

Hold a second Seder once this is all over

LIBERAL JUDAISM has declared that a Pesach Sheini (Second Pesach) will take place once this period of uncertainty and physical isolation/distancing, due to the coronavirus, ends.

Passover this year was celebrated in a very different manner – with online platforms such as Zoom and Facebook Live used to conduct many of our family and communal Seders. You can see the wonderful pictures from our communities on pages 6-7 of this edition of *lj today*.

So much hard work, effort and ingenuity went into this virtual Pesach, including a unique audio broadcast of 16 Liberal Judaism rabbis singing and teaching about the Seder for those not in a position to use video technology.

However, there is something even more magical and joyful when people are physically together to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt and enjoy all those familiar tastes, smells and melodies.

That is why, following precedent set in our Bible, Liberal Judaism is declaring that a Second Seder will be held once the public health authorities say it is safe to do so – whether that be in June, August, October or whenever.

After all, to paraphrase God's words to Moses – if you can't mark Pesach at the right time, mark it at the wrong time.

Student Rabbi Gabriel Kanter-Webber came up with the initiative, working alongside Rabbi Aaron Goldstein – chair of the Conference of Liberal Rabbis and Cantors – to produce a resource pack that can be found on Liberal Judaism's website (see story on the right).

Gabriel said: "This might seem a strange time to think about Sukkot, but its history suggests a way forward.

"During the invasion of Jerusalem in the 2nd century BCE, the Jewish resistance, led by Judah Maccabee, wasn't able to celebrate Sukkot properly. They were living in the mountains and fighting for their lives. So what did they do? As soon as they cast off the invaders, they celebrated a late Sukkot... around December and for eight days. Sounding familiar? It's Chanukah.

"It's even happened before with Pesach. The Book of Numbers tells the story of a group of Israelites who were unable to observe Pesach at the right time because they were busy doing essential work.

"Moses took their case to God, and God decided: do it later. If, for good reason, you can't mark Pesach at the right time, mark it at the wrong time. Nobody should miss out on our right and duty to celebrate the joy of freedom.

"When things settle down, Liberal Judaism will declare a Pesach Sheini, just like our ancestors did in the Book of Numbers; just like the Maccabees did with Sukkot. We are not giving up on the experience of us all sitting down, in person, and celebrating our freedom.

"At the right time for Pesach, we used video feeds. But at the wrong time, we will gather together and have our Seder."



Seder led by Student Rabbi Gabriel Kanter-Webber

Liberal Judaism delivered to you



LIBERAL JUDAISM, our communities and youth movement LJY-Netzer are offering something for everyone throughout this period... every day of the week.

Our entire movement has moved online, from streamed Shabbat services and adult education classes to fun activities and virtual check-ins. Our flagship Biennial Weekend will now be held entirely online from May 22-24. You will even be reading this copy of *lj today* on your computer, phone or tablet.

Everything you need can be found on our Liberal Judaism At Home web pages - www.liberaljudaism.org/lj-at-home

There you will see details of streamed services from around the country, as well as all our prayerbooks and liturgy, rabbinic commentary, poetry and music. Plus there are live LJY-Netzer sessions to keep our youth educated and entertained.

Liberal Judaism's director of strategy and partnerships Rabbi Charley Baginsky said: "Liberal Judaism has always tried to be the home for everyone's Jewish story and now, in these times, we have a responsibility to help people find new ways to connect to that story at home."

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Keeping our young people safe online

By Becca Fetterman, Liberal Judaism Director of Youth

AS WE have heard from so many people, this is an unprecedented time that no one foresaw and for which educationally we were not ready.

Liberal Judaism and its youth movement LJY-Netzer are working hard to adapt and meet the needs of our young people as quickly and fully as we can. We are offering increased online programming, with multiple daily live events, and making back up plans for the summer holidays. Safeguarding and youth mental health are also key.

Support at home

Families are currently locked together in their houses with no clear end date. All existing tensions are exacerbated and people are being stretched in every way.

Meanwhile social media is full of images of other 'perfect' families doing amazing things. Few are posting about the reality of parents trying to juggle looking after their children, their day jobs, financial concerns and their own mental and physical health.

If things are getting too much in your home, social care are seen as essential workers and are still there to help and support you. Please also start sharing with your friends how tough this really is.

If you are worried about another family, especially where domestic violence or child abuse may be taking place, then please call your local MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub).

Internet safety

Our children, especially our younger ones, have been thrown into an online world where all of a sudden they are meeting their friends, teachers, youth groups and synagogues online. In the last week my eight-year-old has set up two social media accounts and taken part in five online classes. At the start of the year, I probably wouldn't have considered her being old enough to do any of this.

As parents we need to balance the risks against the gains. We also need to give our children a chance to learn the tools to assess these situations for themselves.

There are lots of resources out there to help you and your children make decisions. The www.thinkuknow.co.uk website is my favourite with videos appropriate for every age group.

I have created online accounts with my daughter and tweaked the privacy and security settings with her, discussing what they mean and writing out rules for using the different platforms. I am also making sure I am in the room when she is doing her online classes.

What Liberal Judaism is doing

The key question that our movement and communities face right now is what are our responsibilities in terms of engaging with our young people online?

Many youth organisations have put out new safeguarding guides but none, that I have seen, have gone through how to make things 100% safe. So we need to share best practice as it emerges.

There are some key things LJY-Netzer are doing. We have created a sign up form to get the link to our Zoom channel - so it is not open access. On the form we seek parental permission, as we would when engaging at any other time. We also explain that, like all LJY events, our covenant of mutual respect is in place. Finally, we have set up these rules:

- Private chat functions are turned off.
- No one can take any pictures, videos or screen shots of the Zoom call.
- The child must be in a room with an open door, and ideally not their bedroom.
- Young people should use a parent or guardian's Zoom account or, alternatively, one under their parents' control.
- Surnames should not form part of the participant's Zoom screen name.
- Everyone must turn their camera on for the start of the call, at least, so we can check who they are.

As more people turn to online video calls and streaming services, others try to work out ways to interfere with them. We all need to be following safety advice and ensuring we know how to protect ourselves. As a movement, we will keep posting updated safeguarding information on the Liberal Judaism website.

Most of all, please look after yourselves and your children and keep informed in these changing times.

Our sense of community will be doubled

By Rabbi Aaron Goldstein

THIS is a topsy turvy world where everything is different; so it will be a topsy turvy year where we're going to do things differently to how we are used to.

In the past weeks, I've been able to conduct funerals and shivas online - and they have given great comfort.

What we can do for mourners is express the incredible warmth and love they can receive. It's not a physical hug - but it is a sense of connection and contact which they would never have dreamt they would experience.

We can commemorate life and, most importantly, comfort the bereaved, rather than keep focusing on what we can't do.

Technology is going to greatly increase the number of people attending simchas, funerals and shivas in the future. It's going to bring lifecycle events to people who otherwise wouldn't experience them.

Likewise, I think there will be a huge outburst of appreciation for physical contact when we can meet up. Our sense of community will be doubled.

Please send us details of all the virtual things happening in your community to add to our Liberal Judaism At Home web pages. Email them to ebulletin@liberaljudaism.org

We want to make sure that everyone can access our resources in this time. If you can afford to, please donate and help us keep this free at www.liberaljudaism.org/fundraising

Take part in our Biennial Weekend At Home

Liberal Judaism will be bringing its flagship Biennial Weekend directly into people's homes. Using the latest cutting-edge technology, we will give members and their families three days of services, seminars and socialising.

The Biennial Weekend At Home will be held from Friday 22 until Sunday 24 May 2020. The event will be entirely free for all those wishing to take part.

Full details – including the speaker line-up and youth activities – will be released over the coming weeks on www.liberaljudaism.org/biennial

The physical Biennial that was set to take place on those dates, at the De Vere Staverton Estate in Daventry, has been moved to 2021 (30 April – 2 May 2021).

Rabbi Charley Baginsky, Liberal Judaism's director of strategy and partnerships, said: "A bit like one is not supposed to have favourite children, I am guessing I am not supposed to have a favourite moment in the Liberal Judaism calendar – but I do and it is Biennial.

"Over the years our Biennial Weekend has grown and developed into this incredible opportunity to showcase our rabbis and members, the work they do and the deep thinking they invest in it.

"As it became increasingly obvious that Biennial could not happen in its usual form this May, we turned our minds to how we can still have this time together.

#LJBiennial2020


liberal judaism

BIENNIAL WEEKEND AT HOME

Friday 22 - Sunday 24 May 2020



**EVERYONE
IS INVITED**

Find out more at
www.liberaljudaism.org/biennial

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"More than ever we need those moments of movement collaboration, of joining together in prayer and thought and even to socialise. That is why we are unbelievably proud to announce the Biennial Weekend At Home."

The Biennial Weekend will retain its theme of Liberal Judaism: Collaboratory – providing an open space and a creative process where partners work together.

Charley added: "If ever there was a theme more apt for a conference, and more needed, then I have not heard it!

"This weekend will be a real Collaboratory - sharing and exploring the best that Liberal Jews can offer in this time, and also examining how all our internal and external partnerships can thrive and push us into new spaces and new relationships."

The rabbinic view on lockdown

Read extracts from three leaders writing on our Liberal Judaism At Home pages

Rabbi Sandra Kviat:

WHILE we might have stocked up, or feel good ourselves, our focus should be on how we can also support others in the community: those who might have to self-isolate; those who might not have a large network; those who are vulnerable; those who may just appreciate a friendly phone or video call.

One idea is to develop a skills register and use that to arrange phone trees, food/medicine drop offs and other needs within the community as they arise. A simple willingness to help is a skill.

This is a worrying time for many, especially as there is so much uncertainty, but we should not lose sight of the importance of helping each other, of being kind, and that coming together to celebrate and support each other is vital, even if it now has to be virtually.

Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich:



I WALKED through my local park a few days ago and took some pictures (*left*). I have not been for a walk there for about five years.

I believe it is important for us

to focus people on these kinds of silver linings of the situation we are now in.

We are living through challenging times indeed - but this is also an opportunity for us to re-connect to ourselves, each other and to generations of our ancestors who came before us and went through slavery, expulsions, pogroms and the Holocaust. We may ask how did they do it? It was through the strength of their spirits.

Rabbi Dr René Pfertzel:

IN THE Talmud (Berakhot 4b), King David is praised by the rabbis for being able to say that he doesn't have an answer to an important question about his own behaviour. Is he really righteous? I don't know, he replies.

Being able to express one's doubt allows people to take responsibility and to accept that sometimes there is no easy answer, nor foreseeable solution.

This current crisis is entirely out of our control. We too need to accept this uncertainty. This relieves the pressure on our shoulders, and allows us to build for the here and now.

So let us embrace this new reality with the assurance that there is a community here to look after our needs, and that we have more power in our hands than we would have thought before.

Tributes to Rabbi Neil Kraft Dr Alex Keller



PRAISE has poured in from around the Jewish community for Rabbi Neil Kraft, the beloved Progressive minister who died just a few days before he was due to retire.

Neil was rabbi of Edgware and Hendon Reform Synagogue, where he served for 17 years. Before then, he was rabbi at Woodford Liberal Synagogue (now part of East London & Essex Liberal Synagogue) in the 1980s and South London Liberal Synagogue between 1990 and 2000.

More than 1,300 people watched Neil's funeral service online. The thoughts of everyone at Liberal Judaism are with his widow, Susannah, and their two sons Elie and Oscar. We have published some of the tributes to Neil below.

Rabbi Richard Jacobi, East London & Essex Liberal Synagogue: "Friendships Neil made in Woodford back in the 1980s continued to this day. He was unique. I've seen him described as 'a rogue rabbi in a million'. I think he'd have liked that."

Jonny Benjamin, mental health campaigner: "I'm heartbroken. Neil was the kindest, warmest soul you could meet. He was a rock to my family at times. I just can't believe he's gone."

Derek Aarons, former chair of South London Liberal Synagogue: "Neil will be remembered particularly as an enthusiastic educator. He had a natural liking for and understanding of children, and his enthusiasm stimulated all those he taught in our religion school."

Rabbi Emily Reitsma-Jurman, Edgware & Hendon Reform Synagogue: "It was obvious that every interaction he had with his congregants came from a deep love for people. One thing Neil didn't have was a desire for public recognition. For him, helping people was its own reward."

Rabbi Mark Goldsmith, Edgware & Hendon Reform Synagogue: "Neil was the pastor's pastor, who cared deeply for colleagues and student rabbis. He went the extra mile to support congregants in distress and this was the foundation of his rabbinate. So many people have let us know how much his care at their bar/batmitzvah, wedding, during an illness or bereavement meant to them."



DR ALEX KELLER - university professor, author and core member of Leicester Progressive Jewish Community (LPJC) - has died.

Speaking at his funeral, LPJC's Rabbi

Mark Solomon said: "Tall, wise, funny and endlessly kind, Alex was a fixture in your lives. Yet now we have to say goodbye."

"How poignant that Alex should have left us just after celebrating his 88th birthday, and just before Pesach. That's when the family would thrill to his energetic narration of the Passover story and above all to his rousing rendition of *Chad Gadya*, the closing song.

"In the last couple of years, the legend that was his *Chad Gadya* moved beyond the family circle to our communal Seders.

"*Chad Gadya* ends with God putting an end to death itself. Right now, the angel of death is stalking the land - the world - with particular menace.

"But there is something about Alex's spirit that defies death. Death means obliteration, but a *neshamah* (soul) like Alex's cannot be obliterated.

"His words, his voice, his smile, his unfailing kindness live on."

In memory of those we have lost

Rabbi Charley Baginsky shares a reflection for all who are mourning loved ones



I ONCE heard a teacher of mine refer to the Jewish traditions that surround death and mourning as a 'reality-based approach'.

At a Jewish funeral there is no effort to try and cover up the finality of death. We do not embalm or preserve: we bury or cremate in a plain wooden box.

The traditional idea has been that nature will take its course and restore the body back to the earth from which it was taken. The mourners will pour earth into the grave, with a thud of reality coursing through their veins that their loved one has really gone.

When a loved one dies we tear at our garment - ripped clothes, ripped hearts.

We cover our mirrors, we stop washing and shaving, stop caring about how we look - as no amount of looking better can make us feel better and nothing can replace a life lost. Loss makes us shrink into ourselves, close off and shut down.

And yet, today, death and mourning and every ritual we have ever held on to in order to guide us through these moments, has changed.

During the last weeks we, as the Liberal Jewish family, have seen so many deaths. There are very few within our community who have not been touched by the death of someone we knew and loved.

I also know that there are many, many of us who have not been present at their funerals, who have attended shivas by Zoom and who have not been able to reach out and hold someone shaken by loss and offer the comfort we would have offered without a thought - that of simply our own presence and warmth.

It can seem trite in these times to talk of new rituals. But there are many people who have told me how touched they were by the way their rabbi was able to lead a meaningful ceremony without mourners and how their online shiva allowed family across waters to connect.

We are already working with our rabbis and communities to think of new ways to mark stone settings and yahrzeits.

The world will have changed for ever when our physical isolation comes to an end and many of you will be taking steps along that new road without a loved one by your side.

We will work to make their memories a blessing not only through remembering everything about them that we are grateful for, but in never forgetting to be thankful for the lives and freedoms that we have. As the author Thornton Wilder advised: "The highest tribute to the dead is not grief, but gratitude."

Liberal Judaism chair retires Jeremy's new Leo Baeck role



LIBERAL JUDAISM chair Simon Benscher has retired from the role after a period of ill health. One of the most popular and recognisable people in our movement, Simon has been a committed and very active Liberal Jew for many decades.

A former chair of Woodford Liberal Synagogue (now part of East London & Essex Liberal Synagogue) he brought his passion and zeal for communal work to the national movement.

Announcing his decision in *lj today*, Simon said: "Some of you might be aware that I have not been in the best of health recently and, as a result, I have had to make some changes in my life.

"With a heavy heart I have decided that, after being a part of our national movement for more than 20 years, I am taking early retirement from the best job in the world as chair of Liberal Judaism.

"It has always been an honour and a pleasure to serve and represent a movement and its members, who I hold so dearly. The aspect I will miss most will be my congregational visits and the invitations to your homes and I hope to be able to maintain these in some form.

"I am deeply thankful to all the LJ staff over the years and our inspirational rabbis, but my biggest thanks go to the lay leaders and members who have made me so welcome in their congregations.

"I look forward to seeing and speaking to you all online at the Biennial Weekend At Home in May."

Ruth Seager, who has worked alongside Simon for many years, will continue in the role of acting chair until an election is held at the AGM. We will have more details and an interview with Ruth in the next edition of *lj today*.

Liberal Judaism president Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein said: "Simon Benscher's greatest love is his wife and family, but close after that comes his devotion to Liberal Judaism. This was shown first at his synagogue; then on the Board of National Officers; and finally as chair of our movement.

"But his considerable presence was not just at the Montagu Centre, because Simon has made every effort to attend special events, services and AGMs at Liberal congregations all over the country and represent our movement at national ceremonies and events.

"He always made you feel it was his honour to be chair of Liberal Judaism and, though 'retiring' from this office, I'm sure he will continue to show his devotion to LJ whenever and wherever he can.

"In Yiddish a 'benscher' is the book of blessing for Grace After Meals. Simon certainly blessed us for many years with his tireless work, long may this continue."



DR JEREMY SCHONFIELD has been appointed as Leo Baeck College's professor of liturgy.

Jeremy began his career at the College in 1995, originally as temporary cover

for the late Rabbi John Rayner while he was unwell. He later took over from him permanently to teach liturgy and prayer.

Since then he has lectured for more than 25 years at Leo Baeck College, and 30 years at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, having a strong influence on successive cohorts of Progressive Judaism rabbis. He remains in touch with many and still advises them on academic and other queries.

Jeremy's book *Undercurrents of Jewish Prayer* was a runner up in the National Jewish Book Awards in the category of Modern Jewish Thought in 2006.

He is currently in the later stages of writing a sequel, to be called *Why Jews Pray*. Several papers relating to liturgy, or to the subject in this book, have also appeared in the journal *European Judaism*, published at the College.

Speaking about his new appointment, Jeremy said: "I am delighted and honoured to have my work at Leo Baeck College recognised in this way by colleagues whom I respect and admire. I see it as a gesture of esteem."

College principal Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris added: "When I first moved to the UK 30 years ago, Jeremy welcomed me to life in the UK as my teacher in Oxford. I am immensely proud that, as principal, I am now able to welcome him to his new role as professor of liturgy here at Leo Baeck College."



Before lockdown, many Liberal Judaism communities were able to celebrate Purim including those (pictured clockwise) in Dublin, Essex & East London, Bristol, Kingston, Northwood, Finchley, Reading, Ealing, Elstree, the LJS and Southgate.

THIS YEAR'S Passover Seders were truly different from all other nights. Below we asked two members, one from Liberal Judaism's largest congregation and another from one of our smallest, to write about their virtual experiences - and on the right we share pictures from all over the UK.

Pesach 578

Judith King, The Liberal Jewish Synagogue (LJS):



IN YEARS gone by, our LJS Communal Seder, held on the second night of Pesach, has been celebrated with members and friends gathering in the Montefiore Hall next to the Sanctuary, observing the Passover rituals and enjoying an excellent meal together. This year's was necessarily different but perhaps created an even stronger community spirit, even if the meal had to be self-service, so to speak, and the delicious Pesach recipes of

our regular caterer, Helena Miller, were much missed.

Well over 100 people connected via Zoom for the Seder led by our Senior Rabbi, Alexandra Wright, together with Rabbi Igor Zinkov (pictured). A sweet sense of togetherness was created as we followed the Haggadah on screen, with special dramatic interludes introduced into the narrative; and could see others members of the community doing the same in their own homes. Everyone showed great enthusiasm as they were invited to take part in different sections, and we all sang along with gusto on those occasions when we were 'unmuted' in what might best be described as joyful cacophony.

We were impressed with the innovations within the Seder. How could we possibly find the afikoman that Rabbi Alexandra had hidden? Rabbi Igor produced an image on screen at the relevant time, within which the eagle-eyed could indeed locate the virtual matzo he had cunningly positioned within it.

What was striking was how meaningful this Communal Seder was - it created a real sense of belonging. We ended our celebration of Pesach on a note of hope, as we were invited to consider what positive words conveyed our wish to move closer to 'a world redeemed' this time next year.

Owen Power, Manchester Liberal Jewish Community (MLJC):

THE IRONY of celebrating our festival of liberation in lockdown, as we protect ourselves from a 21st century 'plague', has not been lost on any of us.

On the first night of Passover I and other MLJC members had the pleasure of 'attending' and participating in Rabbi Mark Solomon's Seder... and what a poignant one it was. Mark led the Seder in his usual warm unique style.

Many of us were largely Zoom virgins feeling our way, but we had no blips to speak of. Mark's deed of loving kindness is very much in the spirit of our movement's founders and I am sure Lily Montagu herself would give him a high five!

I am buzzing thinking of all the ways to use this technology - and can't wait for the Biennial Weekend At Home in May.

• Liberal Judaism sends a special thank you to Leo Mindel. Leo has gone above and beyond in helping our movement, and many of our communities, fulfil our online potential by guiding us in all of the wonderful things we can do virtually.



Kehillah North London



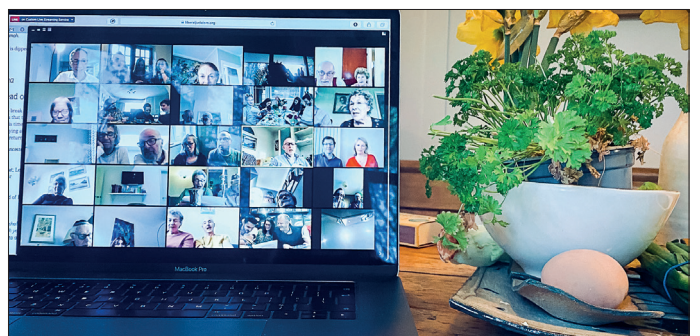
Crouch End Chavurah



LJY-Netzer



Birmingham Progressive Synagogue



Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue

30 around the communities



South London Liberal Synagogue



Nottingham Liberal Synagogue



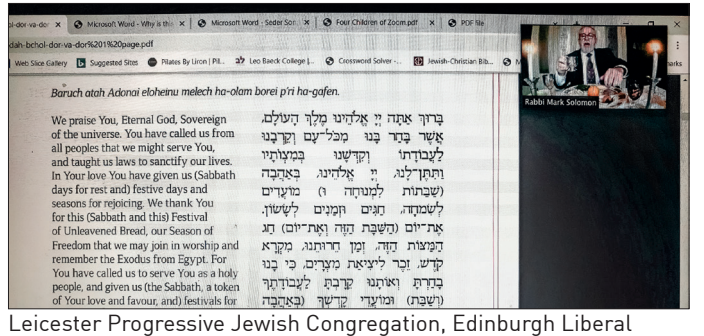
Norwich Liberal Jewish Community



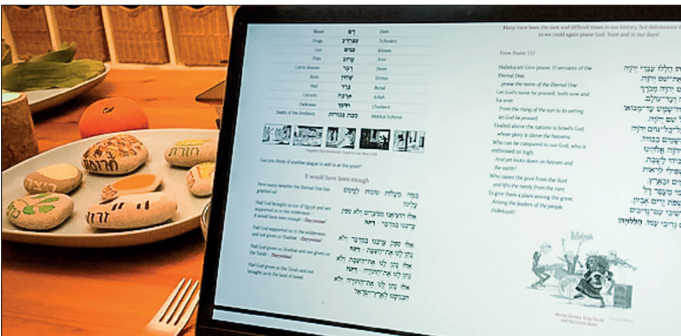
Kingston Liberal Synagogue



East London & Essex Liberal Synagogue



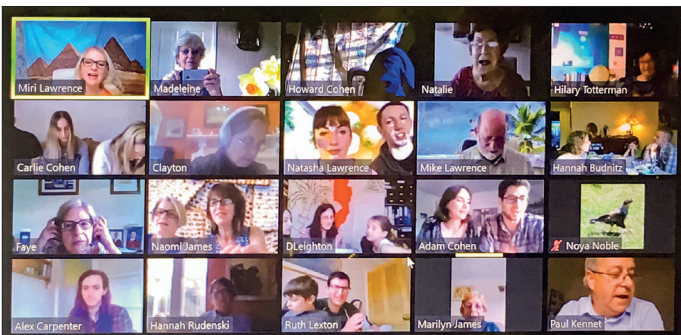
Leicester Progressive Jewish Congregation, Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community and Manchester Liberal Jewish Community



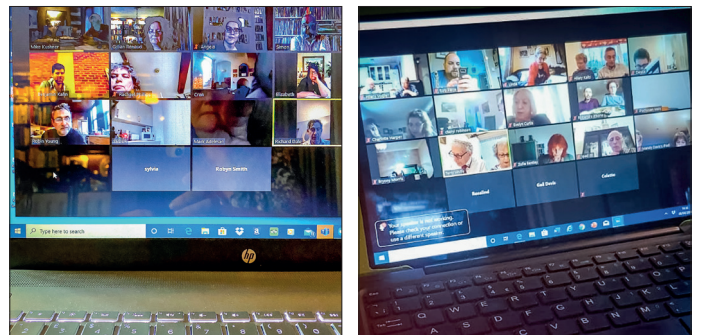
Southgate Progressive Synagogue



The Liberal Synagogue Elstree



Reading Liberal Jewish Community



Lincolnshire Jewish Community Stevenage Liberal Synagogue

Edgwarebury Cemetery

By John Abramson

BY NOW I have heard all the gags. "It's in the dead centre of town" and "Do you have a skeleton staff?"

Since September 2019, I have been the chair of the EJBB, the Edgwarebury Joint Burial Board, which is the governing body of Edgwarebury Cemetery.

The cemetery - established in 1972 in its current location - is owned by four different communities with four very different traditions: S&P Sephardi Community, West London Synagogue, Liberal Judaism and my own community, Belsize Square Synagogue. The four share the facilities and also the expenses. It is the ultimate co-operative.

The cemetery is governed by the EJBB Board, which meets quarterly and comprises three representatives from each of the four communities. Many members have been on the Board for some time - giving us a wealth of experience to draw upon. There is also an operations committee, which is similarly drawn from each of the communities.

The cemetery is run by the cemetery director and the operations manager. We also have three office staff and six full time cemetery operatives, many of whom have advanced horticultural qualifications and experience which enable us to beautify and maintain the grounds.

The Board gets to consider genuinely interesting issues. For example, we currently have a drainage issue after a particularly wet winter. Some years ago, we started investigating installing subterranean pipes to move excess water away from the site - a sizeable project now coming to fruition.

We have recently been challenged by the implications of Covid-19 and adapting to the restrictions that have been imposed. This has drawn on many different resources as we have had to think about things that we never wanted to think about. We are learning as we go along.

The cemetery fulfils a vital and constant need for the communities that own it and does so with care and pride. I am proud that the Board plays a key role in ensuring this.

Your movement needs you!

Robin Moss on becoming a Liberal Judaism officer



THIS SUMMER, after six years on Liberal Judaism's Board of National Officers, I will be stepping down. Liberal Judaism's rules give officers three-year terms

before they have to seek re-election and I have decided that, after two terms, I wish to stand aside.

But doing so requires someone else to step in, step forward and step up. That is why I want to encourage you - yes, you - to consider becoming an officer.

Liberal Judaism is legally a charity and a company limited by guarantee. Therefore, on the most basic level, the officers are the trustees of the charity and the directors of the company.

But Liberal Judaism is also a religious movement and a community of communities, and in that respect the officers represent the fourth 'corner' of the Liberal Judaism organisational structure - the other three being Council (representing our communities), the Conference of Liberal Rabbis and Cantors and the professional staff team.

The officers are the 'lay leaders' of the movement and our role is primarily strategic - to provide direction to the professional team, to plan and prioritise, to exercise prudent oversight and to offer constructive challenge.

In practice therefore, officers serve two functions: the first, as individuals, is to bring our skills, knowledge, time and energy to support and serve Liberal Judaism; the second, as a collective, is to provide governance.

Each officer has a specific portfolio, with the aim of covering all major areas of Liberal Judaism's activities. Most, therefore, have one or a group of members of staff with whom we work closely. For instance, I am the officer for strategy so my natural partner on the staff team is Rabbi Charley Baginsky - our director of strategy and partnerships.

The officers meet as a group every month or so to consider reports from the professional team and/or other officers. They deliberate and decide on issues as they arise and also think long-term.

Agenda items range from the prosaic and practical - such as the cemetery

drainage issues discussed in the article on the left - to the philosophical and prophetic, for example whether and in what way to speak out on any of the great issues of the day. Meetings are lively and debate is encouraged, but decisions are reached and tempers rarely flare!

In addition, the typical month for an officer might also include meetings with staff, representing Liberal Judaism at external events and contributing to between-meeting discussions on email. A highlight for all of us is visiting Liberal Judaism's communities - even if those visits currently have to be made via Skype or Zoom. Each officer is 'linked' to specific communities to act as a two-way channel of communication.

As with any voluntary role, the more one puts in, the more one gets out and, depending on the rest of one's life, different officers have different capacities. Over my six years, I have always had a full-time job and never found it hard to manage both.

The officers are a relatively diverse bunch at the moment - we are slightly more female than male, range in age from our 20s to 70s and come from nine different communities. Any Board needs a range of backgrounds, perspectives and life-experiences to be effective. As such, this year we conducted an audit of where we are currently less well represented. There are three areas where we would actively welcome interest (though if the election for officers is contested, it is ultimately in Council's hands to decide):

- Communities - We would ideally like an officer from Southgate Progressive Synagogue, The Liberal Synagogue Elstree and/or a non-London community
- Skills - We have less developed skills in the area of marketing/communications.
- Interests - We would like an officer with a particular interest in Leo Baeck College, and another with a focus on community development.

If any of these sound like you, then please do get in touch by emailing shelley@liberaljudaism.org

Being an officer is immensely rewarding, not overly onerous and you get to play a small part in shaping and strengthening our movement. If you care about Liberal Judaism, there is really no better or more meaningful way to engage than getting involved.

Exploring my family's heritage

Becca Fetterman on two trips to discover her roots



Liberal Judaism's Becca Fetterman and her family have been visiting their ancestral homes

OVER THE last two years I have, with my family, visited the homes of my paternal great grandfather in Lithuania and my maternal granny in Germany... and the trips couldn't have been more different.

The first, to Vilnius and Butrimonys in Lithuania, was eye-opening for me and extremely shocking. My dad had been working with a Lithuanian historian to research our family history and had found out a lot about our great grandpa - so he organised for most of my family to visit and explore his findings.

We had an incredible long weekend, learning about the story of the Litvak Jews, meeting a Vilna Ghetto survivor and spending time together as a family. However, it was also very harrowing.



Exploring mass Jewish graves in Lithuania

We visited mass graves and sites of unbelievable cruelty. The thing that was most upsetting was meeting Lithuanians who still talk about 'the Jews' as other. Not their people.

We went to a 'Jewish home' in Butrimonys (where our ancestors had lived) and the owner told us that when they moved in they found the most amazing thing: a hiding place under the

floorboards with a hole to see the town square. We all went silent thinking about our family and how, once, they could have been hiding there.

There were some positives. The town Mayor officially welcomed us as the first Jews returning to their village and hosted an exhibition in our honour. But we did feel more of a curiosity than neighbours.

Our second trip to Leipzig in Germany couldn't have felt more different. We travelled with our children for the Stolpersteine (stumblestone) ceremony outside my granny's childhood home. From the minute we landed, every person we spoke to was so happy we were there, thanked us for coming and asked us all about our family.

The artist Gunter Demnig has made commemorative brass plaques to be placed in the pavement outside the last address of victims of the Holocaust. This was a story of unbelievable survival.

My granny and her family moved to England, with my aunt then going on to America. In both countries they gave life to strong and enduring Jewish families.

A group of school students had been researching my family for a year and spoke at the ceremony about how amazing my great grandpa was and what his descendants have achieved.

I had previously never wanted to visit Germany and have always thought of it as a place of antisemitism. This trip was healing. We received a warm reception everywhere and were even followed by a university radio crew, who were making a documentary about the stones.

I would happily return to Germany any time and feel that an inherited trauma has, in some ways, been healed.

Introducing René Cassin

By Moses Seitler

IN THE short space available, I want to tell you about an individual and an organisation called René Cassin.

Monsieur René Cassin was an extraordinary Jewish jurist and one of the co-drafters of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the wake of the Holocaust. Having lost 26 members of his family, he helped shape the international community's commitment that – in the words of the Declaration's preamble – **never again** would "disregard and contempt for human rights result in barbarous acts that outrage the conscience of mankind".

Seventy-two years later, in his name and out of a small office in Golders Green, René Cassin: The Jewish Voice For Human Rights is committed to making real that same principle - **never again**. This means running campaigns across a range of human rights issues and bringing awareness and advocacy skills to the Jewish community. We do so for the specific reason identified by our namesake, because as he said: "Human rights are an integral part of the faith and tradition of Judaism."

René Cassin also runs workshops, training sessions and campaign events, many of which have been in collaboration with LJY-Netzer. We have worked together on everything, from bringing social action into our classrooms and synagogues to enacting positive change for refugees and asylum seekers.

We have been inspired by the desire of every member of LJY-Netzer to make a difference to the world around them. René Cassin's work is fuelled by their enthusiasm, but there is some way to go.

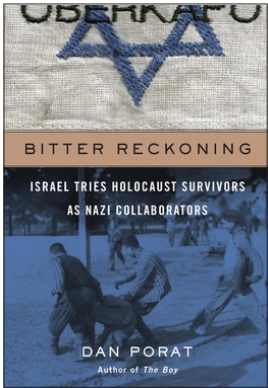
We are looking for more Liberal Jews to join us in our campaigns and programmes, so please email me on moses.seitler@reencassin.org

We are coordinating the Jewish community's response to the disgraceful treatment of Uyghur Muslims in China. We are fighting hate crime in Britain. We are looking for young people to be our inaugural Human Rights Ambassadors. And, above all, we are inviting you to join us in saying that **never again is now**.

A key addition to the Shoah canon

Bitter Reckoning: Israel Tries Holocaust Survivors as Nazi Collaborators

by Dan Porat (ISBN: 9780674988149) **REVIEWED by Rabbi Dr Charles Middleburgh**



ALMOST everyone who knows anything about the Holocaust will know the name of Adolf Eichmann, and the fact that he was tried by an Israeli court for genocide, convicted and then executed.

It was an event of the utmost significance for native born Israelis, or earlier immigrants, who knew little about the suffering of Jews in the Shoah and couldn't understand how little their co-religionists had done to make the Nazis work harder to achieve their evil aims.

What may be less well known is that among the survivors of the Shoah, who got to Israel after the war, there were those who had served on Nazi-created Jewish Councils in the ghettos and others who had been Jewish policeman and kapos in the concentration camps.

As individuals were identified, often by those who had suffered grievously at their hands, and denounced to the authorities, it was necessary for laws to be created under which these individuals were tried for having colluded with the Nazis in their destruction of the Jewish people.

This story is told in *Bitter Reckoning*. Author Dan Porat details events across eight chapters with an introduction and epilogue: From Revenge to Retribution in Nazi Europe; Tensions among Survivors in Mandatory Palestine; The Nazis and Nazi Collaborators Punishment

Law; Preliminary Court Examinations; Weighing the Actions of Jewish Collaborators; Did Jewish Kapos Commit Crimes against Humanity?; The First Doubts about the Kapo Trials; Judging a Nazi and Reframing Collaboration; Absolving Ordinary Functionaries.

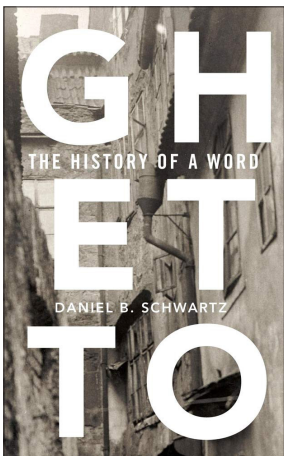
This is an extremely well-researched and highly readable book, telling an important story about how the Israeli authorities acted in the immediate post-war period, and especially the immensely high standards of the judges who presided over very challenging cases.

It also highlights the challenge to any democracy when some of its citizens, in another time, place and context, acted in ways that would have been intolerable in their new national home.

Dan Porat's work is an important addition to the Shoah canon.

More than just a word Iconic photos

Ghetto: The History of a Word by Daniel B Schwartz (ISBN: 9780674737532)



FOR ME, and others of the baby boomer generation, the word Ghetto is irredeemably linked to the ghettos imposed on Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War in countries occupied by the Germans.

Those Ghettoes became places of overcrowding, disease, starvation and death, the most terrible incarnation of the ghetto in human history.

Daniel Schwartz's *Ghetto* is, however, about much more. Starting with the institution of the Venice Ghetto, the original and its successor, he proceeds to the transformation of the Ghetto in the 19th century, the ghetto's translation to America with waves of Jewish immigration to the USA, the ghettos of

the Holocaust and finally the ghetto in post-war America.

He tracks the metamorphoses of the ghetto, from place of containment influenced by the Catholic Church, to a place of growing persecution culminating as a staging post to extermination.

But there is also the appropriation by Jewish immigrants of the term – which continues to this day – in an almost affectionate way to describe an area of a town or city where a majority of the residents are Jews. Finally, there is the adoption of the word by African-Americans with a similar connotation.

The value of a focused history such as this is immense: it enables the reader to go into an apparently well-understood term or issue, revealing along the way how much more to it there is than one knew or imagined.

It teaches in a very comfortable way a skein of Jewish history of some importance, explaining the peculiar longevity of a term that began in Venice and arguably should have stayed there.

• **Review by Rabbi Dr Charles Middleburgh, Dean of Leo Baeck College**



FORMER Fleet Street photographer and Norwich Liberal Jewish Community member Stuart Goodman has a new book out full of

stunning black and white photography of an iconic era in the history of London.

Titled *One Saturday in 82 on Broadway Market* (ISBN: 9781916052338), the book captures a day in the lives of shoppers and shop owners in Hackney. Stuart's photos candidly recall the market in the depth of its degeneration, when the emergence of large supermarkets led to it being threatened with demolition, a plan against which Stuart helped to organise successful protests.

After years of neglect, the market reopened in 2004, but is now very different with upmarket stalls and cafés.

Stuart, who both lived and worked in the market, said: "I miss the place. Not the squalor, the outside loo, the wasps, the cold... but the people, the community and, somehow, the optimism. There wasn't a gastro pub in sight and who had ever encountered a buffalo burger?"



LJY-Netzer is Liberal Judaism's Zionist youth movement. It gives young people the opportunity to develop a strong Progressive Jewish identity, make lasting friendships and have loads of fun

Join us online for LJY-Netzer At Home

LJY-NETZER is first and foremost a community. Although we are deeply saddened by the loss of our programmes this year, we will continue to bring the *kef* (fun), *chinuch* (informal education) and *ruach* (spirit) of LJY into the homes of our *Chanchimot* (participants) through the *Ofakim Hadashim* (New Horizons) initiative. With online-only programming tailored for our different *shikvot* (age groups), and ranging from art sessions to debate club, there really is something for everyone. Each week we will have a slightly different programme with a variety of fun games and activities.

We will primarily be using Zoom, which we have modified to ensure we maintain a high level of safety and privacy for our members. In order to participate in the online sessions, parents/guardians will have to sign each child up. The sign up form and schedules are on our website and social media.

We will also be livestreaming every morning on our Facebook page with dances, services, storytelling and more.



We hope as many LJY-Netzer members as possible will join us each week, so that we can continue our vital role in engaging and inspiring our wonderful community of young Liberal Jews.

This is not the end of Shnat Perach



By Guy Morad

THE chaos and bustle of normal life has all but ceased. My *kehila kedosha* (holy community) is another victim of Covid-19. Our Shnat Netzer gap-year programme was amputated. Our premature departure means that our wonderful *tzevet* (staff) Orit, Omer and Noa have lost their jobs or face unpaid leave.

Yet our year group, which we named Shnat Perach, are lucky. Despite not reaching the completion of our gap year in Israel, we all started a journey within ourselves and together.

We created lifelong bonds in an atmosphere of excitement, learning and adventure. Our time together has already influenced us all so much and will continue to change our lives forever.

I am lucky to have been surrounded by the most brilliant and inspirational people I

have ever met. To have shared so many life-altering experiences with them. To have them in my life.

Where else but in Israel can you hear the Palestinian narrative in the Israel-Palestine conflict, while overlooking the Old City? Where else can you bow to the Bar'chu while having a view of David's Tower? Where else can you have ideological discussions about how we should pray while being surrounded by Jerusalem stone?

The frenzy of learning, laughing and arguing opened each of us up to new and different things.

I experienced spirituality and Judaism like never before, while other people connected to Israel for the first time. We all were truly discovering this multi-faceted country with an intense and rich culture. Our Shnat was just a beginning.

The news that our gap year was ending early came as a shock and a blow. Grief and uncertainty followed as I realised that these people I had come to know and love would once again be separated by thousands of miles.

Since arriving home we have all been on Zoom calls incessantly. For the last fortnight, Orit has arranged for our educators to give us some sense of completion of our various courses. Perach will continue to work towards *hagshama* (living out our ideology) - Shnat has given us the ability to do so.

This situation has shown us the mobility of Judaism and Jewish life. We've been tuning into webinars and services from across the world. I still tear up during the services. Netzer South Africa services are a particular favourite, along with Nava Tahila in Israel and even our very own local LJY-Netzer offering.

Contact LJY-Netzer: **Fran Kurlansky** (f.kurlansky@liberaljudaism.org), **Rosa Slater** (r.slater@liberaljudaism.org) and **Jacob Swirsky** (j.swirsky@liberaljudaism.org); **Director of Youth - Rebecca Fetterman** (r.fetterman@liberaljudaism.org)

Liberal Judaism congregations

Bedfordshire Progressive Synagogue

T: 0845 869 7105
E: info@bedsps.org.uk
W: bedfordshire-ps.org.uk

Beit Klal Yisrael (London)

E: bkymailing@gmail.com
W: bky.org.uk

Birmingham Progressive Synagogue

T: 0121 634 3888
E: bps@liberaljudaism.org
W: bpsjudaism.com

Brighton and Hove Progressive Synagogue

T: 01273 737 223
E: info@bhps-online.org
W: bhps-online.org

Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation

T: 0117 403 3456
E: bwppjc@bwppjc.org
W: bwppjc.org

Crawley Jewish Community

T: 01293 534 294

Crouch End Chavurah

E: info@crouchendchavurah.co.uk
W: crouchendchavurah.co.uk

Dublin Progressive Congregation

E: djpc@liberaljudaism.org
W: djpcireland.com

Ealing Liberal Synagogue

T: 020 8997 0528
E: admin@ealingliberalsynagogue.org.uk
W: ealingliberalsynagogue.org.uk

East London & Essex Liberal Synagogue

T: 0208 989 7619
E: eastlondonandessexliberal@gmail.com
W: eastlondonandessexliberal-synagogue.org

Eastbourne Liberal Jewish Community

T: 07497 401 280
E: eljc.contact@gmail.com
W: eljc.org.uk

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

T: 0131 777 8024
E: info@eljc.org
W: eljc.org

Finchley Progressive Synagogue

T: 020 8446 4063
E: fps@liberaljudaism.org
W: fps.org

Kehillah North London

T: 020 7403 3779
E: kehillah.northlondon@yahoo.co.uk
W: kehillah.org.uk

Kent Liberal Jewish Community

T: 07952 242 432
E: enquiries@kljc.org.uk
W: kljc.org.uk

Kingston Liberal Synagogue

T: 020 8398 7400
E: kls@liberaljudaism.org
W: klsonline.org

Leicester Progressive Jewish Congregation

T: 0116 271 5584
E: chair@lpjc.org.uk
W: lpjc.org.uk

The Liberal Jewish Synagogue (St John's Wood)

T: 020 7286 5181
E: ljs@ljs.org
W: ljs.org

The Liberal Synagogue Elstree

T: 020 8953 8889
E: office@tlse.org.uk
W: tlse.org.uk

Lincolnshire Jewish Community

T: 01427 628 958
E: ljcc@liberaljudaism.org
W: lincolnshirejc.co.uk

Manchester Liberal Jewish Community

T: 0161 796 6210
E: mljc@liberaljudaism.org
W: mljc.org.uk

Mosaic Liberal (Harrow)

T: 020 8864 5323
E: office@mosaicliberal.org.uk
W: mosaicliberal.org.uk

Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue

T: 01923 822 592
E: npls@liberaljudaism.org
W: npls.org.uk

Norwich Liberal Jewish Community

E: nljc@liberaljudaism.org
W: norwichljc.org.uk

Nottingham Liberal Synagogue

T: 0115 962 4761
E: nls@liberaljudaism.org
W: nottinghamliberalsynagogue.com

Peterborough Liberal Jewish Community

T: 07561 331 390
E: info@pljc.org.uk
W: pljc.org.uk

Reading Liberal Jewish Community

T: 0118 942 8022
E: readingliberaljewishcommunity@gmail.com
W: readingljc.org.uk

Shir Hatzafon (Copenhagen)

E: shir@shirhatzafon.dk
W: shirhatzafon.dk

South Bucks Jewish Community

T: 0845 644 2370
E: info@sbjc.org.uk
W: sbjc.org.uk

Southgate Progressive Synagogue

T: 020 8886 0977
E: sps@liberaljudaism.org
W: sps.uk.com

South London Liberal Synagogue (Streatham)

T: 020 8769 4787
E: slls@liberaljudaism.org
W: southlondon.org

Stevenage Liberal Synagogue

T: 01438 300 222
E: stevenageliberalsynagogue@gmail.com
W: stevenageliberalsynagogue.org.uk

Suffolk Liberal Jewish Community (Ipswich)

T: 01473 250 797
E: sljc@liberaljudaism.org

Three Counties Liberal Jewish Community (Gloucestershire and Herefordshire)

T: 07900 612 058
E: info@3cljc.org.uk
W: 3cljc.org.uk

Tikvah Chadasha Synagogue (Shenfield)

T: 01277 888 610
E: tikvahchadasha@gmail.com
W: tikvahchadasha.com

Wessex Liberal Jewish Community (Bournemouth)

T: 01202 757 590
E: info@wessexliberaljudaism.org.uk
W: wessexliberaljudaism.org.uk

West Central Liberal Synagogue

T: 020 7636 7627
E: office@wcls.org.uk
W: wcls.org.uk

York Liberal Jewish Community

T: 0300 102 0062
E: info@jewsinyork.org.uk
W: jewsinyork.org.uk

Developing and affiliated

Beit Ha'Chidush (Amsterdam)

T: +31 23 524 7204
E: bhc.informatie@gmail.com
W: beithachidush.nl

Lancashire & Cumbria Liberal Jewish Community

T: 0777 531 0944
W: northwestjews.org

Oxford Jewish Congregation

T: 01865 515 584
E: connections@ojc-online.org
W: ojc-online.org



The Montagu Centre
21 Maple Street
London, W1T 4BE
T: 020 7580 1663
E: montagu@liberaljudaism.org
W: liberaljudaism.org

Liberal Judaism is the dynamic, cutting edge of modern Judaism. It reverences Jewish tradition, seeking to preserve the values of the past, while giving them contemporary force.
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lj today is edited by Simon Rothstein
s.rothstein@liberaljudaism.org

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