

HIGHLight

Bromley Reform Synagogue newsletter

Welcome to our new Rabbi



Welcome to our new Rabbi, **Mati Kirschenbaum**, here captured online as he spoke at our *Tikkun Leyl* discussion on 28 May. There will be opportunities to meet Rabbi Mati online at our streamed Shabbat morning service at 10.30 am on Saturday, 4 July and at the Friday evening candle lighting at 7 pm on 10 July.



Lockdown Laughter

Saturday, 4 July 7.45 pm

BRS presents the internationally acclaimed Jewish stand-up comedian **Ashley Blaker**, seen and heard on TV and radio across the world.

Thanks to generous funding by a member, Ashley will be performing a one-off 45-minute comedy routine just for us. So grab a drink, get some snacks, make yourself comfortable and join us for a laugh!

Please use the zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89250583508>

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)

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Saturday 18 July

Live on Zoom!

This year the **Big BRS Quiz** is going virtual. Can you seize the crown from last year's champions The Rabble?

The Zoom link will go live at 7:45 pm and the quiz will start at 8:00 pm.

Contact chair@bromleyshul.org.uk for the link.

View from the Chair - still in lockdown

"Is the glass half empty or half full?" this common expression is usually used rhetorically to indicate if a particular situation could be a cause for pessimism (half empty) or optimism (half full). Which of the two is correct? Both see the same glass and acknowledge its same physical properties. But one speaks out of despair while the other enjoys the benefit of living in a state of optimism and hope.

Contrary to the pessimist, the optimist has the truer perspective in Judaism. The "glass half full" shows us the power of that period from Rosh Hashanah through the conclusion of Days of Awe and holiness, Shemini Atzeret. When we open our siddurim, we discover the most optimistic of all psalms, selected specifically for this awesome period – Psalm 27. The Midrash teaches that the words *Adonai Ori* (the Lord is my light), refer to Rosh Hashanah while *v'yishi*, (and aid), reflects on Yom Kippur. *Ki yitzpeneni b'suko*, (He will hide me within His tabernacle), speaks of Sukkot. A quick glance through the psalm is enough to find all the words that conjure up hope, optimism, happiness, and strength.

Times right now are tough and many people are struggling to stay optimistic given the lockdown, the state of the economy, loneliness, working from home, lack of schooling for children and the strain that all of this can put on relationships. Maybe you are one of them, or maybe you know someone else who is having it tough. Even though you can find lots of reasons for feeling down and being pessimistic this doesn't mean that you should. The fact is, optimism creates opportunity and hope, something we all need. Yes, you might be thinking it is easy for me to say this, but believe me I have had periods of worry and anxiety about my children, parents and the world. I feel guilty and inadequate when I get impatient home schooling. At this time when the more vulnerable and elderly in my family need me, I either cannot visit or I struggle with social distancing. I miss hugging my extended family and friends. Also how many meals do I have to prepare for the six of us all at home at the moment! Then I remember I have my family, a bed to sleep in, a roof over my head, more than

enough food, and I feel loved.

So I am going to concentrate on all the positive things we have going on at the moment. The first is that on 1 July we officially have **Rabbi Mati Kirschenbaum** starting at BRS. I say officially, as Rabbi Mati has already been teaching at "HomeShul" Cheder online and, in his enthusiasm, he has already sat in at committee meetings and has shown lots of initiative. You will be able to "see" him on the streamed Shabbat service on **Saturday, 4 July**, and then you will have an opportunity to talk to him at a "*Meet the Rabbi*" Friday night service on **10 July** via Zoom (see the ad). Then there will be area-specific "*Meet the Rabbi*" Zoom events planned for later in the summer. Just look out for details in e-light.

Although we are not together in the shul building, there is increasingly a lot going on for the community at BRS. Our services continue to be streamed every Saturday on YouTube, there is a Friday night candle lighting every week via Zoom, there is a series of talks planned by Rabbi Mati and there are adult Hebrew classes going on. As well as this, the **Caring Community** continue their work for our members via the telephone and I hear they are planning a "virtual tea party" and, hopefully, the return of the Social Centre, all via Zoom.

For July we have two really super social events available free to all of our members. On **Saturday, 4 July at 7.45 pm** there is "*Lockdown Laughter*" with stand-up Jewish comedian **Ashley Blaker**. He will be performing a comedy routine just for BRS, and you can enjoy this from the comfort of your sofa. Then on **Saturday, 18 July** the "*Big BRS Quiz*" is returning live on Zoom at 7.45 pm. Details for both of these events can be found in ads in *Highlight*.

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

Michelle Brooks Evans
chair@bromleyshul.org



Meet Rabbi Mati



Rabbi Mati Kirschenbaum will be welcoming in Shabbat at our Friday night candle lighting on **Friday 10 July at 7 pm**.

Please join us and stay on for a chat and to say hello.

Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/578441665>

Study Dates with Rabbi Mati

The Education Committee is delighted to announce that, when he joins us in July, Rabbi Mati will be leading a study session once a week. These will comprise *parashah* study once a fortnight, one in the morning and the other in the evening, alternating with other topics.

We would very much like to hear from you if there is any special subject you would like him to cover.

The dates for July are as follows:

Wednesday, 8 July at 8 pm,

Rabbi Mati will try to answer the question: "How come our rabbi is originally Polish?" - Jewish revival in modern Poland.

Thursday, 16 July at 11 am.

Parashah (Mattot) study session

Tuesday, 21 July at 8 pm.

Parashah (Devarim) study session

Wednesday, 29 July at 8 pm –

"What do Progressive Jews mourn on Tisha B'Av?"

All sessions will be via Zoom, links to be provided nearer the dates.

For further details please contact Barbara on a.bkurtz@talktalk.net, or rabbi@bromleyshul.org.uk

Not According to Plan – Thoughts from the Rabbi

This spring and early summer did not conform to the plan I had for them. In late March, I was supposed to submit my rabbinic dissertation; I was looking forward to leading the seder at Kent Liberal Jewish Community in April; I planned to combine my placement visits to Newcastle Reform Synagogue in May and June with short walking holidays in Northumberland and County Durham; finally, in early July, my family and friends were supposed to come to London from Poland, Israel, Germany and the UK to celebrate my ordination.

None of this happened. First, my dissertation deadline got postponed when many members of my college community developed Covid-19 symptoms; then the seder in Kent got cancelled; then the visits to Newcastle were suspended indefinitely; finally, my ordination ceremony got postponed until further notice. Not that my family could attend it anyway; travelling abroad has become too cumbersome to be viable.

Cancellation of one of these events would not have been pleasant but it would be manageable. What made this spring and summer difficult for me was the cancellation upon cancellation of things that I was looking forward to or, at the very least, had planned. The hardest bit about it was that I didn't know how long this limbo period was going to last and that I was aware that there was little I could do to change my situation. Feeling powerless and anxious, I turned to the Hebrew Bible to search for words that could express my feelings. I found them in Psalm 13:2-3:

How long, O Eternal; will You ignore me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day?

I am convinced that in lockdown all of us have had a difficult experience that has made us ask ourselves: 'How long is it going to last?' Let's pause here to remind ourselves of the emotions and actions that brought this moment about:

Was it anxiety about our and our family's health? Fear for our economic future? Lethargic resignation? Frustration and anger? A mixture of all of the above?

In lockdown, we have experienced the feeling of insecurity about the future that characterised Jewish life throughout much of our history. In many periods, Jews felt like one hardship followed another. They yearned for an age of peace and prosperity, which was supposed to start with the coming of the Messiah. Soon after the destruction of the Temple, Jews expected Messiah to come in the near future to release them from oppression. They made numerous predictions regarding the date of Messiah's arrival, which was supposed to spell the end of their suffering. These dates have come and gone until they were forced to conclude that the messianic age is not going to start any time soon. Abba Arikha (? - 247 CE), the founder of the Talmudic academy in Sura (modern day Iraq), expressed this belief as follows:

All the ends of days [of suffering] that were calculated passed, and the matter [i.e. the arrival of Messiah] depends only upon repentance and good deeds.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 97b

Interestingly, Rav does not specify good deeds that one needs to perform in order to speed up the arrival of the messianic age. However, later in tractate Sanhedrin we learn that the Messiah has already arrived:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi encountered Elijah the prophet and asked him: 'When will the Messiah come?' Elijah answered: 'Go ask him.' Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked: 'And where is he sitting?' Elijah replied: 'At the entrance of the city of Rome.' Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked him: 'And how will I be able to recognise him?' Elijah answered: 'He sits among the unfortunate ones who suffer from illnesses [that force them to self-isolate outside the city].'

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi went to Rome to meet the Messiah. He said to him: 'Greetings to you, my rabbi and my teacher.' The Messiah said to him: 'Greetings to you, son of Levi.' Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said to him: 'When will the Master [i.e. Messiah] come?' The Messiah

said to him: 'today.' Some time later, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi met Elijah again and said to him: 'The Messiah lied to me, as he said to me: I am coming today and He did not come.' In response, Elijah explained: 'He said that he will come "today, if you would only listen to his voice" (Psalms 95:7).'

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 98a

As we can see, Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi encounters the Messiah but it does not bring about the messianic age he hoped for. When he shares his disenchantment with Elijah, the prophet explains that the Messiah will come only when people will be able to follow his lead. Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi expects the Messiah to be a great military leader who will liberate the Jews from Roman occupation. He doesn't expect him to be a humble carer for the sick and the needy. Messiah, seeing Rabbi Yehoshua's unwillingness to get involved in helping the vulnerable, realises that the world is not yet ready for the messianic age and disappears. Elijah then explains that he will return when we are ready to selflessly commit ourselves to taking care of the ones who need us the most.

Given the current restrictions on foreign travel, I think it would be difficult for most of us to travel to Rome. Nevertheless, we can follow Messiah's example by supporting the most vulnerable in our family and community through this difficult time. We can give them a call to make them feel less lonely, do shopping for them, and help them stay connected by teaching them how to navigate Zoom and other channels of video communication.

I am convinced that this difficult time has a silver lining: it provides us with ample opportunity to follow Messiah's example by taking care for others. I hope that, even though many of us spend so much time on Zoom these days, we will listen to the messianic call of our tradition and not put it on mute.

Rabbi Mati Kirschenbaum

HomeShul News, July 2020

Can you believe that we've been running HomeShul for nearly an entire term? And who knew that an online Cheder would run as well as it has done? Of course it's not perfect, but I think our children (and us parents!) have coped with the changes brilliantly.

Some of you have asked me whether we'll be back in the building in September. Well the truth is, I don't know. With government guidance for places of worship changing almost daily, it seems impossible to make concrete plans for anything. But what I can tell you is we won't be able to hold Cheder in the building with social distancing rules in place. Those teeny-weeny classrooms would only hold about 3 people! So unless social distancing is over by September, HomeShul will carry on as it is online next term.

That's not to say our kids will be at a disadvantage – far from it. There are already plans underway to hold a second, shorter session of HomeShul on weekday evenings which will focus on Hebrew, starting in September. These extra sessions will enable us to claw back some of the time lost on Sunday mornings. They'll be completely voluntary, but they certainly will make learning Hebrew easier for the children so we recommend you take advantage of them! And, as for the High Holidays, if we are online we'll be combining HomeShul with children's services so

our kids don't miss a thing.

But what about the summer, you ask? Well, there are plenty of programmes being hosted online for Jewish children, including Hebrew classes, an 'online' summer camp hosted by RSY and something called a "Summer Boost". Keep an eye on the Cheder Parents WhatsApp group for more information about summer programmes for the kids, which we'll keep updating throughout the summer.

And, speaking of summer, this will be our last HomeShul News of the summer term. I wish you all the happiest and healthiest of holidays, whether you are at home, on a vacation or a staycation in between. I look forward to seeing you all in September whether we're in Cheder or HomeShul, because we'll be having FUN, learning and laughing in a Jewish environment. Live and in real time, together.

September will also see the return of a Youth Club page in *Highlight* (see below). Please encourage your children to contact Rachael or Seb to find out more about the Club or to share ideas for the page.

Vicki, Cheder Head Teacher
cheder@bromleyshul.org.uk



Youth Club is back and so is the Youth Club page

For now the Sunday Youth Club meetings will be done on video call! We'll be just chatting, chilling, and playing a few Kahoot quizzes that we've set up in advance for those who want to do them. It'll be very much experimental and so coming along to try it out would be greatly appreciated; we're more than open to any ideas and it would greatly improve your experience for the next one!

The Club is open to people in **Kittah Chet and above** and calls will be on **Sundays from 12 to 12.40** (exact dates to be confirmed). To make sure you are on the mailing list and for all other information, please contact **Seb or Rachael**:

rachael.freida.ashmore@gmail.com or
sebfarm123@gmail.com

In September, after many years, the Highlight Youth Club Page will be back, so we need ideas from you. We plan to include blogs and memes, but what would you like to see on your page? Quizzes? Word searches? Ideas from other young people about things to do?

Have you been on an interesting holiday or outing (not recently, of course, but something you can tell people about, especially if you have photos)?

Please send your ideas/contributions to Seb or Rachael no later than 15 August. See you online soon

Leo Baeck College - Summer 2020 On-Line courses

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

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: lehrhaus@lbc.ac.uk if you would like some help towards your fees.

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

A Masterclass with the Principal, Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris: *Breath in a Time of Breathlessness: An Exploration of nefesh in the Hebrew Bible*

Dr Jakub Kowalewski: *The Heresies of Baruch Spinoza*

Liat Aharonovich: *ULPAN - Modern Hebrew*

Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton: *Classical Greek – Beyond the Alphabet*

Pamela Hartog and guests - *Teacher Training for Jewish Supplementary Schools*

A Masterclass with the Senior Librarian, Cassy Sachar: *Let the libraries come to you – discovering Jewish Manuscripts on-line*

Please click on this link: 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

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

Dr Jo-Ann Myers
Director of Jewish Education

תשעה באב The Ninth of Av

Wednesday, 29 July is the start of the Fast of Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple and of other calamities that have befallen the Jewish people in history.

BRS will commemorate the day with an evening service at 7.30 pm, followed by a study session at 8.00 pm, led by **Rabbi Mati Kirschenbaum** on Zoom. The study session will address the question "What do Progressive Jews mourn on Tisha B'Av?"

Hesped for Philip Michaelis, 19 October 1932-26 May 2020

Philip and Rae were amongst the first people I met when I came to Bromley well over thirty years ago as a freshly ordained rabbi. Rae was the Senior Warden, Philip was a general factotum who knew all the ins and outs of the building and its surroundings, the services, the community, and most particularly the terrifying heating system that existed in those days – hidden under the stairs crouched an enormous boiler worthy of a TransAtlantic Steamer, and it had a temperament that matched Philip himself.

As a founder member, and as a hard working builder of the community, he showed me the ingenious work-arounds he and David Barnett, Ivor Lask and Sid Grant and others had engineered when putting the building back to its first iteration as a place of worship, from its earlier – interim – life as residential units. There was some of the most creative remodelling ever seen. I particularly remember the hatch that reached from the kitchen into the only lockable office at the time, shared by rabbi and cheder and synagogue officers and volunteers – it had been carved out of the wall in order to reach the one and only telephone in the building, should anyone have been careless enough to actually lock the office door.

Philip was born in London in 1932, older son of Theodore David and Elizabeth Michaelis. Not long before the start of the war, he moved to stay with family in East Sussex and went to school in Brighton. Returning to attend London University to study electrical engineering, he began his career in engineering in Manchester, then worked at Admiralty Weapons Establishment at Portland, and finally moved to the Patent Office, where he met Rae and where he stayed until his retirement.

Rae and Philip married in 1960 and moved to Orpington. John arrived pretty promptly, followed by Lesley and Janet. Life was busy for the family, but as soon as a synagogue in the area was suggested, Rae and Philip gave their time and skills to make it happen. Along with a number of young, and not so young, families in the area, they built a community which solidified into the Bromley and District Reform Synagogue in 1964. Many are the stories of that time – of Friday evening services in the village hall where the dog training also took place – sometimes overlapping events; of the



Philip and Rae at the shul in 2007

finding of premises in Highland Road, which needed extraordinary skills of both fundraising and engineering. Luckily the owners, the local church, waited until this nascent community raised the money to buy and then renovate the building, which has been home to the community ever since. And luckily Philip and the others were undaunted by the task they had taken on, dealing with every problem with their collection of DIY tools and enthusiasm, giving over evenings and weekends to the task.

Philip also took on the work of taking services and reading from the scroll, which he practised diligently during the week at home. He became part of the choir, and his Avinu Malkenu (alternating with Martin Posner) was part of the high holydays experience for many – along with shofar blowing and of course the famous Yom Kippur Minchah services which he could stretch or collapse depending on the time available till the end of the fast. He became our JJBS governor and worked consistently for many years doing the unglamorous but necessary work that entailed.

Philip was a stalwart of the synagogue, turning up for shabbatot and festival services, singing the festival morning Hallel; geeing up the singing of choir and rabbi generally, whether they needed it or not. He had strong views and was not afraid to express them. His compliments were rare, but all the more valuable for that, and his brickbats were rather more frequent – though we learned to take them in good heart. He will be missed, but not forgotten – for, just as with Rae, his presence is part of the fabric of the Bromley Synagogue and of the living community going forward.

Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild

We are 'open for business' thanks to our wonderful friends

A thank you letter from Mohammad Fahili

My dear Friends

Some weeks ago, I wrote to ask for your help with an emergency funding appeal. I was overwhelmed and deeply moved by the immediacy of the generous support we received. It showed me that your commitment to the Clore Centre is such that, in spite of the stresses of COVID-19, we remain important to you. Within hours, we were told of donations coming in. So many of you wanted to help get the Centre up and running after having been forced to close during the first two months of the pandemic.

On 10 May we tentatively opened our doors. Would families come? Would they be afraid? Would any be able to pay? On that first day, 35 parents brought their young children back to Daycare so they could return to work. They felt safe and they discovered that, through your generosity, subsidies were available to alleviate some of their financial worries. It was a joyous week as each day saw more families joining, more classes re-starting and a kind of normality returning. As I write we have 65 families sending their children to our daycare facility - more than before - and many more joining our after-school programmes.

Around the world we continue to deal with the pandemic and the frightening implications of not seeing our neighbours as equal citizens. I am glad to say that, at least in our little corner of Israel, our arms and hearts are open to all.

Thank you for enabling us to re-open so that, together, we can continue to make a difference.

Mohammad Fahili



The Board of Deputies: A Tale of Good and Bad by Joe Millis

This year, as in all previous years, the Synagogue is asking each household to donate £30 to the Board of Deputies (BoD) for its Communal Levy (funnily enough, there is no Community Cohen).

What is different about this year is that Bromley does not have a representative on the Board, as I have stood down after eight years (or two years into my third three-year term). But more on that later.

What is the Communal Levy and what does the Board do, I hear you ask?

As the organisation itself says, “The Board of Deputies receives most of its income from the Communal Contribution [Levy] – a modest charge added to annual synagogue bills.”

So, what is the BoD, and what does it actually do with your money? It currently has deputies from 143 synagogues from the Federation to Liberal (out of about 450 in the UK) and a further 30 or so communal organisations (mainly charities), many of whose supporters are members of the 143 synagogues (so double-bubble, I suppose).

The BoD was set up in 1760 and represents the Jewish community’s interests to the government of the day, whether it be on shechitah (ritual slaughter of meat), milah (circumcision), clashes of school holidays with Jewish festivals and, more contentiously, advocating for the Israeli government (Hint: that’s one of the reasons I am no longer a deputy).

All this takes money, and membership fees alone (about £500 per annum per deputy) do not cover the costs. Therefore, the organisation has to fundraise to make up the shortfall. One of the ways is the Communal Levy, another is the Annual Dinner, which is unlikely to take place this year due to Covid-19.

The Board does much good work, such as setting up a “Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community”, which is due to take evidence from Jews of Colour in the UK community about the racism they

face. I hope it will also look at the wider issue of racism in the community towards BAME. Marie van der Zyl, who has the unenviable job of being President of the Board, said that after the outrage over the senseless, “cold-blooded, racist murder of George Floyd” in the US, “We must show solidarity against hate and such vile racism”.

Unfortunately, the Board – and Marie, it must be said – somewhat blot their copybook with its attitudes to Israel and Progressive Jews (which is ironic, since Marie is a member of West London Synagogue).

For instance, it hasn’t publicly stood up for Progressive Jews in Israel, despite prompting by me and several other Reform, Liberal and Masorti Deputies. It just won’t say boo to a goose when it comes to Israel. One exception was the very wishy-washy statement on its Nation State Law, which in effect turned Israel’s minorities into second-class citizens.

Another example is the failure to take a stand on Israel’s proposed annexation of parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territories despite letters from 500+ named young leaders of the community, 500+ not-so-young named community members (including, I’m pleased to say, several from BRS), and 45 deputies.

Marie seems to have capitulated to a letter from 200 or so anonymous people, and 20 unnamed deputies, as well as no doubt the Israeli embassy, who demanded silence.

I suppose you have to feel a certain amount of sympathy for Marie, who says any statement would split the community. This ignores the basic fact that the community is already split and the BoD itself is in favour of a negotiated two-state solution, which would logically preclude the sort of unilateral move the Israelis want to make.

I supported Marie, only the second woman to become president, when she sought election two years ago, because I honestly thought she would be a vast improvement on the “pale, stale,

males” who preceded her.

Unfortunately, my expectations were not met, and after banging my head against a wall for two years, I decided to step aside. The synagogue has not been put at any financial disadvantage as we have not paid our membership fees for the last year. We are also represented by Reform Judaism.

Over the coming year, the synagogue will have to decide whether it wants to have a deputy again for the three-year term from June 2021. I am extremely unlikely to want to be that person again, but I am happy to sit down with anyone who does want to take it on and explain what it entails.

Now it is up to you to decide whether you want to pay for the Communal Levy.

Joe Millis

Statement following the death of George Floyd

Senior Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner released the following statement:

The Torah teaches, ‘do not stand idly by the spilled blood of your neighbour... love your neighbour as yourself.’ Reform Judaism supports Black communities in the US, the UK and globally in asserting their right to live with the same protections and opportunities as every other group. The death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer is deeply troubling and we recognise the pain of those protesting against systemic injustice.

We stand by Black communities and Black members of our own communities and commit to non-violent challenges to all injustice. It is our duty to do this, not just now, but consistently, if we are to do our part to repair our world. #BlackLivesMatter

We at BRS support Reform Judaism's statement, if you would like to talk or have concerns please contact Michelle at chair@bromleyshul.org.uk

Michelle Brooks Evans
Chair of Bromley Reform Synagogue

Social and Personal

DEATH - We are very sad to report the death of our founder member, **Philip Michaelis**, and we extend our deepest condolences to Phil's son, John, his daughters, Lesley and Janet, and their families.

Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild's hesped for Philip appears on page 5 of this *Highlight*, while Lesley and Janet's tributes can be read on the synagogue website - go to:

<http://www.bromleyshul.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Squire-Eulogies.pdf>

The Michaelis family would like to thank all the people who attended Philip's funeral online and for the support and sympathy they have shown at this sad time.

If readers wish to make a donation in Philip's memory, the family's preferred charity is: Talking Books for the Blind (rnib.org.uk) May Philip's name be for a blessing.

BEREAVEMENTS

Sincere condolences to Toby Allin and his family on the sad loss of his father, **Maurice Allin** at the age of 98. Maurice was a familiar figure at our Shabbat morning and festival services, which he attended whenever he was staying with Toby and his family.

Sincere condolences also to Lesley Jackson, her brother Malcolm and her family on the sad loss of her mother, **Margaret Pritchard**, in North Wales at the age of 87. May the names of Maurice and Margaret be for a blessing.

BIRTH - A hearty mazal tov to **Dot (Dorothy) Gee** on the arrival of her grandson, Alan, born on 27 May to her son Gerald and his fiancée Dina.



BAR/BAT MITZVAH - A hearty mazal tov to **Jake and Megan Frankel** (above) and their family on the occasion of their joint bar/bat mitzvah, which they will celebrate on 22 August - *Shabbat Shofetim*. Please check with e-light nearer the date to learn what form the celebration will take.

More Social News on page 9.

More Bouquets for Bob ... and then what?

On behalf of all at BRS and other *Highlight* readers may I thank my very dear friend Bob Symonds for his dedication over more than 40 years in getting every single issue out in good time, except once or twice when circumstances beyond his control have prevented it.

Bob would be the first to agree, however, that times have changed. People receive news and information in a range of ways undreamed of until recently – and the last four or five months have massively accelerated that process. Each of us, technophobe and -phile alike, has had to adapt to new ways of doing things and to embrace the positive aspects of change. Now it's time to build on our new knowledge and practices to make *Highlight* even better and more accessible.

Luckily, because Bob has been posting a pdf of *Highlight* on the website every month for several years, he hasn't had to do anything new but readers have had to remember to look for it, as it is no longer arriving on your doormat. I hope you have done so and enjoy seeing the full colour version.

Now it's time to make some of the changes permanent. With Bob's "retirement" (don't worry, he's still busy translating and taking photos, just not in charge of *Highlight* any more), we have no one person with the time to undertake every stage of *Highlight* production. Happily, we have a talented team standing by to attend to all the relevant tasks. We're also looking at how to make it easy for you to access different types of information via our other media, particularly the website. Please watch e-light for updates as we approach the September issue.

A message from the Caring Community

We send get well wishes to all shul members, family and friends who are unwell. Get well soon!

Please do not hesitate to contact the Caring Community if there is any way, however large or small, in which we can help you.

Contact: **Pauline**, CC Chair: 07745 740114.

We are in the process of planning **Zoom Tea Parties**. It will be a great opportunity to chat together over a cup of tea and perhaps a biscuit or a piece of cake - virtually!

I guess we are all looking forward to getting together.

The most significant change for readers will be that, internet permitting, you will receive a pdf of *Highlight* straight into your inbox every month. For contributors, the process will be much the same as it is now. If in doubt, write and/or send your copy to **comms@bromleyshul.org.uk**, same as for e-light. We have more specific plans for regular columnists, who are being contacted individually.

Most importantly, nobody should be prevented from accessing information about our shul. If you cannot receive things electronically, please tell our chair, Michelle, at **chair@bromleyshul.org.uk** and if you have previously received Talking *Highlight* you will continue to do so. Social distancing has made recording difficult in recent months, so if you are in touch with somebody who cannot see well enough to read our communications, please could you give them a hand. Remember it might be easier for them to receive the electronic version as they can enlarge it as much as necessary.

The Rosh Hashanah issue will feature a column by our new rabbi and the return of a youth page. Please join me in thanking Bob one more time for his extraordinary degree of dedication while editor and his kindness in agreeing to help with the first issue as the new team finds its feet. Have a great summer, whatever that might look like this year, and see you in September.

Judi Sheffrin (*Highlight* co-ordinator)
comms@bromleyshul.org.uk

A Thank You to the Community from Alex and Stephanie

We are writing to thank our community for the love and support shown to us over the death of our Mum, **Trudie Amiel-Fry**. What a fantastic tribute the Bromley community paid to her. The lovely words people sent us in letters and emails have truly helped us remember our Mum as the wonderful, vibrant, funny lady she was before she became ill and restored her spirit to us intact. She gave, and now we see clearly received, love wherever she went. Janet and John, Michelle and Kieron, Rabbi Larry and student rabbi Mati and Mitzi and Adam of JJBS were all so wonderful and so too were all of the many people who wrote to us, called us and came to wave Mum good-bye.

Thank you all so much.

Alex Pachter and Stephanie Alberti

Remembering Trudie Amiel-Fry, 14 September 1922 - 22 May 2020

Mum was born in Germany in 1922. She came to London with her parents when she was nine, when her father, an engineer, was sent here for his company's UK division. They settled in Hendon and Mum was sent to Downshurst. Mum had generally fond memories of her schooldays. Her headmistress by today's standards would be considered draconian, but she imbued Mum with perfect manners, a respectable education and a love of language and its correct usage, which never deserted her.

Mum had a place at Bedford College London to read English but the war changed everything. For a while, Mum worked in a publishing house but decided she needed to do something more for the war effort and enrolled as a trainee nurse. Being a "Guy's nurse" was her greatest pride. Her stories were legion but our favourites include: sterilising thermometers in boiling water (they burst); carrying radium needles for cancer therapy in the top pocket of her apron; and collecting gifts of fresh vegetables and fruit at London Bridge station under the banner "Grow Greens for Guy's". She was evacuated with her patients to Kent. She met our father, Gerald Amiel, when he came back to Guy's after tours of duty in India and Burma with the RAF. By then Mum was a ward sister, with more tales to tell, especially of the Christmas when she decorated her ward to resemble a London pub. The local brewery donated a beer barrel, with real beer, and the senior physician came in on Christmas Day to carve the turkey. Not a health and safety clip-board in sight. When Mum told Matron she wanted to get married, she had to choose between a career or a husband. Mum chose our Dad, and Guy's lost a potential future Matron.

Dad's father had a shop on the Mile End Road in East London. He was a leader in the local community, who had been an active campaigner against the Black Shirts. He welcomed Mum into his family. Our grandmothers communicated freely, never realising that one was speaking Yiddish and the other German. Mum and Dad initially lived in a flat in Chalk Farm but then Dad found a post in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Farnborough Hospital, where Alex and I were born. Dad was



appointed consultant to Beckenham Maternity and Beckenham General Hospitals and we moved to Bromley. Mum re-trained as a medical secretary and supported our father's tiny private clinic in the front rooms of our home. Mum devoted herself mostly to running the family home. We have wonderful memories. Going up to London with Mum to visit our maternal grandmother in Hendon; singing songs in the family car as Dad drove us to holidays in Scotland, the Lake District, Dartmoor and Exmoor, while Mum read him the route page by page from the AA guide. We didn't need maps to visit Dad's mother and her two sisters, in Hove. We did everything as a family – Dad drove us places and paid the bills, but Mum directed operations. She saw that we went to museums, stately homes and art galleries, she took us to the ballet, to the theatre and introduced us early to her great passions, Shakespeare and opera. When we were old enough to be left to the care of grandmothers, she took Dad on cruises round the Mediterranean, visiting classical Greek and Roman sites. Every so often, on a Sunday, we would drive north of the river to visit uncles, aunts and cousins in Hampstead and Temple Fortune. Our aunts insisted that the drive north from the south was much shorter than the drive to the south from the north!

Alex and I attended "Sunday school" at West London, going up with other South London kids in a Thompsons' coach, with Mum sometimes the "responsible adult". It was those long journeys that made the parents of South

London decide they needed a cheder nearer to home. Mum and Dad attended that first meeting, in the living room of local GP Dr John Fry and his wife Joan. From those meetings, Bromley Reform Synagogue was formed. By the time the cheder was ready, Alex and I were just too old to need it but we were (fairly) regular attenders of Friday night services in the Farnborough village hall. Mum was an active member of WIZO and later, when the synagogue was up and running in Highland Road, a keen supporter of the social club. She loved to drive and was collecting her "old ladies" for the social club when she was well into her 80s.

When Dad retired, our parents moved to a flat overlooking Kelsey Park. They became bridge players, which stood Mum in good stead when Dad died unexpectedly. Mum was devastated but soldiered on. When John Fry's wife knew she was dying she hatched a plot to get Mum and John together. John and Mum married, Mum found a new family and a new life with the Frys. She accompanied John on lecture tours and medical meetings across the globe. John was on retreat in Bellagio, editing a book, when his iatrogenic pulmonary fibrosis became too much for him. Mum nursed him through his terminal lung disease and was widowed a second time. This time she had the love of the Fry family, as well as the Amiels, the Buckmans and, by then, also the Pachtors, in support.

Mum never gave up on nursing. When we had grown to adulthood, she returned to Guy's as a bank nurse. Until her dementia became incapacitating, she continued to provide social and nursing care to elderly friends and neighbours. She continued to travel – Algeria, Peru, China, Tashkent. Or Europe for opera. Her standard response would be "if I don't go now, I may not be able to go next year." She was annoyed not to be allowed to climb the thousand steps at Manchu Pichu and unfazed to be left behind in Jerusalem when the tour guide moved on without her. She had gone to Israel to hear Nabucco sung at Masada. She finally stopped travelling when told she would not manage inflatable dinghies in Antarctica. She continued her

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nursing roles, read widely, went to the opera, served as secretary of her flats' residents association and had her weekly bridge with friends, until she became too confused to be a good player. By then she had significant memory loss, and it spoiled the rest of her life.

When we were telling people she had died, a theme came back in their responses. "Feisty, strong, a remarkable person who lived a full life with gusto; lively and entertaining; wonderful, welcoming and fascinating; a really special person, the life and soul of the Social Centre, convivial, full of laughter. Always elegantly dressed. A lady." That is how we will remember our Mum.

Because we remember Mum for the way she brought us up, to be honest, kind and caring. She taught us a love of language, music and the arts. She was very proud of us, of her two granddaughters, Mel and Laura, and she loved her extended families of Amiels and Frys, Pacters, Gilberts and Albertis. We are grateful that she knew that Melanie and Mark now have a daughter, Mailiie-Rose, born on Saturday, 2 May. Mum saw photographs of the baby on Skype before she died.

Mum was so proud of all her family and what they achieved. Alex and I are equally proud of her.

Stephanie Alberti

Late-breaking Social News

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS - Reuben and Sharon Solomon and family of CROYDON.

SILVER WEDDING - A hearty mazal tov to our Chair, **Michelle Brooks Evans**, and husband **Bill**, who will be celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary on Wednesday, 8 July.

The **Social Centre** has reconvened by Zoom and will hold its next meeting on **Wednesday 8 July**, when **Rebekah Lucking** will talk about her voluntary work in Greece. The centre will continue its hourly Zoom meetings every other week until it is again able to meet in the Shul.

Introduction to Judaism - **John Posner** will give another online class in this series on **Sunday, 5 July**, but the longer-term future of the course has yet to be determined in consultation with our new Rabbi.

SERVICES - July/August 2020 - Tammuz/Av/Elul 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.

There will also be online Shabbat candle lightings every Friday evening at 7 pm via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/578441665>

Saturday 4 July	Balak (12 Tammuz)
Saturday 11 July	Pinchas (19 Tammuz)
Saturday 18 July	Mattot (26 Tammuz)
Wednesday 22 July	Rosh Chodesh Av
Saturday 25 July	Devarim (4 Av)
Wednesday 29 July	Erev Tisha B'Av Online Evening Service led by Rabbi Mati at 7.30 pm, followed by study session at 8 pm
Thursday 30 July	TISHA B'AV
Saturday 1 August	Va'etchanan (11 Av)
Saturday 8 August	Ekev (18 Av)
Saturday 15 August	Re-eh (25 Av)
Friday 21 August	Rosh Chodesh Elul
Saturday 22 August	Shofetim (2 Elul) Bar/Bat Mitzvah of Jake and Megan Frankel
Saturday 29 August	Ki Tetze (9 Elul)

A Jewish Revival in Portugal

There were Jews in Portugal in Roman times before the country even formally existed and they lived there right up to the expulsion under King Manuel I in 1497, when they were given the choice of converting to Christianity or leaving the country.

Many Jews did convert - formally at least (they were known as *conversos*) - but continued to practise their religion in secret, which put them in danger from the Inquisition. One group of secret Jews who did succeed in maintaining their Judaism up to the 20th century were those in the small town of Belmonte, who finally came out after the Carnation Revolution of 1974, which overthrew the dictator Salazar.



A corner of Belmonte showing the synagogue

The *conversos*' coming out has made Belmonte into a tourist attraction for Jews from all over the world. Donations and the income from visitors have enabled a small synagogue - Bet Eliyahu - to be built and a museum of Jewish life to be opened.

Belmonte is situated in north-central Portugal, away from the coast, but near the Spanish border and also near the Serra de Estrela Natural Park, which contains Portugal's highest point at nearly 2000 metres and is attractive to nature lovers.

Knitters, Stitchers and Natterers

We hope you are enjoying our Knitters and Stitchers Newsletter (please let me know if you have yet to receive either Newsletter 1 or Newsletter 2. Thank you Ann - greatly appreciated and enjoyed.

The Senior Sister at King's College Hospital Intensive Neonatal Care Unit has recently been in touch telling us how busy they have been and also saying sadly that a number of their staff had been ill with the Covoind 19 virus.

We will continue making all the things that we have been making to date. The necessary treatment of the garments will be undertaken at KCH by their specialist staff before being used by the babes. Meanwhile please kindly store your knitting until we get the go ahead and items can be collected by KCH staff. Thank you.



Keep safe and well.

Pauline 020 8650 4860
pauline.jeffree@btinternet.com

Covid-19 and the Economy – A Talk by Martin Wolf

Here at BRS we are very fortunate to have as a member **Martin Wolf, CBE**, Associate Editor and Chief Economics Commentator at the Financial Times.

Martin has very kindly offered to share his financial expertise with us and we invite you to attend a Zoom talk entitled “*How Covid-19 is transforming the economy*”.

Date and time – Tuesday, 14 July starting at 8 pm.

If you plan to attend, please contact our chair, Michelle:

chair@bromleyshul.org.uk, or Barbara at a.bkurtz@talktalk.net and you will be sent the link nearer the date.

There will be an opportunity for questions afterwards, but we would appreciate it if you would please send them to Barbara in advance as this will be easier using the Zoom format. Many thanks.

A Big Thank You to Bromley Shul

The shul supports the Lewisham Refugee Project through our 3 Faiths group. That's how we met one of the refugees, Karla, a young Christian woman who wanted to learn Hebrew –one thing we could definitely help with. Now read on....

“My name is Karla. I'm 25 years old, the oldest of five siblings. I'm studying to be an accountant. Everyone has been through a lot during the last few months of lockdown and everyone has had a different experience of it. This is not my first experience of lockdown. I grew up in Iraq, and I had it a few years ago when ISIS came to my village in Northern Iraq and destroyed it. I'm so grateful to God, who always surrounds me with great people. My amazing friend Howard Binysh introduced me to another amazing person, Matthew de Lange, and, through him, I had the opportunity to learn Hebrew: one of my dreams. Since I was young, I've been interested in Judaism. We don't have many Jews in Iraq, but I knew Hebrew was similar to Aramaic, which is my first language. The more I learn, the more I realise that it's not quite the same. Some of it is difficult to learn, some easy; the bits that are different are harder to learn than the bits that are similar.

I am still a beginner; I can read and have a basic conversation, Shalom was my first word- how wonderful! I like the sound of it, and the meaning.

Syrian Refugees in Lewisham

As part of the Bromley 3 Faiths Group's ongoing support for the Syrian Refugee families in Lewisham, we are looking for a few volunteers to help sew face masks. We will be providing all the materials and a simple pattern (but you are free to use your own if you have one). We need to make around 100 masks for the 25 families.

If you would like to help please contact **Howard Binysh** (howard@binysh.co.uk or 07715527911).

Thank you,
Matthew de Lange



I would say I'm enjoying my journey with Hebrew and I'm looking forward to the next course. It's such an experience, the teacher Sarit is great and everyone is very helpful. Learning Hebrew is my highlight of lockdown. When I read Hebrew, it makes me feel happy and accomplished; like I'm doing something good with my life. Hebrew is not just a language but a history, and I am so happy to be learning about the culture. I'm very grateful to Bromley Synagogue for helping me learn.

*(For more information about our 3 Faiths Group please speak to **Matthew de Lange**: matthew_delange@yahoo.co.uk)*

The Book Group

The next meeting of the Book Group will be on **Thursday, 9 July** via Zoom at 8.00 pm

The book will be ‘*Waking Lions*’ by **Ayelet Gundar-Goshen**.

Details: Judy Woolfe:

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

Calling all contributors

Please send contributions for **September Highlight** to comms@bromleyshul.org.uk by **17 August**. We cannot guarantee inclusion if they are late or sent elsewhere.

ימים וראים

High Holy Days at BRS in the time of COVID-19

Summer is just beginning but we are now embarking on plans for the High Holydays. The COVID-19 restrictions are being eased and we all look forward to the day when we can reconvene with each other in the synagogue and be able to shmooze before and after (and, yes, sometimes even during) truly communal services. Sadly, we do not think this will happen in time for Rosh Hashanah and the following weeks. It is possible that religious gatherings will be permitted in September but we are sure that social distancing will remain a priority and many of our members will still be considered highly vulnerable and be reluctant for mass meetings. One thing we are sure of is that we are one community and we do not want to open the sanctuary until we open it for all. So we will not be able to gather in the shul and at Crofton Halls for this year. What shall we do?

Over the last months we have become accustomed to virtual meetings – friends meet for tea parties and cocktails over Zoom and dress up for evenings at the theatre to be watched on You Tube. At BRS, our Zoomed-and-Streamed home services have been well received; the service leaders feel there is a congregation out there joining with them in the singing and prayers and we have even won plaudits from that notable critic of Reform practice, the JC! We said at the beginning that Jews could form a community in time as well as in space. Zooming-and-streaming has allowed an intimacy between the people on Zoom and with the people participating from home and we believe we have a technique that works pretty smoothly (thank you, Kieron!). Our plan is to use the same systems to deliver High Holy Day services as close as possible to our normal practice but on line. We know that the heimishe nature of the current Shabbat services lacks some of the theatricality and atmosphere of a proper service in the sanctuary, and we hope that the technology will allow us to add two innovations – choral singing from our wonderful choir and service leading by our new rabbi **Mati Kirschenbaum**. If we can achieve it, he will lead Torah services from the sanctuary, in front of the *Aron Ha-kodesh*, our beautiful ark. Services will be shorter than usual, and the breaks longer – we won't be able to carry out processions and we know sitting in front of a screen can be very tiring – but we hope to provide all the usual elements to allow us all to feel able to celebrate the New Year and access the spiritual renewal and return that Yom Kippur offers. While main services will be Zoomed-and-Streamed, a HomeShul will provide a space for younger children on Rosh Hashanah morning and on Yom Kippur – we are considering offering the latter during the Kol Nidre service (which is on a Sunday evening) if the children are back at school by then.

We will be using the familiar Days of Awe Machzor. If you do not have one and would like to purchase a new copy, they are available from Manor House Books, price £31. Check out “Festivals” on the website <http://www.manorhousebooks.co.uk> and select “Days of Awe Machzor, Reform Judaism”. We do have some shul copies and if you need to borrow a Machzor instead, please let us know (admin@bromleyshul.org.uk) and we will arrange a delivery for you in due course.

Our plans are a work-in-progress so please do let us know what you think. You can contact our Senior Warden, **Stephanie Alberti**, on rrc@bromleyshul.org.uk. We will still need singers and readers to lead us so if you would like to help, have ideas of your own or questions to ask, do get in touch.



Shakshuka

Serves 3-4



Ingredients

1 tablespoon olive oil or vegetable oil
1 medium brown onion, peeled and diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 bay leaves
2 medium bell peppers (any colour), sliced into strips
1 teaspoon chilli powder (mild)
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon sweet paprika
2-3 cans plum tomatoes (400g each), chopped
2 tablespoons tomato paste
Pinch of sugar (optional)
Low sodium salt and pepper, to taste
6 eggs
Small handful fresh chopped coriander (for garnish)

Instructions

Put a large, deep frying pan over a medium heat; add the olive oil and allow to warm through before adding the chopped onion. Sauté the onions until softened, then add the minced garlic and bay leaves. Continue to cook for a couple of minutes.

Add the bell peppers and sauté until softened.

Add the spices and stir through for a minute or so, allowing everything to be well coated. Add the plum tomatoes and tomato paste and stir until all ingredients are blended. At this stage, you can add the sugar (to sweeten any acidity in the tomatoes) and season the mixture with salt and pepper.

Stir well, then simmer over a medium heat for 10 minutes, or until it starts to reduce. Crack the eggs into the tomato mixture, one at a time, making sure to space them out evenly.

NOTE: It helps to dig a well into the mixture before cracking each egg into it; this will contain the egg whites and stop them from leaking out and blending into one another.

Cover the pan and allow the eggs to cook to your preferred consistency: around 10-12 minutes for softer yolks or 15 minutes for more solid yolks.

Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve immediately with warm pitta.

Source: www.jewishcareinteract.org/shakshuka

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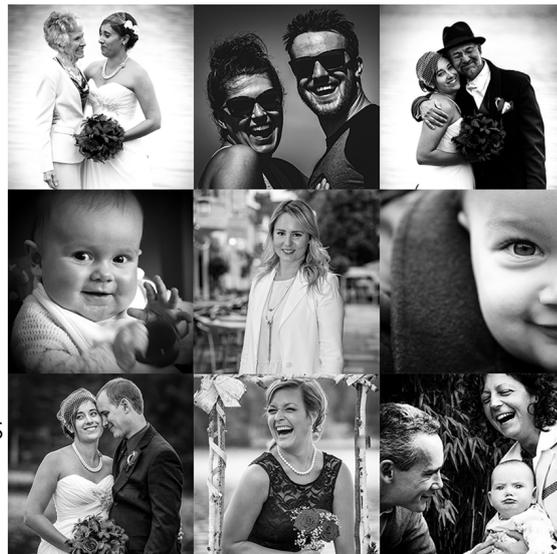
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