

Wine and Fruit - what's not to like?

That was the response of one prominent member when she heard the plans for Tu B'Shvat, which falls on 27/28 January (other produce and beverages are available). We hope you will feel the same way join Rabbi Mati and others online to take a fresh look at what we thought we knew about the festival. Details and joining information are on pages 2 and 12.



We had an incredibly busy Chanukah season: beautifully told and illustrated stories, music, food and drink, humour and magic, not to mention the pleasure of seeing other people's colourful chanukiyot. Now it's time to look forward to our spring festivals and all they bring.

Previous years have seen tree-plantings – one year the ground was frozen so hard that the rabbi couldn't dig a hole for his sapling – and the planting of vegetables to be ready for use at Pesach. How will we manage online? Will the strawberry plants donated by one member for the recent auction and won, then donated, by others take root at Highland Road?

In this HighLight we meet yet more members through the eyes of those who have interviewed them on our behalf; learn more about education for all with Rabbi Mati and Head Teacher Frankie and have the chance to try more recipes ideal for wintry days. Enjoy. *See you online soon.*



AUTHOR TALK



Children's author Tom Palmer will talk to us about his book, **After The War**, on Zoom, on **Sunday 24 January at 12pm**, ahead of Holocaust Memorial Day. Suitable for children aged 9+ and all adults! Watch the trailer for the book at www.tompalmer.co.uk/after-the-war. Join us on the day at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83427373972>

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Thoughts from the Rabbi

Going nuts in lockdown? Time to eat some fruit and nuts!

Our lives are shaped by a number of calendars. You are reading my words in January because the Western world keeps track of time using the Gregorian calendar. Our Cheder term and half-term dates follow the school calendar. The dates of our religious festivals are, unsurprisingly, anchored in the Jewish calendar. Finally, our tax year is defined by HMRC and starts in April. In January, the New Year festivity gives way to the hustle and bustle of trying to fit all our commitments in our busy calendars. This year, however, in January we get to celebrate New Year twice.

The New Year for Trees. What is it all about?

New Year for Trees was one of four new year celebrations introduced to help ancient Jews navigate different areas in their lives, each of which had its own time frame.

The first of Nisan is the new year for kings and for festivals. The first of Elul is the New Year for the tithe of animals. The first of Tishri (Rosh HaShanah) is the New Year for years, for Sabbath and jubilee years, for planting and for tithe of vegetables. In Shevat, we have the New Year for Trees.

As you can see, four new years in ancient Judaism reflected the reality of an agricultural society, in which tithes (taxes for the upkeep of the Temple in Jerusalem) were paid in kind. Because different types of produce/animals grew in different seasons, there was a need to set separate 'tax' year cut-off dates for each of them.

After the destruction of the Temple, tithes for its maintenance were no longer collected. As a result, unlike Rosh HaShanah, new years related to agriculture were largely forgotten. You may ask: how come we mark it when other new years are forgotten?

Tu B'shvat was revived in the 16th century by a group of Sephardic mystics who, following their expulsion from Spain, settled in the town of Safed in Upper Galilee. Inspired by the landscape of Northern Israel, they were interested in finding meaning in the surrounding nature.

Kabbalists of Safed reinterpreted Tu B'shvat as a festival celebrating the potential of both nature and human beings to reawaken to life after winter. In order to (literally) drive their understanding of Tu B'shvat home, they came up with the ritual of Tu B'shvat seder. Just like the Passover Seder, Tu B'shvat seder was supposed to teach Jews something while we eat and drink.

So what beverages and special foods do we eat on Tu B'shvat? And what do they symbolise?

On Tu B'shvat, just like during our Passover seder, we drink four cups of wine or grape juice. However, on Tu B'Shvat we are encouraged to start with a cup of white wine. The second cup is filled with white wine with a drop of red; the third with red wine with a drop of white and the fourth with solely red wine. If you can't imagine mixing different types of wine, I recommend you to mix white and red grape juice



instead... or buy one bottle of white, one of red, and two shades of rose - this way you won't need to mix your tippale. This progression from white to red wine symbolises the growing power of the sun as winter turns to spring. Its rays, first pale and cold, become warm and bright with time. While Chanukkah gives us hope that we have spiritual resources to survive the upcoming winter darkness, Tu B'shvat reminds us that spring is drawing closer with every passing day.

Tu B'shvat traditional foods are various fruits and nuts, particularly those associated with the land of Israel. During the Tu B'shvat seder, it is a tradition to eat fruit and nuts belonging to three distinct categories:

- Those with hard, inedible exteriors and soft edible insides, such as oranges, bananas, walnuts, and pistachios. They represent the power that makes the first buds appear in the spring. They also represent our unacknowledged potential to grow.
- Fruits and nuts with soft exteriors, but with a hard pit inside, such as dates, apricots, olives and persimmons. They represent the pitfalls that need to be overcome before spring fully takes hold. They also stand for

turn to page 13 to find out!

View from the Chair

Goodbye 2020, Hello 2021!

There will be many who can't wait to say goodbye to 2020 and hello to 2021. However, despite all the difficulties and sad news that the past year has brought us, it has also given us a unique opportunity to connect to those around us in different parts of our country and the world. During our High Holyday services we had people watching from all around the UK, but also from Switzerland, Poland, South Africa, USA and even Australia!

Saturday services with the wonder of zoom and YouTube have meant that many people, young and old, and families have had the chance to take part when before they could not get to the synagogue building. I have had the honour of lighting the candles almost every Friday night since lockdown via zoom with a hard-core group including Marilyn, Judi and Bob, and we are often joined by others. With all the uncertainty we are surrounded by, this constant has kept me grounded, and a weekly check-in with this lot always puts a smile on my face.

Last month Professor Bernie Cohen gave us a wonderful talk; the Social Centre has continued to meet every second and fourth Wednesday; and members of the Knit and Natter group have reconvened to resume their important work for premature babies. Rabbi Mati has continued to deliver his study sessions and teach at cheder. With his well-attended Shabbat services and outreach to our community, he has established himself as our Rabbi. It is not only in Highlight that Rabbi Mati has been published, but once again he has headlined in the JC in an article about Rabbis joining new communities during the pandemic.

During Chanukah, Rabbi Mati lit the first candle and the last, followed by study sessions. Every night of Chanukah was celebrated with candle lightings from different homes, and I thank each and every one of those volunteers. We have had stories, singing, music and discussions. The darkness of winter was illuminated by the shared joy of this festival.

The children at cheder ended their learning by having a Chanukah party with Gilbert Giggles. It was wonderful to see 35 households zoom in to the party, and there was a lot of laughter and fun going on. The cheder PTA ran an online auction, which raised £776. Thank you for all the generous donations and bidding that took place.

Another success story is the BRS Klezmer band run by Joe Parks, which that played at the Caring Community Tea Party. Joe only had the opportunity to rehearse with Aimee and James Ashmore, Sophie and Sara Taylor and Lloyd Evans a few times over the lockdown. Everyone really enjoyed the music and the band has promised to play live when we are back in the building.

At the last Board meeting of 2020 the Board unanimously agreed to appoint Hadassah Britz as a Vice President in recognition of her many years of service to the community. We are honoured to have Hadassah and Lew as beloved members of BRS.

So we say goodbye to 2020 and hello to 2021, and all the new opportunities and potential that the new year brings. The first festival we celebrate in January is Tu B'Shvat, which has a long and varied history,



but the theme most commonly given to the holiday today is the environment. It is thought of as a festival of nature, and of the fruits native to Israel. During this festival, Jews recall the sacred obligation to care for the world, and the responsibility to share the fruits of the earth with all. I understand that we will be marking the festival with a "study seder" with fruit and wine, more details elsewhere in this Highlight.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy and joyous 2021.

Michelle Brooks Evans

chair@bromleyshul.org.uk



Master of Disaster? You can always count on Gilbert Giggles to keep everyone guessing

HomeShul News

with Frankie Gruzd



Shalom L’Kulam

We will be continuing our online Cheder learning journey when term starts again on Sunday January 10. As soon as we can return to BRS and get together in person we will do so, but sadly it looks like this will not be before half-term, at the earliest.

From January we’ll be following the story of Exodus, and what it can teach us about valuing our freedom. We’ll be learning about Moses, Miriam, Hebrew rebellions and rebelliousness in the lead up to Pesach. We will also take time to celebrate Tu B’Shevat, plant a few seeds and consider how we ourselves are seeds for the future, alongside developing our Hebrew letters and language skills.

May 2021 be a happy, healthy and more hopeful year for us and our lovely children.

Educational talks

For Rabbi Mati’s study sessions on Zoom, go to:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81044309130>

Tuesday 5 January, 7.30pm:
Broyges in Bromley – how should we manage our return to “in person” services?

Wednesday 20 January, 7.30pm:
Pirkei Avot continued.

Saturday, 23 January, 12.30 pm
after Shabbat Service: Parashah study session.

HomeShul reminders

- 1) **HomeShul will continue on Zoom from 10am until further notice.** You can log on from 9.45am – in fact *it’s best that you join us from* then so we don’t have everyone trying to join at the same time. You can always log in at 9.45am, allow Vicki and me to put you in your virtual classroom and then go and make a cup of tea, ready to begin at 10am.
- 2) It would be especially helpful at this time if you would **join us with your child/children’s names and classes when logging on to Zoom.**
- 3) **Please stay within earshot of your children when they are learning.** We can teach your children remotely, but we can’t make sure they behave!
- 4) **Helper development** will continue during HomeShul at 10am. Please make sure all Helpers have signed in by 9.55am to make sure we start on time.
- 5) Remember to **check for an email from your teacher every Friday** before the Sunday of HomeShul. Occasionally you may receive one even earlier if the teacher is asking you for things you might need time to collect for craft. Your regular Friday email will also talk about the theme of the week and will always have the Zoom link to HomeShul, even though it is the same every week.

“Frankie’s Virtual Office” is open during HomeShul, so if you feel like a friendly chat or have queries please email cheder@bromleyshul.org.uk to arrange a Zoom window. I’m also available (Tuesdays-Thursdays) on 07564 715079 during term time and holidays.

TAKEN BY SIMON.CO
COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

FAMILY

BIRTHDAY

EVENTS

CELEBRATIONS

ALSO A COMMERCIAL DRONE PILOT

LAND SURVEYING

PROPERTY ROOF INSPECTION

LARGE PROPERTY ESTATE VIDEO & PHOTO

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“ENGAGING PHOTOGRAPHY. ENDLESS MEMORIES”

Cheder stories



Katia and Natali

We are starting a new series of interviews with BRS's many Cheder teachers, in order to highlight their experiences and path to BRS and teaching our community's children. This is particularly important in these times when we cannot meet face to face, due to the pandemic.

This month, Amelia B. Kyazze interviews **Katia Pisetzky**, who teaches Kittah Vuv.

AK: Where were you born, and did you grow up Jewish?

KP: I was born in Bulgaria, to a Bulgarian father and a Russian mother. My father was a diplomat, and at the age of three I was sent to live with my grandmother in Russia for a year-and-a-half. She lived on the Black Sea with some other Jewish families nearby, but there was no talk about religion or Jewish tradition. Then from the age of 6-12 years old I joined my parents in Havana, Cuba. These were very formative years for me. I loved it there; the culture is very vibrant, and the weather is wonderful (except for the hurricanes). Later we moved to Holland when I was 16. I was free to learn about religion and philosophy, and to ask some questions about God and what my family history was. I was exposed to a world without censorship, and I learned a lot. There, I met Jews from the Diaspora and Israel, and I felt like I belonged. My personality fit in with them. I didn't have to explain myself all the time.

AK: What brought you to BRS?

KP: I travelled a lot after University, and I lived in China. When I was there, Beit Chabad reached out to me, trying to make a Jewish community. When I came to the UK, I wanted to put down roots. When I became a mum, I wanted things to be different for my daughter. [Katia's daughter Natali was born in 2011]. I wanted her to know from a young age her background and history. It had to be a Reform synagogue, so we would feel welcome even though her father isn't Jewish. We started with the Gan and became members soon after.

AK: When did you start as a Cheder teacher?

KP: Vicki asked me if I wanted to be a Cheder teacher about four years ago. I was in the Hooray Cheder group and soon began coordinating the volunteer security rota. I thought it would be a nice way to commit to being at Cheder every week for Natali, and to get to know the students and other families.

AK: How are you finding Cheder on Zoom?

It is okay, better than nothing. Sometimes technical issues can be a problem for one student or another, and that's hard to manage. Also, some children struggle with the platform. If I find that people aren't able to engage, I adopt a different kind of approach. We chat more, I ask their opinions and they start talking more about their views, the world around them, and it works better. And then there is always Hebrew. Funnily enough, not a single student in my class is averse to Hebrew, though some make a face when I say it's time to practice. They secretly love it, I am sure.

AK: Has anything surprised you about Cheder?

KP: The students bring their different points of view to each conversation. Sometimes they are funny, other times they are genuinely profound. Even from the age of 10 or 11, there is a level of sophistication in their thinking. There is also a feeling of solidarity amongst classmates that's nice to see. Sometimes they might squabble, but I've also seen them be very supportive of each other. Their Hebrew is better than they think and that surprises even them!

When it comes to online education, whether that's our provision for adults or Cheder, the BRS spirit of working together to find solutions and innovations prevails...

BRINGING CHEDER HOME

Back in March when lockdown was announced, Cheder was left with a real challenge. As Vicki Ashmore, former Head Teacher and now Co-Chair of Education, recalls, "everything was left behind in the building. There was no access to pupils' machberets, resources or story books."

"To complicate matters, it wasn't known if social restrictions were going to be in place for a few weeks or many months. There was a buzz of members, parents and teachers coming to me and Michelle asking the same question: 'What is our Plan?'"

Familiar with the potential of Zoom through her role as a sign language interpreter and aware of some of its limitations from her music work, Vicki soon had one. "It was clear that little tushies weren't going to sit comfortably for more than an hour," and it was also clear that the Chai curriculum wasn't transferable to an on-line teaching environment. Following instructions like "make sure all your pupils pass the playdough to each other" simply was not going to work. So Vicki created a document called "What's The Plan?!?!" and presented it to the teachers, knowing it would only be a success if they could embrace this new way of working on Zoom. But embrace it they did, and with their help, and the support of Michelle and Keiron on IT, HomeShul was formed.

Behind the Zoom screens, there was so much rally-round to make this happen. Central to the new approach was a move to one weekly theme shared across all year groups.

'Gan as you Can'

Newly arrived BRS Head Teacher Frankie says, "for the littlest pupils it's still a case of 'Gan as you Can'. The difference in September was knowing that a Zoom-based term plan was needed and that we'd need to keep the HomeShul spirit burning. In the 3D classroom you have spontaneity and the vitality of being there, hands-on

group work and displays around you to point to; on Zoom, as a teacher, you are one box among many, so you've really got to step up the prep and orchestrate the learning experience."

"The challenge as Head has been to design and co-create new resources that better fit a 50-minute online learning environment. In Gan, working with Heidi and Sue, we've tried out new 'energisers'. Across the age ranges, as part of 'online engagement', bespoke Hebrew resources, stories and games have all been added in; it's encouraged all teachers to bring to the fore new ways of enlivening sessions."

Positive Legacy

"Many of these innovations, and the new teaching materials, are certainly going to be a positive legacy of the pandemic. Working with Rabbi Mati, we've wanted to ensure our weekly themes chime with the challenges pupils are facing in their lives now during Covid times; alongside keeping the HomeShul ruach going with fun challenges and song. Leaving aside the technical glitches and times we should have been on mute, I am sure we will be bringing many positives out of these difficult times, which will continue to inspire us when we return to Cheder."

ZOOMING IN ON ADULT EDUCATION

When Rabbi Mati joined us in July, he knew that he started his rabbinical career at BRS in the most unlikely of circumstances. Rabbi Mati recalls,

"I applied for the job in Bromley after a lovely experience of leading a study session at BRS one Saturday afternoon, following a Shabbat morning service I led. I wasn't quite sure how to recreate this atmosphere online."

The first challenge that had to be addressed was computer literacy. Rabbi Mati describes these early days of Zoom learning as follows:

"While many of our members easily adapted to taking part in study sessions on Zoom, others needed some time to master it. During my first few weeks on the job, some participants of our study session had difficulty muting and unmuting themselves. Sometimes we had to resend the links to our study

sessions as they 'got lost' among all the emails our congregants receive these days when such a big portion of our lives has moved online. However, it didn't take long before our regular session participants became Zoom pros. Where there was will, there was a way."

The move to virtual life also called for a new format for our study sessions. Rabbi Mati observes:

"One cannot stay on Zoom for too long. We had to factor in 'Zoom fatigue' while scheduling the times and length of our study sessions. Moreover, leading sessions online requires more effort from the teacher as it is harder to keep participants' attention. I try to do it by asking BRS members attending our sessions to take turns reading the texts we are discussing. I also ask a lot of questions; few of our members would like to attend an online lecture. Moreover, I do my best to make connections between the topics of our study sessions and our life under Covid-19. This makes ancient texts resonate with our experience today."

Rabbi Mati can't wait to return to in-person study sessions over coffee in our synagogue. Nevertheless, he can see the silver lining of the current situation. He notices:

"Online educational activities have enabled some home-bound members of our community to actively participate in our study sessions. In fact, we now have participants joining us from as far away as Canada. The same is true for HomeShul, which is now regularly attended by a number of children who join us from afar, even from abroad."

Frankie and Rabbi Mati admit that the 'new normal' can often be challenging. However, they also point out that the pandemic has forced us to reflect on the way we teach. Rabbi Mati is convinced that the experience gained while teaching online can be used to make offline classes more engaging when we return to the synagogue. He laughs,

"My offline classes better be interesting. After all, the participants can't turn the volume down to mute me."

Books, art, theatre, music and....

Compiled by Judy Woolfe and Marilyn McKeever

Contributions to marilynjmckeeper@icloud.com

Bromley Reform Synagogue Book Group

The next meeting of our lively book group will be on **Thursday, 7 January** via Zoom.

We will be discussing Linda Grant's most recent novel, *A Stranger City*, which recently won **The Jewish Quarterly Wingate Literary Prize** and is described in *The Times* review as: 'a lush love letter to London that asks questions about what cost Brexit will have on Grant's adopted city and its diverse inhabitants...'

If you wish to join the group please contact Judy Woolfe at jwoolfe@ntlworld.com or 07989 091066

JMI's WORLD TOUR – A celebration of Jewish Music hosted by Dame Maureen Lipman, BBC's Suzy Klein, Sir Simon Schama and Lord Michael Grade, will be on **Thursday, 11 February** from 7.30 – 9.30pm. Details: www.jmi.org.uk, where you can also find out how the Jewish Music Institute aims to bring the ancient and contemporary global musical culture of the Jews to today's mainstream UK cultural life.



Yes, *this is* the theatre page. Surely Frankie's candle-lighting on the fourth night was nothing if not theatrical!

The Dressmaker

Judy Woolfe wrote this poem during the first lockdown last year. Many of us have links to the clothing industry in our family histories, like Judy's mother, who was a dressmaker and seamstress, making dresses for individual clients at home.

Her Singer sat in the dining room
ready to sew outfits, breaking the gloom
of post war rationing
foot on the treadle, head bent
up and down
hand on the wheel creating seams
for a sumptuous gown from a Simplicity pattern
bought in town.

The tools of her trade all around
tailors chalk, pinking shears pins in mouth
working the magic of dressing up to the mark
modelled on a stately posed dummy
without arms; we had no qualms inking it in
with dubious charms!
not a thought for her reaction
such is the joy of childish fun,
not caring if work is done

Ah the school shirt-waister
turquoise seersucker, with nylon slip
starched to perfection in sugared water
textured and creased like greaseproof paper
folds and darts for shape
my name in red on Cash's tape

In that prim and proper time we knew that
blue with green must never be seen
and yellow on pink, in a frock
might shock
Worn today by sassy women
those rules of colour seem so absurd
who now would blink or utter a word?

This page is for the exchange of news about music, art and theatre. If you know of something that could be of interest to other members, or have seen, heard or read something and would like to review it, please tell Marilyn – details in the banner at the top of the page.

In Our Community

Page Contact:
Bob Symonds:
comms@bromleyshul.org

Social and Personal

DEATH - We are very sad to report the death of our member, **June Posner**, wife of Martin Posner and sister of Sally Rosebery, and we extend sincere condolences to them both. June used her musical and artistic gifts to benefit the community, including her beautiful calligraphy on certificates for B'nei Mitzvah and other simchas. May June's name be for a blessing. *Martin and Sally remember June on pages 9 & 10.*

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:
Bethany McDonald Shepherd of Lee Green, with her husband Tristan Shepherd and daughter Edith.

Illanyt Woolfson of Eltham, with her husband Nic Fildes and daughters Astrid and Ivy.

GOOD BYE AND GOOD LUCK to **Sylvia Ezer**, who is leaving Bromley to return to her North London family. Sylvia wishes to thank everyone at BRS for their warm welcome and to say how much she enjoyed being a member. Sylvia also made a valuable contribution to the choir, especially during the High Holydays, and as an interesting contributor to BRS Book Group.

HONOURED BY THE SHUL



A big "Thank You" and "Mazal Tov" from the BRS community to **Hadassah Britz** (above) who has been made an Honorary Vice-President in recognition of her selfless service to the synagogue over many years in a host of roles - reader, singer, teacher, helper at Social Centre – as well as friend and all-round mensch.

Pauline writes on behalf of the Caring Community:

We are thinking of all our members, family and friends who may be unwell and wish them a speedy recovery. Dear All, please keep safe, and well. Please do not hesitate to contact the Caring Community through Pauline on 07745 740114 if you would like to chat or if we can help you in any way.

Knitters and Stitchers fill up a car for Kings babies

At about 10:00am on Friday, 11 December, members of the Knitting, Nattering and Stitching Group came with the items they had made: cardigans, traffic light hats, small and large blankets, 40 gift bags (yes, we achieved our remit, wonderful!) and a huge number of amazing knitted toys and a goodly number of incubator covers. All the knitted items were wrapped in plastic as requested and beautifully and helpfully labelled.

Jude came from King's College Hospital Intensive Care Neonatal Unit in an empty car and left with a very full car out of which she just had enough vision to be able to see safely!

It was so good to see everyone and thank you for coming.

I am meeting with Jude (virtually) in the New Year to discuss the needs of the little ones coming to the Unit either as in-patients or out-patients. I will, of course, let you know the outcome of the meeting. Meanwhile we continue to meet via Zoom and look forward to our next Knit and Natter session at **10.30am on 5 January.**

Caring Community Tea Parties

How lovely it was as a community that as many as were able and free to do so came to our Community Zoom Tea Party. Thank you for coming and how very good it was to see you and to chat with you.

In particular, we would like to thank **Joe Parks** and the rest of the band members and parents for providing a very lovely Klezmer concert and we look forward not only to our next Tea Party (virtual) but also to the next Klezmer concert, please!

News from Park Court re Tea Parties. We have been informed that our Lounge is not for general or specific use until the Tier level has fallen to One. This means we will continue our Tea Parties, but virtually for the foreseeable future. We will keep you informed.

Please let us know if you need help with accessing Zoom. We do have kind experts available who are waiting and willing to help anyone.

Details of all the above from:
Pauline.jeffree@btinternet.com,
07745 740114

Social Centre News

Meeting of 25 November 2020

What a pleasure it is to meet our friends on our screens by the technology of Zoom, which, by the way, has become a word in common usage since the lockdowns.

On this occasion we had the pleasure of a talk by **Eileen Fry** concerning her journey to becoming a member of Bromley Reform Synagogue. She explained that her parents were both refugees from Nazi Germany. Her father, having arrived in his teens by means of the Kindertransport, had been taken in by a family who were members of the Plymouth Brethren sect.

Eileen's parents did not acknowledge their Jewish origins. Therefore, she did not have any form of Jewish upbringing. She decided not to tell people, when asked, that she was Jewish. However, when she was at Manchester University she disclosed to a boyfriend that she was Jewish and met with anti-Semitic comments.

Eileen has enjoyed a successful career which, latterly, has led to her becoming an examiner for people wishing to become lawyers.

Having reached her mature years seems to have awakened in her a need to acknowledge her Judaism, which has prompted her to join our synagogue and to seek out a community to which she can belong. We trust this connection will provide Eileen with the comfort and religious fulfilment that she desires. Thank you, Eileen, for telling us your story. You are very welcome at BRS.

Meeting of 9 December

At 3 pm precisely our screens came to life with smiling familiar faces as we logged on to our Zoom Social Centre meeting.

Rabbi Mati told us that he had moved from High Barnet to the area of Petts Wood. Then he told us that the story of Chanukah can only be found in the Christian bible, which was something I did not know and found surprising.¹

Rabbi Mati presented us with on-screen text extracted from the First Book of the Maccabees which gives an account of wars which raged in the 2nd century BCE between the group of people led by Judas Maccabee against the Hellenised Syrians led by Antiochus. The Syrians were trying to capture Jerusalem, which led to many battles, as well as trying to indoctrinate the Jewish people into Greek ways. So went the story of Chanukah, with which I am sure you are all familiar. Rabbi Mati asked several people to read aloud from the on-screen script so that we could follow the story.

Towards the end of the session our good friend Andreas came online to give us instruction on various "Keep Fit" exercises. Everyone entered into the spirit of following the instructions by using their chairs to carry out the movements - I am sure this will be needed by all of us to practise at home.

So a special 'thank you' to Rabbi Mati and our friend Andreas, who gave up his time in his practice to come and keep us fit.

Maureen Pearlstone

¹ Editor's note: Actually in the Apocrypha, a supplement containing books that did not form part of the Biblical canon.

SOCIAL CENTRE JANUARY DATES

Weds 13 January

Visit from **Tom and David** with their musical entertainment

Weds 27 January

Topic to be arranged

Thinking of writing your memoirs? Or that novel you've imagined? A blog? A gift for a loved one?

I can help! I am a writer and professional editor, trained in facilitation and helping people bring their ideas to life!

Contact me
Amelia Kyazze
abkyazze@yahoo.com



More warming recipes from Social Centre folk

Sweet Potato Pie – from Denise Levinrad

2 sweet potatoes,
2 onions
1 bag of baby spinach,
2 eggs,
1 cup of cheddar cheese. strong.

Cut sweet potatoes into rounds, place in a greased dish, put into the oven for 15 mins.

While that is in the oven sauté onions till softish, add the spinach, press down hard, beat the eggs and add on top of spinach, add cheese. Also put some cheese on the onions.

Put in the oven for about 20 to 25 min. Oven about 350. Prick with a fork to see that the sweet potatoes are soft.

I like a lot of cheese, so I use a cup, but it's up to you. We all love this pie bake.

Lokshen Pudding – from Dianne

Sarah Kazan: *Love & Kishkes*

With Apples

2 eggs, beaten
3 tbsp sugar
¾ tsp cinnamon
Pinch of salt
8 oz/225g noodles, cooked & drained. (broad or fine)
225 g grated cooking apples
175 g/6 oz raisins
175 g/6 oz chopped nuts (optional)
4 tbsp melted margarine or butter.

Combine eggs, sugar, cinnamon and salt. Add to the noodles. Add apples, raisins, nuts and melted fat. Mix thoroughly. Place in a well-greased casserole dish, bake at Gas 6/200°C until brown on top – about 1 hour.

With Apricots

8 oz/225 g noodles
225 g dried apricots chopped and soaked in boiling water for 5 mins. (ready-to-eat)
2 eggs
4 oz/75g sugar
¼ tsp salt
Pinch of nutmeg

Proceed as with the apples.

THE CENSUS IS COMING!

A message from our Chair

The census is coming, and it's about you. By taking part, you will help inform decisions about the services you and your community need, like doctors' surgeries and new schools.

Without the information you share, it is more difficult to understand your community's needs and to plan and fund public services.

Whether the data is used to plan apprenticeship schemes, new bike lanes or nursery spaces, your information makes a difference to the life of every single person in England and Wales.

Census Day is Sunday 21 March. You can fill your form in online as soon as you get your access code in the post. If your household circumstances change on Census Day, you can let The Office for National Statistics (ONS) know. For more information, visit www.census.gov.uk

Learning about the Uyghur Community and how important our support can be

Listening to our guest speakers on Human Rights Shabbat on 12 December it was impossible not to recognise the parallels between the situation of the Uyghur community in China now and that of Europe's Jews in the 1930s and 40s: systematic destruction not only of individuals but of their history and culture; concentration camps by any other name; denial that anything untoward is going on... Mia Hasenson-Gross from the Rene Cassin organisation (www.renecassin.org) introduced the Uyghur speaker, Dilnaz. Although her Zoom Connection was not good, we had no difficulty understanding that help and support was needed. What could we do?

“Stay hopeful, Stay helpful, stay human”

Mia and Dilnaz **suggested joining campaigns** such as those run by Jewish News and “Stop Uyghur Genocide” **writing to our MPs** and **boycotting** businesses that import Chinese goods made with Uyghur slave labour. Regrettably these include many well-known names. The Rene Cassin website provides

all necessary links. In answer to a question about whether we could do anything “better” than fundraising, Dilnaz explained that, as a community in exile, they need centres in which they can teach their culture so as to maintain their identity. Hence, financial support is needed, as are our prayers. She urged us to, “Stay hopeful, stay helpful, stay human.” The local Three Faiths Group, in which BRS is an active partner, has offered to take up the cause, so please watch this space and e-Light for more news

Remembering June Posner

(14 June 1932 - 10 December 2020)



As an artist – by husband Martin

From the age of about three, June was pictured with a pencil in her hand. Unlike Sally, her sister, June hated sports at school and would hide in the library, away from her teachers, to read a book. She emigrated to London

in the 1960s to find a husband. We met at the Berkeley Group at West London Synagogue and we were surprised, on meeting Rabbi Hugo Gryn at a social event, that he wished to marry us.

June spent many years trying to teach art to a mixed group of pupils aged between 11 and 17. She had far better results when working with individuals.

Calligraphy was her speciality and she designed manuscripts for mayors and aldermen in a number of boroughs. She produced a beautiful piece of work for the late Speaker of the House of Commons, Bernard Weatherill, and also did work for the College of Art. June would see a design in her head. To her, colour balance was critical.

In our synagogue, she was delighted to help with the committee to redesign the sanctuary. In 2019, she created a watercolour painting that she was really pleased with, a sea view, and last June achieved something very special. This, for me, is a lasting memory of when she was really happy, sitting in the sun drawing.

As a sister – by Sally Rosebery

June was my big sister. She was the most creative person of our family. As a little girl, the creative spirit was already there. Actually, she was good at all subjects at school (apart from physical exercise!). June was a very intelligent person and a deep and spiritual thinker.

She trained at art school in Liverpool and then as an art teacher at Leeds University. As a scribe and illuminator, she created exquisite works. It wasn't what she wrote, it was the way she wrote it and the beautiful illustrations that were part of her works. I have a painting on my bedroom wall that she did for me of a holiday we went on to Portugal in 1963. It is full of exquisite vignettes of the places we visited. Our family came from Portugal originally and, as she and I were dark haired and suntanned, we were “told off” by the elderly women because we were bare-armed and unescorted, unlike the blonde girls in our tour.

In later years, June went on to painting in gouache and water-colour and enjoyed painting holidays at country hotels - as did Martin. It was largely due to June that I ended up as a potter. In our thirties she dragged me off to Barry (Glamorgan) Summer School. While she did painting, I found myself in the pottery class - and got hooked. Thank you, June.

All of this was before she and Martin met at West London, where we would go every Sunday evening. June was very practical and made her own clothes, using beautiful Liberty fabrics. June was very much part of our synagogue and she was on the then Council in charge of the building for several years. She created the Torah cover that we use in the synagogue in the colours described in Exodus - of blue and purple and scarlet. And she illustrated the story of the king's diamond that suffered a deep scratch that is in the synagogue. She also used to write the certificates for our B'nei Mitzvah. And, of course, she and Martin enjoyed singing in the choir for many years.

A note to members from Martin

Dear All,

May I thank the many members of our congregation who sent me and Sally kind thoughts and messages of sympathy on the death of dear June. It is wonderful to know how much she was appreciated.

January profile: Victoria Hart

As told to Eileen Fry

Victoria works as a social worker at the forensic unit in Bethlem Hospital in Beckenham. This means she is working with those at the interface with the criminal law who have been transferred from prison or hospital. Security is tight and there is a risk of violence. She works on the male rehabilitation ward. The aim is to move people on but they haven't had some of the pressures felt elsewhere to move people on before things are ready. Victoria focuses on the fact that the patients are unwell and need care and treatment, not what they have done before.

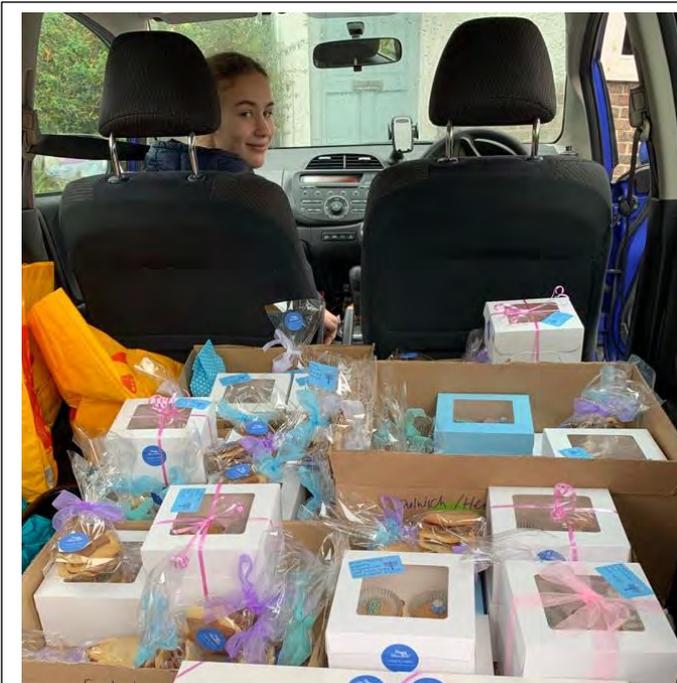
Victoria told me she was also a foster carer for about 4 years. 5 children aged between 5 – 11 stayed with her at different times. It was supposed to be short term foster care but one girl ended up staying for a year. None of the children were a problem, although working with the local authority was stressful! She learnt a lot, including about the poverty in which some children grow up

She had a Jewish upbringing, first in Leeds and then in North London. She attended a Modern Orthodox synagogue and Jewish schools. On returning to Leeds to attend University, Victoria joined the Jewish Society. After University, she worked for Ravenswood,

a Jewish charity supporting people with learning disabilities, which merged with Norwood, a Jewish charity for children in need, as Norwood Ravenswood and later Norwood. During this period, Victoria gradually drifted away from her Jewish upbringing. She returned to University to study social work and later spent some time living in Italy where she met her partner (who was busy cooking something delicious and Italian while we spoke).

Two main things have brought her back to Judaism and to joining Bromley. First, lockdown made her reflect on her priorities and the meaning of community and belonging. The second was the increase in anti-semitism particularly on the left. Many of the left wing social workers she met, while believing they were anti-racist to their core, did not recognise anti-semitism when it occurred or understand that there is a problem. It was a relief talking to friends from her school days who were Jewish and not having to explain.

Victoria's parents have died but her uncle suggested she joined BRS. She Watching some of our services on YouTube brought everything back and connected with something inside her. She felt comfortable.



Fantastic achievement by Sophie and her supporters

Sophie Taylor, right, whose Bat Mitzvah was last February, was finally able to complete her BM Project in December, despite lockdown, by selling baked goods in aid of Crisis. It took her 13 hours to bake all the cookies and muffins that had been ordered, a further half day to pack them and nine hours to deliver. Donations are still coming in, but Sophie's total is £1005 so far, with which she is thrilled. Thank you to all her customers.

TU B'SHVAT: Continued from Rabbi's Column, p.2

... challenges that we need to overcome before we can fully flourish.

- Fruit that is eaten whole, such as figs, seedless grapes, strawberries, raspberries or blueberries. They represent spring in its full glory. They also symbolise our realised potential, the fulfillment of our hopes and dreams.

This winter we can't travel to find winter sun. Instead, we yearn for spring more than ever before. We can't quite speed up its arrival. However, what we can do is to celebrate Tu B'Shvat together to remind ourselves that it will eventually come - even after this dreary lockdown winter. I hope to see many of you at our Zoom Tu B'Shvat seder on 27 January (see right).

Best wishes,
Rabbi Mati Kirschenbaum

Don't miss Rabbi Mati's study sessions on January 5, 20 and 23: Details on page 4.

Learning in Lockdown:

BRS is offering **online Hebrew** tuition at two more levels, starting in January: Hebrew from Scratch, and Hebrew 2 for Advanced Beginner/Intermediate students. These 10-week courses are taught by a native Israeli, qualified Hebrew tutor and cost £120 for members and £130 for non-members. Hebrew from Scratch will only run if we have sufficient numbers, so if you want to join please contact: education@bromleyshul.org.uk

Top: Lili teaching a song during Chanukah



Services January 2021 / Tevet-Shevat 5781

Friday evening candle lightings will continue via Zoom at 7pm, unless otherwise indicated, at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/578441665>

Shabbat morning services will continue in an online/streamed format beginning at **10.30 am**. Please subscribe to BRS' YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/c/BromleyReformSynagogue/videos>
Please do not come to Highland Road

Friday January 1, Saturday January 2	Shabbat Vayechi – 18 Tevet Genesis 50: 7-26, Joshua 24: 14-32 Led by Rabbi Mati with Matthew, Jon and Hadassah
Friday January 8, Saturday January 9	Shabbat Shemot – 25 Tevet Exodus 4: 1-21, Job 40: 1-14 Blessing for Shevat Led by Rabbi Mati, with Andreas and Sally
Friday January 15, Saturday January 16	Shabbat Va'eira – 3 Shevat Exodus 8: 12-28, Ezekiel 28:25 – 29:21 Led by Larry, with Stephanie and Marilyn
Friday January 22, Saturday January 23	Shabbat Bo – 10 Shevat Exodus 12: 15-36, 2 Chronicles 30: 1-12 Led by Rabbi Mati, with David, Sheila and Judi
Wednesday January 27 Thursday January 28	Tu B'Shvat Fruit, Wine and Study Session Led by Rabbi Mati via Zoom, 7.30pm. Join Zoom Meeting at https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82103456451
Friday January 29, Saturday January 30	Shabbat B'Shallach/Shabbat Shira – 17 Shevat Exodus 16:11-30, Judges 6: 1-24 Led by Rabbi Mati, with Barbara and Sally. <i>Readings and leaders are correct at time of compilation</i>

BRS and Beyond

News of, and from, organisations connected with but not part of the synagogue

Contributions to marilynjmckeever@icloud.com

Manchester Day Limmud - no need to miss it: it's online



The first ever **Manchester Day Limmud Online** will be coming to a computer near you on **Sunday 7 February** from **11am to 5 pm**. They have planned a fantastic day of online learning with sessions on everything from strategic risk in the Middle East to nutrition and wellbeing. The full programme and presenters will be announced over the coming weeks so check <https://limmud.org/event/limmud-manchester-2/> for news and to book. The cost is only £10 for adults and £1 for children and concessions.

GRILL THE PANEL AT SOUTH OF THE RIVER QUESTION TIME

On **Sunday, 21 February** at 7.30pm, a distinguished inter-synagogue panel will discuss your current affairs questions, with audience participation. The event will be streamed live on YouTube and Zoom. The Panel includes journalist and Green Party councillor **Andree Frieze**; **Colin Green** and **Daniel Dayan**, both trustees of Nightingale Hammerson; **Sir Ivan Lawrence QC**, criminal barrister and former Conservative MP; and **Malcolm Levi** - Chair of Richmond Synagogue and ex-CEO of two UK Housing Associations Chair: **Leo Kelion**, BBC Technology Editor. *Joining info: jackie@wimshul.org*

End-of-year greetings from our friends in Akko:

At the end of the calendar year it is customary to look back, reflect on opportunities taken and others missed, and hope we'll do better next year. But [2020] has taken us to places we have never imagined. The pandemic has created a bond between all people as we undergo similar experiences and hardships: loss of income, sickness, losing people we love, so much loneliness.

Yet, there was some stability during this tumultuous period. Here in Akko, except for a few weeks of lockdown, our programmes continued, enabling families to adjust to their changing circumstances. [Amid] so much uncertainty and frustration, we remained open every day continuing to be a positive place for children and their families, even when schools were closed. **The laughter on the faces of the little ones** in the daycare was a reminder of the importance of providing a stable and happy environment for children from Akko's mixed community, regardless of the constant stresses felt by us adults.

Wherever you are, you have also been living under the cloud of COVID-19, yet you have remained dedicated to our cause, and for this we are ever grateful. To [see how you can] continue to support our work please visit <https://aicenter.org.il/donate/>. I wish you a brighter 2021, as the clouds begin to clear.

Your friend, Mohammad Fahili, Director, Sir Charles Clore Jewish-Arab Community Center, +972 50 557 3797 [slightly edited due to space].

Passionately curious?

Leo Baeck College has launched its **Lehrhaus** programme for Spring 2021. All the courses are taught by LBC's outstanding faculty and specialist teachers. There are courses on:

Modern and Biblical Hebrew

Classical Greek

King David

The Thoughts of Walter Benjamin

Judaism in the Universe of Faiths

The Heresies of Baruch Spinoza

"Ancient Christians and Jews: Contacts, Conflicts and Conversations"

"Preach and Be Damned"

"Learn to Leyn"

"The Jewish God – who, what and where?"

Magic, Divination and Witchcraft

Arts and Crafts

"Wrestling with God in the Cheder Classroom" - with our own Frankie Gruz

and much more.

All dates and times, full course detail and biographies of the lecturers are at: lbc.ac.uk or ring 020 8349 5600.

Calendar January – February 2021, T evet-Shevat-Adar 5781

Please note that all services, meetings and events are taking place online until further notice.

Contact details may be found on the on the relevant pages and in each weekly e-light.

JANUARY	
Fri 1	Shabbat Candle-Lighting, 7pm
Sat 2	Shabbat morning service, 10.30am
Sun 3	
Mon 4	Hebrew 1, 6.30-7.30pm
Tue 5	Knit, Natter & Stitching Group, 10.30 – 12.00
Wed 6	Ulpan, 6-7pm
Thur 7	Hebrew 2, 7.30pm Book Group, 8pm
Fri 8	Shabbat Candle-Lighting, 7pm
Sat 9	Shabbat morning service, 10.30am
Sun 10	HomeShul Cheder, 10am
Mon 11	Hebrew 1, 6.30-7.30pm
Tue 12	
Wed 13	Social Centre, 3pm Ulpan, 6-7pm
Thur 14	Hebrew 2, 7.30pm
Fri 15	Shabbat Candle-Lighting, 7pm
Sat 16	Shabbat morning service, 10.30am
Sun 17	HomeShul Cheder, 10am
Mon 18	Hebrew 1, 6.30-7.30pm
Tue 19	
Wed 20	Ulpan, 6-7pm
Thur 21	Hebrew 2, 7.30pm
Fri 22	Shabbat Candle-Lighting, 7pm
Sat 23	Shabbat morning service, 10.30am
Sun 24	HomeShul Cheder, 10am; Children's author Tom Palmer Zoom talk at 12pm
Mon 25	Hebrew 1, 6.30-7.30pm
Tue 26	
Wed 27	Social Centre, 3pm Ulpan, 6-7pm Tu B'Shvat Study, 7.30pm
Thur 28	Hebrew 2, 7.30pm
Fri 29	Shabbat Candle-Lighting, 7pm
Sat 30	Shabbat morning service, 10.30am
Sun 31	HomeShul Cheder, 10am

FEBRUARY	
Mon 1	Hebrew 1, 6.30-7.30pm
Tue 2	
Wed 3	Ulpan, 6-7pm
Thur 4	Hebrew 2, 7.30pm
Fri 5	Shabbat Candle-Lighting, 7pm
Sat 6	Shabbat morning service, 10.30am
Sun 7	HomeShul Cheder, 10am
Mon 8	Hebrew 1, 6.30-7.30pm
Tue 9	
Wed 10	Social Centre, 3pm Ulpan, 6-7pm
Thur 11	Hebrew 2, 7.30pm
Fri 12	Shabbat Candle-Lighting, 7pm
Sat 13	Shabbat morning service, 10.30am
Sun 14	
Mon 15	Hebrew 1, 6.30-7.30pm
Tue 16	
Wed 17	Ulpan, 6-7pm
Thur 18	Hebrew 2, 7.30pm
Fri 19	Shabbat Candle-Lighting, 7pm
Sat 20	Shabbat morning service, 10.30am
Sun 21	
Mon 22	Hebrew 1, 6.30-7.30pm
Tue 23	
Wed 24	Social Centre, 3pm Ulpan, 6-7pm
Thur 25	Hebrew 2, 7.30pm
Fri 26	Shabbat Candle-Lighting, 7pm
Sat 27	Shabbat morning service, 10.30am
Sun 28	

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Minister: rabbi@bromleyshul.org.uk

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Your HighLight, e-Light and comms team

Bob: responsible for the Community pages, the heart of every issue.

Danielle: our former Cheder head is now making sure that the Chair and Rabbi have their pages ready every month.

Amelia, writer and a cheder parent, who looks after our Education and Cheder pages.

Marilyn: in charge of the "Beyond BRS" and Books pages, with **Judy** providing much of the material.

Eileen has bravely offered to interview members for our Profiles. If there's someone you'd like to see featured, please *let us know*.

Judi: editing the front, back, diary and services pages and co-ordinating everyone else's

Joanna: having hugely improved e-light, Jo now proofreads everything before it goes to *almost* the final stage...

Kieron, who creates the link so you can access Highlight every month.

We are deeply grateful to our Chair, Rabbi, Cheder and Education people who supply so much information every month, but we welcome **NEW CONTRIBUTORS**. If you would like to submit or suggest an item, please email any or all of us at: comms@bromleyshul.org.uk

HELPFUL HINT...

for the post-Chanukah clean-up: to get the wax off your Chanukiyah, place it on foil on a tray in the oven for about five minute on approx. 100 degrees. The wax should just drop off. Polish with a soft cloth and you're ready for next year.

With thanks to the cheder parents WhatsApp group.

