.”

Younger son Niall thought, growing up, that everyone had a lovely mum, who then became their friend. Now, he says, he feels blessed to have had the parents he had and for so long. He summed up Susan’s wise and loving guidance as a parent by recalling how, aged about eight, he siphoned off small change from her handbags, hoping she wouldn’t notice. “She did. At the end of the summer I proudly presented my money box to her to [show] that I had accumulated the grand total of £8, which was a lot of money then, hoping, by being so open, to deflect any hint of guilt. Mum said, “That’s a lot of money. Did you by chance take some out of my handbags? I’ve been missing a bit.” I said I wouldn’t do



anything like that and then she said, “It would have been fine if you had and you had let me know”. This was a great lesson; I was left with the double guilt of knowing I had stolen and also lied and [realising that] if I had been honest I would have been exonerated. She was kind and gentle, honest and open. She led by example, without fanfare.

Some of my fondest memories of Mum are from the last few years. I got to know her in a much more intimate way than I would have if she had not become unwell. All unresolved conflicts and resentments fell away and I am left with an uncomplicated love and respect for her, which now translates into missing her presence. During this time, it felt like a great adventure to take her out for coffee, to sit with her and enjoy (in my friend’s words) marvelling at the passing parade. With great strength of character, she continued to make something of life despite her long illness, [again] providing an example and a map for us all.

She was kept going by the devotion and care of my Dad, with their ‘ningkyponkypoo’, a wondrous language of made-up words, sounds and actions that usually finished up with a half-kiss, half-raspberry on the cheek. It was unique and I will miss it.”

Elder son Ian said, “There is nothing more sacred than life [but] Mum’s passing has lifted the dark cloud of her illness from my memories and I now find myself smiling more when I think of her and remembering her own wonderfully warm, happy smile. She was simply a carer; someone

who shared 62 wonderful years of marriage and an array of true friends and family around the world. Someone to teach the blind, support her mother and others through the ends of their lives; someone to be that friend in need; someone to knit clothes for premature babies (although not through Saturday night ‘Columbo’ or ‘Kojak’) and someone to sing ‘Sound of Music’ songs with. Well, two lines of each - on a loop. Mum never sang a whole song!

Susan found herself in Australia and then Bermuda for 3 years in the 1960s. That would have been a shock to someone who, according to Dad, would not choose to travel beyond Sevenoaks. At times she struggled with her relationship with her mother, Nora, but I think that drove her to be the best wife, mother, grandmother, sister and aunt she could possibly be.

Mum took her duties very seriously, not that she enjoyed gardening or cooking; she would much rather spend the time and thought with her immediate family and her brother Robin. That meant we had the same meals every week: Shepherd’s Pie with tinned fruit on a Monday, chicken and chips on a Wednesday, tongue salad for Saturday lunch and a roast on Sunday. Now, she would have wanted to spend weeks just talking to Dad, catching up on what she had missed over the last 12 years. She would want this ceremony to last all day so she could sit and gossip with you all, bending the ears of her lifelong friends from college and work.

Susan’s Judaism and Bromley Reform Synagogue were always very important to her: she set up the audio magazine *Talking Highlight* for visually impaired members and we all had a very special day at her Bat Mitzvah. Mum lived a very blessed life of family, friends, tennis and academia. Dr Susan Florence Simmons would most certainly have wished you all a long and a very happy life.”

Compiled by Judi Sheffrin from the eulogies spoken by her husband Barry and sons Ian and Niall

Zoomed and Streamed our Senior Warden writes

We are now starting our third month of streaming our religious services from the homes of our lay leaders and it seems timely to reflect on our experience. The feedback we have had from you, our members, has been very positive; attendance at the services has been and continues to be high and we have had favourable national coverage in the JC! Success? I think we can claim so.

I suspect we all share some of the sadness of the JC's secret shul-goer's sense of loss, with the loss of a physical community. But our loss is much less, because we still are that community. In the support our members are offering each other through and alongside our Caring Community; the participation in remote learning – and playing – in the Cheder; in remote candle lightings and in coming together for prayer in our streamed (not Zoomed!) services. At the start of the last, I paraphrased the words of **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** in describing biblical references to us Jews being a “community in time, as well as (or, as now, instead of) in space” and how we are bound to each other by our shared principles, practices, rituals and prayers. When I join a streamed service led by others, I read and I sing, and sometimes I laugh or cry, with my fellow members on the laptop screen. And perhaps particularly when I have had the privilege of leading a streamed service from my home, I know that there are many people out there who are reading with me or singing with Judi. I believe that members of our community are joining our service leaders each week, not watching them perform. And that isn't a semantic issue, it is what makes us who we are.

The reasons for our currently high attendance will be many, not least that it is easier for people to join a service from home than to journey to it. I don't think there is anyone who wants to replace the physical gathering in our Sanctuary for Shabbat and festival services with Zoomed-and-streamed versions, but we do need to understand

SERVICES - June 2020 – Sivan/Tammuz 5780

Shabbat morning services will continue 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.

Saturday 6 June

Beha'alotecha (14 Sivan)
Service Leader: Stephanie Alberti
Torah Reader: Matthew de Lange
Haftarah/Singer: Judi Sheffrin
Numbers 11: 1-18
II Kings 2: 1-15

Saturday 13 June

Shelach Lecha (21 Sivan)
Service Leader: Judi Sheffrin
Torah Reader: Hadassah Britz
Haftarah/Singer: Marilyn Freeman
Numbers 14: 1-19
Zechariah: 8: 2-23

Saturday 20 June

Korach (28 Sivan)
Service Leader: John Posner
Torah Reader: Larry Shall
Haftarah/Singer: Sally Rosebery
Numbers 17: 6-17
Jeremiah 31: 27-40

Tuesday 23 June

Rosh Chodesh Tammuz

Saturday 27 June

Chukat (5 Tammuz)
Service Leader: Marilyn Freeman
Torah Reader: David Zerihan
Haftarah/Singer: Hadassah Britz
Numbers 20: 1-14
I Kings 11: 1-13

what it is that they are providing that engages so many of us, and to continue to provide that when we return home.

I cannot finish without a personal thank you to the wonderful wardens, lay leaders, singers, Torah readers, and joining-in-from-home members who make our current services so engaging. To **Michelle** and **Vicki** for connecting in our younger members. And, of course, to **Kieron** for masterminding the stream from Zoom. He supports every one of the services from before it starts to after it finishes and, in supporting the service, supports us all. We all, I think, find comfort in the last line of the Adon Olam: *My God is close, I shall not fear.*

Stephanie Alberti, Senior Warden

Knitters, Stitchers and Natterers

Pauline writes:

Bromley's Knitters and Stitchers have gone to print with the first edition of their Newsletter, May, 2020.

The Newsletter has been circulated via email and will also be going out via snail mail as necessary.

We still need Knitters and Stitchers, so please do not hesitate to contact any one of us if you would like to help in any way.

Pauline Jeffree, 020 8650 4860
pauline.jeffree@btinternet.com



Seven Weeks

Why is May 13 a significant date?

For some of us, it is the date that life began to return to normal after seven weeks of abnormality. In England, people returned to work (unless they worked from home) and were advised not to use public transport. Between March 23 and May 13, life revolved around rules about where we could go, what we could do. A word that usually applies to prison inmates – lockdown – jumped over the prison walls and affected law-abiding people. Holidays were cancelled and schools closed. Buying food varied in difficulty, according to people's age, finances and access to the internet. Pubs, clubs, theatres, art galleries and theatres all closed. And places of worship were closed.

Shul doors remaining shut were not the only Jewish casualties of lockdown – Pesach, Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut came and went, but they were observed differently, courtesy of the internet. Streamed synagogue services are part of the future and BRS has embraced them – a look at the number of viewers on the BRS YouTube channel is proof of that. Attendance at funerals was restricted; sitting shiva was either a solitary event or, again, observed via the internet.

Everyone has had to 'improvise, adapt and overcome' an adversary. A Jewish pragmatist would say that we have been improvising, adapting and overcoming throughout our history. Everyone has opinions about COVID-19; facts, speculation and science, all scrabbling for a platform.

Should we look to Tanakh for explanations? If we do, Kohelet is a contender:

- 3:1 To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven;
- 3:2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
- 3:3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
- 3:4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- 3:5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

- 3:6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
- 3:7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
- 3:8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

These are not words of consolation or comfort; these are words of pragmatism. We can look forward to another Pesach with family and friends. We can commemorate another Yom HaZikaron and dance or wave flags at another Yom Ha'atzmaut. But, as surely as night follows day, there will be faces missing on Yom HaShoah 5781; every year, there are fewer survivors to tell their stories.

On 21 April, Dr John Posner presented a streamed BRS commemoration, aimed at adults, and described the history behind commemorating the Shoah, from 1949 to the annual ceremony at Yad Vashem. Usually, we have a ceremony at the Cheder, when six candles are lighted, to represent each of the six million Jews who were murdered, including one and a half million children. At the ceremony in Israel, six survivors light six candles too. This year, the ceremony was streamed live. The average age of the six survivors in Israel – the torch lighters – is 91.

We have adjusted during lockdown; we had no option. And it may sound contrarian or perverse to say that something worthwhile has come out of seven weeks' worth of disruption and death.

But the intimacy and impact of BRS' Yom HaShoah service would not have been possible without YouTube. And I would not have been able to share it with my friend, who survived the Warsaw Ghetto. She emailed me to say that it was very moving. She is a survivor who still has the capacity to be moved. A survivor who, I hope, will see Yom HaShoah 5781. As Kohelet relates, there is a time for everything, between life and death. And now we include COVID-19.

From our Recumbent Reporter

Link: Bromley Reform Synagogue
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C116GLF1B1c>

Mazal tov to Anna Posner, who was our visiting student rabbi until earlier this year. Like our now rabbi-to-be Mati



Kirschenbaum she is due to receive Semicha in July. Our thanks to SLLS for forwarding this lovely picture of Anna, who will be taking up a position with a Liberal congregation.

Reform Judaism Message to Communities

Dear members of Reform Judaism,

During the Covid-19 crisis, we have been humbled by the outstanding efforts of individual communities, and proud of the work of your rabbis and cantors. In adversity, we are proving our strength as a national movement, coming together to celebrate, support and commemorate.

We are with you at this challenging time, working with your community to ensure that Jewish communal life not only continues, but prospers. RSY-Netzer is providing outstanding programming for young people, RJ:TV broadcasts interactive sessions daily and our communities ensure that services continue online. We have had national audiences of up to 800 for ceremonies marking every significant moment this spring.

There is no avoiding the fact that it has been a challenging time for many families and individuals. However, we believe that the new ways of working, new spiritual practices and new relationships that have been formed will stay with us, filling us with memories of coming together against adversity, something that the Jewish people have been doing for millennia. We'll remember a Seder like no other, a time when we supported the most vulnerable and when we joined together with strength as Reform Judaism. We'll tell future generations that we couldn't congregate, so we decided to innovate. Or, as our ancestors may have described it, we had a choice, as it is described in Torah, and in our generation we chose life.

We look forward to seeing you face to face soon, in better times.

All the very best,

Everyone at Reform Judaism

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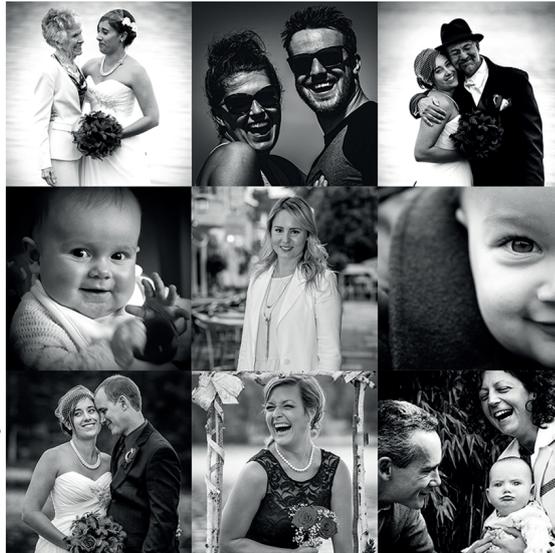
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