

Summer 2023

www.bromleyshul.org.uk

Botox for Books

Yes, you read right. We are thinking about how to rejuvenate BRS's Josef Hausmann library in time for the shul's 60th anniversary next year. This involves considering how the space is used as well as which items will be in there permanently.

One suggestion has been to feature important Jewish authors of fiction and non-fiction of the past 150 years or so. This is where you come in. We need your nominations. They could be rabbis/philosophers of the late 20C such as Lionel Blue and Hugo Gryn; current thinkers and writers such as David Baddiel and Simon Shama; old favourites such as Isaac Bashevis Singer; or modern Israeli or American authors such as Amos Oz and Philip Roth.

Whose work would you like to see there to study or borrow?

We need your suggestions. There's no point in having a room full of books that nobody wants to read! **Send your nominations by 31 July** to: rabbilaura@bromleyshul.org.uk and we'll print a **short list in the next HighLight** so you can vote.



IN THIS ISSUE: Crossings

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Good news: as you can see above, we've revived the Bromley tradition of celebrating summer in a member's garden. Let's hope the weather is kind and lots of us will be able to attend. Other initiatives are ongoing rather than one-off events. For example, Rabbi Laura is running numerous educational series, some for specific groups and others of general interest, such as the excellent recent panel discussion about the balance of power. She's also working to make our library room a more relevant space for today's BRS community (see right), and constantly keeping up the momentum on the tech front to improve the experience of everyone who accesses our services (small-s) remotely. Please check your weekly e-Lights for news of all of these.

Also in true BRS tradition, younger generations are leading the way for us within the shul and outside it, visiting places of interest and finding constructive things to do. Below is the group that recently took a course in the Israeli self-defence techniques of Krav Maga. Coming in the next issue: members' summer experiences. If you're doing something special, new or memorable, *please let us know by 15 August at comms@bromleyshul.org.uk*



Jewish Ethics and Artificial Intelligence



Great question from a congregant, says Rabbi Laura:

“Are there Jewish ethics that can help us think about Artificial Intelligence (AI)?”

In many ways this is an old question because we have been looking at the Jewish version of AI and robots for centuries.

We also have the fantastic (in all senses of the word) story that goes beyond the boundaries of any sensible rabbinic job description by creating a golem called Yosef (anthropomorphic figure) out of clay from the river banks and brought it to life to defend the ghetto from anti-Jewish attacks. He was so kosher that he was deactivated on Friday evenings, so rested on Sabbath. Here’s a fascinating indication of ethics, or projection of human need or commitment to mitzvah, by keeping Shabbat even though it was a non-human entity. The rabbi eventually dismantled or ‘killed off’ the golem because he became too dangerous and his body is said to be huddled up in the attic of the Altneuschul in Prague. By the way, there’s no attic there... I was disappointed when I visited a few years ago...

But the golem story is helpful as it indicates Jewish guiding principles relating to AI – we received the power and the command to partner the Creator

of all things, good and destructive, so that we improve creation. We are empowered to create technologies to help achieve this aim if, and only if, there are safeguards. The ethical principle to sustain life, *pikuah nefesh* and not to cause harm overrides even promoting what is seen as progress.

Judaism differentiates between humans and AI robots by the belief in a nefesh, which combines our bodies and invisible life-force. BUT please don’t be distracted by the shiny world of robots and golems (even if we got there first!).

This is not the central issue of ethics of AI – it is far more mundane as most of AI exists back-of-stage to service our offices, health and finances. It might help to replace the initials ‘AI’ with ‘data-driven machine’ as it demystifies them. It is easy to be drawn into the rabbit warren of dystopian sci-fi of drones killing off the humans that created them. This will be easier to respond to as it’s visible and explicit.

The central concerns of AI and ethics that keep me awake at night are hidden, often deliberately. How do we programme algorithms that drive our ‘machines’ so they are fair, don’t misuse our data or manipulate our psychologies so we are deprived of attention and clarity and, most importantly, don’t engage with views that we disagree with? How is it that pornography, so frighteningly available (1 in 3 searches are for porn. Yes. 1 in 3), is affecting the sexual behaviour and expectations of young people, so that slapping and choking, for

instance, have become accepted as part of sex play?

Genesis (6:7) tells of how God also regretted creating humans due to our capacities, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the surface of the ground, from man to cattle to creeping things to the birds of the heavens, for I regret that I made them." Good news for us, though, the creator of the universe gave us the parameters of the Torah and mitzvot as self-regulating limitations on our power. This means that the objection to seeing robots (however human-like they look) as having souls or agency is far more than just that it’s an incorrect view of nefesh. Far more importantly, if we grant robots, or machines, or any form of artificial intelligent programme or manifestation of big data (ie lots of data) any kind of anthropomorphic recognition or language (‘the computer thinks’ etc) then it is a danger to us as humans. This is dangerous as it depletes our own ability to develop as autonomous and morally responsible people. We cannot delegate responsibility to an AI. It is a mirage and it detracts from our roles as people who have to be totally accountable for our own actions – whatever religious tradition we come from.



THREE BOOKS IN ONE

BRS Book Group will discuss Paul Auster’s **New York Trilogy** on **20 July**. The group meets every two months, alternating between serious and light-hearted material. Details of how, where and when you can join in from Judy: jwoolfe@ntlworld.com

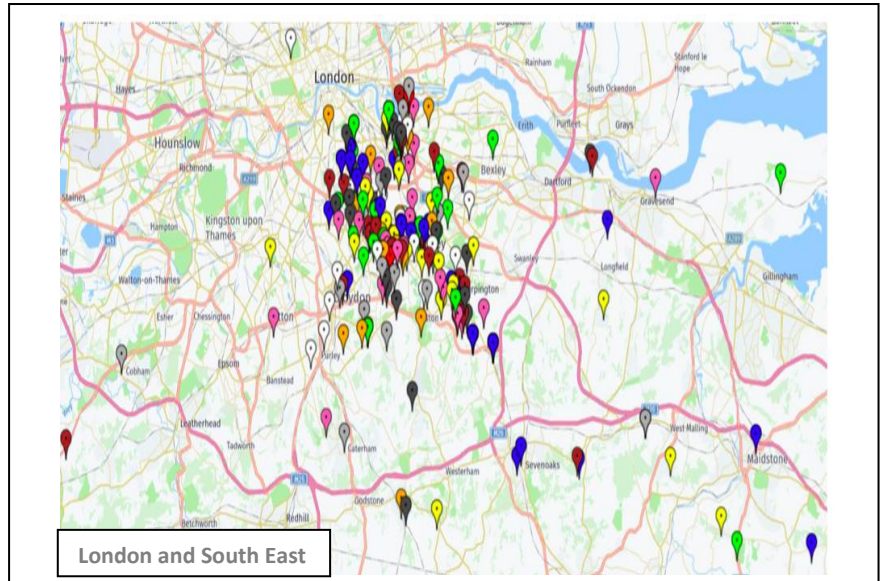
VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

In February 2022 the Jewish Chronicle described Bromley Reform Synagogue “as a magnet for Jewish life in the area”. At the same time the Jewish News reported that more Jews were coming to south east London, where they find a young and vibrant community. The 2021 census, too, shows that many Jews are crossing the Thames southwards. It all makes sense as housing can be cheaper, there are great transport links and good schools, it is green and there is even challah!

In London over the last 20 years there has been a small fall in the number of Jews from 149,000 to 145,000. In South London there are around 11,000 Jews, with a growth in inner boroughs but a decline in outer boroughs. Especially relevant to us at BRS is the increase in Greenwich, Lewisham, and Southwark.

When the new BRS Board assembled in May to plan how we’d like to nurture and grow BRS, we asked Michael Abrahams to plot out where our current members reside. As you can see from the diagram we really do cover most of the south east.

With our wonderful lay leadership, community and Rabbi Laura, this buzz has not gone unnoticed and the Movement for Reform Judaism (MRJ) has decided to make a big investment in BRS by appointing a Community Builder to work with us. This initiative means an 18-month appointment for one day a week. MRJ’s decision is huge; this has been done only once before, in Willesden Green. As the census is showing an



increase in the Jewish population in our inner catchment area of Greenwich, Lewisham and Southwark, it is wonderful that we have been given the opportunity to grow our Jewish community. As someone who came to BRS as a teenager and now has four children, one of whom is a teenager, I would love for BRS to be an oasis of Jewish life in the south east for generations to come. We need to build on the hard work of our founding members. We already have a thriving cheder, inspiring services and education, a well established Social Centre and a newly rejuvenated Social Committee planning lots of exciting events and social activities. **What else would you like to see or have happening at the shul?**

“Who is our new Community Builder?” you ask. I am pleased to say it will be Einat Aronberg a Bromleyite who joined BRS with her husband Laurence and their two little girls. Einat has a wealth of experience and expertise and I am very excited to have her in this role. Einat will be working closely with Rabbi Laura and me, so please welcome her when you get to meet her.

In November 2024, BRS will be celebrating its 60th birthday and

plans are already being made to make sure we honour the foundation of our wonderful community, so please do look out for further details.

Another community that will be marking its 60th is Or Hadash (New Light) in Haifa. We are proposing to twin with this community, led by Rabbi Gabby Dagan, who is a friend of our Rabbi Laura. This community parallels us not only in its name - BRS’s name is Beit Or (House of Light) - but also in its ethos of inclusivity and welcoming everyone who wants to take responsibility for their Jewish identity and act as a light in the world. Another enterprise to look out for later in the year.

I want to finish by thanking Matthew de Lange and Flora Spiegel for encouraging me to attend a 3Faiths meeting at Keston mosque. It was a completely delightful and interesting evening talking about our faiths, and the sweetness and sometimes bitter aspects of them. If you have never been, I would really encourage you to go to a 3Faiths meeting. It was refreshing to be reminded how similar we all are.

Michelle Brooks Evans
chair@bromleyshul.org.uk

As families grow and learn together ...

“During the summer term,” writes cheder Head Teacher Frankie, “we were excited to run a range of sessions where families connected to one another and learned together. Rather than “dropping off” at the door, parents and grandparents “dropped in” and were part of services, learning sessions and trips, alongside their children. Cheder isn’t simply a school, after all. It’s a place where we grow together; where we build a sense of Kehillah; where we experience for ourselves how doing more together as a community enriches our lives as Jews. A good example was our Yom HaShoah service, which you can read about on p8.

Sharing blessings

Similarly, on June 10, Chai School swapped from Sunday to Saturday to enable us to celebrate Shabbat together and to be part of baby Cameron/Avraham’s naming and blessing. Participating in such a joyous life cycle event and special family service was just wonderful. It meant a lot to parents to share readings with their children, and to be on the bimah together playing joint roles in the service. There were many smiles between the generations and Rabbi Laura lead with such energy and love that it was a truly memorable morning and simcha. Though a swap to Shabbat was not without its challenges or barriers for some, it was an important stage in the term’s learning road map - a morning that was all about being there, doing more, and togetherness. Our Gannies, led by Sue and Heidi, and Juniors with Aimee and myself started downstairs, making naming gifts and blessings to share later in the service upstairs. The blessing “May he soon discover chocolate

and challah” was added by our yeladim to our morning service liturgy and Gan showed and shared the blessings of their colourful rainbow name clouds.

Interesting displays and an unwelcome surprise

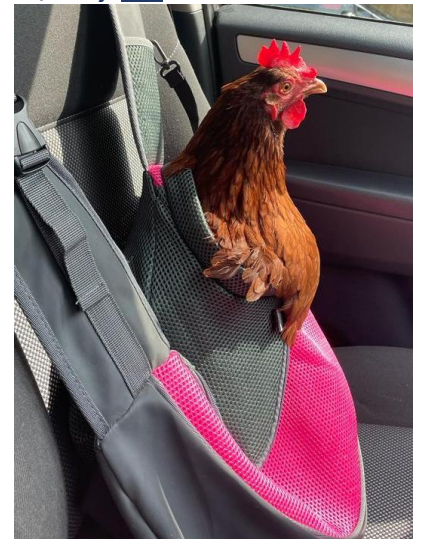
It was a surprise to all that just a week or so after our trip to the London Jewish Museum, it was announced in the Jewish Press that the Museum would be closing indefinitely. Over 50 parents and children had enthusiastically signed up for our trip there in May. You can see some of them below and another group later on.



We explored the **development of British Jewry from 1066 onwards**, and learned about London’s Jewish East End. Though it is a relatively small museum, compared with those in South Kensington, our visit had something special for all ages and stages. The displays and objects brought so many stories to life. Standing in front of the London Yiddish Baker’s Union banner, who could not kvell at the fact that they invented the “fair-trade” logo idea back in the 1900’s? Or that so many pursued justice and reasonable working conditions or stood against the Fascists in Cable Street? Or to suddenly realise that the name of the sweet kiddush wine known as Palwin is an abbreviation for Palestine wines? Who knew? Some did, some didn’t. One of the Museum’s prized and largest items was the Italian Aron

Kodesh (Ark). It had survived destruction in Europe by serving for many years as an ornate clothes cupboard for the steward of a wealthy English family in Northumbria. Let’s hope that the Museum finds a new home for its displays where all can come and see, rather than having to hide them away again.

So, why did the chicken cross...



To go to cheder with Janvier, of course. Chipmunk, above, came to meet the pupils on 18 June. She and her friends provide Janvier with eggs and accompany her when she speaks to groups, for example at Sadeh.

Benefits of silence

In one of the few classroom sessions of the term, we looked at the teachings of Rabbi Akiva. Beside saying that he believed that the mitzvah that was of paramount importance was to “love your fellow or neighbour as yourself”, Rabbi Akiva coined the phrase ‘Silence is a fence around wisdom’ (Pirkei Avot 3:13), adding that a wise person maintains silence until he or she has something of value to say.

A great team of morim

Listening and reflecting rather than firing off the first thought, quick retort or rebuttal requires

...communities grow and learn together

self awareness; and regulation isn't something that comes without practice for all. So with the help of our Senior Morim (facilitators), it was great to test out a new debate game which I'd designed to give individuals an insight into their debating styles and default modes by putting in timed reflection breaks and cards that limited and specified ways of responding. It worked very well and is set to become one of our house formats. It's one of my joys as Head to design and co-develop activities with my lovely and really great team of morim.

Summer? Time for Sadeh and the July gala morning

No Summer term would seem complete without a trip to Sadeh Farm. It's just such a great combination of the open fields, Jewish values, muddy hands, eco-farming, chickens, courgettes and of course a chance to hang out on the zip-wire. By the time this goes to print we'll have ended our summer term and another Chai School year...with a gala morning for parents and children, generously hosted by Margaret Brearley in her wonderful home and garden. It's so uplifting to have our final morning together in this beautiful family setting.

Welcomes and farewells

This July we're marking the arrival of five pupils who will move up from the Gan into Chai School next term and saying a big toda raba (thank you) to **Janvier Palmer**, who is stepping down for a much deserved sabbatical after seven years of leading and teaching, and to **Aimee Ashmore** and **Hannah Bekman**, who are both off to university. Good luck to both of you.

Everyone's played a part

The gala morning is a chance for us to thank and acknowledge the varied and invaluable contributions of the whole team of morim and ozrim. It's been a lively and demanding programme of activities, one that has taken the collective effort and commitment of our core team, as well as our wonderful parents group, Hooray Cheder, our kitah parent reps and our guest musicians – steered, as ever, by BRS Education Committee and our BRS Vice Chairs keeping me calm in the wings... or at least flapping in the right direction! It's wonderful to know that two of our ozrim (assistants), **Keo Kyazze** and **Sam Hyams**, will be moving into co-morim roles next year, and that virtually all of our B-Mitzvah graduates want to stay on and continue as ozrim at Chai School.

So, for now, Shalom Chaverim, **we return on Sunday, 10 September**. If you're new to BRS and want to sign your children or grandchildren up for our Chai School cheder please get in touch with me and be part of our learning journey next year!

Frankie Gruz, Head Teacher
cheder@bromleyshul.org.uk

Below: some of the museum visitors

BRS Chai School term dates 5784 - 2023/24

STAV/AUTUMN TERM 2023

Term starts for pupils:

Sunday 10 September

Rosh Hashanah: Shabbat, Saturday 16 September

Yom Kippur:

Monday 25 September
(no cheder on 24th)

HALF TERM:

Sundays 15 and 22 October

Mitzvah Day:

Sunday 19 November

Then every Sunday up to and including Sunday 10 December :

Chanukah Party

AVIV/SPRING TERM 2024

Team Training:

Sunday 7 January

Yeladim term starts:

14 January

HALF TERM:

Sunday 11 February

Term Ends:

24 March – Purim

KAYITZ/SUMMER TERM

Term starts :

Sunday 21 April - Preparing for Pesach session

Bank Holiday Weekend

No Session Sunday 5 May

HALF TERM: 26 May

Term Ends: 30 Jun



IN OUR COMMUNITY

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SOCIAL CENTRE

Members meet every month to enjoy each other's company, sessions with guest speakers or performers and great food. Details of both SC and Knit, Natter & Stitch from barbarakurtz42@gmail.com

DATES: August 9 & 23; September 13 & 27; October 11 & 25; November 8 & 22 and December 13, the Chanukah party.

Thank you to the great SC team, who create such a happy space for so many people every fortnight.

Knit, Natter and Stitch

Meetings are normally on the first Thursday of each month. The PRUH is thrilled with all the lovely items these talented folk provide.

Please watch weekly e-Lights for fuller details and updates.

Our Centenarian Sylvia



Mazal tov to founder member **Sylvia Harris**, who turned 100 on 23 June, and to her children Jo and Jonathan and their families. Sylvia and her late husband Henry were much loved stalwarts of the choir in the earliest days of BRS. Although she moved to Northamptonshire some years ago to be closer to her children and grandchildren, Sylvia is still a member and watches all that goes on in Bromley with interest.

Birth

Mazal Tov to **John Michaelis**, also a founder member, on the birth of his granddaughter **Katie**, a daughter for **David and Liz**, on 30 May.

Death

We are very sad to record the death in May of our member **Zelda Stone** and wish her daughters Elsa and Katherine and families long life.

Bereavements

Sincere condolences to **Kim Adler** on the loss of her father, **Richard Adler**, in California, at the age of 81. Our thoughts are with Kim, her husband Mathew Hall and their children, Zach and Sam, as well as Kim's siblings, Heidi and Aaron; and to

Josh Richman and his father, **Warren**, on the loss of their mother and wife, **Linda**, in June.

We wish all our mourners a long life and only happy memories.

Welcome

to new congregant

Steven Farthing of Tunbridge Wells and to new members

Anna Albano of Beckenham;

Molly MacAllister of Orpington;

Marie-Anne Hulot of SE4; and

Maria Eugenia Garcia and **Luca**

Riccardo Sonino and family of SE16

Farewell

We wish good fortune in their new community to long-term members **David** and **Lesley Harnes**.

Ruby Wedding

Mazal tov to **Linda and Matthew de Lange**, who recently marked their 40th anniversary only a year late!

New Home

Mazal tov to **Jamie Barnett** on his recent move into a new home.

Marriages

Mazal tov to our members **Damien Egan** and **Yossi Felberbaum** on their recent marriage; to our wonderful security lady, **Lizzy Smith**, who will be marrying her partner, **Megan**, in early July; to **Marilyn McKeever**, on the marriage of her daughter **Jennifer** to **Joe Russell** on 16 July; to **Louise Levinson** and **John Dallimore** on the marriage of their son **Adam** to **Laura Hepworth** on 28 July; and to **Shiri Yonash** and **Avi Shonberg** who are to be married on 11 August.

B'Mitzvahs and Babies



Mazal tov to **Elijah Solomon**, **Will Abrahams** and **Laurence Jones** (below), all of whom celebrated BMs during the spring and to the families of babies **Gabriel** (here with parents Melanie and Nick, flirting with Rabbi Laura) and **Cameron**, whose naming services were in April and June respectively (more photos: pp 9&12)



IN OUR COMMUNITY

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Judy Koekoek, BRS's newest Vice President



With the passage of time, it is easy to forget or just never know the important role some members have played in building our synagogue. To those who are not familiar with what a Vice-President means in BRS, it is an honour that the Board offers to just a few members who have given years of exceptional loyal service to the shul. So I am delighted to write a few words in honour of our recently appointed Vice-President Judy Koekoek. Judy served as senior warden and a Board member. She was Head of Caring Community supporting so many members. She also has been a highly competent lay reader on shabbatot and festivals. In honouring Judy, we also posthumously honour her dear husband John z"l (pictured with her above) who, like Judy, worked so conscientiously on behalf of the shul for many years. Before the days of a shul administrator, John provided a lot of administrative support to the rabbi and to the cheder. He was particularly active in welcoming new members, whom he visited at home, provided with information and arranged evening get-togethers to welcome them into the community. John also played an active role on the Board for many

years. The appointment of Judy as a Vice-President is one way we can acknowledge the enormous contribution she and John have made to BRS.

With thanks from us all.

John Posner.

Thanks to the community

Dear fellow members,
I was quite overwhelmed by the kind words of consolation I received in emails, cards, phone calls and letters of condolence after my brother Charles died back in February. The number of you that attended the shiva on zoom was also amazing. I really can't thank you all enough. It is such a wonderful thing to feel the support of the community at such a time and I really do mean 'community'. Thank you all so much for caring. **John Posner**

A fascinating talk in prospect with CCJ

SE London branch CCJ invites us to hear BRS's own Dr Margaret Brearley speak on ***"Eradicating Christian and Jewish perceptions of God in the Bible: Richard Wagner, his pagan musical religion and its consequences"*** at St Stephen's Church, College Road, SE21 7HN **Thursday 13 July, 8pm**; Refreshments from 7.45pm
For further information, please contact branch Hon Sec Stephen Weil 020 8299 4141 or stephenweil6@gmail.com

REFUA SH'LEMA

We wish all members who are ill or incapacitated a speedy recovery. If you learn of anyone who needs help, please contact caring@bromleyshul.org.uk

YET MORE FUN IN THE GAN



Cheder's gannies (Kindergarten) have such fun every single week that we cannot contain them in just the cheder pages. Here's a group in their "Mishkan Gan" with leaders Heidi and Sue.

Saturday Dining Club

Meets next on **15 July** at 6.30pm at Jackie Aldridge's home in SE26 to bring and share supper. For full details and to say you're coming: rabbilaura@bromleyshul.org.uk
New people are always welcome.

Funding approved for three BRS projects

The Endowment Oversight Committee and Bromley Synagogue board of trustees are delighted to announce **our first successful applications** - in June 2023 - for projects that will be supported by a legacy fund:

1. To support BRS families for the next four years with a contribution of 50% towards the cost for any child of a member who would like to attend any RSY event, no matter what their financial circumstances (not means-tested). RSY is the Reform Jewish youth movement that provides events and trips in an empowering Jewish environment.
2. To support the purchase of a plot to accommodate four

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children on behalf of Bromley Synagogue at Greenacres Kemnal Park burial ground and specifically designate it as a children's area. (Please G-d it remains empty).

3) To ensure that we widen the inclusive nature of our services, we will purchase technical equipment to deliver high quality hybrid (in-synagogue and on-line) services. This will enable us to have sound and image linked by live-stream which will mean that we can hear and see a person on Zoom, so those watching from home can actively take part in services.

Please look out for the launch of our next round of funds, which will open in September and will be announced through email and e-light. All BRS members are invited to apply for funds for projects that positively contribute to the life of the shul.

Sonia Hyams, Chair of Endowment Oversight Committee

Annual service at BRS that bridges the generations

Cheder Head Frankie Gruz, who helped to organise this year's Yom Hashoah service and accompanied the pupils who took part in this solemn ceremony, reflects.

Our very special Yom HaShoah service began with John Posner telling the story of the rescue of 1,564 Czech Sifrei Torah that arrived in London in February 1964. Bromley's own two rescued scrolls were brought out onto to our bimah at our candle-lighting and remembrance service. Standing silently as witnesses to the horrors and tragedy, the scrolls are a symbol of our sorrow. Yet these same scrolls are also a

symbol of our hopes, restored to their rightful place and held on our bimah for all to see. Now they are being read and used in our shul, being shared by a new generation, a growing community and a thriving cheder. As every year, there were children – and possibly adults too – in our community who heard the story of the scrolls' restoration for the first time. It's a service that bridges all the generations at BRS. We all come together and take part in this poignant and very moving act of witness and remembrance. For Chai School, this service and the special study sessions prior to it, provide parents with a way of beginning or continuing their own conversations about this, the very darkest, episode in Jewish history.

More about books

Some news from Amelia Kyazze JW3 (UK), The Wingate Prize (UK), Jewish Book Council (US) and the JCC Association of North America (US and Canada) **recently launched the Global Jewish Literary Alliance** with a discussion about two very interesting non-fiction books about artists working while trapped, in different ways, during WWII. As an author, reader and parent of Jewish children, I plan to stay in touch with them and will happily share anything I learn... or you can use the links at the top of the next column.

Simon Parkin's *The Island of Extraordinary Captives: A Painter, a Poet, an Heiress, and a Spy in a World War II British Internment Camp* won the 2023 Wingate Prize,

while **Susan Wider** won the Young Adult Literature category of the 72nd National Jewish Book Awards for *It's My Whole Life: Charlotte Salomon: An Artist in Hiding During World War II*.

More about all the organisations:
www.jewishbookcouncil.org
wingate.org.uk/literary-prize
<https://jcca.org>
<https://www.jw3.org.uk>

And, picking up a theme from p12, highly recommended by Colin Clary for drama and interesting detail, **Sholem Asch's "Moses"**.

Yiddish Song Concert and summer courses

Sunday 20 August, 6 - 8pm

The Jewish Music Institute's Summer Schools and Festival of Music will begin with a concert showcasing the wealth in vocal diversity of Yiddish culture with an **international cast of singers and instrumentalists**. It will feature Shura Lipovsky, Rachel Weston and Joseph Finlay.

There will be recitals of classic and modern Yiddish repertoire as well as instrumental, the opportunity to meet the faculty and to experience first hand the quality of Yiddish song that is taught every year at The Golden Peacock.

Tickets (£5-15) and information about this concert and many courses and other upcoming events: jmi.org.uk



On-line Friday night services to be slightly longer once a month. Trial starts soon.

Starting on **8 September**, Rabbi Laura will lead a slightly longer service (6.30-7.15pm), still in the comfort of our own homes, once a month for five months.

The other dates are **20 October, 17 November, 15 December** and **12 January**. The trial period will be to test out the format and the timing. More details when known.

IN OUR COMMUNITY

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SHAVUOT ARTWORK



Kittah Dalet's collage, produced in a classroom session, was shown and admired during a Cheder assembly

The Clergy have too much power, says Rabbi Laura

Well, that's slightly unexpected, but she should know!

On 19 June, the shul hosted a panel discussion entitled Shifting Power Dynamics at Work.

Food was involved, of course – a bring and share supper – and then we moved into the Sanctuary to listen to Rabbi Laura and the three speakers, all BRS members, Alison Wolf, Dan Posner and Josh Richman. We found out what the Torah and Talmud have to say about the power balance between employers and employees (and even slaves!) Fairness seemed key – wages must be paid on time, and servants/workers fed, housed and watered adequately. This acknowledges they are seen as humans, made in God's image, and means they perform better.

Then the speakers to discuss how these issues were relevant in their fields. Alison's opinion was that laws and customs have improved the power balance for workers, but that there is more that can be done.

Both Alison and Dan mentioned that the employer/ employee relationship can be more complex when a third element – the end user – is also considered. Should hospitals be run for the benefit of the patients or the staff? Is the focus in banking selling to customers or delivering what customers want?

Josh was able to comment on how power in law firms is distributed in the UK and in France, where he spent some time training. The French seem to prefer a hierarchical model while the emphasis in the UK is on getting the work done, by whatever group can do it best. He was happy that there was a collegiate feel to his chambers, senior and junior lawyers working alongside each other.

From the floor, Michael Zuke, a retired employment judge, told us that, especially since laws passed in the early 1970's, the rights of individual employees had increased, and that the basic premise for employment law was that both sides would behave reasonably towards each other. Fairness and mutual respect, backed up by legislation, echo some of the biblical and Talmudic passages. Janet Posner pointed out the difficulties that can face voluntary organisations, where, by definition, there are no contracts of employment and the trust and respect that had been discussed are not always in evidence (BRS being the honourable exception, of course).

The panel agreed that the fallout from lockdown, working from home and a greater awareness of the need to achieve a work/life balance mean that the issue of who has the power in the workplace is undergoing rapid change. Both young and old are re-evaluating their status in their organisations. It was a thought-provoking

discussion that highlighted how our tradition is still relevant today, but also what changes have been made and still need to be made. Thanks to those who made it possible and those who participated. Now I come to think of it, we didn't talk about loyalty. But maybe that's for another time... **Joanna Koenigsberg**

The discussion was streamed and is available to view. Go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5oekdbCz3Q but be sure to skip the first 23 minutes of technical adjustments.

SPRINGTIME CELEBRATIONS



Will and Elijah's BMs were among spring Shabbat highlights. See page 6.



If you're celebrating a special event, please tell us – address above. We can't wish you well if we don't know about it!

'My Coronation Weekend Memories'

Many BRS families were involved in events and celebrations during Coronation weekend. Here are pictures of just a few of them, some with great stories to tell. We start, of course, in-house at shul with Noah's B'Mitzvah.

BRS celebrations on 6 May 2023



Rabbi Laura with Noah and his family. He is also below with Chair Michelle, who sympathised, *"We always knew this would be a special day, and it is, but we didn't expect King Charles to jump on the bandwagon."* The rabbi is also seen here offering a blessing for travel for congregants **Rebekah and Pablo**, prior to a long trip.



Other memories come from BRS's **Claudia Goodman**, (right) who received a **Coronation Champions Award** for her leadership of the West Kent Autism Parent Support Group, which she founded in 2020. Claudia, who has an adult son with autism, impressed judges with her dedication in leading the organisation. Over the last three years, this group has snowballed from one parent to over 180 families. Claudia organises

monthly presentations, discussions, zoom talks, a WhatsApp group and social gatherings. She is assisted by a wonderful team who lead satellite age and stage related groups. She said: "It's an honour to be named a Coronation Champion. As a group, we learn, share information and advice and support each other. It's heart-warming to have my work recognised alongside the passionate support and contribution of all the group who demonstrate such commitment and determination helping their children reach their full potential, often in the face of many challenges." Claudia was excited to receive not only her award but an invitation to a Buckingham Palace garden party. Just one problem: which hat to wear. We'll check up on how she solved that one in time for the next issue.

Another member, a police officer, was on duty all day around Whitehall (unfortunately we are not allowed to name the individual), and recalls: "Coronation day was filled with a lot of public emotion, mainly excitement from the crowd. I had to make sure that nobody got onto the procession route. It was a long wet day..." This same officer was on duty for the state funeral. A timely reminder that it's not always fun for those involved in huge public occasions.

Sam Barnett was nominated for a place among the seated charity volunteers for her work with those dealing with the stress of life with Type 1 Diabetes.

Tina Wood has a special connection with the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 - one of her aunts sang for it – while former editor **Bob Symonds** recalls the crowning of King George VI in 1937. He says it was as wet on that day as in 1953 and 2023!



Sonia Hyams' report is a few pages back but the portrait of her and Jacob at the museum (above right) fitted well here.

'My Coronation Weekend Memories'

Out on the street partying or helping to clear up, celebrating at Windsor or remembering how it was in the past, BRS members were to be found in many corners of the capital and beyond over the whole special weekend.



Judi Sheffrin (above with pal Paul) was able to be at the concert in Windsor (literally luck of the draw; Paul's luck not mine), and to enjoy the sunshine and music, while **Chair Michelle**, like many, enjoyed a local street party. Above is a colourful reminder from her.



Other BRS members were in the street on 8 May not partying but joining 15 or more other volunteers in **The Big Help Out**, under the auspices of our local Council of Christians and Jews. Here are **Stephen Weil** (right), and **Judy and David Taylor**. Stephen reports that CCJ SE London worked with Lewisham Creative Chorus and Christ Church United Reformed Church, Bellingham to clean up around the Fellowship Inn, Lewisham Music Centre and Bellingham Station, and to offer a celebration tea in the church for neighbours and volunteers. The excitement generated by the recent performance by the Chorus of an original work

set in a real and imagined Lewisham, ***Stories We Tell Ourselves***, gave a boost to volunteer numbers and consequently to the team's impact on its target area.

Tea in the church saw 40 people meeting and chatting at one time or another - a wonderful mixing of backgrounds, ages and ethnicity, reflecting Lewisham itself - while the activities, involving three separate voluntary organisations, made real the spirit of togetherness that our newly crowned King and Queen so wish to encourage.

A few weeks earlier, reports Stephen, the branch discussed Ethics and Practical Action. "We asked, '**Is there a role today for Christianity and/or Judaism in setting standards for British public service?**' and our two very distinguished and eloquent speakers, Daniel Greenberg, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, and Sir Simon Hughes, former MP for Bermondsey and Old Southwark, challenged us with very surprising and different answers: Daniel Greenberg took the view that there is no special authority for religious institutions, and that the principles of public life had to be non-sectarian and universal; while Simon Hughes argued that for 2,000 years Christians have taken a key role in setting standards in this country, and the Chief Rabbi has been vocal in reminding us of the guidance 'Do as you would be done by.' In the lively Q&A, there was reference to the many people of faith filling the gaps in voluntary services; that ethical standards are not a luxury but a necessity; and the need to restore trust."

CCJ meetings are held regularly, sometimes at BRS. Details, including Stephen's contact info, are on page 8.



TEA FOR TWENTY TWO? Not strictly a Coronation event, but certainly a tea party. Shane (above) and Hugh Lask are among many members who've recently offered their homes for both serious meetings and social events. If you'd like to host something, large or small, to feed body or soul, please contact the rabbi.

BROMLEY REFORM SYNAGOGUE 28 Highland Road, BR1 4AD
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Minister: Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner (rabbilaura@bromleyshul.org.uk)

Administrator/Administrator and Community Co-ordinator

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Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 10am-3pm

Chair: chair@bromleyshul.org.uk

BRS IS PART OF THE UK's REFORM MOVEMENT. What does that mean?

The Movement for Reform Judaism's website puts in a nutshell what it stands for:

Treasuring tradition, finding holy in the new

We are blessed with millennia of Jewish wisdom, as well as a world that continues to give us new insights and understanding. Our Judaism is strongest when we value all of these sources of inspiration – building a Jewish community that remains true to our history and evolves to face the future. We empower every member to find their own path to meaning through informed decision making, providing transformative education and events to support them throughout their lives.

Social justice

It is central to our duty as Jews to continue the sacred mission started at creation of perfecting the world we live in – *l'tikkun olam*. We heed the calls of our tradition which tell us that we all have responsibility for the wellbeing of our fellow humans and to always pursue justice. In doing this, we bring holiness into the world. Reform Judaism enables our communities to play their part as active citizens for one another, wider society and our world. We speak up for our values – ensuring they are heard inside and outside our community. Where there is persecution, we speak out, and where there is destruction, we do not remain silent.

Equality and Inclusivity

Every person is created *b'tzelem elohim* – in the image of God – and should have equal value in

our communities and our society. We hold an uncompromising commitment to building communities that are based on egalitarianism and welcome all – no matter their gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ability or any other characteristic. Our diversity enriches us – we can achieve more when we enable every person to make their unique contribution to our communal life.

Israel

We are committed to Israel as a collective project of the Jewish people – to build a Jewish and Democratic state which stands as an *ohr l'goyim* (a light to the nations) and a safe haven for Jews facing persecution. Together, we stand with those Israeli citizens and organisations pursuing democracy, religious freedom and human rights for all within Israel's borders. We will do all we can to bring about the day when Israelis and Palestinians both have secure states, able to live side-by-side with dignity and peace.

Strengthening Jewish life in the UK

Every Jewish person should have the opportunity to lead a full and fulfilling Jewish life in this country. We ensure our members have access to meaningful ways to engage at every stage of their journey through life. Innovation is welcomed to find new ways to inspire, especially to strengthen the Jewish identity of our young members as the future of British Reform Judaism. We enable our communities and members to respond to the changing realities of Jewish life in the UK – dealing with challenges and threats they may face. We welcome unaffiliated Jews, or those disillusioned with their connection to Jewish life, to find Jewish life which is authentic to them in our communities.

Want to contribute to HighLight?
email comms@bromleyshul.org.uk