

May 2021 – Shavuot 5781

www.bromleyshul.org.uk



Welcome to our Shavuot issue

There is plenty about Shavuot and past/future events inside, so this is a bit more about how and when HighLight will appear in future months. As you can see, we have returned to print rather than on-line – although those who do **not** want to receive this in the post are very welcome to save us money by telling the office (admin@bromleyshul.org.uk) – but it's now in colour, as we have become accustomed to during lockdown, and it will appear in this form only six times a year, linked to the main festivals, with occasional online-only issues in between whiles if necessary.

As we have stressed over the past year or so, HighLight is a work in progress. This transition from the black and white monthly HighLight via the online issues of the past nine months takes into consideration how and when people receive and use information; what is already available on our website and what it is better sent out weekly via e-Light. So what is HighLight for? Surveys have shown that members value it as a means of keeping in touch with the community. So, our focus is on news of members; what they have been doing or find of interest, as it could appeal to us too; and what our lay leaders and rabbi see as the priorities for BRS religiously, socially and educationally, rather than immediate dates, which are better conveyed by e-Light before they expire.

Enjoy the news, chat and cheesecake and do let us know if you particularly like/dislike anything or have suggestions for future issues. The next issue will be out in August, ahead of the High Holydays, which start very early this year. The deadline is 24 July, but sooner is better! Contributions to: comms@bromleyshul.org.uk **Chag Sameach Shavuot**

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Summer is not that far off and RSY has camps for school years 5 to 11

RSY Netzer is running summer camps for Reform Youth in July and August, with an early bird discount available for those who book early - for a limited time.

Financial help may be available through the synagogue, so please have a look at the details found on the links below:

Shemesh (residential camps for years 5-10) publicity:

<http://rsy-netzer.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Shemesh-5781-FINAL.pdf>

Machane Ha'Derech (Israel Tour alternative) Year 11:

<http://rsy-netzer.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Machane-HaDerech-Brochure-1.pdf>

*To make Shavuot complete,
you can find our simple
cheesecake recipe, courtesy
Dianne, doyenne of the shul
kitchen, on page 6.*

View from the Chair

“This is one of the goals of the Jewish way of living: to experience common place deeds as spiritual adventures, to find the hidden love and wisdom in all things.” - Abraham Joshua Herschel

How exciting it is to be writing my piece in our new version of Highlight that will be going out to everyone by post for the first time. We have Judi Sheffrin and the Highlight team to thank for this. I know a lot of you have missed the physical aspect of Highlight, having it in your hand to flick through and to refer to. The return of Highlight posted out to everyone is similar to our return on the path to some normality. We have fully taken advantage of Zoom and the ease of watching services and going to meetings, but it is not a replacement for the physical presence of being with others. I am sure I am not the only one who misses our Synagogue building and the intimacy of a hug or handshake.

The BRS Board is watching closely the government guidelines and following the advice from Reform Judaism as to when we can return to our Synagogue. For now, we will have to wait until 21 June, and to see have to see how the advice translates to us and perform a thorough risk assessment to keep everyone safe. Meanwhile everything continues on YouTube and Zoom.

At the AGM on 23 March we were really pleased to welcome four new Board members, Eileen Fry (our new Board Secretary), Rhona Green, Judy Taylor and Michael Abrahams. How wonderful for us to have them involved on the Board. They have already taken on projects and I am really looking forward to working with them and the rest of the Board. You can read the full report given at the AGM on the BRS website.

Thanks to Rhona, our new Youth Coordinator, I am thrilled about an initiative called “YABS” - Young Adults of Bromley Synagogue. Young adults themselves lead this new group for the 16 to 25 year olds of our community. They have also been joined by former BRS members in the USA and the invitation has been extended to Wimbledon Reform shul. I heard that the Murder Mystery event and the Philosophy and Pizza event just after Pesach were both great successes. The next event, a fun Quiz, is on Sunday 23 May at 8pm. Please email: youth@bromleyshul.org.uk for more details or to join in. I urge you to share these details and encourage any young adult you know to get involved.

Marking each important date

In March we also celebrated a magnificent **Purim** spiel and service, with contributions from many members. At the communal Pesach Seder we had 66 households join us, and what a great community affair that was. The children at cheder had a “chocolate Seder” run by RSY (Reform Synagogue Youth) and all that chocolate early on a Sunday morning meant there were a lot of happy lively children. BRS contributed to the UK-wide event, with our cheder children providing readings and Vicki Ashmore singing.



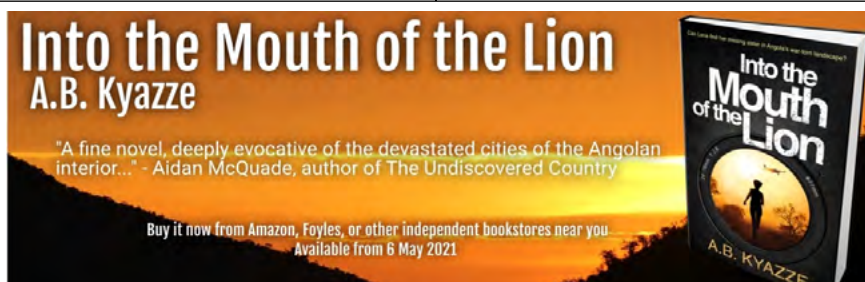
Yom Hashoah was marked with a Zoom service led by Rabbi Mati and John Posner. It was a very powerful and moving service. Thank you to them and to Judy Taylor and her family for their musical contributions.

Finally, as we look towards the summer and sunnier days I have just heard that the RSY “Shemesh” summer camps in the UK will be running. These residential summer camps for Years 5 to 10 children are fun, safe and inspiring, along with the chance to make friends with other children from Reform communities. For more information go to:

<https://rsy-netzer.org.uk/shemesh-summer-camp-5781-2021/>

For any child who wants to go to a RSY camp the Donor Trust at BRS may be able to give financial help. Contact me for further details or for anything else at chair@bromleyshul.org.uk or give me a call on 07956 234309.

Michelle Brooks Evans
chair@bromleyshul.org.uk



It's our tradition to count the weeks

Now let's celebrate an outdoors event by going indoors

Week in, week out... This winter and early spring weeks flew by as the indistinguishable days merged into one. Just like the ancient Israelites, we were wandering through a wilderness - that of a lockdown. However, unlike the Israelites who travelled together, we journeyed through lockdown on our own or with our most immediate social bubble. I believe that the words of Mehri Niknam, a British Iranian Jew, on travelling solo in the desert, express our lockdown experience. She writes:

Desert is a wilderness. It is vast... And the other thing, of course, is that the desert is a very, very lonely place. It is lonely because it is so empty... And yet because of this emptiness it becomes so full because the sense is that although all is vastness, in there is just me - a tiny, tiny me in the middle, and yet this vastness is filled with me... You wander and you see things and you go on day after day - and now I am talking not just about the desert outside but the wilderness inside, really.

I believe that the hardest thing about the lockdown was the wilderness inside - the concern about the health and well-being of our loved ones, the inability to plan things to look forward to, the sense of separation from those we care about. They have made us struggle on the journey through the wilderness of lockdown. Mehri Niknam again:

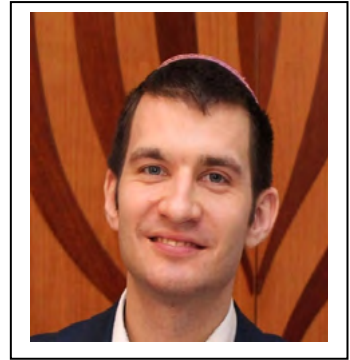
Like a camel I go on day after day after day nearer and eventually you reach a point where you really cannot go any further and have no more strength... You say, 'Oh God, I can't, I cannot go any further. It's enough.' And either you dream it or it actually

happens, but it is there... somehow the oasis does appear.

Lockdown easing on 12 April was when our 'oasis' appeared: we could meet family and friends in an outdoor cafe. Now we are just days away from meeting others indoors. If the vaccination programme goes to plan, social distancing measures will be dropped in a few weeks. We are literally counting the days to having even more freedom.

Shavuot, the Festival of Weeks, resonates with our current experience of counting days and weeks. After all, the Torah commands us to count off seven weeks from Passover to know when it should be celebrated. The rabbis decided that the count should start on the second night of Passover. This year Shavuot starts, serendipitously, on the evening of 16 May, which coincides with the relaxation of lockdown rules. All being well, on 17 May we will be able to meet our family and friends indoors. At the same time, we will be celebrating the Giving of the Torah which took place at the most 'outdoorsy' location imaginable - Mount Sinai. Is there any connection between these two events?

I believe that there are two ways in which the Giving of the Torah and our indoor gatherings are similar. First, they are both encounters that enhance our life. Secondly, they mark the end of a difficult stage in our journey. We don't know what exactly happened on Mount Sinai. But we do know that this experience made the people of Israel embrace a way of life that recognised the value of every human being and the sanctity of



ties that bind us together. This Shavuot, indoor gatherings after a long time of separation will enable us to appreciate the lesson that our ancestors learned on Sinai. We will be reminded that today, just like millenia ago, one encounters God with and through others. This might sound less spectacular than the glory of the revelation on Sinai described in the Torah. However, having wandered the wilderness of lockdown for more than a year, I will gladly settle for this one.

But our journey will not finish when lockdown rules are finally relaxed. The memory of what we learned in lockdown will stay with us. Mehri Niknam writes:

So the desert was real on the outside but also real inside. It meant a lot to wander and always, always be just behind.

Now I know why the children of Israel went from mountain to mountain to mountain: because just beyond, of course, is what you are looking for. And sometimes you do find a little bit of what you are looking for. I hope that what we will find will be the recognition of the importance of love and friendship that we give to and receive from our family and community. For me this is the message the Israelites received on Mount Sinai. It is good to embrace it every Shavuot, year in, year out.

Rabbi Mati Kirschenbaum
Shavuot service and 'Tikun Leyl' study details are on page 5.

ADULT EDUCATION

Vayikra: and the eternal called unto moses

Patricia Lawrence regularly attends Rabbi Mati's study sessions. This is a slightly abridged version of an article she wrote after studying the portion VaYikra.

"And the Lord called unto Moses, and spoke unto him out of the tent of meeting saying: Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them..." These are the opening words of VaYikra, the Parsha that begins the third, central, book of our Torah. VaYikra is sometimes referred to as Torat Kohanim, the teachings of the priests, and it is where the laws of sacrifices, Korbanot, are laid out. But is this Parsha really centred in how to offer sacrifices or is there something else at the heart of the matter?

Who was calling whom and why?

Ze'ev Falk, a 20C professor from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, remarked that the "And he called to Moses" beginning of VaYikra is ambiguous. Who is addressing Moses? Falk writes, "It is not at all clear to Moses who is calling out to him. Only when God speaks to him from the Tent of Meeting does Moses understand that the call is directly from God."

Rashi, the 11th century French rabbi and commentator, had a different take. He said that the word VaYikra, meaning "and he called", is 'a way of expressing affection; for it is the mode used by the ministering angels when addressing each other.' For Rashi, "to call" is about one person's desire to create a relationship with something or someone else.

The Parsha gives, in some detail, instructions regarding sacrifices that followed that initial call. The commentary in Hertz says that the custom of sacrifices is "pre-supposed, and not introduced as something novel and hitherto unheard of." Indeed, burnt offerings were already being made to God or gods well before Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai.

We first learn about it in Parshat Noach, Genesis 8:20, where Noach's first recorded act after the flood subsides is one of worship and gratitude. He builds an altar, sacrifices clean animals and clean birds on it, and makes a burnt offering to God. This reveals Noach's continued faithfulness to his Creator. God responds by entering into a covenant with Noach and promises that He "will not again curse the ground for man's sake"; neither would He "smite any more every thing living" as He had done.

And, of course, possibly the best known example of a potential human sacrifice was when God tested Abraham's obedience by asking him to sacrifice his favourite son, Isaac, as a burnt offering, a test that Abraham passed, as he was ready to submit to God's will.

What's the real meat of the matter: sacrifices or relationships?

A lot of rules and regulations are set down in the Parsha, but is this, if you'll pardon the pun, the real meat of the matter? What is really behind this? Is this about sacrifices or, rather, is it concerned with relationships? I believe it is the latter. God cares about relationships between Him and us - and between each of us. From creation there has been a bond between God and humankind.

The opening words of VaYikra, demonstrate that the voice calling out to Moses wants to deepen the existing covenantal bond and to set the stage for a closer relationship between God and the Jewish people. Moses is being enrolled to be God's spokesperson. We don't have a full account of Moses discussion with the people, but it must have been effective as sacrifices continued through to the end of the Second Temple period. Surely a classic example of 'Tell', followed by a successful 'Tell and Sell' (by Moses).

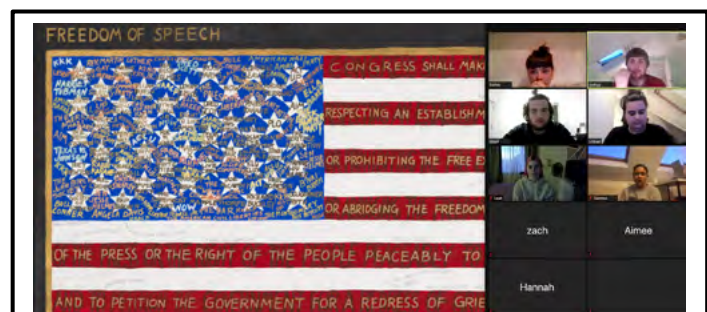
What were sacrifices for?

They were to demonstrate the submission of the individual to God, inasmuch as the items being offered were the choicest ones and of real value; it took effort and thought to prepare them correctly. Offerings that were favourable not only demonstrated thanks, but helped to achieve atonement for sinful thoughts and deeds.

Calling and listening effectively

Effective communication requires us to give and receive information accurately and appropriately: we need to be willing to listen, and to listen attentively. We need to signify our receipt of information, verbally and by our actions. We also communicate non-verbally through our body language - and God knows what our thoughts and feelings are.

Within our community, within our individual circles of families and friends, and within the community at large, we must call, answer calls and hear the call to support each other, while developing a common vocabulary of respect and a shared pursuit of holiness. In these troubled times, we must be especially aware of the need to reach out and listen to others, while continuing to deepen our relationship with God.



Young Adults of Bromley Shul (YABS) meet to discuss freedom and eat pizza. A timely discussion for the end of Passover. All the sessions are organised and run by different members of YABS. Contact is: youth@bromleyshul.org.uk

HOMESHUL NEWS & EDUCATION

Making Every Day Count

Shalom L'Kulam,

The first half of our Kayitz term happens in the period known as *Sefirat Ha'Omer*, the counting of the Omer. Every night brings us a day nearer the holiday of *Shavuot*, when the Children of Israel received the Torah. It's a period of seven weeks.

From the second night of Pesach until we celebrate with a slice of cheesecake, and some engage in an all-night study session (*Tikkun Leil Shavuot*) are 49 days we can embrace historically and also in a revitalised way, as we will be exploring. At Passover we reminded ourselves and our children that freedom is possible. We can choose to reflect on how we can move beyond our current limits and become our best selves. So we do hope that parents will continue this developing journey alongside their children at our later **Cheder Shavuot Family Learning Session on 16 May**.



When pupils returned on 18 April, celebrating with a session on Yom Ha'atzmaut, we also began a term's journey looking at key Jewish values and virtues (*Middot*), starting out with *hakarat hatov*, which can be interpreted as 'recognising the good'.

Though it is easy to be thankful and appreciative when we experience simchas, Jewish wisdom encourages us to practise gratitude and count our blessings even in the tougher times, such as now, when we still face COVID restrictions. We'll also be looking at the power of our words to help and heal, the principles of *Bal Tashchit* (avoidance of harm) and Tikkun Olam.

As Cheder Head Teacher I'm thankful for a team of truly gifted and committed teachers who've co-developed and delivered HomeShul over the last year. A year on-line; one far from our classrooms, full of uncertainties, rife with challenges, which has nonetheless yielded new possibilities and approaches. Though we cannot count the exact number of weeks and days before we can return fully to in-person cheder... there's definitely growing hope that a return to BRS or at least an in-person gathering might be possible this year.

With warmer days coming and the lessening of restrictions we are making plans for an outing to Sadeh, the local Jewish farm and environmental centre demonstrating some of the values we will have been learning about this term, as well giving our lovely pupils a chance to play together in its zip-wire playground. This we hope will be on the penultimate week of term 4 July, with our final session, wherever it may be, a celebration of all our learning, singing, and growing together on 11 July. I look forward to seeing you and your lovely children each week of our Kayitz Term and welcoming you at 9.50 am each week on-line until further notice.

Frankie : 07505 950795 or cheder@bromleyshul.org.uk

Study Dates with Rabbi Mati for May and June

All are on Zoom at 7.30pm week nights, 12.30pm on Shabbat, marked *.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85914618462>
ID: 859 1461 8462

11 May - Parashah study: Bemidbar - wandering in the wilderness

****16 May** - Tikkun Leil Shavuot (7pm evening study)
Megilat Rut: Ruth as a female migrant

***29 May** - Parashah study: Behaalotcha - prayers for healing

8 June - Parashah Study: Korach - questioning leadership

15 June - Pirkei Avot continued

***19 June** - Parashat Chukkat - biblical and rabbinic cures

22 June - Parashat Balak - curses and protective spells in Judaism

Shavuot is on Sunday 16 - Monday 17 May

Bring your *cheesecake and meet on Zoom at **7pm on Sunday 16 May** for the Tikkun Leil. This will be an interactive, Limmud-style, study-sharing session.

The Festival Service at 10.30am on **Monday 17 May** will also be via Zoom (link at top of this column)

***Cheesecake recipe on page 6.**



FOOD FOR MIND AND BODY

A quirky read at Book Club

The next meeting will be on **Thursday, 13 May** at 8.00pm, when we look forward to having a somewhat lively discussion about Bernard Kop's very quirky novel *By the waters of Whitechapel*, which was written in 1969 and set in the heart of the old Jewish East End. We always welcome new people into the group so give it some thought if you haven't joined in before.

Contact Judy Woolfe on
jwoolfe@ntlworld.com
07989 091066.
Zoom link on the night:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81823079626>

Simple Cheesecake recipe

You need: 8 or 9 inch/20 or 22.5 cm loose-bottomed cake tin.

Crumb base

4oz/125g digestive biscuits
1 level tbsp caster sugar
1/2 level teaspoon cinnamon
2ozs/50g melted butter

Process the biscuits or place in a plastic bag and crush with a rolling pin, add sugar and cinnamon. Stir in the melted butter until well blended. Press into the base of the oiled tin.

Filling

2 eggs, separated
1lb/450g cream cheese
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
Juice and rind of half a lemon
2ozs/50g caster sugar
2 level tablespoons cornflour
or custard powder
5 fluid ozs/150ml soured cream
or fromage frais

Separate the eggs and place the whites in a bowl. In another bowl beat all other ingredients until soft and thick. With clean whisks beat egg whites until stiff and glossy then beat in two teaspoons of caster sugar. Fold into cheese mixture and pour onto biscuit lined tin. Place into preheated oven at Gas 4/180C and bake for about 25 mins until about one inch of the cake around the edge of tin is firm to the touch. Leave to cool then refrigerate until required.

If you missed the communal seder, or would enjoy a reminder...

Rabbi M announced the good news
That the long-feared meteorite would not
Land on earth for another hundred years.
He also said there was light at the end
Of the long tunnel of Covid!
Just as the Israelites escaped from slavery
Across arid, sunlit deserts, so we were eluding
The plague of being in our own homes day and night
Cooking, sour-dough baking, cleaning and online ordering.
But tonight, he said, we can lean on cushions
Follow the Seder, drinking four cups (glasses)
Of wine, even spilling drops, for the ten plagues of course.
On the Zoom screen individuals greeted each other
In surprise, as if each did not expect to see the other, some
With longer hair, or hair growing out after a charitable shave.
One young child with a serious angelic expression
Followed all the proceedings, including downing four mugs,
Not wine I presume. And now we start with the Kiddush
Candle lighting, my candle-sticks propped up on the Cannon printer
No room on the trolley, except for the Seder plate, matzot, wine and glasses.
When it came to Ma Nishtana, we had four lovely singing children
All organised, but then the Wise one, blessed be he
Didn't seem to know what or where his words were;
The Rabbi came to the rescue. As for hiding the afikomen
The poor Rabbi had to hide his own and find it himself,
Alone as he was in the technology centre of the Shul office.
As it was, the oldest member in the Zoom room
Found the afikomen in the screen scene first; luckily
It was later reported that a young participant
Had also chosen the hiding place, not behind the curtains, under the lamp
Nor under the sleeping grand-dad, but believe it or not
Under the sleeping dog, a Miracle he hadn't crunched it up.
Soon the charoseth, bitter herb and green parsley became
Our Hillel sandwiches; the hard-boiled egg in salt water called us away.
And so we continued with the stories, praises, songs
All with expert sign language, even alongside the Hebrew.
And now for Elijah; the Rabbi said we could open a window
Or door, not sure if it was to let Covid out as well as Elijah in,
Though I didn't realise he could fly, as my window is high on second floor
Still we stood and clapped to send out our love to the world,
Rather than the traditional "Wrath upon the Heathen"
We thanked God and the Doctors for the Miracle of Covid vaccines.
After singing Adir Hu and Who knows the answer to One-
Right up to the thirteen attributes of God, after Dayenu,
Counting the Omer, days and weeks to Spring freedom
We came to the final prayerful hope, "next year in Jerusalem,"
But the Rabbi indicated, "next Year in Highland Road"
Might even be enough; Dayenu!

Barbara Saalfeld-Edwards, Pesach 5781

For more about Spitalfields past and present, Judy recommends going to <https://spitalfieldslife.com/> where you will find posts by The Gentle Author, and much to interest, entertain and possibly stir memories.

A Message from the Caring Community

Tracy Frankel writes:

When I sat down to write these words, I wanted so desperately to find a quote of comfort and hope to bring some brightness in these extremely challenging, lonely and sad times that we are experiencing in Covid. In times gone by we have heard "Keep Calm and Carry On" or "Don't Worry, Be Happy" or "Dawn Comes After Darkness" ... and yet after more than 15 months of uncertainty I think it's not a quote that is needed, but the knowledge that your Caring Community does just that. We care. We are here for you, and will do all that we can to assist with whatever difficulty you are having, or even if you just need a chat.

Please do get in touch through me, on 07944 424347, or by reaching out to Michelle:
chair@bromleyshul.org.uk

We are thinking of you all and wish you, your family and friends well and please keep safe. Tracy

Knitters, Natterers and Stitchers:

Pauline Jeffree writes:

Dear Knitters, Stitchers and Natterers, I am sure you will always remember dear **Cynthia**, who joined us at Knit and Natter quite regularly. One of her daughters has let us know that her beloved mum passed away peacefully at home recently, z'l. The daughter is anxious to keep in touch with us and, when free, will join us. I promised to keep in touch.

I had a lovely telephone call from Sharon, one of the daughters of

Pat, a wonderful knitter from Yorkshire. Sharon wants to take over where her mum left off. Sadly Pat passed away last summer after a very short illness, z'l. Whenever Pat and her husband came to visit their Auntie Vera (103) they arrived with their car boot full of knitted teddy bears, blankets and all the rest. Barbara has kindly sent all the necessary patterns and details of knitting opportunities to Sharon, so we have another very good knitter on board. If Sharon is free she will join us on Zoom.

I have met with Jude, the Senior Neonatal Sister at King's College Hospital Intensive Neonatal Care Unit. The only knitting required until further notice is the 4-inch squares. Jude informed me that there was no charity money available now or in the future to support the purchase of material for incubator covers.

All change, but there's much more to be done

Jude is leaving her post in order to look after her sick mother. Our details will be passed to her successor. Jude has kindly given us a tin of shortbread and a card in which she writes 'I would like to thank you all for your support and generosity. Sadly the pandemic has changed so much of what we knew and we have to adjust to the constant movement of boundaries and rules'. I was again reassured that the items we have already produced, which are in storage, will eventually go through the necessary processes so they can be released and used for the little ones. Our work now focuses on all the new projects, which are far-reaching. All I can say is thank you for your wonderful caring, kind support. Looking forward to seeing you.

Pauline

Social Centre

The Social Centre will be meeting on **Wednesday 5 May** on the usual link. Please note, we will be starting earlier, at **2.45 pm**, to allow time to join and have a chat before our speaker at 3 pm, who will be **Simon Gilbert** on "Another Opening, Another Show"

Simon is currently a choral director and voice coach but is going to speak to us about his exciting career in opera and musical theatre. He sang opposite Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti at the Edinburgh Festival, in "Mame" and "Showboat" on the London stage and was the singing voice for Peter O'Toole in the film "Man of La Mancha". He was more recently a finalist on "Britain's Got Talent". He has fascinating stories to tell. Everyone is most welcome to join the regular members.

Care, Art and Exercise

Future meetings will be held on **Wednesdays, 19 May** (topic to be arranged) and **2 June** (talk by **Rebekah Lucking**, Zelda Stone's granddaughter), **16 June** (talk by Stephen Ison of Jewish Care) and **30 June**, when **Bernie Victor** will talk on "Jewish Artists in the 19th/20th Centuries".

All talks (except that on 5 May) will begin at 3 pm and will end with exercises with Andreas (unless notified nearer the date).

Further information from Barbara:
barbarakurtz42@gmail.com

Bereavement

Just as we were going to press, we received the very sad news of the death of **Farideh Brooks**, mother of our Chair. Deepest condolences to **Michelle Brooks Evans**, and all her family, near and far.

Remembering Esther Rothschild, 1925 - 2021



Esther was a Bradfordian through and through and spent her whole life in the city.

She was born the third child of Herman and Margaret on 6 February 1925, a day when the snow fell thickly and the local doctor told her anxious father who came for help, "Oh don't worry, it's just another kitten being born!" Then, in swept grandmother Doris imperiously, and announced "I'd like you should call her Esther but please yourself." So Esther she became – named after Grandma Doris' mother.

Times were hard. When she was five they moved to the home of grandmother Doris. She said of that time: "I had an uncomplicated life - I was much loved, we were very poor but it did not affect me. My 'sandpit' was digging up the dirt between the paving stones. Is that why I love gardening?" From these early days she recalled: "Being found standing in the rain in the backyard aged 3. I had heard that rainwater made your hair curl! Watching the lamplighter lighting the gas lamps in the street; nursery school at 3: afternoon sleep, milk in glasses, resting on raffia mats made by the infant class. A story, and then home - an overwhelming feeling of wanting my mother at this time; and: Walking with my mum on my 6th birthday and making a memory picture of it - quite consciously - to retain."

An important family member for her was her Aunt Fanny, born a year before her father, who lived with them. There was a very close bond between them. She died in 1938 when Esther was thirteen and was always Esther's "guardian angel", confidante, mentor and helper.

Esther was always good at storytelling and later proved to be a very useful source of information on wider aspects of the family history – and it was indeed a very extended family. She recalled: "Once I won a prize for storytelling at the Children's Section of our local library. My parents were alarmed when Mr. Parsons, the notoriously bad-tempered Chief Librarian, came to our house to announce that I had won and had to be at the library the following week with another story to tell. They were quite sure I was in some sort of trouble!" But she was adept at writing stories, and poems too, as several books now testify.

She chose to become a teacher and attended training college at Bingley, and brought back all her salary to help the household budget.

In August 1952 she married Edgar, a refugee from Germany. They had met at a weekend seminar for young Jewish people near Skipton. He was the love of her life. She had also been impressed by his deep interest in Judaism and together they ran a Jewish home and played an active part in the Bradford Synagogue – though we doubt if they ever expected that two of their children would become rabbis and the third would run a Jewish choir!

Throughout her long teaching career of over 35 years she was a popular and trusted colleague and friend and remained in contact with many colleagues for many years. But she truly also enjoyed her retirement, especially her kitchen and her garden, and excursions with Daddy – sometimes abroad, for many years visiting Daddy's mother Charlotte in Germany or Switzerland but often just outings to a favourite piece of countryside or a National Trust site. The two were inseparable for sixty years and their home was open to so many – as a range of photographs of various simchas and visitors testifies. They were loving parents, pushing us all to do our best, encouraging us when things got difficult. They were good and welcoming parents-in-law and were then proud to be the grandparents to Nechama, Ben,

Charlotte, Richard, Jacob, Raphael, Bracha and Zachariah.

Increasing infirmity meant the need for aids so that she could continue to potter in her beloved garden and, later, without even the company of Middie (the last of a lengthy sequence of beloved canine family members) she was confined to bed – but retained her interest in the outside world, reading avidly the e-mails sent to her, staying in touch with us all, and inspired love and affection even among professional carers and nurses.

Esther was our mother. She was warm and she was wise and she knew when to speak and when to keep her thoughts to herself. She was loving and nurturing, had strong values that she instilled into all of us, allowed us each to be ourselves. She was wife and daughter, teacher and mother and extended those roles to embrace many who enjoyed hospitality in the family home. She took joy in the joys of others' lives and she responded with love when people were in need. She knew who she was in herself, enjoyed her own company as well as being with others, and was a strong woman whose strength did not damage others but instead was put to their service. She never dominated situations but her calm interested persona meant she was invaluable to so many in so many ways.

We are touched and delighted that, even at the age of 96, she had friends of all ages and generations who enjoyed her company and who have expressed to us just how much she meant to them.

Her death was expected and is yet a wrench for us all. Her passing was a blessed one, calm and peaceful, with her daughters holding her hands; knowing she was loved, knowing she would be missed, but at the same time looking forward to "whatever comes next" and to being reunited with Edgar, her deepest love. *Zecher Tzadika Livrachá*. May her memory be a blessing for all who knew her, for all whose lives were touched by her.

Walter, Joyce and Sylvia

Festivals and Services

Contact Senior Warden
Stephanie Alberti –
rrc@bromleyshul.org.uk

Looking back, looking forward and looking for your input

Greetings from your Senior Warden on behalf of all the wardens and members of BRS Religion and Ritual Committee, who have been working hard to keep our Shabbat and festival services on track over the past year. We have grown, welcoming Judy Taylor as a new warden and Vicki Ashmore as our contact with the Education Committee, while Barbara Kurtz, previously in that role, remains a warden and therefore on the committee with her vast wisdom and experience.

Celebrating, remembering and looking forward

Rabbi Mati and Frankie Gurtz led us through joyful Purim and Passover celebrations and John Posner and Judy helped us remember at Yom Ha'shoah. By the time you are reading this, we will have celebrated Lag B'Omer – Rabbi Mati has been scrupulously counting the Omer with us every Saturday morning and his study sessions will have embedded the celebration of the 2nd century Mishnaic sage, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the Rashbi, on day 33, in our annual cycle. Now we are looking forward to the great cheesecake bake and study for Shavuot, coordinated by Rabbi Mati and Hayley Preston, sadly still on Zoom, although the cheesecake should be real! Service and study details, plus cheesecake recipe, can be found earlier in this HighLight.

Maintaining the intimacy of our on-line experience when we're back in shul

What of the coming months? There is the sad fast of Tisha B'Av on 17/18 July but summer is normally a quiet time for us. However, with the hope that we will be able to return to our sanctuary some time this year, your RRC will be busy. We hope to take the best of our on-line experience (may we call it ethereal?) into resumed terrestrial services. Our webmaster and streamer-in-chief, Kieron Hyams, is looking at ways of upgrading our sanctuary streaming system, which is no longer viable, with an eye to maintaining some of the intimacy the Zoom-and-Stream of Covid restrictions has created, as well as with a view to accommodating the wish of many of us to celebrate the High Holydays in our own home in Highland Road. We will be seeking your input on that over the coming weeks.

Planning for this year's community choir has begun and you can join in

Meanwhile, Vicki Ashmore and Joe Parks have started work on the music for the High Holydays – please do let Vicki know if you would like to join the expanded choir. Rehearsals will be mainly by training tape and you can choose the services in which you would like to sing. We need every voice the congregation can muster!

Support is available for new leaders and readers

Please get in touch with me if you would like to join our band of service leaders and readers, on line and in place. We are looking for fresh faces and fresh ideas and will provide any support you feel you might need to be confident on the bimah. We truly look forward to working with you all.

*Stephanie A Alberti,
Senior Warden, April 2021*

A reminder of significant dates for the rest of this calendar year:

Erev Shavuot: 16 May

SHAVUOT: 17 May

TISHA B'AV: 18 July

Erev ROSH HASHANAH:
6 September

ROSH HASHANAH:
7 September

KOL NIDRE: 15 September

YOM KIPPUR: 16 September

SUKKOT: September 21-

SIMCHAT TORAH:
September 28

CHANUKAH: November 29

Service details and, if necessary, Zoom links, will appear in e-Light in due course. If you don't receive e-Light or you change your email address, please re-subscribe via the website. NB You have to do this yourself for confirmation purposes; we cannot do it for you. https://www.bromleyshul.org.uk/?page_id=20



Member profile: Illy Woolfson and the Woolfson family



Illy Woolfson has joined BRS with her daughters Astrid and Ivy and husband Nic. Astrid, who is 6, goes to the Cheder and Ivy, 3, will one day return to the Gan (she's not got the patience for Zoom).

Illy is a Digital Producer and started a new job just before lockdown as Head of Digital at the British Dental Association. It might have been quite a calm job had it not been for the lockdown! Previously she has worked for the BBC, the Design Council and the Government Digital Service

Nic and Illy come from Australia, although they have been in the UK for some time now. Talking to family and friends on the internet was a feature of their lives even prior to lockdown.

Her family history is very important to Illy. Her grandparents on her mother's side were Polish refugees. They were married in the Lodz ghetto (by Rumkowski) and later both deported to Auschwitz. At the end of the war Illy's grandfather was in Dachau and her grandmother in Bergen Belsen. They were unaware of each other's survival.

After liberation, her grandfather stayed in the area to look after his brother, who was very ill, and only then got word that Illy's grandmother was in fact alive. Travel to both ends of Germany followed to try to find her and they were eventually reunited. They didn't spend a night apart since.

Not wanting to stay in Germany, they were smuggled into Belgium where they stayed for 5 years and where Illy's mother was born. They had thought of going to America but Illy's grandmother wanted to go "to the end of the earth" and so in due course they made their way to Australia. They settled in Melbourne in a community with other Holocaust

survivors. Illy's grandfather would talk about his experiences every Friday night. Her grandmother never discussed it. Illy told me that not only did they survive but they survived with their humanity.

Illy was brought up in Melbourne in a Jewish community and with a Jewish education. She tried various Shuls in London but none of them quite stuck. They moved to Eltham a couple of years ago. Illy was particularly keen that her children would have an understanding of Judaism and Jewish friends so she was keen to find a synagogue with young families and a thriving Cheder and Gan. She was delighted to find Bromley which she found very warm and welcoming.

BROMLEY THREE FAITHS GROUP

is this month's featured local communal organisation

Why Do We Bother with Interfaith Discussions?

You may well feel that in a cosmopolitan city like London, where we all rub shoulders with Christians and Muslims and people of other religions, there is little point having a group dedicated to bringing such people together.

There are two reasons why I disagree with this. First, just because I know people of other religions does not mean I understand and empathise with them. Secondly, I love Judaism: its ethics and its approach to life and I welcome the chance to share that with people of other religions and to examine their approaches to see whether that challenges or reinforces my feelings about Judaism.

Our current Bromley 3 Faiths Group is a fantastic group of people who provide just that opportunity – to learn and share, to examine our approaches and even challenge each other. We have lively meetings – currently and perhaps even more successfully on Zoom: previously meeting in church, shul or mosque. The only real advantage of meeting physically is the food!

Most importantly, we don't mainly talk, we act. We work together to support refugees living locally, providing welcome packs of food and essentials and fund raising as necessary to help meet their other needs.

If you would like more information please contact me on matthew_delange@yahoo.co.uk

Matthew de Lange

Meet some of the lockdown puppies of BRS

Even if you are not a dog-lover, we hope you'll enjoy this peep into the kitchens and sock drawers of other members.



"Joe and I always wanted to get a puppy one day," says **Jennifer McKeever**, daughter of Marilyn. "However, with us both commuting into London every day it wouldn't have been fair to the dog or practical. Due to Covid, we both started working from home full time."

How's the training going?

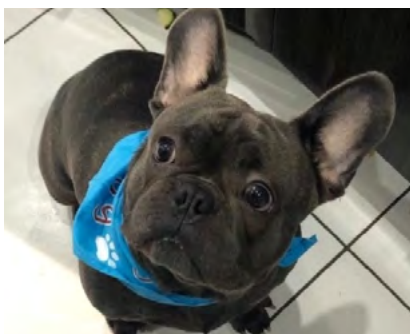
Our logic was that we would both be home all the time while **Cassie** was young and if things went back to normal after Covid, we could use a dog walker or doggy day care for the days we couldn't cover. In fact we have been able to be at home for the first year of our puppy's life to train her (unsuccessfully).

Advantages

- We've been around to train her.
- You can't leave puppies for more than an hour, depending on their age. This way, we haven't had to leave her for longer than we should.
- Walking her has not been a chore as it's instead of a commute and it's a great excuse to leave the house in lockdown. - We have a puppy

Disadvantages

We have been quite fortunate with **Cassie** as I don't think the problems we have with her are due to getting her in lockdown (an obsession with socks and gloves is just who she is). We also paid a normal price for a Cavapoo, whereas, for many, the inflated prices of dogs during lockdown is a big disincentive (Cavapoos literally doubled in price). Additionally, although we don't have this issue, several friends who got puppies in lockdown struggle to leave them without the dogs becoming very distressed as they are not used to being alone.



Tracy says, "Why did we get a puppy in lockdown? Well I would love to say it was all my idea, because I have nagged **Ant** for so many years to get a puppy that perhaps he finally agreed with me."

In fact, when he heard last year that exams, life, get-togethers, holidays and friends would all be put on hold, **Ant** decided the **Frankel** family would need something to keep it amused and create new adventures and delight every day. He jumped on the computer and a little later declared that he and **Erin** were going Mother's Day shopping... and came home with our fabulous little bundle with the rather oversized ears - French bulldog **Frankie**.

A voyage of discovery

And what a delight he has been! As soon as we could take him for walks we were out and about 'showing him off' and he has been the reason we go for sanity walks every day to admire the beauty in the changing of the seasons over the past year. We have even discovered parts of our neighbourhood that we never knew were there - including vineyards where **Frankie** spent many a picnic with friends and their puppies last summer. We have laughed endlessly at his antics and so loved having another playmate - he always 'suggests' tug of war, 'catch me if you can', chase the rainbow ball and 'follow my leader', even if it is to the bathroom :)

The best part is **Frankie** snuggles. These are in high demand and, of course, mostly on his terms. He does like to lie on your chest while you have a nap. He has an uncanny way of letting you know when he is not

comfortable, and quite a bit of snoring goes on when he is.

I can honestly say I can't imagine life without our fifth **Franklet**. He made our lockdown a voyage of discovery, creating magical memories and an absolute joy for our family. He is a great listener, an inquisitive adventurer, a sparring partner and a loyal friend.

What if it's not nailed down?



Now meet **Caerus**, the latest member of the de Lange family. **Linda** writes, "She joined us when she was 10 weeks and is now a much bigger 5-month-old border collie." True to her breed, she is very intelligent and incredibly energetic. She has turned our life upside down by making us walk for at least an hour and a half every day and become tidy (this is the hardest part for me).

She thinks anything not nailed down must be investigated with a little chewing. Her haul so far includes any socks and underwear not worn or in drawers, all shoes not in cupboards or on feet, credit cards, spectacles and lots more. But she's incredibly affectionate, really funny and we love her.

Thank you to all three families. If you have a suggestion for a future feature, please email comms@bromleyshul.org.uk

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Vice Presidents: Hadassah Britz, Ronnie Goldberg, Pauline Jeffree, Dianne Mathews, Sally Rosebery, Bob Symonds, David Zerihan.

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

please contact Janet Posner (07841 373309) or Stephen Weil (07764 475209)

This is the Shavuot issue, so what's it all about?

Here are some responses from people involved in Sadeh, our local farm and environmental community centre based on Jewish values. First, Rachel Rose Reid, chicken sponsor, and then volunteer Maya Browne, who is on Sadeh's fellowship programme, of which details are at: <https://sadehfarm.co.uk/volunteering>

Shavuot marks the ancient wheat harvest festival, when offerings were brought to the temple in Jerusalem. After the destruction of the ancient temple, Rabbinic Judaism applied religious themes to our agricultural annual cycle, so that we could celebrate them however far removed we might be from the land. For Shavuot, they brought us the story of revelation on Mount Sinai, the becoming of a People guided by stories, laws, and codes of behaviour. But the tale of revelation isn't set in a burgeoning wheat field, it's out in the Wilderness. Why? Why not have revelation in a place abundant with good crops and plenty? Erich Fromm, the German social psychologist, writes, "The desert is not a home. There are no cities. There is no property. It is the place of nomads who have that which they need, and all that they need is life's essentials..." Torah is said to have been received not only in the Wilderness but on a mountain top in the Wilderness. From there, one can view that great expanse and grasp a glimpse of the green lands and hills and possibility beyond.

Your HighLight, e-Light and comms team

is 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

Deadline for Rosh Hashanah issue: 24 July

Please send your Rosh HaShanah greetings

for the next issue to:

comms@bromleyshul.org.uk

Messages to arrive by 24 July 2021

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Since arriving at Sadeh I have felt ... climate activism is not just talking about things, protesting or signing a petition: but living where you are; confronting ourselves and our present. The aim at Sadeh is to learn from each other's examples and create a Jewishly pluralist diasporist and spiritually-nurturing community life together. Through tree planting, mulching, foraging food, growing and cooking we rediscover a connection with food, the land and the joys and struggles of communal living. Through workshops on land justice, composting and diasporist Judaism we have begun to question what it means to be where we are, what is our connection to land and to Judaism, and how does it intersect? We begin the journey [to] a possible future of a just world for the planet and all living beings.