



How to spot a part-time rabbi

“Just don’t even try it in Bromley” seems to be the conclusion

Matthew de Lange reflects on Rabbi Laura’s time with us so far.

“It can’t be just eight months since Rabbi Laura joined the shul!” But it is! And what an eight months it’s been. Even harder to believe, Rabbi Laura is only with us 50% of her time. I hesitate to call it a “part-time” role since no-one who has encountered Laura in any capacity at BRS would think of her as “part time” – but we do need to remember it and not imagine she is around 24/7. Luckily, as Laura is quick to point out, we are a genuinely exceptional shul when it comes to volunteering and running things.

But what a joy it has been to have Laura here and what a difference she has made! In just those eight months, she has visited and got to know a huge proportion of our members, cared for and supported many of our community in their grief and built excellent working relations with all our lay leaders and the Cheder. Her services are full of joy and clarity – it is such a pleasure to have a rabbi whose Hebrew and English reading, singing and chanting are of such a high standard but who also brings both intensity of feeling and lightness of touch to the bimah. And her love of learning and her personal scholarship shine through whether in the cheder, on the bimah or bringing Talmud to us by Zoom!

Much of the last eight months has been about getting to know us and building relationships, but that would certainly not be enough for Laura. There has been innovation and long-term planning. A “visioning” workshop early on generated many ideas for future developments – to increase inclusivity, build membership and lay down strong foundations for a bright long term future. I know that Rabbi Laura is enjoying her time with us as much as we are and if you have not yet had the chance to meet the rabbi please get in touch. Her “part-time” role includes being with us one long weekend, one Shabbat and one Sunday morning each month. But she always welcomes contact by phone, Zoom or email. Whether it is

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something personal or an idea for the community, do get in touch with her.

Laura’s focus for the coming year includes, in particular, developing support and opportunities for our youth, training more people to participate in and lead services and read from Torah, encouraging local area groups to provide social and pastoral care and helping to build a future generation of community leaders.

But all of that is secondary to supporting you, our community, in whatever way you need – emotional and spiritual and also, in these difficult times, the practical challenges of daily living

I was involved in the recruitment process that brought Rabbi Laura to us and I feel very grateful that we now have a rabbi of such learning, passion and compassion.

Roll on the next eight months!

Rabbi Laura is shown at the top of the page with BRS klezmer band members after her induction service.



IT’S CHANUKAH MONTH!

The Chanukah Fair: 11 December
Candle lightings: 18 December
onwards. Details on pages 5 & 9

“Life, children and food ... depend not on merit but on luck”

(Babylonian Talmud, Moed Katan 28a)



I'm often flummoxed by how to respond to the knottiest problem that often comes our way: why such profoundly difficult and unfair bad things happen to good people. I've just discovered a beautiful text that lightened my heart when I think about the pain and injustice that so many of us experience.

A great fourth-century rabbi, Rava, introduces us to two rabbis, Rav Hisda and Rabbah, who may help us navigate this thorny theological question. Rava explains that both of these rabbis were righteous. When there was a drought, Rav Hisda would pray for rain and rain would fall. Likewise, Rabbah would also pray - for an end to the drought - and rain would fall. However, that's where the similarity between them ended. Rav Hisda lived for 92 years, but Rabbah for only 40. Whereas there were 60 weddings celebrated in Rav Hisda's house, in Rabbah's house, there were 60 funerals. In Rav Hisda's house, they enjoyed bread made of the finest flour, even for their dogs, and no one went hungry, but in Rabbah's house there was only barley bread for the people and that was in short supply.

The context of this comparison was that Rava was trying to make sense out of premature deaths in his community. It was a brave thing to do to state that he believed that the length of a person's life is not determined by righteousness or piety. He believed that it is, in the end, a matter of luck. This challenged the predominant view that mitzvot (commandments) would be rewarded and there is a link between good deeds and positive experiences.

Both the rabbis Rava discusses, Rav Hisda and Rabbah, lived and died in such different circumstances but were both known for their righteousness and Rava couldn't fathom why they experienced such different lives and deaths.

Some pain and suffering is simply unfathomable

I love this bold and honest approach that some pain and suffering is simply unfathomable, incomprehensible – and even a matter of “luck”. The Aramaic uses the word mazal, so this theology could be summed up as “mazal not mitzvah”. But – don't stop there – perhaps what's most important in this narrative is what we can learn from Rabbah's life and behaviour.

Even when this great scholar was experiencing an enormous amount of loss, poverty and injustice, he continued to pray with efficacy for others, such as in his prayer for rain. Our prayers are not primarily for ourselves. We are not alone in a community.

We socialise together, pray together, sing together, visit each other, comfort and console each other and relish each other's joys. We are bound up with each other. We are an interwoven, interconnected community with all our joyful and fascinating differences and quirks. And what we can learn from Rabbah is that even when our lot feels excruciating, let alone excruciatingly unfair, if we connect with other people, we might be able to alleviate their pain and strengthen their joy but, also, soften our own pain and deepen our own happiness.

That's both the mitzvah and even the great mazal of community life, whether we are lucky enough to be a Rav Hisda or have the difficulties of a Rabbah – although we're probably a mixture of both.

Rabbi Laura

Toby is getting involved with our youth engagement activities



We look forward to Toby helping with our new youth and young adults engagement programme.



View from the Chair - spot the Rabbi & Chair!

Albert Einstein said, "There is nothing known as 'perfect'." True. However, I thought **Rabbi Laura's induction service** was a perfect celebration and induction for our new rabbi. The sanctuary was filled with BRS members, dignitaries and the rabbi's family and friends. In my address, I spoke about how I first met Laura in 1984, as she was my madricha on a RSY tour of Israel. See if you can spot us in the photo above.

After the joyful but meaningful service - aptly planned and led by BRS members themselves - we all enjoyed a delicious **kiddush**, Lawrence Jones's **cocktail bar** and music from BRS **klezmer band**, joined by Vicki on vocals. We concluded with Havdalah in a hushed, darkened Garden Room. Rabbi Laura has been with us for only eight months but her energy and ideas have meant that we have accomplished so much. I **rejoice in our "shidduch"** of a long and happy partnership.

You will all soon be receiving your membership letters with details of your subscriptions for 2023. There is a huge change regarding membership that has recently been approved by the Board.

The "**Community Family Membership**" category that is being introduced means that our non-Jewish partners and BRS's inclusive ethos are now reflected in our membership. Please read the details in your membership letters. You will also find in the letter that **members who are 21 to 30 years old** have more affordable membership. So, if you have children who are over 21 and have not become members in their own right please get in touch straight away.

As **Chanukah** approaches please look out for our **candle lighting dates and hosts**. As well as one or two familiar hosts, many newer members are opening up their homes, so please support them and attend a lighting near you.

These occasions are an opportunity to make new friends and meet up with old ones and they are always really enjoyable. As 2022 draws to a close, our Administrator, Janet Burlem, will be retiring after 24 years with BRS. Janet says she has really enjoyed her work but all good things must come to an end. We thank her for her commitment and dedication to our community. This is not a goodbye, though. Janet remains a valued member and will still be around. Please look out for details of a special Shabbat kiddush early next year to thank Janet and celebrate with her. Chag sameach, and happy holidays to you all.

Michelle Brooks Evans
chair@bromleyshul.org.uk



And here they are in colour, still sparring after all these years, at Rabbi Laura's induction service in November. A shidduch indeed!

What makes a community?

Ask our Chai School pupils, families, teachers and helpers!

Chai School Cheder head Frankie can certainly tell She believes that “A community happens because the individual passions of many people combine into a beautiful mosaic, as one can see within our current Chai School team.” She invited them to tell us of their experiences, which are many and very varied. Our morim (teachers) are **parents**, high-powered **executives** in their day jobs, **retired** professionals, sixth form and undergraduate **students**, musicians, **entertainers** and **bakers**. Some have been at BRS since Gan, and some, like Hannah, come new to BRS.

Building the foundations for our children’s Jewish education is a privilege I look forward to each week

I’m a business manager in a large global bank by day, but on Sundays during term time, I become a Gan morah (teacher). Which job do I love more and which “clients” are more engaging? Well, I think you know the answer to that! Teaching and building the foundations for a child’s Jewish education is truly a privilege, one that I look forward to each week. When my work colleagues ask me just how I manage it all I proudly answer, “With love.” **Heidi Small, Gan.**

I’ve gained much more than teaching experience

Hannah joined the team as a Duke of Edinburgh volunteer a little over a year ago to help in Kitah Hey. She admits, “I was very apprehensive about my decision to be part of the community:

although I had some exposure to Judaism through my dad’s Ashkenazi side of the family, I had limited knowledge of Jewish traditions or community life.”



However, her initial insecurities did not last long. She recalls, “The community and team were extremely welcoming, and within a surprisingly short time I felt connected and able to teach the children without inhibitions. I hoped to get experience of teaching, but I’ve gained much more. Being in this supportive and loving environment has led me to feel more connected to my family history, religion and my personal spiritual journey than ever before. The children, teachers and helpers that I’ve had the privilege to meet and befriend are exceptionally bright and kind-hearted; the memories I’ve made, and continue to make at BRS, will always have a special place in my life.”

Harnessing diversity and non-conventional skills

Cheder teaching in the 2020s is about providing our pupils with a range of experiences, immersive encounters and activities in preference to lessons led by a teacher from the front. It’s the different talents and attributes of individuals in the team at any one

time that allow us to explore **different possibilities, perspectives and formats**. Community learning happens when we join together to **dance, sing, explore, share or create festival events** – when we harness our team diversity and non-conventional teaching skills base. There’s no one-size fits all. Every teacher has the scope to co-create and enhance lessons.

What does it require of us? Why do we do it?

Our morim don’t have to start from scratch each week, thanks to a digital briefing system that provides a folder of classroom-ready activities, stories, debates that Frankie creates and curates each week... a level of support that moreh **Robert Cohen** feels “has transformed my ability to prepare each week. There’s so much there that’s well prepared, I tend only to go outside of it when an interpretation or briefing has raised a question or angle for me that I want to research...”



Robert grew up attending High Holydays at a United Synagogue shul but felt no connection to Judaism or that community. Skip forward to 2009 and, “I joined an Adult Ed class at the LJS and began exploring my Judaism,

What makes a community?

Collaborating with others to run and enjoy events

through questioning rather than observance. I began to feel connected and have a lot of fun at the same time. After some years, I had an opportunity to “give back” by becoming a cheder co-teacher. If anything, teaching has ‘big time’ enhanced my learning; it’s helped me pull together many threads and recycle others.

Teaching has become a real passion for me after a career as a solicitor. It’s **something that I took to in a way that I wouldn’t have predicted.”**

Being in the company of our children is fabulous,

says **Janvier Palmer**, who teaches Jewish Studies and Hebrew to different classes. “They are bright and enthusiastic and you get to know them in different ways. I love the kids and their enthusiasm for learning. For me, it’s fulfilling the mitzvah in the Shema “ve’shinantam le’vanecha – teaching torah diligently to our children”. This is more fun than you might think, as “diligently” can mean we’re playing Hebrew games and they get so caught up in the activity that for some moments they forget that they’re learning or that I’m teaching.”

TERM DATES 2022- 2023

End of term: 18 December:

Chanukah Party morning.

Aviv/Spring Term

Starts: 15 January

5 February **Tu Bishvat** celebration

Half-Term: 12 February

5 March: **Purim** Cheder and Community morning, Purim Spiel - Shushan Market

Term Ends: 19 March: Mothers’

Day - **Parents Kiddush**

New term begins: 16 April

Torah teaching in practice as all ages help Macmillan



When the coffee morning organisers thanked Frankie for allowing people of all ages to come together during Chai School time they hit the nail on the head. Everyone, from our (at the time) most recently blessed babies, banot mitzvah and nonagenarians to pupils, parents and teaching team, enjoyed or helped with the gorgeous fare. The morning raised £1447. Mazal tov to all.



Sue Bowyer has been teaching in the Gan for over fifteen years. She says, “You see all our pupils...well, many I remember from when they were little and used to stay and play with me in the Garden Room. Being part of Chai School is great and I just love it. I’m in first in each week, setting up for our craft and then see all our children doing it over the morning. I particularly love doing our Shabbat songs and boxes, which we add to over the year - we start with an empty box, which they make their own - and trying out new things, which we’ve done more of since Frankie came. I do get a little sad when it’s time for our Gannies to graduate, so I started making the little black square graduate caps and giving them a farewell in Assembly. There’s so many little **characters** you see grow **and I am always so proud when I see them in the older classes or as helpers.**

We are delighted to announce the

Chanukah Fair 2022

in the BRS Garden Room

Sunday 11 December

12.30 – 3.00pm

with food and drink,
Judaica, gifts & music

Our amazing klezmer band
is playing at 2pm

What’s it all for?

To raise money for the cheder
and to get together to celebrate!

See you there

What makes a community?

Giving and receiving support, helping others to gain confidence

Aimee Ashmore, Morah AlefBet, a member of BRS since birth and now in the klezmer band as well as teaching, explains, “I’m currently teaching with two other members of the team, but I began as helper in Gan. Moving from supporting to teaching was a leap. The biggest change was the amount of responsibility and confidence that I needed to have. It meant that rather than helping with a teacher’s guidance, I would now have to give that guidance. However, I was given support in my transition. BRS sponsored my attendance on a 10-week on-line course for cheder teachers and, as a new morah, I was given help and feedback on planning lessons and running an activity zone at the Chanukah party. I’m enjoying the process of gaining confidence and supporting my class in learning and sustaining knowledge. I look forward to seeing how my classes progress.

A joy to see pupils taking pleasure in learning

Alona Sheridan, Hebrew, Senior Kitot, started with a quite different set of experiences and expectations from Aimee’s. “As I take my grandson to Chai School, rather than sitting around for two hours I thought it would be nice to help and get involved. It’s a joy to see pupils coming and enjoying that learn-ing, particularly as they are not obliged to come. I like seeing all the different ways they are learning and developing each week, looking at the Hebrew methods, learning techniques and brain games and seeing how much pupils are achieving. I didn’t come with much knowledge. I had my



basic memories around festivals but being a part of them at cheder helps you learn and make new connections to those memories.”

Rachael Ashmore, Kitah Gimmel, observes, “Since starting as a teacher three years ago, I’ve had the privilege of teaching Alef through Hey and it’s taught me lessons in teaching that I wouldn’t trade for anything. Each year, I love the opportunity to decorate the classroom in a fun, colourful way and add to it the sweet drawings and craft projects that the kids make throughout the year. In the Kitah, we’ve got our own inside jokes about the various happenings in the classroom, I know each cuddly toy’s name by heart (often they help me teach) and our wonderful helper Noah plays routine Hebrew games with the kids.

Half teaching, half entertaining

I often feel as though teaching in a class like Gimmel is half teaching, half entertaining. Similar to a kids’ party entertainer, I feel the aim ought to be trying to make the kids laugh, get involved with the lesson and have fun, all while engaging in our everyday and classroom Hebrew language and lesson content. Having studied

Gan teacher Heidi celebrates having walked 18 miles for hospital charities in September. She raised £2,300 thanks to her supporters, many of them from Chai School community

Hebrew at Cheder when I was a child, and as a current Hebrew student at university, having my own class now is a real privilege. I truly love my Kitah and I’m so lucky to be able to spend my Sundays with such a sweet, bubbly class. I believe all this has helped me considerably on my future path of becoming a teacher.”

To find out more about Chai School, from a teacher or pupil’s point of view, don’t be shy. Contact Frankie (below, right, with former head Vicki) at cheder@bromleyshul.org.uk



IN OUR COMMUNITY

Page contact:
Bob Symonds:
comms@bromleyshul.org

Birth

Mazel Tov to **Joan and Leon Preston** on becoming first-time great-grand-parents, and to **Hayley Preston** on becoming a first-time grandmother. **Rachel Preston and Jordan Hennessey** are the proud parents of **Roman Peter Leon Hennessey**, who was born on Saturday 29 October 2022, weighing 7lb 2oz.



L to R, Joan, holding baby Roman, Rachel, Hayley and Leon.

Deaths

We are very sad to report the death of our member **Martin Posner**, husband of the late June Posner and brother-in-law of Sally Rosebery, to whom we extend our sincere condolences.

We are very sad to report the death of our member **Julia Williams**, daughter of the late Ronnie and Gloria Goldberg, sister of Justin, wife of Simon and mother of Leah and Adam, to all of whom we extend our sincere condolences

We are also very sad to report the death of our member **Jean Sheldon**, and extend our sincere condolences to her daughter, Maureen, son-in-law, Reuven, and her grandsons Aaron and Adam.

Bereavement

Sincere condolences to **Anthony Frankel** and his family on the sad loss of his father, Brian Lloyd Frankel, in South Africa on 3 October.

We wish all our mourners a long life.

Welcome to New Members

Mrs. **Josephine Garcia** of Bromley, Mrs. **Tamar Lawrence** and family of Catford; Mr. **Peter Berry** and Ms. **Philippa Martin** of Penge; Miss **Shana Douglas** of Hither Green and Mr. **Daniel Radov** of Orpington.

Enjoy your new home!

Mandy Wax, who is moving to Sydenham.

Sorry to lose you!

Martin and Alex Pachter on their transfer to Milton Keynes; **Jonathan and Iona Waterman**, who are transferring to South West Essex (SWERS) and **Jon Woolf and family**, who are moving to Lowestoft.

Refua Shlema, get well soon

Wishing a speedy recovery to all BRS folk who are unwell at this time.

B'nei Mitzvah

A hearty mazal tov to **Isaac Nana, Katie Hall, Zac Bates Fisher** and **Aimee Ashmore** and their families on the occasion of their respective b'nei mitzvah at BRS on 3, 10 and 17 December and 21 January respectively, Shabbat Vayetze, Shabbat V'yishlach, Shabbat VaYeshev and Shabbat Va'era.



Sara Taylor standing between her parents before the ark at her bat mitzvah on 10 September



Ilana Posner reading Torah under the watchful eye of her grandfather and teacher, Dr. John Posner, at her bat mitzvah on 24 September



Ezra Evans being presented with travelling Shabbat candlesticks by his mother, Chair Michelle Brooks-Evans, during his bar mitzvah on 22 October

90th birthday

Mazal tov to **Lew Britz**, who will celebrate this landmark with a Kiddush after the service on Saturday, 7 January.

Plaque Dedication

Zena Goodman will be remembered by her family and community when a plaque in her name is dedicated after the service on 18 February, 2023.

Retirement



After 24 years, as BRS Administrator **Janet Burlem** will retire this month. See Michelle's comments on page 3.

IN OUR COMMUNITY

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Social Centre News

We have continued to meet twice a month to enjoy meeting friends, chatting, playing Rummikub and enjoying a delicious lunch. We enjoyed our annual Summer Party at the end of August, when we were entertained by **Roland Perrin** and his clarinettist friend. There was more music in September from our old friends **Tom** and **David**, who will be returning in December to help us celebrate Chanukah. In November we were delighted to welcome back BRS member and author **Amelia Kyazze**, who spoke about her second book, *Ahead of the Shadows*. Those who'd enjoyed her first book were keen to find out what happened next. She also spoke about her early work with humanitarian organisations such as Oxfam and the Red Cross and her photography was on show for us to admire. She currently works as an editor and is constantly seeking and developing ideas for future novels.



Dianne's grandson, Ryan

Mathews of the Antarctic

An unexpected, but much hoped for, visitor joined us at our last meeting in October. **Ryan Mathews**, Dianne's grandson, found his flight for his second visit to Antarctica postponed, so he was able to come and talk to us. We had heard so much of his exploits at the other end of the world we were really keen to meet him and hear his talk – and we weren't

disappointed. Ryan is a marine field scientist working with the British Antarctic Survey. He told us of his first visit which lasted 20 months after a boat journey of seven weeks! He joined a group of scientists at the British Rothera Research Station, Adelaide Island on the Western Antarctic Peninsula. His work involved collecting and processing water and biological samples throughout the year. This is done either from small powerboats or by SCUBA diving. We all of us shivered at the thought of having to dive in - 40 degree water and could quite appreciate the fact that twenty minutes was the longest time spent in the sea. He was also able to enjoy exploring the area around the base – when they weren't snowed in – and seeing the local penguins and seals and spotting a few whales.

He told us of the importance of such ecological work in understanding the effect of climate change. We were also interested to learn of the International Antarctic Treaty signed by twelve nations including UK, USA, USSR, Australia, New Zealand and Argentina. This treaty stipulates that any exploration of Antarctica should be for peaceful purposes only; a zone free of nuclear tests and disposal of nuclear waste with no disputes over territorial sovereignty. There should be freedom of research and scientific cooperation, nations sharing the results of their investigations for the benefit of all.

Chatting to him afterwards, I found that the main disadvantage of what to us seems a fascinating and quite adventurous job is the fact that, when each contract is finished, he has no permanent base at home to come back to. This is something he is going to have to address in the future. We wish him well and send him our thanks via Dianne for giving us such an interesting and informative talk. - **Barbara Kurtz**

Knit, Natter & Stitch Group

Group members have been very busy knitting for various projects and enjoying their monthly get-togethers



Val and Rebeca knitted these gorgeous toys for popping into babies' cots at the PRUH

at my home. We were very fortunate to receive a large quantity of wool from **Naomi Marston**, her late mother, Davina Powell, having been a very keen knitter and, it appears, a keen buyer of wool. Thanks to them, we have been able to knit three large bags of goods, including over fifty hats, twenty scarves, jumpers and knee blankets. These items, plus fabric pencil cases, are shortly to be collected by our friend Karen and will be added to the annual donations of shoeboxes and taken to very deserving, and needy, recipients in Eastern Europe. A big thank you here to **Sue Bowyer** and her friends who have also been busy knitting for us.

Our other projects include jackets for Croydon Hospital, but we are now knitting and stitching mainly for the baby unit at the PRUH. Sally and Joan are our principal stitchers, making cot and incubator covers. We have just, in fact, received a thank-you from Leeds General Infirmary, where the last incubator covers made by Joan for Kings finally found a home, thanks to **Erin Frankel**. Val and Rebeca keep the PRUH supplied with lovely knitted animals, which find their way into babies' cots, Sue E is our principal cannula mitten knitter while Dianne and I knit hats, jackets and cot blankets. **Pat Boddie**, who has recently joined us, has also suggested knitting blankets for Battersea Dogs and Cats' Home. So, as you can see, we all keep very busy - **Barbara Kurtz**

Remembering Martin Posner

14 December 1936 to 28 September 2022



Martin and June celebrating their Ruby wedding at the synagogue in July 2010

June and Martin were long-standing, active members of BRS. Martin died at the end of September, June having predeceased him by about 18 months. Despite having the same surname, we were not related but were good friends since we met when Janet and I joined the shul back in 1982. They had no children, so June's sister Sally and I are writing this in memory of Martin.

Martin grew up in Hendon and Totteridge. He was born

prematurely and was physically disabled from birth due to cerebral palsy but he never let this hinder his life. His parents were not well-to-do and he left school to go out to work at the age of 15 with no plans for higher education. He was entrepreneurial and did well, becoming an expert in finance and in particular, credit control. In the 1970s, books on credit control were all from the USA and were not entirely applicable to practice in this country so Martin decided to write his own book on the subject. This became an authoritative text on credit control and he also made important contributions to further books in collaboration with colleagues. Later, he became responsible for establishing the syllabus and examinations for professional credit controllers and taught trainees. In the 1990s he set up his own business and for many years was a successful **independent consultant**, as well as working for part of his time as a **journalist on financial matters**. At West London Synagogue, Martin became an active member of the Berkeley Group.

There he met Phoebe June Rosebery. They fell in love, were married in that shul by the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn and remained happily married for nearly 50 years. June was an artist and calligrapher and in later life Martin also took up **art**, attending lessons and showing considerable talent. As most of us know, he also had a **beautiful baritone** voice and members of the shul will remember his wonderful singing in the choir at High Holyday as well as Shabbat services. He served as **Chairman of the synagogue** and was very active in that role, phoning members of the Council (now Board) frequently to sound out views and encourage active participation. Away from shul and work, Martin was a life-Martin also had interests outside the long enthusiast for **railways**; building models, reading magazines, attending exhibitions and mixing with fellow enthusiasts. He also served as treasurer of his Masonic lodge. Martin was a thoroughly decent person, absolutely honest and straight, who showed **commitment** to all the areas in which he got involved. He was interested in the world about him. He **read the news-papers avidly**; right up to his final days, he wanted to know what was going on in this country and all over the world.

He died in Nightingale, after a very short stay, at the age of 85. May his memory be for a blessing – *zichrono l'vracha*.

John Posner and Sally Rosebery

BRS CANDLE LIGHTINGS

Chanukah 5783, December 2022

We cannot print private addresses so please don't be shy to phone or email our generous hosts, each of whom is offering something different, to check where they are, what they're providing and what, if anything, they'd like you to bring.

FIRST NIGHT, Sunday 18 December, a CHOICE:
BLACKHEATH, with Linda and Matthew de Lange,
5.30pm to 7.30pm
matthew.delange@metaforepartners.com

or... **SEVENOAKS**, John Citron and family, **4pm onwards**. Directions from John
jscitron@gmail.com

SECOND NIGHT, Monday 19 December:
LEWISHAM, Bethany, Tristan and Edith McShepherd, with French bulldog Audrey, invite you to candle lighting, wine and nibbles from **6-8pm**. Directions
bethanyannmcdonald@gmail.com or 07968 680973. Closest trains: Elverson Road DLR (3min walk) or Lewisham Station (10min walk)

THIRD NIGHT, Tuesday 20 December:
BELLINGHAM, From 7pm with Tom in the meeting room on his allotment, possibly joined by Ukrainian guests. Information and directions from Matthew (see first night)

FOURTH NIGHT, Wednesday, 21 December:
BICKLEY, Drinks, doughnuts and cakes with Angie Bloom and her brother Paul (at his home).
6.30pm. Directions from judishef@aol.com

FIFTH NIGHT, Thursday, 22 December:
ORPINGTON, Tea time with Dianne Mathews. Details and directions: diannem3@gmail.com

SIXTH NIGHT, Friday, 23 December LOWER SYDENHAM, Chanukah and Shabbat candles with Aurelie from 7pm, featuring wine and **cheese from Une Normande a Londres**. Please contact Aurelie for directions and to say what you can bring. This is another dog-loving home, in case you need to know.

SEVENTH NIGHT, Saturday, 24 December BECKENHAM, Tea time with Judi, **3.30 to 5.30**. Details and directions: judishef@aol.com

EIGHTH NIGHT, Sunday, 25 December, ONLINE – details, judishef@aol.com

Please keep an eye on e-Light in case of updates. Thank you to all our volunteers.

BOOKS & BEYOND: Amelia Kyazze

Once again, our roving reporter, Judy Woolfe, has found a fellow member with stories to tell

ART UNDER THE ARK DAY

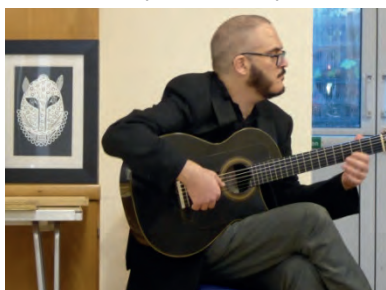
As well as containing talented writers such as Amelia, BRS is not short of artists, potters, sculptors, musicians and people involved in film, theatre and all other forms of art, as was demonstrated at our first “**Art Under the Ark**” afternoon in November. Thanks to Andrew Goldman and Greg Liebenhals, who put the programme together in record time, an interesting, stimulating and, above all, sociable time was had by audience, speakers and exhibitors alike. Another is planned for the spring. Please look out for details in due course.

Why “under the ark”? The BRS Garden Room is directly below it!



From left to right at top, **Zach**, who discussed new opportunities and challenges in the film industry and live theatre in the UK; artist, sculptor and cake-provider **Ashley**; musician, speaker and accompanist **Matthew**; organisers **Greg** and **Andrew**; and potter, musician and ceramicist **Sally**.

*Matthew Sear (below) spoke about his musical interpretation of the creation story, **Seven Days**.*



JUDY WOOLFE: How did it feel to have a first novel published - surely every writer’s dream?

AMELIA KYAZZE: Pretty amazing! It was a lot of hard work and then a promise to myself to keep going. Now I’ve written a sequel, because I had more story to tell. I am lucky that one of my skills is juggling several things at a time, such as photography, editing other writers’ work and childcare, which I have to do as I have two children, Kéo and Yvette.

JW: Can you tell me when you decided to work with refugees and say a bit about your career in this field?

AK: When I was 19 - at Cornell University in the US – I learned Nepali and then studied abroad in Nepal, where I encountered Tibetan refugees. That started me off in my career with humanitarian organisations. But, earlier than that, another influence was my mum, who instilled in me the very positive Jewish idea of Tikkun Olam, fixing the world, or at least trying to leave the world a better place than when you came into it. My first job was with Refugees International. I travelled to Albania and Kosovo at the time of the Kosovan/Bosnian Serbian conflict. I spent a lot of my time in my 20s and 30s travelling to different crisis spots in Africa and Asia, working for Oxfam, Save the Children and, more recently, as an adviser to the British Red Cross.

JW: Which came first, photography or writing, and how do you connect the two skills in your work?

AK: I’ve always done both. I started creative writing very young, at primary school, and learned photography in high school in the US. Once I started work and travelling, I took the camera around the world wherever I went.

JW: It is often said that to write a successful novel, in terms of plot and character, its best to write about what you know. Would you agree with that and, if so, how did your experience in Africa inform your first novel, *Into the Mouth of the Lion*, which we all enjoyed reading in our shul book club?

AK: Yes and no. All novels probably have elements of the writer’s experience, but it’s essential to be able to put yourself in the shoes of others. Imagination is very important. For me, landscape has a major influence on character, themes and plots and the theme for all my books. ‘Humanity in the Landscape’ is the theme of the photography books that I published in 2012, and that still influences me today.

JW: So, what are the mechanics of developing plot/character?

AK: In the early days of a new novel, I carry notebooks with me, set goals (e.g. so many words a day/week) and pin a large piece of paper on the wall of my office listing the characters and their details. Generally I start with a certain landscape, setting or inciting incident, but then I am led by the characters. I don’t know how a book is going to end until they lead me there.

JW: Tell me a bit about your methodology ‘Writing the Senses’, which you use in your creative writing workshops.

AK: This is about using the senses in descriptive writing to get creativity flowing in a fun and joyful way. We use touch, sight, smell, hearing and taste, but I’ve added two more - a sense of humour and a sense of direction/movement.

JW: Tell me about your second novel, *‘Ahead of the Shadows’*, which has just been published.

BOOKS & BEYOND: ART & MUSIC

Meanwhile, Andrew and Greg helped showcase members telling stories through other media



Sally Rosebery described techniques she uses to make and glaze pots and containers and Ashley Goldman showed one of her larger creations.



It was a lively induction day!



Talking of ceremonies, **mazal tov** to **DANIEL WEIL**, who led Jewish members of the armed forces at the Cenotaph in November.

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AK: It is a sequel to *'Into The Mouth of the Lion'*. The new book is set in DR Congo, Darfur, Sudan and the gritty back streets of Paris. It is the continuing story of a photographer working in intense situations across east and central Africa. It is also about the transmission of trauma across the generations, and how one unconventional boy might be able to break the cycle.

JW: How important to you is your Jewishness and how does this relate to your writing?

AK: I think it is important, but it can be subtle. My characters in these first two novels aren't Jewish but they have a strong sense of social justice, which I see as the same as Tikun Olam. In other books I have written (in draft form, but hope to share some news soon), I explore Jewish characters, and that takes the novels in different directions.

JW: What is the most important thing that life has taught you?

AK: Difficult question! We are learning all the time, if we are lucky. Lately, I think it's about being creative and curious, while still being responsible in what we need to do for our children and community.

JW: If you could invite six people to dinner (apart from family and friends) who would they be?

AK: Another difficult question but I think I'd go with Toni Morrison, Audrey Hepburn, David Baddiel, Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama and the late Yvette Pierpaoli, who was a refugee advocate and a mentor to me, and I named my daughter after her.

Amelia, thank you so much for giving me your time. I am sure many of our readers will want to buy copies of your books. They will be available at the shul **Chanukah Fair on 11 December** and online from Amazon, Blackwells, Barnes and Noble, and your own website, www.abkyazze.co.uk/shop.



Can you spot the Hebrew?

You may recognise the above segment of the large glass artwork in our sanctuary. There is now a plaque to the side of it, explaining the ideas of the artist who was commissioned by the late Rae Michaelis to illustrate the Hebrew name of BRS, Beit Or, House of Light. Do have a look next time you are at the shul.



Book Club meets in person again!

A dozen book club members, including Amelia herself (far right), met online and in person in November for a very lively evening with great hospitality provided by Lisa. It will meet again on **Tuesday, 17 January** at Lisa's and on Zoom to discuss Elif Shafak's **The Island of Missing Trees**. Although the author is not Jewish (she is of Turkish origin, living in the UK), she's appeared many times at Jewish Book Week, so this is an opportunity to contribute to our shul ethos of working with other faiths and cultures. Fuller book and meeting details from Judy: jwoolfe@ntlworld.com

More magical memories from autumn months



**Please send contributions for Pesach HighLight
by 9 March 2023 to: comms@bromleyshul.org.uk**

If you have an idea for a regular or one-off feature or a skill that you can bring to the production of HighLight or its online weekly companion, e-Light, please tell us at the same address.



Wishing
all
our
readers
a
very
happy
Chanukah

