

HIGHLight

Bromley Reform Synagogue newsletter

A Busy Month at the Synagogue



At the Communal Seder the Rabbi presented prizes to the finders of the hidden afikomen

Celebrate Shavuot

Saturday evening,

19 May

Service at 7.30 pm,
followed by **Tikkun Leyl**
(study session)
with cheesecake!



Festival service,
Sunday 20 May,
10.30 am



On the last day of the Cheder term the children of the Gan made afikomen covers in preparation for their Pesach sedarim



During the Yom Hashoah service on the first day of the new Cheder term the children of each class kindled memorial lights in turn

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A Catalogue of Chairs - View from the Chair

by Michelle Brooks Evans

When I was asked to write “View from the Chair” this month I thought, “What am I going to write about?” However I decided to take a literal approach and tell you about the views from a few chairs in my life, and hence a bit about me.

One of the first **chairs** I ever remember was in the garden of my grandparents’ courtyard in Tehran, Iran. During the long summer months that we used to spend there much of our time was spent outside. My grandparents lived in a house with a courtyard that was shared with mostly Muslim neighbours. As my brother and I were the youngest grandchildren there we had our own little chairs. These were always placed under the tree for shade, and the view was of a water fountain and jasmine growing everywhere. We spent many magical times with our family in Iran.

The beginning of Jewish history in Iran dates back to late biblical times. The books of Isaiah, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah all contain references to the life and experiences of Jews in Iran. In the book of Ezra, the Persian kings were credited with allowing and helping the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple. This took place in the late 6th century BCE and, by this time, there was a well-established Jewish community in what was then called Persia. The number of Jews in Iran has dwindled and some put it as low as 8,500. The majority now live in either Israel or Los Angeles. Being of Persian Jewish heritage has certainly greatly influenced my life, especially with food and music. Many of the Ashkenazi traditions in this country were alien to me and, until I came to Bromley shul, I had never had a fish ball or gefilte fish in my life.

The view from the **chairs** at my grandparents’ house in Florida played a big part of my life. When my grandparents left Tehran they settled in Florida with the rest of my uncles, aunts and cousins. They were split with other cousins going to Los Angeles. Still the family stuck to its sacrosanct Friday night Shabbat dinners, where my grandma would cook all week. Her house and many chairs were open to everyone and her cooking was famous, with up to 25 of us at the dinner table. The typical Shabbat dinner was rice, chicken and gondi, which is like a dumpling made from ground chicken or veal with chickpea flour.

Another **chair** recently enjoyed by a lot of us was at the Communal Seder at shul on 31 March. Once again the organisation by **Harriet Posner** and her many helpers was impressive. Rabbi Jason led the service and we were lucky to have Vicki leading us in song. I found myself sitting in a shul that I first visited when I was 15. However, as I looked around I was sitting with my husband and four children: Lili, Esther, Lloyd and Ezra. I reflect on Judaism’s positive perspective on the unending circle of life and the continuity of generations. Even at the close of a period of mourning, one Jew says to another, “Af simchas” – let us come together again at times of joy. Just after a baby boy undergoes circumcision, the tension in the room is often released in laughter as the mohel wishes his parents the joy of bringing their son to the wedding canopy.

What might be seen as a silly blessing for an eight-day-old infant actually reflects a communal orientation filled with hope. The ritual belongs not only to the child’s family, but also reminds others present of similar ceremonies held, so this moment links them to other Jews across time, tying their personal history with that of the Jewish people.

My son Lloyd celebrated his bar mitzvah on 14 April. This was the Shabbat corresponding to Israel’s 70th year of its independence. It was wonderful to see the shul filled to bursting point, with family, friends and community coming together. Yom Ha’Atzmaut commemorates when David Ben-Gurion, who was Israel’s first prime minister, publicly read Israel’s Declaration of Independence. So happy anniversary to Israel and *l’chaim* as you celebrate life. The festivities of Lloyd’s bar mitzvah were continued in the evening when he was carried high on a **chair** to *Hava Nagila*. I think his view from the chair might have been a bit scary, for those of you who know Lloyd, this was a great feat of strength as he is a 6 foot rugby player! Lifting the chair is all about singling the bar mitzvah out for celebration and having fun.

The final chair I am going to mention is the one at the AGM in March. Here I was honoured to become joint **Vice Chair**. So I look forward to sharing many views from many chairs with many of you.

Michelle Brooks Evans

Sadeh

The field and all that are in it will rejoice

Jewish farming week 14 - 20 May 2018



Would you love to try out farming, growing vegetables and getting your hands dirty? Are you interested in finding out what Jewish farming means and how Sadeh can nourish your mind, body and soul?

What will I learn?

In the field: Sadeh farm is based on permaculture and no dig systems. Get ready to get muddy, learn how to feed the soil and grow veggies.

Jewish education: Learn about earth-based Judaism, our agricultural traditions and the spirituality of farming. Our Jewish educator, **Rachel Rose Reid**, Kohenet, will be leading this journey.

Land and food preservation education: explore land ownership, our current systems and how to preserve and keep the food we grow.

Shavuot

This week will conclude with a Shavuot-focused Shabbat, where we will be inviting others to join us.

This programme is sponsored by Moishe House.

The programme takes place over Shavuot and, though we will wrap the programme up Sunday night, there will be an option to stay an extra day for those who would like to keep second day Shavuot. Food, peace, company and good walks will all be available.

No experience needed!

Cost of the programme is £120, though no-one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Please email talia.chain@sadehfarm.co.uk for an application form if you would like to apply.

You have to be over 18 to attend this programme.

Inheritors and Creators by Rabbi Jason Holtz

This is my penultimate *Highlight* article, and I am writing it knowing that when my final column is printed for the June *Highlight*, I will have already said goodbye. Jodi and I are sad to be leaving, and we couldn't have asked for a better synagogue over the past five years. But this is not my last *Highlight* column, so onwards to an otherwise "regular" column.

This month is Shavuot, the festival that celebrates the giving of the Torah, so I'd like to share with you my favourite story about the Torah. It comes from a midrashic work called *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*.

Once there was a king who had two subjects that he loved. Each subject, in turn, loved the king. The king decided to give each subject a gift. They both received an identical amount of gold, silver, wool, wood, yarn, fabric, you name it.

The first subject decided that the gift was so valuable and precious that he created a space to store and preserve it. He often went to look at and admire all the precious materials gifted to him, but did nothing more with them.

The second subject also loved the gift, yet he took a different approach. He took the gold, silver, wool, wood, yarn, fabric, etc. and used them to create new sculptures and works of art. By the time he finished, nothing of the gift was left in its original form.

One day the king decided to visit each of the subjects. He went to the first and asked what he had done with the gift. That subject took the king and showed him how he had preserved the gift and told him how he regularly went to appreciate and look at all the fine materials given to him. The king was disappointed. Next, the king went to the second subject and asked him also what he had done with the gift. The second subject showed him new works of art and new sculptures. The king was overjoyed to see how his gift fuelled his subject's creativity.

I see this story as a great metaphor for Torah and Jewish tradition. We have inherited thousands of years of Jewish tradition and teaching. This inheritance is like the gold, silver, etc. given by the king to his beloved subjects. For some, they take that inheritance and appreciate it, but otherwise don't do anything with it. For us, I hope, we take that inheritance

and use it to craft Jewish life now and for the future. Torah shouldn't be seen as a finished product, meant to be locked away and stunted. We say, "*Etz Chayim Hi – It is a Tree of Life — a Living tree*". We must nurture Torah to grow into the future. In that way, Jewish life will be all the better for new expressions, and so will we, as we allow our creative impulses to flourish.

Reform Judaism recognizes the truth of this story better than anyone. Reform isn't something to apologize for, it's something to be celebrated and be overjoyed about. Judaism isn't the National Trust—trying so hard to preserve the past of a house that it can no longer be lived in and that the furniture has signs that say, "Keep off!" Rather, it is the deepest creative expression of Jews, inspired by our Torah inheritance, but not limited by preserving it in its current form.

May we all be both inheritors of the Jewish past as well as creators of the Jewish future.

Rabbi Jason Holtz



Tikkun Leyl - The Jewish All-Nighter at Sadeh, Sat - Sun, 19 - 20 May

The Tikkun Leyl will start at 9 pm and we will make Havdalah together.

Shavuot is one of the three main Jewish harvest festivals. The tradition is to stay up all night learning, talking, singing and eating to remember the ancient story of how the Jewish people gathered at Sinai to receive the Torah.

Snacks, drinks and other refreshments will be provided to keep our spirits high.

Shavuot day will consist of walks, meals, singing, alternative services, peace and parades. There is also an option to stay an extra day if you keep two days of Yom Tov. For those who are **Shomer Shabbat**, there is also the option to come on Friday and share our Shabbat with us.

For booking details see the article on page 3 of this *Highlight*.

We will be providing food, snacks, sessions, beds and fun! We will send packing lists nearer the time.

Reform Judaism enhances conversion classes with distance learning

Reform Judaism has just launched an innovative online learning programme for conversion candidates.

The online sessions, led by **Rabbi Sybil Sheridan**, are intended to complement regular classes arranged and taught in synagogue communities. They will benefit students living in remote areas or smaller communities and those who might be constrained by illness or disability. Students will have the support of a sponsoring rabbi and it is expected that all candidates participate in some form of local Jewish community activities and services.

Before the candidates appear before the Beit Din they must have attended in person a number of Shabbat services and all the main festivals at an established Reform congregation.

Watching and participating in streamed services, especially with a local group, is also beneficial; however, except for in exceptional circumstances, this cannot be seen as a substitute for personal attendance.

Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick, Convenor of the Reform Beit Din said: "Reform Judaism welcomes potential converts to Judaism with compassion, combining modernity with Jewish tradition. In the past we have exceptionally conducted Beit Din hearings by Skype and I am delighted that we are able to expand the boundaries of inclusion in this innovative way."

Nevertheless, Judaism is a communal tradition and it is vital that candidates can also be present in a community to experience the reading of the Torah, hear the shofar, feel the changing atmosphere of the services through the day on Yom Kippur, wave a lulav and experience a Passover Seder."

The Meaning of Shavuot

The Kotzker Rabbi gave two reasons for our naming the Feast of Shavuot 'The Time of the Giving of our Torah', and not 'The Time of Our Receiving the Torah.'

The first reason is that while the Torah was given us in the time of Moses, we continue to receive the Torah all the time since then.

The second reason is that, while the Torah was given to every Jew alike, it was not received by everyone in equal proportion, since the receiving depends upon the power of understanding in each individual.

Hasidic

Cheder News

Hello, all of you interested in our Cheder News! **All parents please note:** We are entering a part of our calendar full of bank holidays and half terms. This means that the Cheder's "opening hours" can become a bit unpredictable - **please** check the calendar or the website if you're unsure whether or not Cheder is open on any given Sunday.

1. Cheder began with a very moving memorial service for **Yom Hashoah**. I was so pleased to see so many parents stay and take part in the service, and I'm sure your children noticed too. Unfortunately our speaker, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, was unwell and could not join us. Many thanks to **Ruth Rolle** for reading her story to us, and putting a human face to this part of our history for the children.
2. We also celebrated **Yom Ha'atzmaut - Israeli Independence Day** with a day of food and activities centered around Israel. The children had a fantastic time celebrating all things Israeli!
3. Congratulations are in order: Last term, your children and their Tzedakah money managed to raise £240 for **Bliss**, a charity which supports ill and premature babies. Thank you so much for supporting your children's efforts to raise money for this worthy cause. Our next charity chosen by Kittah Chet is called the **Eagle Heights Wildlife Foundation**.
4. It's time for our next **Children's Service, this time on Sunday, 20 May in honour of Shavuot!** The whole community will be invited to watch the children sing and recite poems and prayers, with Kittah Chet taking a leading role. Please do join your children and show them why synagogue is important to you too. Hooray Cheder (our parent group) leader Michelle Brooks Evans will be in touch to let you know what to bring to our Bring and Share Kiddush, which will feature cheesecake heavily, I'm sure. If you'd like to contact her first, just email her at hooraycheder@gmail.com
5. And now **save the date**: Our next **Cheder School Trip** will take place on the last day of Cheder, **Sunday, 8**



Enjoying the Communal Seder on 31 March

July, at Sadeh Farm! We'll organise transport from the Cheder, but if you live around Orpington you may be better off meeting us there. We'll be spending the morning learning about working the farm and all about bees, all under the theme of *Olam Chesed Yibaneh* ("A World of Kindness will be Built"). Keep your eyes open for emails to follow shortly.

Last but not least, please check the **Security Rota** on this page to see if we are expecting you to show up for security. If you realize you cannot attend on the day you've been allocated, please contact **Katia Pisetzky**: pisetzky@gmail.com

Enjoy a happy and healthy May,
Vicki, Cheder Head Teacher

Cheder Security Rota Kayitz/Summer Term

Sundays	
6 May	Judy/David Taylor
13 May	Michael Abrahams
20 May	Danielle/David Woodward
27 May	Michelle Brooks Evans
3 June	Half term
10 June	Sune Shulman/Aaron Markowitz
17 June	Gary Brown/Chiara Messineo
24 June	Philip/Joanna Burchill
1 July	Benjie/Kerry Butler
8 July	Janine/Len Campling

Social Centre News

At the meeting of the Social Centre on Wednesday, 28 March, a delicious lunch of salmon and fruit salad in celebration of **Bernie Citron's** birthday (thanks Bernie!) was followed by a talk from **Faye Routledge** of Deaf Access on coping with hearing loss. Profoundly deaf from infancy, Faye gave the talk in sign language expertly interpreted by **Vicki Ashmore**. She impressed us by telling of her earlier life at school and university and how she copes so magnificently with her lack of hearing. We learnt the anatomy of the ear, the minerals we should include in our diet to combat or delay hearing loss and how to be good communicators with those of reduced hearing. Tinnitus, which can be a distressing aspect of hearing impairment, was also dealt with.

We learned how and where to seek advice, obtain helpful equipment and how to manage a visit to the theatre or cinema. I had never heard of **StageText**, a charity which provides captioning and live subtitled services to theatres and arts venues. We also heard that our local cinema may be able to show accessible subtitled films for hearing loss sufferers. Our thanks to Faye for a very interesting and informative session and to Vicki for arranging it for us.

Barbara Kurtz

Dianne Mathews adds:

We met again on 11 April, which was a rather dull day, but Andreas' exercises wakened us and the day was spiced up with a very tasty vegetable tagine for lunch.

We had been expecting a musical entertainment by **David Coronel** and **Tom Shiels** but, unfortunately, David was unwell. However Tom carried on and played some recordings, telling us about the musicians and vocalists and reminding us all of our youth. As always, this was really enjoyable and we thank Tom, wish David well and look forward to them coming again later in the year.

Social Centre Diary Dates for May

Wednesdays, 9 and 23, 10.30 am – 2.30 pm in the Garden Room.

AJEX film show

Sunday, 6 May, at 2.30 pm

Wimbledon Synagogue, 1 Queensmere Road, Wimbledon, SW19

Price £8 per person

South West London & Surrey branch of AJEX invites you to a showing of the video **'Partners in this Great Enterprise'**

2 November 2017 was the centenary of the **Balfour Declaration**. There were many celebrations, including a major event at the Albert Hall organised by a group of Christian leaders and attended by 3,500 people, including the Israeli Ambassador. The evening's programme consisted of entertainment and a recounting of the years and events that led up to the British government's declaration in 1917 supporting the establishment of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

This DVD was recorded live at the Albert Hall event. Time restraints mean that only the first part of the evening's programme can be shown.

All are invited

Film to be followed by the usual excellent AJEX tea!

If you are interested in attending the Editor of Highlight (bobsymonds@mac.com) will be pleased to email you a booking form.

SE10 and Beyond

On Friday, 6 April we met in Blackheath. We shared a delicious Passover meal with contributions from all who attended. We managed to squeeze a dozen of us around the table, and we enjoyed sharing our family Passover stories and customs. We were joined by a few new faces, which was lovely, and of course, the regulars boosted our numbers.

We will next meet in Greenwich on **Wednesday, 23 May** for an evening of Jewish jokes and humour.

Our group is a friendly informal group, open to all Jewish affiliations or none at all, with a shared Jewish identity. So if you would like to know more or feel like coming along, just contact **Michelle Brooks Evans** through the synagogue.

Remembering Bob Harmes by his son, David Harmes



Bob Harmes at the Communal Seder in 2014

Robert (Bob) Harmes died peacefully on Wednesday, 4 April, aged 83, at Nightingale Care Home, where he lived with his wife Madeleine.

Bob grew up from humble beginnings in Teddington, his father a milkman and his mother a housewife. He had an older sister, Vi, and brother, Peter, who both predeceased him.

For his National Service, he went to Malaya and served in the Intelligence Department. When his time was up and he came home, he had somewhat lost his appetite for further education and instead got a job in motor insurance, with a Lloyds syndicate. Whilst travelling into the city for work, he met Madeleine and this meeting turned into a devoted marriage lasting more than 57 years.

In the latter part of the 1970s, career advancement led to a move to Hayes in Bromley, where they joined Bromley Reform Synagogue, feeling very much at home with the warmth and friendliness of the congregation. When my parents initially married, the ceremony was held in a registry office as Mum was Jewish and Dad was Christian. A few years later, Dad decided he felt the time was right to convert. In latter times this allowed my parents to renew their vows in Bromley Reform Synagogue, surrounded by all their friends – a celebration they both cherished.

One last thing to mention about Dad was his love (and considerable skill) at writing poems. This seems the perfect

time to share one from a few years ago now...

There's something for all at Bromley Shul

*Don't mope at home, come alive
With a ramble and pub lunch with BR5.
But if your yearning is for study and
learning,
Forget the walks, forget the pubs,
There's Torah Study and the two book
clubs.*

*There's education and fun for the kids
at Cheder.*

*All sorts of activities – even a model
Seder.*

*Whilst the Social Centre is for a more
mature bunch,
With interesting talks and a jolly good
lunch.*

*Of course, you could always decide to
go
To view the occasional Israeli Film
Show.*

*It caters for Jewish film-lovers' needs.
It's organised so efficiently by the
Frieds.*

*To find out what's on, it's Highlight
you'll need.*

*Barbara's 'View From The Chair' is
always a good read.*

*There's something on almost every day.
Discover whose family has increased;
who has sadly passed away.*

*Or why not join the service on Saturday
morn?*

*It will restore the spirit if you're feeling
forlorn.*

*There's no pressure and no need to
pine.*

*Taste the sweetness of life in the
Kiddush wine!*

*All are welcome at Bromley Shul, rich
or stony broke.*

*Our treasure is our Rabbi – that super
Tony bloke!*

*There's something for all at Bromley
Shul.*

Dad has left this world a richer place for his part in it.

*The above is an abridged version of the
eulogy read at Bob's funeral.*

Madeleine and David would like to thank everyone for their kind wishes and express the hope that the memory of Bob's name will be a blessing for others...

Social and Personal

BIRTH - Proud grandparents Suzanne and Ian Burgess are delighted to announce the safe arrival of Caitlin Noa, a daughter for Emma (née Burgess) and Joel.

DEATHS - We are very sad to announce the death of our member **Robert (Bob) Harmes** in Nightingale House on 4 April and extend sincere condolences to his widow Madeleine and son David and his family. A eulogy to Bob appears on p. 6 of *Highlight*.

We were also very sad to learn of the death of our member **Bertha Sokoloff** at her residential home in Pinner on 16 April and extend sincere condolences to her daughters, Sally and Ruth, and their families.

Just before going to press we learned of the death of our founder member, **Bernice Kingsley**, widow of the late Bobby Kingsley, in Nottingham. We extend sincere condolences to Bernice and Bobby's sons, Paul and John, and their families.

May the memories of Bob, Bertha and Bernice all be for a blessing.

GET WELL SOON - Pauline Jeffree writes: Get well soon to: Michelle Brooks Evans, Rosalind Clayton, Renee Gertski, Jean Sheldon and others known to us for whom this is a challenging time.

Thanks for condolences - Madeleine and David Harmes would like to thank everyone who attended the funeral of the late **Bob Harmes**, visited Nightingale or sent their kind wishes of condolence. Their kind thoughts and good wishes have been greatly appreciated.

LEAVING US - We wish Bon Voyage and God Speed to **Rabbi Jason Holtz, Jodi and Asher**, who are returning to the United States after nearly five years of serving our congregation. Jason is taking up a new post with a Reform congregation in Atlanta, Georgia. We look forward to hearing from him and how he and his family are progressing from time to time.

Bromley 3 Faiths Forum

Join Rabbi Jason Holtz, Rev. Andrew McClellan and Dr Omar Taha at the Al-Emaan Centre on Wednesday, 9 May from 7:30 pm as the panel discuss the faith and teachings of their respective traditions.

For more details, contact Rabbi Holtz through the synagogue.

Leaving party for the Rabbi, Jodi and Asher

We are having a very British afternoon tea party with tea/coffee, finger sandwiches, scones, Victoria sponge, cakes, and jelly (vegetarian) and ice cream on

Sunday, 6 May from 3 to 5 pm in the Garden Room

So come and wish the Rabbi and his family farewell and good luck.

Please contact **Michelle Brooks Evans** if you can help her make this an afternoon to remember on micellebrooksevans@gmail.com or 07956 234309.

Also please let Michelle know if you will be coming.



Thanks to the congregation



Lloyd Evans with his parents after his bar mitzvah on Saturday, 14 April.

Heartfelt thanks to our family, friends and community who came to celebrate Lloyd's bar mitzvah with us on Saturday 14 April. Special thanks go to Matthew de Lange for his learned teaching, to the Rabbi, choir and kiddush helpers, and to Bob for his amazing photos.

Michelle, Bill, Lili, Esther, Lloyd and Ezra.



e-Light

Lots of our members, from young children to older adults, participate in interesting events, but only a handful tell us about them before it is too late for others to enjoy them too. Tell everyone at comms@bromleyshul.org.uk

Machane Shemesh

(Shemesh Summer Camp 5778)

Shemesh is the summer camp for RSY-Netzer! Shemesh is a chance for your child to spend two weeks (or 10 days if on Briyah – age 10-11) in a Reform community. On each camp there is a range of fun activities to join in with, as well as space to chill out and relax!

Our volunteer leaders were themselves participants on Shemesh and have been involved in RSY-Netzer for a number of years. Our leaders provide a friendly face to educate, inspire and encourage your children. All this while being part of an active, friendly and supportive RSY-Netzer Community.

It's not yet too late to sign up and have an incredible summer with RSY-Netzer! To apply and for more information go to: rsy-netzer.org.uk/shemesh-summer-camp, or pick up an application form in the synagogue.

Education Committee News

A Date for your Diary

Annual Jubilee Lecture

Sunday, 15 July

We look forward to welcoming **Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko** Director of CCJ 'One woman's story after living in Jerusalem for 23 years'

Further details nearer the date

Jewish Care's Holocaust Survivor Centre's Testimony Project

The Testimony Project of the Holocaust Survivor Centre, which is run by Jewish Care, has now been in existence for over sixteen years.

It has a small but dedicated group of volunteers, who are trained to carry out interviews for the Project, usually at the interviewee's home and recorded onto a digital recording machine.

The centre is keen to interview people who can give these eye witness accounts, whether they came to Britain before or after the Second World War.

For more information, please contact **Lesley Urbach** lcurbach@aol.com, 020 8346 2257 or **Helen Norman** at the Holocaust Survivor Centre - hnorman@jcare.org

Surviving in Warsaw – my Wartime Experiences by Wlodka Blit Robertson

My twin sister Nelly and I were born in Warsaw in 1931. In August 1939, we were with my parents near Zakopane. Rumours of a German invasion meant that we had to cut short our holiday and hurry home to Warsaw where we lived in a small apartment. Within days war broke out, and Warsaw was subjected to incendiary bomb raids.

My parents decided that they had to leave Warsaw because of their known political activities. My father was a leading member of the Jewish socialist Bund organisation and my mother was headmistress of a Yiddish primary school and active in Poale Zion. They thought that taking young children on foot to the Russian frontier, along with thousands of other fleeing people, would be too dangerous. We were therefore left with our grandparents, aunts and uncle, and cousins Jerzy and Pavel aged fifteen and four. When my parents were leaving, my uncle Jakob cried; I knew then that awful things were happening.

Then, following the Russo-German pact, Soviet troops invaded Poland from the east and my parents found themselves in Russian-occupied Poland. My mother managed to smuggle herself back to Warsaw to be with us. My father, **Lucjan Blit**, also tried to get back to Warsaw to help with the underground organisation of the Bund. But he was caught by the Russians and imprisoned in a labour camp until 1942, when he was released and joined the Polish army and eventually came to England in 1943. After my mother's return to Warsaw, we moved in with my paternal grandparents. They had a large apartment but we all lived in one room because the winter of 1940 was very cold and fuel was in short supply.

As soon as the Germans occupied Warsaw, they began issuing anti-Jewish laws. I remember being chased by gangs of Polish hooligans, organised by the Germans. A high brick wall topped with barbed wire was constructed around a quarter of Warsaw, which became the Ghetto. We had to move there. My mother's family, my grandparents, aunts and uncles and two cousins, already lived in that part of Warsaw, and we moved in with them. My father's parents found a room in another part of the Ghetto.

Conditions in the Ghetto were appalling – random shootings, beatings,



The Blit family remembered on the 45 Aid Society Holocaust Survivors quilt

hostage-taking, typhus, overcrowding, homelessness, people dead from hunger in the streets. Hungry children used to snatch parcels from passers-by and immediately stuff the contents in their mouths, hoping that it was food. But there were also secret self-help committees, secret schools, secret libraries, synagogues and clandestine political organisations. My mother was in charge of one of the few soup kitchens for starving children. There I saw many of my school friends, swollen from hunger. My sister and I spent most days playing with other children in our courtyard.

Then posters appeared in the Ghetto announcing the evacuation of everyone to 'work camps' somewhere in the east, with only those who were working for the Germans being exempted. We soon knew that these were extermination camps. People were obviously terrified. My family built a bunker in the cellar with a hidden entry and we used to run there and hide when the raids began. We could hear the Germans and Ukrainians shouting for everyone to assemble in the courtyard or be shot. My mother first had exemption papers from the Jewish Council because of her work. But as we watched our neighbours being taken away, some quietly, some struggling, we understood that these bits of paper would not save us for long.

My grandfather gave away his small metal factory to the German industrialist **Toebbens**, hoping to get in return some protection from the raids and some food for the family grown-ups who worked there. The factory repaired arms and mended helmets brought back from the Russian front.

More and more people were caught and taken in cattle trucks to the concentration and extermination camps, mainly to Treblinka which was near Warsaw. Occasionally, someone would escape and tell terrible stories of gassings. We knew not to bother to take belongings with us if we were caught. We knew we would be killed.

My mother's family was still together. As the Ghetto was emptied, we moved to other abandoned apartments and our uncles and grandfather built other bunkers. My father's parents and sister had already been taken away to be murdered. Because of my parents' connection with the Jewish underground organisation ZOB through Poale Zion and the Bund, **Michael Klepfisz**, who was a Bundist courier on the Aryan side (outside the Ghetto), found a Polish Catholic family who for payment agreed to shelter my sister and myself at great risk to themselves.

At night, we were smuggled out of the Ghetto, climbing a ladder over the Ghetto wall. The policemen and Ukrainian soldiers were bribed. Other people were smuggling food and arms at the same time. We were dressed in double clothes and told that now we had new documents and new names and were never to mention to anyone who we really were. The decision that we should leave the Ghetto was taken so quickly that I cannot remember saying goodbye properly to my family.

The Polish family, **Dubiel**, were kind to us and very devoted to Michael Klepfisz, whom they knew from before the war. From the window of their apartment we could see over the Ghetto wall and often our mother would come in the evenings and walk discreetly on the other side of the wall. For a short time, Michael Klepfisz shared the same apartment and talked to us about his smuggling of arms into the Ghetto and making incendiary bottles for the Jewish underground.

From We Remember: Child Survivors of the Holocaust Speak

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/We-Remember-Child-Survivors-Holocaust/dp/1848767870>

This text was delivered on behalf of Wlodka Blit Robertson by Ruth Rolle at the Yom Hashoah service on 15 April and reproduced in Highlight with her kind permission.

To be continued in the June issue of Highlight.

LEHRHAUS

The Leo Baeck College Lehrhaus programme is designed to promote the development and growth of adult Jewish learning for 21st Century Jews.

All our courses are taught by our outstanding faculty, which we hope will entice you to join us.

Courses at Leo Baeck College:

Rabbi Dr Frank Dabba Smith:

Jews and Photography - 4-week course, Thursdays, 3-24 May.

Susannah Alexander:

It's Not All Lox & Bagels: A Historical, Cultural and Gastronomic Overview of Jewish Culinary Traditions - 4-week course, Mondays, 2-25 June

If you have any questions, please contact Jarek: Lehrhaus@lbc.ac.uk, 020 8349 5600.

We very much look forward to having you study with us.

Dr Jo-Ann Myers

Director of Jewish Education

All details of the courses, including start dates, prices and registration, can be found on our website at: www.lbc.ac.uk
Leo Baeck College,
The Sternberg Centre for Judaism,
80 East End Road, London N3 2SY
lehrhaus@lbc.ac.uk 020 8349 5600

We were there too:

London Jews in the First World War

We are aiming to create a permanent record of the lives of London's Jewish men and women and their families, both in the military and on the Home Front, during 1914-1919, ensuring that their stories are not lost for future generations.

Whatever your age, knowledge of the First World War, research experience or understanding of computers, if you have a family member who lived in London during the war, or are interested to research a name on the Book of Honour, a Synagogue Board, a gravestone or a host of other memorials then we will help you to find out more about them and build a personal record.

If you would like more information about the project or the website, please email contactus@jewsfww.london and one of the team will be in touch.

SERVICES

May 2017 – Iyar/Sivan 5778

Fridays at 7 pm, unless otherwise stated.

Saturdays at 10.30 am, unless otherwise stated

Thursday 3 May

Lag B'Omer (18 Iyar)

Friday 4 May

Saturday 5 May

Behar (20 Iyar)

Friday 11 May

Saturday 12 May

Bechukotai (27 Iyar)

Tuesday 15 May

Rosh Chodesh Sivan

Friday 18 May

Saturday 19 May

Bamidbar (5 Sivan)

Saturday 19 May

Erev Shavuot - Service at 7.30 pm, followed by Tikkun Leyl

Sunday 20 May

SHAVUOT - Festival service at 10.30 am in the Synagogue

Friday 25 May

Saturday 26 May

Naso (12 Sivan)

Bromley Beit Midrash – Adult Learning

Sunday, 13 May,
10 am in the synagogue

Modern (and Postmodern) Jewish Thought

We often say that Judaism is more about what we do than what we think or believe. But that's not entirely fair to the role of Jewish philosophy and theology, which helps to explain the significance of Jewish life—the reason why sometimes being as important as the explanation of how. For thousands of years, Jewish teachers have tried to explain what they believe, why they believe it and why it's important. That tradition has continued in the modern (and what some call the post-modern) period. Over two weeks, we'll look at a small handful of significant, influential and diverse Jewish thinkers and discuss their ideas.

Judaism Today and Tomorrow:

Why be Jewish and do Jewish in 2018 and beyond? We'll look at what a few others have had to say, but be prepared to share your own thoughts as well. Also, ask Rabbi Holtz in his final Bromley Beit Midrash session anything and everything before he heads out home Sunday, 13 May from 10:00 am.

Council of Christians and Jews
South East London Branch

Special Event for 75th Anniversary of CCJ

Tuesday, 8 May at 8.00pm

Refreshments from 7.45 pm

at St Stephen's Church,
College Road, SE21

(beside Sydenham Hill railway station)

"75 years of thinking in the UK on how to deliver religious education – Challenges and Possibilities"

Lesley Prior, Senior Lecturer in Religious Education at University of Roehampton, London

Rabbi Dr Michael Shire, Dean and Professor of Jewish Education, Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education and Jewish Studies, Hebrew College Boston, who will be participating online

For further details, please contact **Stephen Weil** through the synagogue.



Dates for Your Diary

May

T	1	
W	2	
Th	3	Talmud Study Group , 10.30-11.45 am at the Shul
F	4	
S	5	Behar
S	6	Farewell Tea Party for Rabbi Jason Holtz and his family, 3-5 pm at the Shul
M	7	Jewish Women's Week coffee morning from 10.30 am at Marilyn's in Beckenham
T	8	CCJ anniversary event , 7.30 for 8 pm at St Stephen's Church, College Road, SE21
W	9	Social Centre , 10.30 am to 2.30 pm at the Shul 3 Faiths Forum - Discussion, 7.30 pm at the Al-Emaan Centre
Th	10	
F	11	
S	12	Bechukotai
S	13	Beit Midrash - 10 am at the Shul
M	14	Jewish Farming Week begins at Sadeh
T	15	Rosh Chodesh Sivan
W	16	
Th	17	Knit & Natter , 10 to 12 noon at Pauline's Talmud Study , 10.30-11.45 am at the Shul
F	18	
S	19	Bamidbar Erev Shavuot - Service at 7.30 pm followed by Tikkun Leyl
S	20	SHAVUOT - Festival service at 10.30 am
M	21	
T	22	
W	23	Social Centre , 10.30 am to 2.30 pm at the Shul SE10 and beyond - Meeting in Greenwich on Jewish humour
Th	24	
F	25	
S	26	Naso
S	27	WIZO Bridge/Games/Cards afternoon, 3-6 pm in Beckenham
M	28	
T	29	
W	30	
Th	31	

June

F	1	
S	2	Beha'alotecha
S	3	
M	4	
T	5	
W	6	
Th	7	
F	8	
S	9	Shelach Lecha
S	10	
M	11	
T	12	
W	13	Social Centre , 10.30 am to 2.30 pm at the Shul
Th	14	Rosh Chodesh Tammuz
F	15	
S	16	Korach
S	17	
M	18	
T	19	
W	20	
Th	21	
F	22	Chagigah 2018 begins at Eastwood Hall, Nottingham
S	23	Chukkat
S	24	
M	25	
T	26	
W	27	Social Centre , 10.30 am to 2.30 pm at the Shul
Th	28	
F	29	
S	30	Balak



22 JUNE - 24 JUNE
Celebrating Reform Judaism
Being part of something bigger

Chagigah is our biennial celebration of Reform Judaism. Chagigah means just that: a celebration. It reflects the special atmosphere we will create over a weekend away, celebrating Reform Judaism and being part of something bigger. We look forward to welcoming you as one big community for **Chagigah 2018, 22-24 June at Eastwood Hall near Nottingham**.

For more information or any questions about Chagigah 2018 please email chagigah@rjuk.org

SPONTANEOUS PRODUCTIONS

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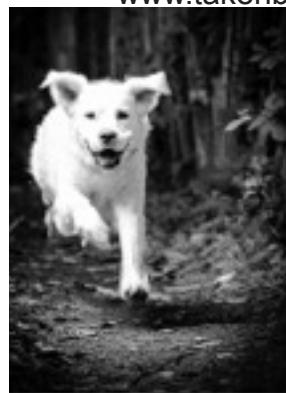
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