



View from the Chair

"Community is the human expression of Divine love. It is where I am valued simply for who I am, how I live and what I give to others. It is the place where they know my name." --Rabbi Sacks

The last time I wrote my "View from the Chair" I spoke about resilience. On a personal level, I have had to dig deep for this recently. However, I was helped greatly by the BRS community and Caring Community. The Caring Community, under the temporary leadership of Tracy Frankel, provides such comfort and kindness. This gem of our community is in real need of extra volunteers, as without them they cannot provide everything that is so desperately needed. You might presume that we are inundated with volunteers, but we are not, so please just email or phone me at chair@bromleyshul.org.uk or 07956 234309 if you can help.

It has been a year since BRS's cemetery was founded in Kemnal Park near Sidcup. Little did I know when we secured our own cemetery that my family would have to use it so quickly, when my mum and dad died within nine weeks of each other recently. I can speak from our experience of how important it is to have a local Jewish cemetery. Our family has found great solace in being able to visit our loved ones whenever we want. The cemetery is enclosed with planted hedging and has a beautiful, personalised gate. When you are faced with the awful and devastating loss of a loved one, having Janet Posner and the JJBS to help is a lifeline. As members of BRS, we are all very lucky to have them and the care and compassion they provide.

The High Holydays are fast approaching. They will give us all time for prayer and self-reflection. We look back on the year and review our actions, but we also look forward to the year ahead, for ways to try to better our community, our world and ourselves. Once again, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur will be different but, building on last year, we will still be brought together. It will be a combination of in-person and online. More about this will be communicated as we gradually emerge

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from lockdown. Our priority is to keep everyone safe and we will be taking a host of measures to ensure this. Some of these may seem excessive and cumbersome, but I ask you to bear with us. In due course, I hope we will be able to relax them to some extent.

BRS's Kol Nidre Appeal this year is supporting four charities: Leo Baeck Education Centre, which provides children of all racial, religious, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds with a first-class education; Reform Judaism and RSY-Netzer who support the wellbeing and inclusion of Reform Young People; DeafPLUS who help profoundly deaf people get access to services; and BRS itself. Charities have suffered because of the economic impact of the pandemic, but it is important and part of the very essence of our being Jewish that we give to others. So please consider giving tzedakah, whatever the amount, as every donation really does make a difference.

I wish you all "L'shanah tovah tikateivu v'teichateimu", and hope that the year 5782 will bring us all together, in health and in happiness. **Michelle Brooks Evans**

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EDUCATION AND SERVICES NEWS

Shabbat and Festival services: *a cautious return*

Our Senior Warden, Stephanie, writes: You may have seen that, following a Board vote not to re-open the sanctuary fully at the beginning of August, our first move towards being back in the synagogue was to stream the service leaders from there, replacing our Zoom-and-Stream from people's homes. Our new, more flexible IT in the sanctuary should allow us to continue to enjoy the intimacy of our Zoom-and-Stream, while enabling us to share the formal rituals of the Torah Service.

The response to the High Holyday preferences questionnaire was overwhelming. Lots of members used the free text to express understanding of the difficult situation in which we still find ourselves. Your messages are greatly appreciated by the Religion and Ritual Committee.

Because the High Holydays are now so close and considering both the continuing threat of infection and our demographic, we are planning to start our High Holydays online. We expect to stream the Rosh Hashanah services from the sanctuary. The rabbi, other participants and choir will be able to share the sanctuary in relative safety and comfort with their immediate families, viewing the service from the Garden Room when not directly involved in it. We believe this gives us the best of both worlds – the ability to be in the synagogue, with live singing, while keeping our

community safe. We are likely to use this model for all the High Holyday services but will, of course, keep the situation under review.

We ask everyone attending a function or service at Highland Road to follow the guidance issued by the synagogue for minimising Covid transmission:

Take a lateral flow test beforehand with a negative result;
Have had two doses of vaccine (if 18 or over);
Wear a mask if over 11;
Maintain social distancing;
Register on arrival;
Stay away if you feel unwell.

I am sorry to disappoint those who had hoped to attend a service in person. We would not be transgressing Government guidelines were we to open fully but, as Jews, our primary responsibility is to keep each other safe. We plan a staged and monitored return to "normal" and the fact that the High Holydays are so early this year has made it difficult for us. We believe our plan does get us back into the sanctuary while keeping everyone safe. The services will be beautiful, with the extended choir – led by Joe Parks – leading us in singing on the stream. We want to get everyone back together as soon as possible but we also want all at Bromley to feel safe and comfortable on our return.

A USEFUL NEW YEAR GIFT WITH EVERY HIGHLIGHT!

Don't miss the pocket luach (calendar) enclosed with this HighLight, prepared with care by our ever-dedicated Bob. It really is very handy!

Help at hand for future Bnei Mitzvah and their families

Hi everyone, my name is Judy Taylor and I have recently taken on the role of Bar/Bat Mitzvah co-ordinator. The idea is for parents of prospective Bnei Mitzvah students to have a contact person at the synagogue who can help guide them through the process of organising a BM at BRS, and answer any practical questions (rather than ones about studying which would go to the Rabbi, or their child's tutor).

I had a meeting before the end of term with the 2022/23 cohort and now have a list of upcoming Bnei Mitzvah for the community to look forward to over the next couple of years. The shul produced some lovely and informative booklets which have now been circulated to those involved, and I look forward to helping people with their enquiries as they arise. If you are a parent with a child who will be turning 13 in the next few years and you'd like to know more about the way Bromley celebrates Bnei Mitzvah, then do feel free to email judyelias.taylor@gmail.com.

And another gift... JACOB'S GIFT

is the BRS Book Club book for its 2 September meet. Jonathan Freedland's immensely readable book is a cross between a family memoir and a history book. Joining details from Judy Woolfe: jwoolfe@ntlworld.com.

Rosh Hashanah's so early! How can we prepare this year?

August is usually a calmer month in Jewish communal life before the frenzy of High Holyday preparations kicks off in earnest.

This year's High Holydays start very early. Erev Rosh HaShanah is as early as 6 September, which turns pretty much all of August into a High Holyday countdown. Outwardly, our communal life has slowed down for the summer. However, behind the scenes our team is busy preparing for Yamim Noraim at Highland Road.

As you can see, August is an interesting month for BRS; it is a time of both slowing down and speeding up. This dichotomy is also typical for Elul, the month preceding Rosh HaShanah, which (starting on 7 August) almost overlaps with August this year. Elul's customs reflect this tension between doing and deliberation.

On one hand, Elul is a month of taking action. In many congregations it is customary to blow a shofar on Rosh Chodesh Elul to call their members to start making amends. Until today, some congregations blow a shofar every day throughout Elul to remind their members that Rosh Hashanah is getting closer by the day. This commitment to action was reflected in Elul prayers, which traditionally included additional Psalms, most notably Psalm 27. The recitation of these Psalms was supposed to help worshippers find motivation to engage in teshuvah, the acts of repairing one's wrongdoings.

On the other hand, Elul is also a month of slowing down to contemplate. Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Moelin (Maharil), the

leading codifier of medieval Ashkenazi customs, advised Jews to schedule some quiet time every day of Elul to reflect on their behaviour. Maharil believed that such daily meditative practice would help Jews to better understand their shortcomings.

Elul customs offer us ways of preparing for High Holydays which resonate with two sides of human nature. As 'doers', we can tune in to the voice of our (inner) shofar calling us to act. This way, we can finish the Jewish Year on the high note of helping others. In turn, our 'thinking' side can use the meditative practices of Elul to take stock of the year that was. In order to prepare for the High Holydays we need to nourish both our 'doer' and 'thinker' sides. I hope these customs will inspire you to recharge your batteries this Elul.

I am sure that the time you take to rest, reflect and regroup will help you prepare not just for the Yamim Noraim but also for the year ahead. My biggest wish for 5782 is that it will be easier than the last one. I look forward to welcoming it with you.

Shana Tova! Rabbi Mati

Meet our Incoming Rabbinical Student, David-Yehuda Stern

My name is David-Yehuda, though many people call me DY, and I am extremely excited to be spending time with you over the next 12 months!

BRS has a reputation for diversity which, in turn, means you are well known for your hospitality and openness. I am particularly impressed by the inter-generational nature of your community; where people at all stages of life can find a home within the Synagogue! I am entering my fifth, and final,



year as a rabbinical student at Leo Baeck College. I also hold a BA in Film and Television Studies from the University of Nottingham and an MA in Jewish Education from the London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS).

I have been working and volunteering in Jewish organisations for over 20 years and my first major role was heading up Jewish Social Responsibility at UJIA. Since then I have coordinated social action and sustainability projects for JW3; headed up youth and education at North Western Reform Synagogue (Alyth); and overseen the Cheder at New London Synagogue. I have also had rabbinic placements at Radlett Reform, Peterborough Liberal and The Wimbledon Shul.

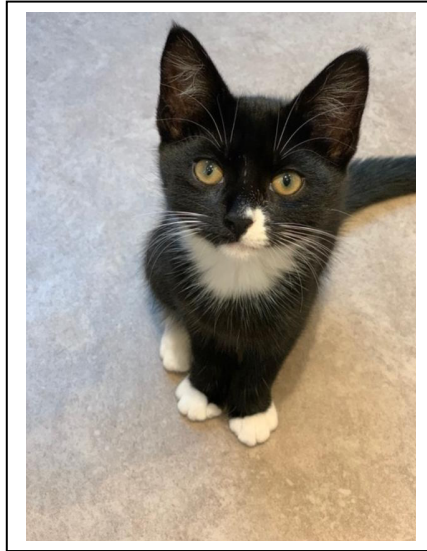
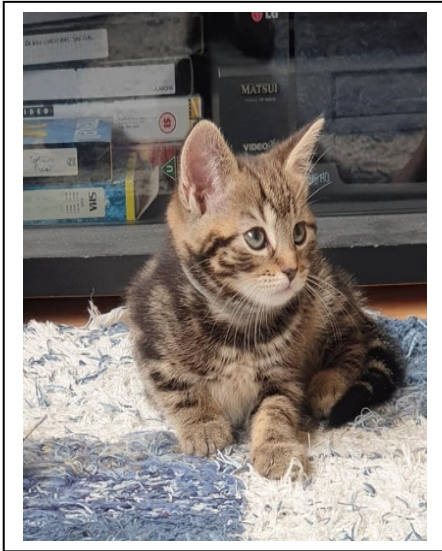
I hope that, together with my wife, Robin, and my daughters, Aviva and Ora, I will have many opportunities to get to know each of you and experience the unique character of your community first hand!

Very much look forward to meeting you, either in person or virtually, in the near future.

Warmest Regards, David-Yehuda ("DY") Stern

We wish all readers a happy and, above all, healthy new year, and hope to see you in person very soon.

Meet the Kittens: Daisy and Button



A High Holyday message from Reform Judaism

A well known Rabbi says that the first time you do something it is an innovation, the second time it becomes normal and the third time you do it, it is a tradition.

Let us hope that the act of praying alone, on zoom or in a drive-in and wearing masks never becomes a tradition. We have adapted to this remote world that few of us even knew existed 18 months ago. Yet, we must hope that we can tentatively look forward to returning to greeting each other in person, laughing together, praying together, singing together, albeit quietly and talking together about our year just gone and our hopes for the year to come, rediscovering the comfort and joy that being together brings to us.

This new year, in particular, I hope we can continue to work to help the healing process from this Covid era and heal our souls, our bodies, and the planet as well. In 'Fiddler on the Roof', Tevya says: *"We cover our heads and wear a prayer shawl in order to show our devotion to God. And you may ask, 'How did this start?' I don't know, but it's a tradition!"* Let us hope that no one in the future says: *"We wear a mask outside our homes, always keep two steps apart, and our phones ping once a week. And you may ask, 'How did this start?' I don't know, but..."*

The Board of Trustees and the Team at MRJ wish you a communal, joyful 5782.

Robert Wiltshire, Chair, RJ

Only fair, after the lockdown puppies last time ...

Michael Abrahams explains:

This May, we were joined by a new member in our family - a lovely little tabby kitten called Daisy. Daisy was born in March in the home of one of Willow's best friends from school, so she was able to meet Willow before coming to live with us. Like all kittens she loves to play, hide, sleep, eat and cuddle. She keeps finding new places in the house to explore and has a zero-tolerance policy on shoelaces!

The one thing I had forgotten about kittens is just how high-pitched their meows/squeaks are - so cute. Although currently observing lockdown, we look forward to her going outside, once she has been neutered and her lockdown is over. Cats are wonderful family members; they will treat you as an equal and are always happy to comfort you if you are feeling ill or sad, and to wake you up in the middle of the night just for a chat and a quick game of follow-my-leader. Kittens are the best! (Daisy is top left)

The Taylor family agrees:

Sara (11) writes: When we first met her, our kitten was only a month old. We loved her at once and she came to live with us when she was eight weeks old. Now five months old, she is the crazy kitten we see climbing up the curtains every day. We named her Button after her little button nose. Her full name is 'Button Mistoffelees, Warrior Princess', after the character Mr Mistoffelees in the musical 'Cats', and 'Warrior Princess' - well, I think it's safer not to ask! She has different moods that span from 'sleepy and adorable' to 'completely mad ninja cat'. She enjoys climbing on the top of the cupboards and getting as high as she can (we've even found her on the cork board on the wall - maybe we should've called her spider cat?!). Despite being completely crazy and sometimes quite annoying, she is an adorable and special part of the family, and is guaranteed to make us smile, whatever her mood.

We wish both families and their kittens a happy 5782. If you have a pet or an idea for a HighLight feature please email comms@bromleyshul.org.uk.

IN OUR COMMUNITY

Page Contact:
Bob Symonds:
comms@bromleyshul.org

Social and Personal

Bereavement – Sincere condolences to **Elizabeth Megitt** and her family on the sad loss of her grandfather, **Eddie Andresier**, on 9 July at the age of 98. We wish them a long life and soon over their trouble.

Welcome to New Member:
Ms. Mandy Wax of Bromley

Social Centre News

Social Centre Meeting - 28 July

Well, at last we were able to meet in person, even though we were to be in the garden, but the weather had other ideas, so we were soon - socially distanced - back in the Garden Room, where we were treated to a lovely afternoon tea.

It was a real treat in many ways, especially being able to have face-to-face conversations with our friends. So I would like to say a big "thank you" to **Barbara Kurtz** and her helpers, who provided us with a great afternoon. I look forward to the next meeting of our Social Centre.

Maureen Pearlstone

Barbara Kurtz writes: The Social Centre will be meeting on Wednesdays: **11 and 25 August** – provisionally at 10.30am in the Garden Room. The meetings will end with exercises (unless otherwise notified).

Knitters, Natterers and Stitchers:

The Knitters, Natterers and Stitchers group will be meeting on **Thursdays, 19 August and 23 September** from 10.30am.

The provisional venue for both meetings is Barbara's garden, as Park Court was unavailable at the time of writing. Find more details in your weekly e-Light.



Sarah Nana and family have been trying to rehouse an unexpectedly large litter of baby bunnies. If you would like to take one, please contact Sarah on 07830 988809, or sarahjanenana@gmail.com

CARING COMMUNITY

Tracy Frankel writes:

There is no escaping it: Lockdown has been difficult. For so many different reasons. And, yet, with restrictions lifting and new challenges to face, it might feel as if in full lockdown things were more certain or predictable; rules were clearer. It can feel stressful now that things are changing. I keep having to remind myself that there are things I can control and things that are beyond my control.

I recently read the book *'The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse'* by Charles Mackesy, which offers hope and inspiration in uncertain times. A tale of four unlikely companions who find themselves together navigating sometimes difficult terrain, sharing their greatest fears and biggest discoveries about vulnerability, kindness, hope, friendship and love. A story that embodies the saying – 'above all else, be kind'.

I hope the Caring Community can be there for you in a similar way – as a

place where you can ask for a helping hand, companionship, practical assistance or just simply someone to share your feelings with. Please do reach out if we can help out in any way. Contact **Tracy** on 07944 424 347 or 6frankels@gmail.com.

The Caring Community team has been approached by those at the Bexley and Greenwich End of Life Programme, who have offered to lead a discussion with our community on the subject *'Let's Talk About Dying'*. Their presentation suggests that *"there is no right or wrong place to die; it will be different for everyone. But it is important for families to think about it, to talk about it and to plan for it. We want people of all ages to be in a good place when they die – physically, emotionally and with the right care in place. Make sure you and your loved ones are in a good place to die."*

If you are interested in finding out more about advanced care plans, the Dying Matters Movement, sources of support and opportunities to chat with others about any aspect of death you'd like to explore; please do drop me an email and, if there is enough interest, we will set up a date to hold an information session.

Until next time, we wish you well. You are always in our thoughts. Take care and stay safe.

Caring Community Tea Parties

Dianne Mathews reports:

At the last tea party, we had nine participants, who enjoyed chatting together for an hour.

The next Tea Party (on Zoom) has been arranged for **Monday, 16 August**, from 3 to 4pm. All are welcome. Further information from diannem3@gmail.com.

Remembering Farideh and Alan



Alan Raymond Brooks was born on 9 March 1939 in West Ham. He was a true East Ender, born within the sound of the Bow Bells, and the fourth of five children to Anne Amelia and Robert Elijah Brooks. Dad spoke of his family living through hard times, and his formal education stopped at the age of 15, when he left school to work. However, his education was continued through his life experiences. He went on to establish a successful haulage company, Brooks Transport. One thing my dad had in abundance was a work ethic unrivalled by anyone I have ever met.

One day in 1964, call it fate, call it luck, my dad met my mum, Farideh. He was taking a route through London that he never usually took. He was a shy young man but that day he stopped and spoke to my mum. The rest, as they say, is history; it is the story of a great love.

My dad was the complete opposite of my mum, in everything. They came from different countries and different religions and had different temperaments. However, my dad did everything to be with my mum. He studied for years to convert to Judaism, and in March 1967 he and mum were married. I was born the following March and then, 10 months and 4 days later, my brother Michael arrived. I remember a happy and carefree childhood and although dad was gone for work a lot of the time, we had mum at home, and we felt very loved by both of them.

Dad became a first-time proud grandfather to Lilinaz, and when we lived by Tower Bridge he used to take her for walks in her pram. He would stop at

a fancy Thames-side restaurant and order two glasses of champagne. When the waitress asked why two he would always say one for himself and one for his granddaughter. Don't worry, he did drink them both. Dad was always pleased at Lili's career path and her hard work. Esther reminded dad of mum, and before he passed away he got the girls to promise the first one that had a daughter would name her Farideh after mum. Then came the grandsons, Lloyd, who bears the middle name Alan and the Jewish name Elijah after dad, Gabriel who is the only one who carries on the Brooks name, and Ezra, who dad was very pleased with as he has started a little business in primary school. I think he hoped that Ezra would become an entrepreneur like him.

Dad was a very generous man, and many benefited from this side of his nature. However, he could be blunt; he did not have many filters. His catch phrase "to cut a long story short" was never true.

When dad retired he thought he and mum would have many years together to enjoy the latter part of their life. Unfortunately, the last few years saw my mum's health deteriorate and dad became her full-time carer. The burden of this was tremendous but dad was determined mum would stay at home. No-one could have looked after her better. Two years ago, they renewed their wedding vows in Florida. He melted down a gold watch he had given mum when they were courting and made two wedding bands for use at the ceremony. Michael and I now wear those rings.

My mum's decline came quickly in the end, and the week before she died at the end of April this year my dad was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. He had neglected his health and symptoms, as his number one priority was my mum. Three days after my mum died the doctor told us his cancer was terminal and he was given three months to live. Thankfully, my brother Michael and nephew Gabriel arrived from the US the day before mum died and they stayed on after dad's diagnosis. Dad decided not to have any treatment, as all he wanted was to be with mum. Dad passed away in his sleep, one year to the day after his brother Albert died and nine weeks after mum. He was on mum's side of the bed, with her blanket tucked around him. He looked like he was just asleep.

Remembering Farideh and Alan

In the end he got what he wanted: to die at home, in his bed, pain free. His ashes were buried with mum at Kemnal Park and he is now reunited with his one true love, my mum.

I am going to finish with an excerpt from a letter my brother and I found last week, dated 1 January 1966, which he wrote to his future mother-in-law:

"Dear mum, the one thing I have always wanted in life is to marry the right girl and make a nice life for the both of us. Fari is a wonderful girl and she is the girl I have been looking for. I will love and take care of her always. All I live for is to make Fari always happy and always loved by me." Dad is now reunited with mum, his love, his life.

FARIDEH BROOKS

My mum was born **Farideh Khoshnou** on 27 January 1942 in Tehran, Iran, to Soltan Rahban and Habib Khoshnou. Mum grew up in Tehran with her parents and three siblings and had a very happy childhood. Her parents encouraged all their children to pursue their education, so at the age of 20 mum moved to London to train as nurse. She had a close group of nursing friends; Tamara and Antonia were at the funeral, friends of nearly 60 years.

It was love at first sight when my dad met mum. She was his Persian princess. After my brother and I were born, mum continued to work but really her focus and her life's work was in supporting and nurturing her family.

She was a loving and loyal wife, who helped dad in everything he did. She spent her time and her energies supporting and encouraging those who were closest to her, making her home a place of comfort and warmth, showing her love and her care in all that she did for us. Mum was first and foremost a wife and a mother – and later a doting, loving and hands-on grandma. She was involved in all of her grand-children's lives; she was there with me when my children were born, just missing out on Ezra as she was still in the car park of the hospital! After the children were born I went straight to my parents' house where my mum looked after my babies and me. She taught me how to be a mother. She was the anchor of her family, and Michael and I, Lilinaz, Esther, Lloyd, Ezra and Gabriel were the pride and joy of her life. The

grandchildren will always remember being with her, being showered with her kisses and cuddles and being offered delicious Persian food.

Mum created the security for her husband, my brother and me to go out into the world and do what we needed to do. Without her, life would have had many more obstacles. Mum's love smoothed the path and made everything possible. My mum was beautiful and stylish, but her beauty was more than just skin deep. She was the epitome of kindness and a loyal friend to many. She would help anyone in need and always saw the goodness in people. She always put others first. When mum's sister Farzaneh's husband Rahmad died, all three of their children came in succession to live with us in the UK. For mum, family was the most important thing in the world, and having Kamran, Siamak and then Rebecca come to us was natural. She treated them as her children, loved them dearly, and they thought of her as a second mum.

To my mum her Jewish faith was always important, and she made sure we knew who we were and how we should be proud of our faith, heritage and traditions. Jewish and Persian traditions were fully embraced – from the fun had at Passover whipping each other with spring onions, to impromptu gatherings full of Persian food, music and dancing.

My mum got her wish when she and dad renewed their marriage vows in Florida with Rabbi Rubinger. Now, she has had her final wish, having been laid to rest in a Jewish cemetery, surrounded by those who love her.

The last few years were not easy for mum or for dad. Dad was a rock and a support to mum, making sure the love she had so freely given was returned to her in her time of illness. As she left this world, Dad and I, Michael and Gabriel were at her side, holding her hands, telling her we loved her and easing her last moments.

Although we have laid mum to rest, she will continue to live on in our thoughts, our memories and in our hearts forever. She will live on in her children and grandchildren. May her name continue to be for a blessing.

Abridged from the words spoken by Michelle Brooks Evans at her parents' funerals.

CELEBRATING ROSH HASHANAH AT HOME

Jewish festivals begin in the evening, so many Jews begin Rosh HaShanah with a festive dinner with family or friends before attending services at a synagogue that night and the following day.

On Erev Rosh HaShanah, the challah – the special twisted loaf Jews eat on **Shabbat** and other special occasions – is round, rather than the oblong loaf we eat during the rest of the year.

This custom has several explanations: One is that the round shape reflects the ongoing cycle of years and seasons; another is that, as our thoughts turn to repentance and self-improvement, the round *challah* reminds us that the opportunity for *t'shuvah*, is always available to us. Another common interpretation is that the round *challah* resembles a crown, symbolizing the sovereignty of God – a common theme throughout the High Holidays. **Learn how to make a round *challah*.**

Throughout the centuries, Jews have commonly eaten apples, as well as *challah*, grapes and other fruits, dipped in honey, which symbolises the hope for sweetness and blessings in the year ahead. **Learn more about the history of this Ashkenazic tradition.** Some families enjoy a pomegranate as a treat before the meal because, according to legend, the number of seeds in the pomegranate reflects the number of good deeds you will do in the coming year.

May we all be blessed with a sweet year.

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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)

Your HighLight, e-Light and comms team is deeply grateful to our regular contacts who supply so much information every month, but we welcome **NEW CONTRIBUTORS**. To submit or suggest an item, contact: comms@bromleyshul.org.uk

Useful resources and links

Reform Judaism

Our umbrella organisation offering a wealth of information, training, courses and resources, such as the invaluable flipping books we have been using for online services, seders etc.

JW3 – Jewish Cultural Centre

Events in person and online such as talks, films, musical events, courses, health and fitness: <https://www.jw3.org.uk/whats-on>

Jewish Renaissance

Magazine covering a wide range of topics of Jewish interest, and now offering online talks etc. <https://www.jewishrenaissance.org.uk/events>

Jewish Music Institute

Organises events and summer schools in music, particularly klezmer, and Yiddish: <https://www.jmi.org.uk/>

Community Security Trust Trains people to undertake security duties and also acts as a watchdog, reporting incidents and recording issues of concern: <https://cst.org.uk/>

LIMMUD – originally a once-a-year conference, now a year-round series of education events of varying lengths at different venues around the country and, of course, online: limmud.org

Whitechapel Gallery

courses, films and events as well as exhibitions such as “Phantoms of Surrealism” until 12 December <https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/>

The Jewish Museum

Permanent and temporary exhibitions, real and virtual tours: <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/>