

April 2022 – Pesach 5782

www.bromleyshul.org.uk

PURIM WITH A CROWD



...of BRS megillah readers and visitors Pizmon

Mazal tov to all who organised and participated in our first live Purim event at BRS since before 2020's lockdowns began. The above crowd is less than a third of them. There are more photos throughout this issue.

So much has happened since our last issue. Chai School Cheder and the Gan go from strength to strength – words and pictures start on page 4 – and some of its older pupils have celebrated the first of many B'nei Mitzvah in this calendar year. Pesach will see our first in-person Seder since 2019 – already sold out as we went to press, but you can book to join in online – and Purim was marked with wonderful music from visiting troubadours Pizmon as well as many magnificent, idiosyncratic readings of chapters of the book of Esther by our own members, who were soon hidden under the equally magnificent pile of Hamantaschen brought in by our peerless Purim bakers. Even more magnificent still was the pile of contributions to our collection for the Trussell Trust. Huge thanks to all.

The fund in memory of our much missed former Caring Community chair Pauline is growing. See p. 11 for details of its aims and how to contribute. We've welcomed speakers such as Mohammad Fahili, making a return visit to Bromley, this time online, and Margaret Brearley, who spoke movingly about Ukraine, and joined online meetings of in-house groups such as our very lively book group, and external organisations.

Meanwhile, hats off to the Social Centre, which has managed to hold most of its spring meetings in person, enjoyed a great lunch every time.

Dedicate yourself to public service

The biggest news was that of the appointment of our new rabbi. The above is, says Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, the message that is hardwired into her and reflected in all she does. You'll have seen much by and about her in other media but, exclusively for HighLight, our own Judy Woolfe spoke to Rabbi Laura during one of her few quiet moments. Their discussion starts on page 2 and continues on page 12.



"Doctor John" as we've never seen him before (has Janet?), leading part of our Purim service and possibly giving off slightly mixed signals.

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When Jewish people look at migrants and refugees, what do they see?

Bromley's Judy Woolfe in conversation with Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner

JW Laura, I think I speak for the whole of Bromley shul when I say we are so delighted to have you in Bromley as our new Rabbi and we are looking forward to a future with you in the community.

JW *Who or what has been the biggest influence on your life and your decision to become a rabbi?*

LJK My dad, who was a politician, and also was the head of the Jewish community. His father brought us up to believe in public service. He taught me that whatever you do, you need to put up your hand, volunteer and dedicate yourself to public service. So, if you have a skill or you have resources that need to be dedicated to that, there's no question that's what you have to do. That's hardwired into me.

JW *The Huffington Post describes you as wildly likeable, emphatic and above all outspoken. How would you describe yourself and could you comment on why and when it's important to be outspoken?*

LJK I would describe myself as warm and empathic, reliable, dedicated, funny and loving. I really think it's important to be outspoken when something strikes you as wrong and you think speaking out will make a difference.

JW *The Alyth Synagogue in North London was your spiritual home for 8 years and has a very welcoming feel, just like Bromley, as well as having great music events! Is there anything from that experience that you would like to bring to the world of Bromley?*

LJK Youth at the centre! Not because people of other ages don't matter but because people who are older tend to bring themselves into community and so you have

to proactively bring in younger people. The balance of ages is important. It's not because youth are our future or that they matter more, but because we have to have a jolly good eye on our young people, particularly after Bar and Bat Mitzvah because they tend to exit after that. The second thing is to proactively see who is at the margins of our community who might not come to our immediate attention who really need time, love and care.

JW *What does it mean to be Jewish in contemporary Britain and how has this changed in the past 30 years, if at all?*

LJK To be Jewish in contemporary Britain is to be actively involved in wider society, not to be solely inward facing and I have a lot of criticism of many of the strictly Orthodox communities, who utilise, often cynically, the wonderful joys of being in Britain and the mechanisms of modernity and the State for their own use without giving back directly. To be Jewish in Britain is to be involved - to be very involved. It's a question of bringing justice to society as well as our own community.

JW *You were Chair of the British Friends of Israeli Rabbis for Human Rights for many years. Why was this work so important to you, especially when you lived in Israel?*

LJK In the early 90's, I worked in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in Israel, running the People's Peace Track of the Oslo Accords. I ran with a Palestinian partner training for Palestinians and Israeli Jews in dialogue between enemies. We then oversaw the facilitation by Palestinians and Israelis of co-professional Israelis and Palestinians, such as groups of

journalists, teachers, lawyers together. The work of Rabbis for Human Rights is extremely important work for me – half of which is in the Territories – but also half of their work is within Israel proper, focusing on economic inequality, women's rights and Bedouin rights.

JW *Another issue you feel passionately about is the plight of refugees. In fact, you are quoted as saying 'When Jewish people look at Calais migrants they see themselves.' We might say that currently the plight of Ukrainians has brought this more sharply into focus. What more can our Jewish community do to help them in dealing with the human effects of the brutal war in Ukraine?*

LJK We can influence the refugee situation on both macro and micro levels. On a macro level, by lobbying central and local government and by making it clear that the British government's present refugee policy is despicable. On a micro level, we can sponsor people so they come into our homes if we have capacity to help. *(cont. Page 12)*

An invitation from Rabbi Laura

**Join us for a gentle
Erev Yom HaShoah**
(Shoah remembrance day)
service and discussion
about how the Shoah
influences how we
experience the war
in Russia and Ukraine.

**Wednesday, 27 April
at 8pm on Zoom:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89786119353>

Online

<https://www.reformjudaism.org.uk/online-siddur-alternative/p388>

View from the Chair



When I was sixteen and had finished my O levels I decided that I wanted to spend the summer with likeminded Jews and have time in Israel. So I signed up to the RSY-Netzer Israel Tour and spent nearly four weeks with people I had never met before in my life. By the end of Tour I had made friends, found a new love of Judasim and Israel, and learnt RSY songs that that I sing even to this day. On the tour we had two madrachim (leaders), Mike and Laura. Little did I know that, nearly thirty eight years later, the Laura I met on tour would be our new Rabbi, Laura Janner-Klausner.

It seems to be karma, after the few years we have all had with covid and no permanent rabbi, that we have Rabbi Laura joining us. Following her near decade as Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism, Rabbi Laura is returning to her vocation as BRS's community Rabbi. I am thrilled to have her enthusiasm, intelligence and spiritual guidance at Bromley. I know that, together, our joyfully diverse, profoundly caring and growing community will achieve even greater things in the future. As a magnet for Jewish life in South London, the possibilities are excitingly endless.

RSY-Netzer is the Reform Jewish youth movement and is a welcoming and empowering Jewish environment where you can feel proud of your identity and make Jewish friends. My children and others at BRS have been lucky to have experienced RSY camps.



After years of no presence at RSY from BRS, last year we had 5 children go on the summer camp and this year we have surpassed that number. My youngest, Ezra (above), went on his first RSY camp last year and can't wait to return this summer.

The synagogue is now fully open for services and events so, if you are able, instead of joining us online do come in and meet real-life people. We recently celebrated Purim in the sanctuary, where we heard the Megillah, ate lots of hamantaschen and were then entertained by Pizmon, an a capella group from Colombia University in NYC. If you missed them you can catch up with them on our YouTube channel.

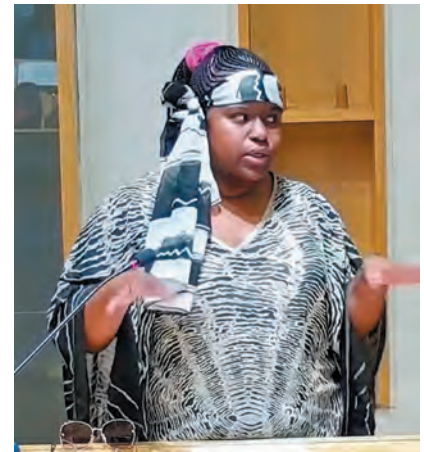
By the time you read this we will have had our AGM on 23 March. A few Board members have stepped down and new ones have joined us. Over the last few years the Board has been so popular that we have introduced a six-year time limit for its members. As well as the Board, BRS has the Education, Religion and Ritual, and Security and Safeguarding committees. Then there are the Caring Community, the Comms group, the Hooray Cheder PTA group... There are so many ways to get involved. If you have half an hour or a few hours spare, do let us know.

After a two-year hiatus we are returning to the Garden Room at shul for the Communal Seder. I believe the tickets are sold out already, but do contact Janet Burlem in the office if you want to go on the waiting list. Rabbi Laura will lead the Seder and it will also be streamed on our YouTube channel, so you won't miss out.

As the war in Ukraine continues we pray and wish for a speedy end to the atrocities. I know many of you have asked me how you can help. You can donate to the WJR Ukraine Crisis Appeal. The World Union for Progressive Jewry has also launched an appeal to support the Jewish community in Ukraine. You can also register with the UK Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Michelle Brooks Evans

chair@bromleyshul.org.uk



Cheder teachers, Board members and Trustees all joined in at Purim. Above: Janvier, Judy and Matthew. Photos: Bob

EDUCATION, CHAI & MUSIC NEWS

Springing Back to Chai School

Head teacher Frankie recalls last term and looks forward to next.

Aviv term began with a journey; one that started in a basket on the Nile, led to a burning bush and ended 120 years later on the plains of Moab. For the first half of term our pupils worked together on kitah team projects; each team looking at different aspects of Moshe/Moses life, as prophet and flawed human leader and the challenges the Torah tells us he faced leading the Israelites.



Gan was relocated to Goshen under the rule of Pharaoh (Sue) and his Vizier (Heidi) to build and craft some of the earlier parts of the Moses story



Alef Bet (Rachael) stormed in with plagues and cries of, "Let my people go."



Kitah Hey, directed by Hannah and Robert, got behind a stop animation version of the Yam Suf crossing; Aimee and Roland started to build a Mishkan of ideas and music in Gimmel Dalet, while Janvier guided Limmudim through some of the strange and profound questions that arose during the 40 Wilderness years, and L'Mitzvah, led by Robert, looked at how the rebellious 'mixed multitude' who fled from Egypt emerged a generation later as B'nei Israel, with Torah, as God's people, but without Moses leading them into the Promised Land.



At our "show and kvell" end Assembly at the end of February, pupils presented to parents their own Moses-inspired dramatisations, songs and craft they'd been working on. This was the first time parents had returned into the building to watch their children since March 2020. A real shehecheyanu moment.



Minimising on-going risks and dealing with unprecedented levels of Covid-related absences made this term and the previous one particularly challenging for all. Yet, Toda Raba for the wonderful support and patience from our Chai School parents, the flexibility of our existing Morim Team and Amanda Penn who joined us as Junior Kittot cover teacher -we made it!



Returning to Chai School, our kitchen again has been filled some Sunday mornings with wonderful baking smells; like the smell of kitah L'Mitzvah's date cookies wafting to our patiently waiting parents on Tu'bishvat. [baking picture in file] Or that of oven-fresh hamantaschen on our Purim learning morning. Chai School pupils raised over £200 for WJR Ukraine Appeal with their cookie mishloach manot bags filled with some very fine looking and tasting ears and hats. Being hands-on again also means the paints are out and glue stick always at the

EDUCATION, CHAI & MUSIC NEWS

ready, and classroom walls are filling once more with collages, drawings and photos.

In Hebrew, as part of our post-lockdown recovery plan, more pupils have had catch-up and tailored support, thanks to Alona Sheridan, and also Chai School graduate Samuel Hyams, who returned two weeks after his bar mitzvah simcha as a helper, and Manya Sergeant, an Ivrit-speaking parent. This has been underpinned by the work of Katia, who has been guiding our final bumper year of BM pupils with reading practice and through biblical Hebrew grammar.

From lockdown lower numbers, Chai School has sprung back. Gan is now three times the size it was at the start of the year, kitah AlefBet is also noticeably growing; in fact, we've been joined by new pupils in every kitah.

Just prior to the lockdown, as a community, we started to explore the introduction of a Hadracha programme for our graduates, and helper development. Now's definitely the time to revive and refocus these efforts going forward.

"Feel the Spiel"

This year you could feel the Spiel



Chai School held a fabulous Chag Sameach Party morning ahead of the wider celebrations on Erev

Purim. Prompted and encouraged by Sonia Hyams and Morim team our parents came laden with wonderful home-baked items for our festival food table. While our younger pupils were entertained with balloons, magic and games, older pupils engaged in a forfeit game of "passing the pur" and found that the lots, true to the story of Esther, weren't always in their favour.



The costumes, social togetherness, and obligatory shouting, yelling and booing brought a vitality again to Purim; a festival that last year was veiled behind Zoom screens. Our Esthers ran about the room with harlequin, Spider Man, Luke Skywalker, an owl, a steam punk and a cast of smiling faces; And just in case anyone felt under dressed a friendly hippy and her Morim team mate Vashti offered face painting.

New **Klezmer band** leader Roland Perrin, on accordion, led our young musicians in a rousing rendition of Bei Mir Bist Du Shein, along with a few other tunes, in what was their first performance under his leadership.

The up-beat tempos and Roland's own repartee encouraged us back

onto the dance floor; Louis from Kitah Hey swung into the Purim spirit, giving us an impromptu puppet dance while balancing a toy on his head; while a kicking squat 'dance-off' was taking place between some of our Morim and parents.

Name needed for the klezmer band

"The band doesn't yet have a name," Roland reminded us, "and suggestions are very much welcome." Adding with a laugh, "Apart from the no-good-band."



KAYITZ/SUMMER TERM DATES

Term Starts: **17 April.**

We start back with a special Pesach family Afikomen Hunt on Sunday 17 April, at a slightly later time of 10.30am; all family members and their holiday guests are invited to join us for this spirited Pesach event.

Chai School will be closed Bank Holiday Weekend, **1 May.**

Half Term: **30 May.**

Term Ends for yeladim: **3 July**, with an outing and end-of-year celebration

Term Ends for Morim and Ozrim: **10 July** Training Day

EDUCATION, CHAI & MUSIC NEWS

News from the B'nei Mitzvah Programme

2022 sees the largest cohort of B'nei Mitzvah kids that Bromley has ever had! The group have been working together and getting to know each other, both at cheder and also at the monthly BM Breakfast Club which has been run by our student rabbi DY Stern and is proving a great success.

AN INSPIRING TWINNING PROGRAMME

Alongside cheder, the BM Breakfast Club and their individual studies, there are also a couple of group events planned for this cohort over the next few months, with more, we hope, later in the year. The first is a talk, on Yom Hashoah (**24 April**) from a representative of Yad Vashem. I have invited Laurie Rosenberg to talk to the students and their families about the B'nei Mitzvah twinning programme. This is a sponsorship programme that sees a BM child twinned with a child of the same age, who was prevented from celebrating a Bar/Bat Mitzvah because of the Holocaust. Each student who takes part in the project will receive a photo and information about their twin. They are encouraged to research their twin's story, and become guardians of their memory; lighting a candle for them on Holocaust Memorial day.

I very much hope this will be an inspiring talk for the group and that many of them will choose to get involved. In the meantime, we look forward to celebrating our spring B'nei Mitzvah with the students and their families.

Judy, BM co-ordinator

Surprising how much can be achieved...

Education Committee Chair Vicki echoes Frankie's sentiments as she recalls a packed year elsewhere in BRS's educational sphere, in this edited version of her report to the AGM.

This year has been quite the adventure, with our shul still somewhat at sea thanks to Covid 19 and no rabbi at the helm for much of it. But I'm sure you'll be surprised at just how much we have been able to achieve despite the storms, both figurative and literal.

Talking and Studying

We have offered plenty of Adult Education, though perhaps not Talmud classes - which are difficult to provide in the absence of a Rabbi! We must give thanks to Dr Margaret Brearley, who has organised our most recent talks. We have already heard from the great lady herself twice, with talks on Philo-Semitism and the Jewish Situation in the Ukraine. She was instrumental in organising a wonderful talk by Carole Stone on "Nurturing Friendships after Lockdown" and she has many more wonderful ideas in store for the coming year, so please do join us either in person or on Zoom.

Thanks are also owed to John Posner, who is teaching our conversion students along with Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild and student rabbi David Yehuda Stern. All three have been taking turns looking after our conversion

students until our new rabbi takes up her post.

The Education Committee also has several Adult Hebrew Classes running every week at both beginner and intermediate levels on Zoom. While we do not earn anything from providing these classes, they do not cost our synagogue anything and so we are offering more access to Hebrew across the UK. Many thanks to teachers Sarit Wilson Chen and Joe Parks for their continued support, and to Education Committee member Joanna Koenigsberg for working with them to make sure it all runs smoothly.

We are working with the Religion and Ritual committee to support Judy Taylor as she leads our B'nei Mitzvah programme. After the Covid pandemic subsided our shul had a backlog of b'nei mitzvah students who needed to celebrate their coming of age, so well done Judy for organising locum rabbis, extra Hebrew tutors and Bnei Mitzvah breakfasts along with Rabbi DY. And, speaking of working with the RRC, we will soon be working together to organise even more music for the synagogue, so watch this space!

And, yet, your Education Committee does even more: We now have Roland Perrin running our Youth Klezmer Band, with hopes that a second Junior Klezmer Band may begin in the near future (thanks Roland!) We must also thank other committee members including Danielle Woodward for liaising with the RJ and ensuring that our children are included in the Jack Petchey award scheme, raising hundreds of pounds for children's activities.

EDUCATION, CHAI & MUSIC NEWS

Thanks due to so many

We thank Rhona Green, who will soon pick up where she left off organising our older Youth Club called YABS, which stands for Young Adults of Bromley Synagogue (named just so we could call them "A bunch of YABS"). Thanks to Mariella Russell for liaising with Wimbledon Synagogue and, of course, Sonia Hyams who is still hard at work as head of our Hooray Cheder, the parents' association, whose Chanukah Fair was again a wonderful success, raising thousands for the shul and giving our community a much needed reason to celebrate.

Now that I am taking over as SACRE rep for Bromley, I will be representing the Reform Jewish point of view when discussing Religious Education in Bromley Council School meetings. I cannot thank Caroline Jones enough for joining the Education Committee to help create resources for this, ensuring that our views are represented far beyond our walls.

And last, but most certainly not least, Head Teacher Frankie Gruzd has done a wonderful job, making sure that the Cheder doors remained open despite high levels of staff sickness that came with Covid 19. She and her team have worked tirelessly to make sure our children made the transition from Homeshul back into the classrooms. You can see on the preceding pages evidence of the innovative, inspiring Cheder which, under her leadership, has continued to grow. The Education Committee would like to thank her and her team for their commitment and dedication to our children.

Vicki Ashmore



Council of Christians and Jews
South East London Branch

"Isaiah – the historical personality"

Tuesday 17 May at 8pm

Refreshments from 7.45 pm
at St Stephen's Church,
College Road, SE21 7HN
(beside Sydenham Hill railway station)

This year, to celebrate the re-start of physical meetings after more than 2 years' break, the group will focus on Isaiah – Prophet of Hope. This first discussion will be led by

Rabbi Larry Becker

(a former BRS Cheder teacher, so surely entitled to appear here!)

Further details from
Stephen Weil : 020 8299 4141
or stephenweil6@gmail.com

Below: Another reminder of our Purim visitors, Pizmon, also well entitled to appear on our Education pages. Why? Read on.

Pizmon describes itself on its website (pizmon.org) as "the co-ed pluralistic Jewish a cappella group of Columbia University, Barnard College, and the Jewish Theological Seminary" with a mission to share the love of Jewish music with Jewish communities around the globe.

"We visit diverse Jewish communities for weekends during which we fully immerse ourselves in their Jewish life... lead services, perform concerts, engage in community service-oriented work, and sing with residents of assisted living facilities, schools, and congregations.

"As a pluralistic group, we have members originating from a variety of Jewish backgrounds. In that pursuit of pluralism, we immerse ourselves in new and unfamiliar modes of thought and ritual practice, ensuring that our members' needs are met while engaging in meaningful exploration... we aim to enhance the religious experiences of Jewish communities and inspire their members."



IN OUR COMMUNITY

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Social and Personal

Bar Mitzvah – A hearty mazal tov to **Solly Dahdi** and his family on the occasion of his bar mitzvah, which he celebrated in the synagogue on 26 March (Shabbat Shemini). Photo bottom right.

Refuah Shlema – Get Well Soon to **Lesley Jackson**, who injured her shoulder on her recent skiing holiday in France and, especially, to husband **Adrian**, who narrowly escaped serious injury when he went off-piste on to a very steep slope littered with rocks and stopped dangerously close to a precipice. Adrian is very grateful to the people who rescued him on that day.

Marriage

A hearty mazal tov to **Matthew and Linda de Lange** on the marriage of their son David to Dr Helen Mokhtar in Glasgow on 28 February. The couple are now on an extended honeymoon touring the USA. We wish them every future happiness.



David de Lange and his bride Helen



Sam Hyams celebrated his bar mitzvah just after the last HighLight went to print. Renewed mazal tov to him and the family.

Welcome to New Members:
Mr. and Mrs. Laurence and Einat Aronberg and family of Forest Hill and
Mr. Robert Cohen of Morden.

Goodbye to Julian and Rita Shenker, who have retired to the seaside and joined their local Reform congregation. We wish them both a happy retirement.

Get well soon to all who are ill or undergoing treatment. Please contact Tracy (see next page) if you think the shul might be able to do something to help.

Social Centre News

The Social Centre has returned to its regular meetings on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. We missed a couple over the New Year because of Covid, but now all hope that the worst is over (for the moment, at least) and we are back to normal. We are delighted to have been joined by two new helpers and some new members are hoping to come to the next meeting.

The regulars and helpers have together created a lovely atmosphere in the Garden Room, happy to be together chatting and playing cards and enjoying a delicious lunch.

We welcomed BRS member and artist **Mandy Wax** to our second meeting in February. Having told us of her life story through her art, illustrated with samples of her work, she set us all to work. She has a project on dreaming planned for September and members were soon busy making concertina collages illustrating their thoughts and dreams. She will return by popular demand to teach us marbling.

We are always happy to welcome BRS members who have a story to tell or a hobby to share – please get in touch! The Social Centre members will provide a friendly and interested audience! With my thanks to all the helpers and Tom who looks after us all.

Barbara Kurtz

Social Centre Dates

We shall be meeting on **Wednesdays, 13 and 27 April** at 10.30am in the Garden Room.



As we went to press Solly Dahdi was preparing for his 26 March bar mitzvah. Warmest wishes to all.

IN OUR COMMUNITY

Page Contact:
Bob Symonds:
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Knit, Natter & Stitch

This year, the group has continued to meet monthly at my home. Having spent the last few months of 2021 knitting and stitching our contributions to the 2407 “shoeboxes”, which went to Eastern Europe as Christmas gifts, we have knitted hats for the homeless in Croydon and baby blankets. Thanks to Shane Lask, we are delighted to have found a home for several cannula mittens that had been sitting in my home for some time. They, plus any more we can supply, will go to the Special Baby Unit at PRUH, along with baby blankets. Thanks to Jewish Care, we also have two new causes to knit and stitch for.

The first is “Baby Banks and Baby Basics” who are looking for first size baby jackets and blankets to add to the Moses baskets of goods they provide to needy new Mums in the Bromley area. The second is the “Separated Child”, who have asked us to knit hats and scarves for teenage boys. These are for refugee children who have arrived in this country unaccompanied. The situation in Ukraine is likely to mean the demand for such items will definitely increase.

We are happy to welcome new knitters and stitchers and would also be glad of any donations of wool – 2x100g double knitting wool (any colour) will be enough for hat and scarf. 100g of double knitting baby wool is enough to knit at least one jacket. Please contact me if you are able to help. Thanks to all the group for their efforts and to anyone offering help. The Group will meet next on **Thursday, 7 April** at 10.30am at my house
Barbara Kurtz



Our photo shows two young people with some of the shoeboxes sent by the Knit and Natter Group as Christmas gifts to Eastern Europe

Caring Community

Tracy Frankel reports

Spring is in the air and, with the welcome sunshine and renewed blossoms sprouting, there seems to be a promise that things are going to be o.k. Certainly with restrictions lifting, we are able to have more freedom to meet again and we enjoyed hosting our first **Tea Party** (by invitation only) in the Garden Room in March. This was the first time that we hosted a tea party at shul and we enjoyed seeing our tea party members in person again.

The Caring Community is honoured to be one of the beneficiaries of the **Pauline Jeffree Fund**. Pauline was our angel of the Caring Community, giving tirelessly of her time, energy and caring to support our community and the children of the Cheder. We can only hope that, in her memory, our team of

volunteers will continue to support the needs of BRS members as well as Pauline did. Your donations to the fund will go a really long way to creating more opportunities for us to be able to support anyone in need. There are more details on page 11.

Please do get in touch if we can assist you in any way, even if it's just for a chat during these worrying times. Call Tracy on 07944 424 347 or email her on 6frankels@gmail.com.

Tracy Frankel

Recommendations from BRS Book Group

Our book group enjoys a lively discussion every other month, when a particular book is in focus. The last one, *The Slaughterman's Daughter* by Yaniv Iczkovits split people along all sorts of lines.

However, there are fascinating exchanges in between whiles, too. Books that have been mentioned recently, even if not yet read by all, include 'The Passenger' by Ulrich Alexander Boschwitz; 'A Tale of Love and Darkness' and 'Between Friends' by Amos Oz; 'Everything Flows' by Vasily Grossman and 'My Life' by Marc Chagall. If you have other recommendations or would like to submit a review of one of these books or another that might be of interest to HighLight readers, please don't be shy – send them to comms@bromleyshul.org.uk

The next meeting of the Book Club itself is on **12 May**. New members and further recommendations, the more controversial the better, are always welcome. Details can be obtained from Judy Woolfe: jwoolfe@ntlworld.com

"If you're not enraged, you're not paying attention"

The above quote inspired Reform Judaism to publish a new book, "What Makes Me Angry?" It features essays by 21 Reform Rabbis, including our own Rabbi Laura, and is compiled and edited by Rabbi Jonathan Romain. That, in turn, prompted us to wonder what makes BRS members constructively angry and, in the interests of balance, what makes us happy.

"**ABLEISM** is what makes me angry," says **ALEX T.** I'm 18, disabled, non-binary, and Jewish. I've been trying to get a job for over 6 months, and every single time my application is refused. I'm really sick and tired of people seeing the word disabled and deciding not to hire me because they think it'll be too much of a "hassle". I want those ignorant ***** to know that I am more than my limitations. So what if I can't walk at 6km an hour. I shouldn't have to!!

I am more than my limits. I have so much to give. I have kindness, resourcefulness, creativity, problem solving skills, and so much more!! If you only view a person through the lens of what they cannot do, then you're missing what's actually important: what they *can* do.

When I was asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, or what I thought my life would look like, at no point did I say, "Oh, I'll be a disabled person." I had never expected my life to be the way it is, to look the way it does, yet at every turn, through everything I've been through, at every moment when I faced adversity and suffering and would've been well within my rights to give up, I kept on going, I kept on living. *I didn't do all that just for someone to say NO to me. It's not fair it's not kind it's not just. I hate ableism.*

JANVIER struggled to decide what she wanted to share but once she realised what it was, she says, she couldn't stop. "**TIME** is finite. It is something that can never be regained once lost and so the thing that makes me angry is when time is taken away without good cause or reason. I think of the insistence that those working successfully from home should return to the office, using time on trains that could be spent resting, caring for others or eating a proper sit-down breakfast. I think of those navigating government bureaucracy with benefit appeals stuck in processing or trials delayed, leaving them in emotional limbo instead of using that time to get on with their lives. It wasn't until the pandemic that many people realised the value of time outside in green spaces, time spent at home with the family, time with those who would soon no longer be with us. I wish people and institutions would take away the lesson from COVID that our time and the time of others is a precious thing. If you do not want to make me angry, do not waste my time.

JUDI also hates waste, especially **FOOD WASTE**, and despairs at the global statistics as well as the daily evidence on the pavements under our feet and in bins and landfill that the spoiled inhabitants of this fragile world have such contempt for its resources and their fellow humans.

We've just been sounding off. The angry rabbis have joined or initiated campaigns to do something about what upsets them. You can obtain their book from RJ: msinger@rjuk.org

If you would like to respond to anything on this page or have an idea for another HighLight feature, please email comms@bromleyshul.org.uk.

FRANKIE responded to "What makes you happy?"

"... celebrating the small events and wonders that could so easily be dismissed as inconsequential ..."

So true! Here's her list:

Hakarat Hatov

[Seeing a Robin or wagtail hop onto my window sill or tube platform](#)

Moments of shared wonder between friends and fellow classmates

[A smile or brief connection or conversation with a complete stranger on the tube](#)

A pupil so excited about what they are doing they can't get their words out trying to tell me or tug at my arm

[My son's girlfriend's giggle](#)

The humility of someone saying "I was wrong" when they'd been adamant they were right, and sharing a laugh about it

[Family words, nicknames or "in jokes" that make no sense to anybody else like "grip of steel"](#)

Hugging it out with someone after a major disconnect or disagreement

[Feeling that you are emotionally growing... that this time you responded rather than reacted](#)

Finishing an epic work or project

[Drinking overpriced coffee in an Italian Piazza](#)

Recycling and up-cycling things left out on the streets of affluent areas!

[Transformative Learning](#)

Days when symptoms of my chronic health condition take a rain check

[Someone appreciative and asking, rather than critical and judging](#)

Mensches

[Simcha events](#)

[Finding a key, glasses or card or misplaced item](#)

The maxim "this too will pass"

[L'dor v'dor community teaching](#)

[Events in person](#)

Co-creating with others

[Beautifully made Meringues](#)

Endeavouring each day to bring my attention to things I can be grateful for and on dark days my upside list

[The sparkle in a friend or colleague's eye](#)

Chesed

[Making banners and spray painting](#)

Planning costume for Purim

"I Loved putting this list together!"

FEATURED FOLK OF THE MONTH (i)

BRS members meet up in the Alps for pastries (and a bit of skiing)



Heidi Small writes: I was so fortunate to be able to go skiing in The Three Valleys in France with my family during the February half term after ski trips to France were cancelled last season due to COVID. Fellow BRS members Adrian and Lesley Jackson have a home close to where James, Beatrice and I stayed this year, so Adrian and I arranged to meet up on the slopes for a ski and a catch up. The weather was variable on the day, but Adrian, as our local guide, knew the best runs given the conditions, and we ended up having a really lovely morning together. Here are three facts I learned about my fellow BRS Board Member. □

Fact 1: Despite being a late starter, Adrian has been skiing for over 30 years and he and I actually learned to ski when we were around the same age. This filled me with hope and inspiration as I followed his smooth and effortless lines down the mountain, believing that one day I will be as confident and competent as him.

Fact 2: Adrian and his wife Lesley heli-ski! In other words, they are taken up a mountain by helicopter and deposited on glaciers and high-altitude mountain tops not served by traditional ski lifts. It takes not only advanced skill and training to participate in this sport but a level of bravery I don't think I will ever possess! He and Lesley stay fit all year round; in France, joining the local fitness centre so they can train and swim daily.

Fact 3: Adrian likes to stop for coffee and a croissant mid-morning, which was a very good thing for me because my husband James doesn't normally like to stop for a break! A more relaxed morning of skiing was super enjoyable for all three of us, and Adrian even knew where to source the freshest and best tasting French pastries on the mountain. Here's a picture of Adrian showing James the best runs to take, helping us plan the rest of our day. James, Beatrice and I had a fantastic week of skiing, including days of sunshine and good food, and Beatrice even earned her 3-Gold Star badge at the end of the week, but the "highlight" for me was certainly my "BRS Board Meeting" in the mountains!

This P.S. was received from Adrian a little later: Despite my advice on the easier way to get to a place called Orelle, the day after I skied with Heidi she went down one of the steepest and hardest runs in the whole of Les Trois Vallées. So, well done Heidi; we will see you on the Helicopter one day. Joking aside, days after that Adrian had a potentially nasty fall. Luckily, he was unharmed, unlike Lesley, who is still nursing a broken shoulder. We wish them all safe and well.



A fitting memorial for a much loved member

Pauline Jeffree was a very dear friend to many of us and shared her kindness and gentleness with generations of children in the shul as well as overseeing our Caring Community tirelessly for many years. To honour and preserve her memory we are launching an appeal within the shul. The money raised will be kept separately in a synagogue fund called "the Pauline Jeffree fund" and used to support the work of the Caring Community and Youth activities. We will also be naming a classroom in the cheder in her name. Please give generously: 50p is as welcome as £50.



IN MEMORY OF DR PAULINE JEFFREE BEM: *Pauline at her bat mitzvah at BRS in 2005. Photo: Bob Symonds*

The easiest way to donate is online:
Sortcode: 40-15-05
HSBC Account: 01862499
Account Name: Bromley & District Reform Synagogue Ltd (**Ref:** Pauline) but cheques or cash can also be sent or handed to Janet Burlem in the BRS Office or Matthew de Lange who is co-ordinating the appeal. **Thank you.**
The Board of BRS

Further Featured Folk and Organisations

More of Judy's interview with Rabbi Laura, and a catch-up with Joe and the Board of Deputies

Joe Millis is part way through his three year term as BRS's Deputy to the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

He aims to ensure that our voice is heard and writes: Board President Marie van der Zyl is keen to improve the interfaith cooperation of the organisation. In March, she met Kenneth Nowakowski, Bishop for Ukrainian Catholics in Britain, to express the Board's support for Ukraine as it faces Russia's devastating onslaught.

Marie was also one of the British Jewish leaders who took the Jewish National Fund to task over its chairman Samuel Hayek's suggestion in the UK. Jews are under threat because of the number of Muslims immigrating to the country. This intervention led to the JNF being censured by the Board and its representative, Gary Mond, who was Senior Vice-President at the time, to leave in somewhat of a huff.

The Board also took the unprecedented step of using a Tweet in Hebrew to tell Bezalel Smotrich, the leader of Israel's far right Religious Zionist Party, in no uncertain terms, to leave the country because of his "abominable" anti-Arab, anti-LGBT and anti-Reform views. The tweet was uncompromising: "We call on all members of the British Jewish community to show him the door. Get back on the plane, Bezalel." In this instance, the Board's nuanced subtlety went out the window.

But there is much to improve: The Board still seems to offer uncritical support for whatever Israeli policy is called into question by human rights groups or the UK government. It also has democracy deficit, despite its slogan "Advocacy, Democracy, Community". Deputies are, for instance, rarely, if ever, given the opportunity to debate and vote on policy. This leads to situations in which they find out what they are supposed to be supporting only after they have seen Tweets.

I hope to be able to update you further soon about these issues and more after a meeting with Marie and the chief executive, Michael Wegier. If you would like me to raise issues of concern to you at the Board, please don't hesitate to contact me via the BRS office.

Conversation with Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner *cont from p. 3.*

JW *I see that you helped train Palestinian Tour Guides in the 1990's, when peace /conciliation might have seemed more hopeful. Can you tell us what that experience was like and also what you miss about living in Israel?*

LJK I trained Palestinian tour guides in guiding in an interesting way. For many years beforehand, I trained Israeli tour guides not to be boring as they can be so fact-centred, rather than involving people through stories. And so I taught Palestinians who are even more attached to their facts how to guide in Israel and also in the Palestinian territories.

JW *Laura, What do you miss about living in Israel?*

LJK I miss so much about living in Israel. It's as if I have a soul that is in two places. I miss our oldest child who lives in Jerusalem, speaking Hebrew, being in Jerusalem, the heat, the food, the culture and teaching in Jerusalem. Above all I miss being part of the integral Jewish life there and experiencing history and Torah at the same time. So, I really feel dislocated.

JW *How do you relax when you are not busy working?* **LJK** Exercise. Lifting weights and... I do quite extreme exercise every single day! I love quilting, watching telly and just hanging out with my family and friends.

JW *What is your favourite Jewish food?*

LJK Eating is my favourite Jewish food activity!!

JW *How important is music in your life and what do you find particularly inspiring?*

LJK I love a lot of the new Jewish music that we brought in through the youth movement and our synagogues over the last 10 years.

JW *You must have wonderful memories of your late brother in law Amos Oz – who is one of my favourite writers. So, what is your most loved book of his?*

LJK His memoir, A Tale of Love and Darkness.

JW *And, finally... who would you invite to a dinner party for 6 guests ?*

LJK My partner, David; my closest friend, Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu; Ruth Bader Ginsberg; the prophet Muhammed; and my Muslim work colleague and friend, Julie Sidiqi.

Thank you so much, Rabbi Laura, for giving me your time and our readers an interesting glimpse into your life. Judy Woolfe



Rabbi Laura, right, and family, demonstrate their shared love of walking

We are so lucky to be Jewish ...

...come and join in!

says our retiring Senior Warden

Demitting office is an opportunity to look back over the past and – much more important – look forward to the future. This will be last column written as our Senior Warden and I am going to indulge myself by doing both. But please keep reading as I have something to offer you!

Challenges

When I assumed the Senior Warden role, I had no idea of the challenges to come. Over the last three years, with the support not just of the members of the Religion and Ritual Committee (RRC) but of so very many people in the congregation, and most especially our Chair, we have delivered services at BRS without missing a single one. This has been no mean achievement, as we have worked our way through lock-downs; re-emergence; rabbis coming and going; loss of individual members, all hugely valued and missed; economic downturns and threats to international peace; all impacting on our congregation and ourselves at group and individual level. I think we can take pride in having ridden these storms and although I would not wish us to repeat the experiences, I do believe we have become stronger.

Helping more to join in

Moving to virtual service delivery was not undertaken lightly but the new platform did help people who wouldn't normally come regularly to shul to join in – as of course did the restrictions on other activities and the need to find human and spiritual support.

The methodology of our on-line services may not have been precisely described in Torah (though I wouldn't bet that a real Talmudic scholar couldn't find it somewhere!) but it reached out to so many of us – and provided access to Judaism for many outside ourselves. The caring part of our caring community has never been so obvious, with so many people stepping forward to help others – the most recent witness may be the large collection raised for the homeless via the Trussell Trust over Purim. We've never ceased to think of others.

Destroying barriers

During lock-down, a non-Jewish friend was envious of our Shabbat as it anchored the week. Working from home and home schooling destroyed barriers between work and play, but we always knew what day of the week it was! It made me think about the many times Jewish ritual has provided support and security and, yes, comfort, in my life – vastly offsetting the guilt and the worry it also brings!

Jewel in the crown

BRS was started by parents who wanted to create a local cheder for their children. Our cheder is the jewel in our crown I think. Our community programmes another one, but providing Jewish services as an anchor for our community, a link with our past and future, and also, yes, a connection to God, is also core business for us. I said three years ago that I wanted to help build bridges between our vibrant Sunday and our regular Shabbat communities and I think we have moved towards that.



Dan, one of our multitudinous multi-talented, multi-tasking Wardens/ Torah readers/ Streamers/ Security folk – I think he's also been known to help with Kiddush – reading during a Shabbat service in February. As Stephanie says, we are fortunate to have so many people among us who are willing as well as able, but a few more will be very welcome so that the likes of Dan don't have to dash from the door to the Bimah to the Kitchen!

Not so much through the RRC and certainly not through me, but we have seen new people coming to the bimah as we emerge from lock down – and Judy Taylor and David Yehuda's breakfasts for the b'nei mitzvah class recently brought 12 youngsters to the platform, apparently having a good time and certainly giving one to the rest of us!

What's ahead?

Going forward, I do hope we can exploit the experiences of the last three years to continue to grow and build, returning many of us to the sanctuary physically as our "congregation in space", with our "congregation in time" fully integrated. The Covid years (I was trying to avoid the C word but it insisted on still being here, apologies!) has helped us break
(continued overleaf)

Further Featured Folk and Organisations

An inspiring speaker with an inspiring story to tell.

Just occasionally in life one comes across someone who is an inspiration; Mohammad Fahili is such a person. Some of you will have heard him tell his story in the shul garden room a few years ago. In February, he gave a talk on Zoom from Israel to our 3 Faiths Group. Fahili told the group how he had a grown up in Akko in Northern Israel. His father died when he was young and they were a very poor family and while still a youngster he started working on a nearby kibbutz to earn some money. He was made to feel welcome and became part of the youth group. On hearing of his family's difficulties, the kibbutz provided him and his family with plenty of food and money to get by.

Later, Fahili went to America where he again found himself supported by the generosity of Jews. He became convinced that his life's work was to work for the integration of Arabs and Jews in Israel. He returned to Akko and set up what became the Clore Jewish Arab Community Centre, an amazingly successful institution providing child care, education and a whole variety of activities for adults and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It was wonderful for our 3 Faiths group to learn that Israel is not all about enmity between Arabs and Jews, politics and territory.

Instead, here was an Israeli Arab bearing no resentment towards Jews. On the contrary, he is committed to working tirelessly for the good of Israelis of whatever ethnicity to live and grow together. Fahili is often asked whether he has any ambition for the future. He always responds that all he wants is the opportunity to continue what he is doing in his local community, "giving back" for his own good fortune.

John Posner



We are so lucky...

...concluding our retiring Senior Warden's reflections

the mould – we look forward to hybrid services, High Holy Days in our own home and so much more as we return to the essentials of the mould but with new vision.

The offer!

Which brings me to my offer! The new times have expanded the opportunities for you to get personally involved in running our services. Don't stop reading yet – the rewards do honestly outweigh the effort. And yes, you do have enough skills, whoever you are. Running the stream requires no knowledge of Hebrew (and not a vast amount of IT skill – after all, I did it last week and the heavens did not fall in) but very quickly familiarises you with a service; singing in the High Holy Day choir, ditto and can be done largely from home; reading a prayer or even the Haftarah can be done in English – and if you want to go the whole way and lead a service, a bit of a service, or read from the Torah in unpointed Hebrew – well, go for it! Help is at hand.

Urgent tasks and an exciting place to be

The tasks of the wardens have increased over the last years and I am delighted that Marilyn Freeman is stepping forward as Acting Senior Warden now. Why "acting"? Well, because we realise that we need to re-think how the RRC operates and re-define the role of the Senior Warden is especially urgent. We have a new rabbi coming – the RRC is going to be a very exciting place to be. Do come and join us!

Stephanie Alberti, March 2022



Part of visiting acapella group Pizmon, mentioned by Stephanie

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IN THE EVENT OF A BEREAVEMENT please contact Janet Posner (07841 373309) or Stephen Weil (07764 475209)



Meet Adele, Malka, Mushka and Noa, all recent graduates of Afikei Ohr in Israel. Before arriving at this girls-only youth village, each had experienced family trauma and neglect, leading to low self-esteem, no life direction and disruptive behaviour in and out of school.

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