

# the new londoner



VOLUME 21 • ROSH HASHANAH 5782 • SEPTEMBER 2022 • ONLINE EDITION



## **Our new windows**

We hear from the artist Josh Baum about what inspired his stained glass designs *p.12*

## **Secret Soviet mission**

Our members' cloak-and-dagger trip to Russia over the chagim to help refuseniks *p.14*

## **Americans in London**

A visit by descendants and relatives of founder members Ellis and Muriel Franklin *p.20*

# Many sources of inspiration

In this edition we celebrate the coming into fruition of the hugely exciting project to install the Cyril Korn Windows in the sanctuary. We hear from Josh Baum, the artist who designed them, about the background to the creative process: the ideas, the images and the poetry. We are equally inspired by Inna Zhuranskaya, our member (a British citizen, born in Nizhny Novgorod in Russia) who has written about her tireless efforts to find emergency accommodation for Jewish and non-Jewish Ukrainians forced to flee the country after the invasion.

We are particularly blessed to publish fascinating stories from members about their activities, recent and not so recent. Beryl and Stephen Lerman write about their mission to help refuseniks in 1970, two young members write about taking part in the Maccabiah Games (Joe Shaw) and a journey to Gibraltar and Malaga (Benjamin Futter), and a visitor from the United States describes her trip to London to visit the synagogue her grandparents, Ellis and Muriel Franklin, helped to found.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Rabbi Jeremy for a top tip. I can't remember exactly when or where he recommended *The Promised Podcast* but it is full of funny and interesting conversations – about how Israel can “warm your heart and make your blood boil”. My humble hope is that this magazine does only the former.

**Beatrice Sayers**

editorial@newlondon.org.uk

## CONTENTS

Rabbi Jeremy's message .....	5
Rabbi Natasha on writing and signing .....	7
Our new cantorial leads .....	8
Cheder: a new year begins .....	10
A new vision of Israel, in stained glass ....	12
A Soviet journey .....	14
Two enchanted evenings .....	18
Franklin family visit .....	20
L'Hayim's connections .....	22
Inna Zhuranskaya's refugee work .....	24
The evolution of the NLS sukkah .....	26
Anthony Berman on HostNation .....	29
Tributes to Stephen Cotsen .....	30
The Kitchener Camp by Julian Futter ...	32
Message from Masorti Judaism.....	34
A mindblowing Maccabiah .....	35
Dates for Your Diary .....	36
Four shuls and a cable car .....	39
<b>Book reviews:</b>	
Tel Aviv's many stories.....	41
The Escape Artist .....	43
Please Write Soon .....	45
<b>A Jew's most important work .....</b>	<b>54</b>



# Shanah tovah and thank you

NLS chair **Abigail Levin** looks back to acknowledge people who have helped the community as well as looking forward to the year ahead



The request for me to write this piece for the magazine comes round with amazing speed. It feels like only a few weeks since I wrote for the Pesach magazine, but I am reliably informed that it's time for another piece from the Chair.

This new year I want to look back as well as look forward. When I agreed to take on the role of Chair of New London I had no idea what I was letting myself in for, but I have been surprised at the number of events that take place at a cracking pace throughout the year. In recent months we have said a fond farewell to Chazan Stephen. Thank you to Anne Cowen for organising a wonderful dinner. It was particularly special to bring so many members and friends together after the Covid years restricted our ability to meet and socialise. Our new cantorial leads, Yoav Oved and David Djemel, are settling in well to their roles. Thank you to the panel who were part of the recruitment process – you did a wonderful job.

We are well under way with the Cyril Korn

window project, of which more elsewhere in this magazine. Thank you again to all who are involved on the design group and to all the members of the community who have taken the time to join the consultation and given their opinions on the designs.

We are setting up an Inclusivity group, to support the important ongoing project of making New London a welcoming place for all. Thanks to all those who have volunteered their insight and expertise. We have said farewell and thanks to David Finberg who led the Cheder through Covid so skilfully, and have been delighted to appoint Gabriella Spencer-Hope to take over as his successor.

Finally, I am delighted that Rabbi Natasha is now officially a permanent member of the NLS team. We thank her for holding the fort so well while Rabbi Jeremy has taken the first part of his well-earned sabbatical this summer, and in advance for doing the same early next year. And we are, as always, appreciative of his leadership and guidance.

I want to use this New Year's message also to thank those who have helped me personally in making the transition from member to council member to Chair. First, my immediate predecessor, Nathalie Glaser, has continued to make time to give me support and insight. The other members of synagogue council – Julian Dawes, Bob Low, Andrew Hirsch, Aviva Raichelson, Joe Carlebach, Jeremy Parlons, Judy Stone and Brian Linden – all bring a vast range of knowledge, skills, experience, humour and patience to their roles. I am very

appreciative of their support for the chair and our community.

I would like to thank those who volunteer their time to keep our community safe and to create a welcoming environment, including those who are on the security rota, greeting team, shamash and wardens. I also want to thank others who are working hard behind the scenes, including Lenin, who keeps the building and the kiddish wine running and flowing alongside the hard work of Phil, Michelle, Frances and Jeanette in the office.

A small plug for the future: if you think you have some time to spare and want to find out what goes on behind the scenes at NLS, please do think about volunteering a small amount of that time to support our community. As you can tell from the appreciation above, there is a wide range of roles that can suit a diverse range of skills, enthusiasms and levels of availability. Do get in touch.

Jonathan, Zella and I wish you and your loved ones Shanah tovah.

## Our wonderful new windows

The 'windows' on the right hand side of the sanctuary, beneath the gallery, haven't been windows for many decades. When the hall was built at the end of the 1960s, the view was replaced with blockwork, and polycarbonate sheets set in timber arches that mimic the openings on the Marlborough Place side of the building.

Transforming the appearance of this slightly sad part of the synagogue is a collective effort. It has been initiated by a generous bequest, from Cyril Korn, and is being supported by input from members of the community. As the building is Grade II listed, heritage consent is required, and an application has recently been submitted to

Westminster Council to enable the work to be permitted. All being well, the first sample panel will be installed in time for the High Holy Days. See page 12 for more about the new glass.

### Head of Cheder

We welcome Gabriella Sencer-Hope as our new head of Cheder, replacing David Finberg, who has become head of art at a school in Park Royal. Gabriella has a PGCE, has worked as a birth and postnatal doula and as a childminder, and has been teaching at the Cheder for nearly 20 years. Read more on page 11, and feel free to contact Gabriella at [chederhead@newlondon.org.uk](mailto:chederhead@newlondon.org.uk).

**COVID UPDATE** This is a reminder that we have lifted all our coronavirus restrictions, so that mask wearing is optional. Seating is also back to normal.

Those who wish for added distancing may sit in the gallery. Women's seating is to the left

and right and mixed seating is available in the middle section.

We look forward to seeing you in the building soon.

**Rabbi Jeremy Gordon, Phil Ashleigh**, NLS operations director; **Abigail Levin**, chair

## Is a neighbour disturbing you? This could be an opportunity

**Rabbi Jeremy Gordon** looks at how to judge others on 'the merit scale'



errors are always benign, or even assume that which we experience as disturbance is, despite a jagged appearance, actually an opportunity to learn or a demonstration of probity that we should celebrate, rather than condemn.

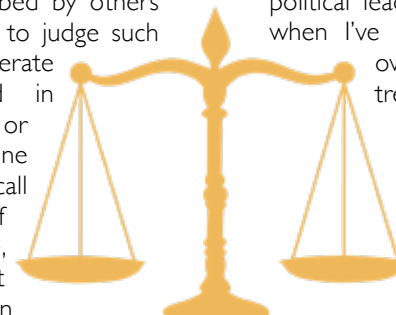
Ben Perachiah's counsel, which first appears in Pirkei Avot (1.6), gets a full treatment in Talmud Shabbat (127b). A succession of disturbances is recorded, and heroic disturbed parties successfully assume decency on behalf of those disturbing them. A servant goes home hungry without pay but, rather than suggesting their employer's malfeasance, assumes that the boss had temporarily promised their cash elsewhere; they are proved correct and receive a reward – that sort of thing. The punchline to each example is the comment that, "One who judges others on the merit scale, stands to be judged favourably themselves."

Two thousand years ago, Yehoshua Ben Perachiah, called us to "judge every person on the merit scale". The English is a little archaic. The Hebrew word for a 'scale' is *haf*, as in the letter ה. The word, and its eponymous letter, suggest a concave dish which can be attached to one side of a measuring scale, with a second *haf* attached to the other side, into which weights would be placed to determine guilt, or innocence.

If the image is archaic, the import of Ben Perachiah's counsel feels astoundingly timely. When we are disturbed by others – and we are all disturbed by others – there is a temptation to judge such interference as deliberate and personal, rooted in aggression, conspiracy or hatred. To judge everyone on the 'merit scale' is a call to dismantle that part of ourselves and assume, instead, benign error; just as we assume our own

These are febrile times. I often find myself invited to assume the malfeasance of others, be they strangers, family members, political leaders, even congregants! But when I've been able to suspend my own inclination to assume treachery in others, I've found plenty to understand about, empathise with and even appreciate in my experience of being disturbed by others.

I always feel nervousness



at this most special time of year in particular – and this year particularly so. Over the High Holy Days, our new cantorial leads will face the unenviable task of leading these awesome and highly technical services at New London for the first time. It will be different; it may disturb. We hope to have the first of a planned major series of new stained glass installed. We are doing it to inspire, but I suppose it may bring, for some, feelings of disturbance. We might be seated next to someone who chatters when we would rather they were silent, or we might be chattering when a neighbour has the temerity to request our silence. Potential for disturbance abounds. Personally, I love it.

In the Torah reading of the Shabbat directly before Rosh Hashanah, Moses calls together the old and the young, the women and the men, the “tribal heads

and the elders” and the “hewers of wood and the drawers of water”. At this time of year, we’re always called to be jostled and disturbed by someone unlike us – whoever we are – as we turn up at shul. Perhaps the goal is to give us the chance to learn how to judge the ‘disturbing other’ on the scale of merit. How, otherwise, are we to earn the right to be judged with compassion for our own disturbing of others?

Perhaps learning to find merit in our experience of disturbance is the only way to grow. If we find joy only in actions which cause us no discomfort, how, otherwise, are we to be renewed in this New Year?

I’m so looking forward to celebrating with the whole community this year. It’s been too long. Josephine, Carmi, Harry and Eliana join me in wishing one and all a year of sweetness, joy and health. Shanah tovah.

## The Agalah\* Project *\*agalah* a thing on wheels

You may wonder why there’s an empty blue *agalah*, a bit like the one pictured, in the foyer. It’s not just parked there. It’s waiting to be filled, with easy-read, look-at books for those of us who’d appreciate them when we come to NLS Shabbat or a festival morning for example.



*Agalah* in Hebrew means ‘a something on wheels’, and the idea of going round and round will apply to these books.

They’re for reading and flipping through in the synagogue but not for taking away. They’ll be there for us and others to read or look at next time.

The books will be:

- on a Jewish theme
- Shabbat/*chag*-friendly in tone (not about war, for example)
- Suitable for adults or teenagers
- Short reads/looks (such as art and photo collections, anthologies of poetry or short stories, magazines, light factual books)

So if you have any books that tick those boxes that you could donate or lend, please leave them on the *agalah* with a note for Angela Gluck or contact her through the office. Your gift or loan will be acknowledged.

# Scribbles and the scribe

**Rabbi Natasha Mann** draws a link between graffiti and the Book of Life



Did you know that archaeologists have discovered graffiti from the ancient world, and it’s essentially the same things you find in public bathrooms today? The same hi, hello, so-and-so was here, the same rude words and drawings, the same haha, made you look from thousands of years ago? It turns out, the urge that causes teenagers to sign their names on the wall is an ancient one.

I wonder if it essentially comes down to wanting to sign our place in the universe. As one piece of graffiti from the early Islamic era states rather succinctly: “This is an inscription that I wrote with my own hand; my hand will wear out but the inscription will remain.”

Over the High Holy Days, we spent countless hours engaging with an image of God as Scribe, sitting poised to write our names in a book that will seal our fate. It’s a favourite poetic image for a reason: how much more conscious are we likely to be of our actions if we are able to envision the Divine, the Supreme Judge, poised with a quill. But not all of

our liturgical imagery is so clear about what happens in that moment. The great *piyyut* (liturgical poem) the Unetaneh Tokef states that God is the writer, but then goes on to describe the book with these words: *chotam yad kol adam bo*, each person’s signature is in it.

So who, exactly, is signing the Book of Life? There is a beautiful and intense midrash in *Sifrei D’varim*, a 2nd-century text, which describes a moment in the imagined afterlife in which a person’s deeds come and present themselves to him. One by one, each deed stands before the deceased and says: “This is what you did on such and such a day. Do you believe it?” The man says: “Yes, I do.” And the deed says: “Then sign me!”

Something shifts dramatically if we envision ourselves holding the quill. If we envision ourselves having to sign for our actions, having to take responsibility for what we leave behind in the world. If the Book of Life is not simply in the heavens, some mystical thing that we cannot touch and can only feel anxious about, and instead is something that we might have to sign at the end of our time on this earth.

I have, incidentally, signed a new contract with NLS this year. After these first three years, which have been strange in completely unpredictable ways, I’ve signed on to stay. It’s no surprise to anyone, I’m sure, that I couldn’t be happier about that particular signature.

Wishing you all a shanah tovah and a g’mar chatimah tovah,



# Our charismatic cantorial leads

**David Djemal** and **Yoav Oved** bring fascinating backgrounds – with similarities and contrasts – to their new roles at the synagogue

On a warm evening – in every sense – in shul in May, we finally got to meet our new cantorial team. David Djemal and Yoav Oved have much in common apart from having wonderful tenor/high baritone singing voices. Both have Sephardi as well as Ashkenazi roots, and both are Israeli – so it felt appropriate that after a brief introduction by Rabbi Jeremy, their opening number on the evening was *Yerushalayim Shel Zachav* (*Jerusalem the Gold*), sung as a duet.

Rabbi Jeremy then asked each of them in turn a few questions to help the congregation to discover more about their backgrounds and interests.

Yoav is the son of two Israelis and grew up partly in Kenya, where his family moved for his father's business. Though he grew up speaking both Hebrew and English, he said it wasn't until he was 15, and the family returned to Israel, that he got to grips with the written language. At high school he studied engineering before entering the army, in the role of tank designer – perhaps inevitably Rabbi Jeremy told Yoav, jokingly we hope, that a "good bit of tank armour would serve you well in this new job".

Though he had always sung, it was his high school's music department that set him on the path to study classical singing seriously, at which point, as Yoav put it, "The world of opera, the world of chazanut began to open up, like a flower blossoming."

His two years after school studying at TACI, the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute, run by Cantor



Yoav Oved grew up in Kenya and Israel

Naftali Hershtik, were similarly transformative. "To him I owe the curiosity about what cantorial music actually is," Yoav said. "He inspired me at a moment when I wasn't as familiar with the texts, the prayers and the mode.... I had to learn from start to finish."

In 2012 he built on this foundation by coming to the UK to study for an undergraduate degree in music at Royal Holloway, University of London, in Egham.

Having talked about his student days it was again time to sing, and Yoav introduced and then performed a setting by Edward Birnbaum of *Hashkiveynu*. Yoav said this is one of his favourite prayers. "It has so many colours, so much brilliant wordplay, which make it a joy to sing. The meaning that it has makes it almost like a lullaby."

The spotlight now turned on David, who was already known to many at NLS, having joined the community six months into lockdown and having been a teacher at Cheder for two years.

David's family came to Israel from London and he himself was born and grew up in Jerusalem. While his mother's side are English, his father is Syrian, from Aleppo. "So it's a mix of Sephardic and Ashkenazi, English and Arabic, all together." He also confirmed that he answers to both the English and Israeli pronunciations of his name – but not, added, the Israeli slang version with the 'a' kept short and the stress transferred to the first syllable – he demonstrated how *not* to say it: *Da'vid!* (rhymes with rapid).

Explaining his first choice of song, *L'Dor V'Dor*, he said: "My mother was raised atheist because of her Holocaust survivor grandmother but before that they were religious. So there's all this spectrum of going back and forth, always with some kind of very strong Jewish identity."

David had plenty of opportunities to perform as a boy soprano, joining a choir from the age of 10: "We sang for Pope John Paul II when he came to Jerusalem," he revealed. But when his voice changed he stopped singing for a few years and turned to acting.

What does it mean to be an actor while also being a shaliach tzibbur, Rabbi Jeremy asked him. "They're quite different in their *kavannah*, their intention, and there's something very beautiful to me about being a shaliach tzibbur and being able to listen to the community, and with the community go on a journey together," David said. "And it's something I really really love. It's much more *l'shem shamayim* -- there's a release of the



Photograph: Nick James

David Djemal sang for Pope John Paul II

ego. There's a different energy to prayer and there's something a lot more pure about it."

After drama school (the Stella Adler Studio in New York and the Yoram Loewenstein Studio in Tel Aviv), David came to London and completed the musical theatre course at the Royal Academy of Music. He shared with us his choice of 'best musical' – *West Side Story* – adding that his personal favourite is Stephen Sondheim's *Assassins*.

For a wonderfully musical finale Yoav, who is half-Yemenite on both sides of his family, treated us to a medley of Yemenite folk songs, self-accompanied with a traditional oil can played with thimbles (less traditionally from Shepherd's Bush). David followed this with a setting of *Unetaneh Tokef*, and our cantorial leads ended with a duet of *Adon HaSlichot*, from the Slichot service.

It was a fascinating introduction and whetted appetites for the music ahead, both at the High Holy Days and at two forthcoming concerts (see page 18).

# We're bursting with optimism, opportunities and surprises

**Gabriella Spencer-Hope**, who starts this month as head of Cheder, sets the scene for a space where learning is fun

Another year approaches. The sweltering heat of the summer is dying down, and we prepare to celebrate new seasons, new classes, new experiences and new friends. I have spent the summer looking forward to the first day of term even more than I usually do, because I have the honour of having been given the role of head of the Cheder.

This is a Cheder I know and love very well, having once been a student here myself, taught in it for many years, and now have two daughters attending. It is a place of warmth and nurturing, fun and learning, art and song. Over the years I have had the benefit of seeing some truly spectacular programmes and projects, and working with some exceptional educators. With the current team of teachers and madrichim I am thrilled and delighted to be embarking on this new role.

The first day of Cheder has a buzz to it. We meet in the foyer of the synagogue before the weekly Cheder Tefillah starts. The new children cling to parents, who are trying to introduce the new teacher to the child. They're nervous and shy, especially the youngest ones. Within a few weeks they'll cheerily scamper into the Cheder with scarcely a backwards glance.

The children returning for another year, catching up with their friends after the long



Gabriella says she is thrilled to be taking on the role

summer. New clothes, new suntans, sometimes new homes or new siblings or new pets, all to be discussed in loud, excited voices.

The children approaching their bar or bat-mitzvah, lolling on the stairways, casually catching up with their friends of course but with an elevated sense of importance, a slight haughtiness. The oldest students in the Cheder, knowing they're about to undergo their first major religious rite of passage, they're at the top of the tree and sit with a calm confidence, and a quiet nervousness of what's in store.

But the tree extends further, and the newly appointed madrichim, fresh after their own bar or batmitzvah, line up to welcome the children with an air of giddy authority. They've chosen to return to the Cheder as leaders in the community. They've chosen to take this path in their Jewish journey, they've chosen to take time out of their valuable weekend



Our Cheder pupils with their teachers and (right) decorating the NLS sukkah

to hone and enhance their Jewish identity. I don't think they realise yet how beautiful a thing that is. For now they're just happy to be hanging out with the children, back in the familiar Cheder they know and love, but this time with a delicious sense of responsibility.

And the teachers preside over the scene, which at first may look like chaos, as they meet their new students, set parents' minds at ease, murmur instructions or encouragement to their class *madrich*. They're prepared for the term ahead, bursting with new lesson ideas or projects to try or songs to teach. There is no one in the world more full of optimism and joy than a teacher on the first day of term. They are the guides and the shepherds of our school. They know their worth and they're proud to take this invaluable role of guiding the new generation of our community up in their Masorti Jewish education. They expertly and calmly arrange the children into lines corresponding to their classes, then lead them into the main synagogue for our first Cheder Tefillah of the academic year. It's going to be a good one.

Our first big Tishrei project is going to start off the school year with a bang. Without wishing



to give away any spoilers, keep your eyes open for changes made to the Kiddush Hall! We think this is a project the wider community will be able to appreciate and enjoy.

Sukkot will be kicking off with our annual tradition of Pizza in the Hut, when parents and families are invited to help to decorate our Sukkah and then are rewarded with some yummy pizza! This is an excellent opportunity for parents to meet their child's teacher properly, as well as connect with other parents of the Cheder.

Then we'll settle into the rhythm of the term properly, covering a variety of thoughtfully chosen Jewish Studies topics as well as improving the children's Hebrew reading skills. Don't worry, there will be plenty of other fun upcoming events!

I, with my husband Jonny and our children Anastasia, Hermione and Teddy, wish you a shanah tovah u'metukah.

If you are interested in sending your children to NLS Cheder or know someone who might be, please be in touch with Gabriella Spencer-Hope via email [chederhead@newlondon.org](mailto:chederhead@newlondon.org)



# The Cyril Korn Windows will give 'a new vision of Israel'

We find out about the creative process behind the stained glass designs from artist **Josh Baum**

The designs for the new stained glass windows for our sanctuary have an energy, a poetry and a beauty that come from somewhere very special. *The New Londoner* found out more about that unique place is when it spoke to Josh Baum (pictured, below), the artist who created them. Born in London and brought up in Bristol, he studied art first in Barcelona, and then, after living for many years in Israel, at Central St Martin's in London. He now lives and works in Mitzpe Ramon, in the Negev.

The desert, and water, became one of the starting points for the ideas behind



the designs. "If you don't have meaning in your life, life is a desert," as Josh puts it, so that water – one of the main motifs of the windows – can be seen as meaning. From the Kinneret to the Red Sea in Eilat and water tower of Mitzpe to the waterfalls of Ein Gedi at the Dead Sea, the Jordan the snow caps of Mount Hermon, meaning and life flow along.

Though the 15 individual windows are about 15 places in Israel, a unity is also achieved through a poem, whose letters dance through them. The text of the poem, *Song of the River*, is a reworking of verses from the Torah, Song of Songs, Tehilim, Ibn Gvirol and from two renowned 20th-century Hebrew poets, Lea Goldberg and Rachel [Bluwstein]. The windows follow the journey of the water across the land.

Josh, who worked on the poem and the designs in collaboration with his apprentice and colleague, Ophir Miller, says the poem is "a prayer for the land, the people who live here and for those who live and pray in London, for whom Israel is a homeland and source of spiritual sustenance".

The poem was created very much with our community in mind and has a balance, with both modern and ancient voices, and female and male. The big dancing letters themselves were not designed by the artists but are in the Ashurit font, from the Sefer Torah, a script whose "secrets and mysteries" Josh delights in.

Josh and Ophir took photos and inspiration as they travelled around the country as part of their initial work on the project. Describing the process of creating the final designs, he says: "They all started off as paintings, semi-figurative paintings, collages, all kinds of things to give lots of variety of texture. The paint was watercolour and acrylic, mostly acrylic." He and Ophir then made "collages on the collages".

He says he didn't want the overall piece to



The first three windows designed by Josh Baum (pictured). From left: Eilat, Arava and Mitzpe Ramon, which has the town's water tower at the top, and below that the seven wells of Be'ersheva as seven blue shapes

be necessarily religious or not religious. "We want it to be a new vision in the sort of spirit of what's happening in Israel and the indigenous spirituality here."

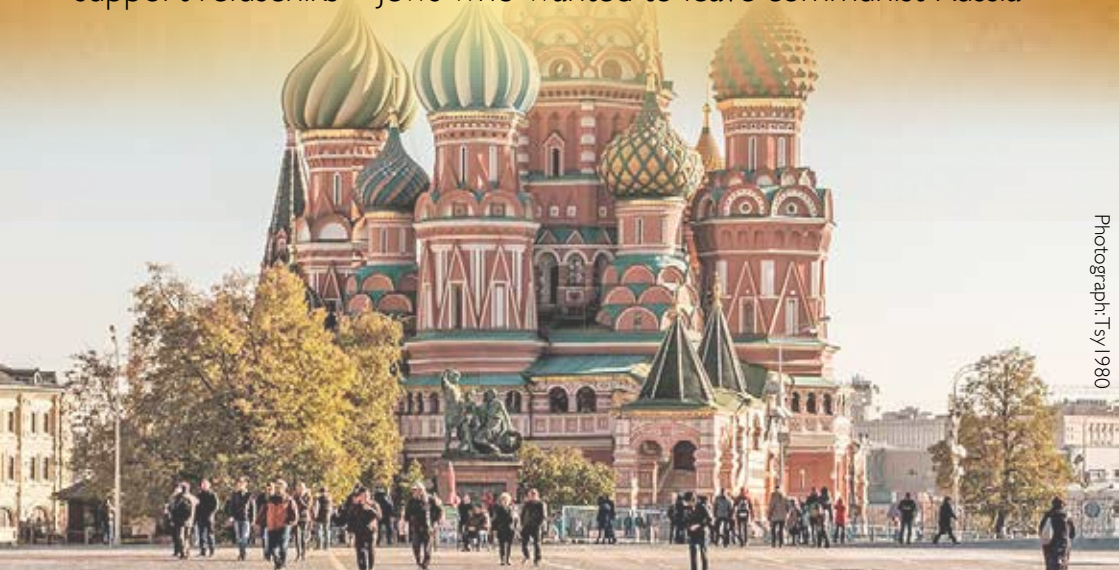
As an artist, Josh draws on his deep knowledge and spirituality. A ba'al teshuvah (a returner to the religion), he studied for many years at a yeshiva in Israel, later training as a Torah scribe. In a beautifully presented 13-minute film, called *Box of Errors* (available on Vimeo, and easily findable on the web), he holds the sofer's quill throughout as he explains the importance of imagination and his relationship as an artist to the practice of being a scribe. His deep love of Hebrew letters can also be seen in print in his illustrations, including the wonderful ones in the recently published *Malkah's Notebook*, for a text by Mira Amiras – reviewed in the last edition of this magazine.

For New London's project, Josh needed to embrace the latest techniques to transfer his images to glass, delivering his final designs to the manufacturer, Andrew Moor, in Photoshop. "It's a brand new technique," Josh says. "It's been a long process to get the colours." He came to Andrew's factory in the UK to look at colour samples but was working remotely most of the time, which presented challenges. But he's confident. "We did have one sample up in the shul and it looks great. It's going to be wonderful."

Josh has put a lot of thought as well as creativity into the question of how to have art in a beit kneset, "to complement the experience of tefillah", as he puts it. By the time this magazine is published, installation of the first three windows will have begun, so we can discover the effects of the colours, the water, the poetry and the meaning for ourselves.

# A Soviet journey, chagim 1970

**Beryl and Stephen Lerman** reveal their cloak-and-dagger mission to support refuseniks – Jews who wanted to leave communist Russia



Photograph: Tsy 1980

As the Yamim Noraim and then Sukkot approach each year we recall our experiences of these days in one particular year, 1970. We were due to make aliyah to a kibbutz, in late October, following many friends from Habonim who had already settled there. Before that, we had spent two weeks in the USSR over the chagim. This was the time of the refuseniks, when Jews who wanted to leave the Soviet Union were not allowed to, and were discriminated against in all sorts of ways for their audacity in applying for permission to leave.

During this period the Jewish Agency contacted some young Jews, chosen we know not how, inviting them to help support the refuseniks by travelling to the Soviet Union, to locations selected by the Agency, and make contact with them to express solidarity, and to let them know that Jews around the world knew of their plight and

were trying to support them in whatever ways were possible.

We were instructed to meet our Agency contact at a nondescript hotel in Maida Vale, where we were given final and precise instructions, including the name of someone we might hear of within the Jewish community in Moscow but not to approach in case he was exposed. He gave us a slip of paper with the name to remember, but told us specifically not to take it with us into Russia. We were also told not to tell anyone, especially our parents, what we were doing. The trip was paid for by the Agency, though for obvious secrecy reasons we booked everything and were reimbursed later.

We were given a tallit, tefillin, a siddur, a chumash and quite a lot of Israeli jewellery, which we were instructed to use and then leave with the communities we were to

visit. We were told the towns we had to go to: in our case Moscow, Kiev/Kyiv, Rostov and Baku, and we were also given the addresses of the synagogues in each town. No maps were available for tourists in any of the locations.

Our first stop was where we landed, Moscow, but first we had to navigate customs and passport control at Sheremetyevo airport. All the forbidden goods were in a smart shoulder bag that Beryl had purchased specifically to carry them in. We spent a few minutes observing the various passport channels before selecting one with a female official in the hope that she would be less threatening in the event that the goods were found.

We had arrived a few days before Yom Kippur and checked into our hotel, the Metropole, by Red Square. We were not given the keys to our room – we had to go

***A big black limousine with darkened windows drove along just behind us as we walked home that evening***

to the relevant floor and, on exiting the lift, found a large Russian woman permanently seated behind a big desk with all the keys to the rooms on that floor.

With an evening free we booked tickets through the hotel for *Swan Lake* at the Bolshoi Theatre. On our return we discovered our room had been rearranged as if to cover a search of all our belongings. Fortunately, as instructed, Beryl had kept her bag with her. Subsequently, we went to the bar, where we met an Australian who told us that the radios in each room could



Stephen Lerman in front of Moscow State University. 'We were told not to tell anyone, especially our parents, what we were doing'

not be turned off completely and so to be careful what we said in the room. When we got back to our room we discovered he was correct.

Meals were strange. In the communist system the waiters were paid for their shift, no matter how they carried out their job. One breakfast time we were ignored completely, until the clock ticked past 9 and we were told the restaurant was closed. Another time there was a band playing; one of the songs was the theme of the film *Exodus*: rather bizarre.

In the absence of a map we found the main synagogue by walking around for a while the next day, in preparation for our visit on Yom Kippur. That day the synagogue was packed with hundreds of people. We managed to get inside but there were many who stayed outside in the street around, struggling to hear the service and participate as best they could. We didn't speak Russian and didn't know enough Yiddish to communicate but our Hebrew was good enough to speak with those who knew the language, and a few spoke some English. We were welcomed although some were, rightly, suspicious. Were we in fact Soviet spies? Those who accepted



our story cautiously thanked us for coming and said how important it was to them that we were there. Beryl went upstairs to the women's gallery, wearing some of the Israeli jewellery, which she then managed to give to a few of the women sitting near her. As we left the shul we looked up to the roofs of the surrounding buildings and saw Soviet soldiers with guns all around, looking very threatening but fortunately just making it clear who was in charge.

There are many other stories we can tell of that trip, including the one about the Shacharit service that I went to in Rostov, leaving the tefillin and the siddur there. The service started at 6:30am. The men were suspicious of me at first, but I was welcomed later and invited to join the 'kiddush' afterwards, which consisted of black bread and vodka. In the meantime, Beryl received a call in the hotel room, though no one spoke. It was clear that the hotel officials must have seen me leaving early and were checking up on us.

There was also a trip to Baku on Simchat Torah, where the community insisted Beryl join me in the men's section downstairs, whilst the Azerbaijani women peered through the curtains upstairs at the two strangers below. I was given the honour of taking a Torah around the shul and Beryl was encouraged to join the procession – she was probably the only woman who had ever had that honour in that shul. They were so delighted to see us, touching us, asking if we knew such and such a person in New York and many other questions. One man followed us afterwards, with two little children in tow, telling us how hard life had become since he had announced his desire to leave. He had lost his job and so had his wife. All we could do was say that we would tell his story when we arrived back home. A big black limousine with

Beryl Lerman in Red Square, Moscow, 1970



darkened windows drove along just behind us as we walked home that evening.

We could also tell about the time we ran out of money, as we had naively changed all our dollars to roubles on arrival in Russia but subsequently discovered that they would only accept dollars. We telegrammed home to get our parents to send some more and, when the money didn't arrive, called the British Embassy for help. My father received a phone call and a voice said: "This is the Foreign Office here calling about your children in Russia." On our return to London my father said that if he didn't have a heart attack then, he'd live to his seventies.

Looking back, we wonder how we dared to take the risk of carrying out this mission. We are pretty sure the authorities knew we were there: there was the search of our room in Moscow, and the black limousine in Baku. They knew what we were doing but perhaps they thought making examples of us was not really worth it. The whole journey was pretty crazy but of course we are glad we did it – and we were very happy that our next journey wasn't to Siberia, but to London, and then Israel.



Photo: Pete Woodhead

## Jyll Bradley leads NLS visit to *The Hop*

Our member Jyll Bradley is pictured at her vibrant new installation at the Hayward Gallery. *The Hop* connects the urban landscape of the South Bank to the rural hop gardens of Kent with an interactive pavilion. In July, Jyll led an NLS visit to *The Hop*, which can be visited until 2 October and is open 24 hours



# Two enchanted evenings

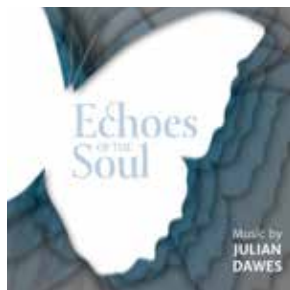
**Julian Dawes** looks forward to fundraising concerts at NLS that will feature his acclaimed compositions based on Hebrew texts

In the coming months two concerts are to take place featuring music based on Hebrew texts. They are both fundraisers for the synagogue – the first concert will also be raising money for Spiro Ark.

As many of you will know, in recent years I have composed more and more music on Jewish themes. It has included four oratorios for choir, soloists and chamber orchestra, other choral pieces setting various religious texts, song cycles setting religious or secular texts, and purely instrumental pieces titled with a psalm or other religious quotation which the music then seeks to express.

The first concert will be at New London Synagogue in conjunction with Spiro Ark, on **Sunday 30 October**, 2022 at 7.30pm. It will be based on my CD, *Echoes of the Soul*, music on Jewish themes – some are religious and others are secular. The programme will contain five songs setting poems from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, two song cycles – four songs from Shir Hashirim, and songs setting poems by Shmuel Hanagid, a 10th-century Hebrew poet.

There will also be pieces expressing Jewish texts in purely instrumental terms, including a *Reflection on Psalm 15* in memory of the late Robin Spiro, and a *Meditation on*



*Sh'ma Koleinu*. There will also be two pieces for choral quintet, one liturgical and the other a concert piece setting the Priestly Blessing.

Here are quotes from two reviews of my CD:

*Echoes of the Soul* is a precious gem and deserves to form part of the collection of every aficionado of Jewish music, regardless of religious background or affiliation. For I believe that Julian is one of the most significant 20- and 21-century composers working in the field of Jewish art music anywhere in the world. (Alex Knapp)

Creative interpretations of Hebrew texts, whether biblical, medieval poetry, Holocaust-inspired or modern Israeli are the remarkable achievement

of composer Julian Dawes. (*Jewish Renaissance* magazine)

The second concert will also be at New London Synagogue to raise money for the shul on **Sunday 5 February 2023** at 7.30pm.

It will be a performance of my String Quartet No 3, subtitled *HaShana HaYehudit* (the Jewish year). It has ten movements, each one titled with one of the Jewish festivals, which it seeks to express in purely musical terms, taking us through the Jewish year.

All but one of the movements uses material from a well-known melody associated with that festival. Sometimes you may recognise part of the melody, but often not since it is well hidden, or by using other forms of the melody – its inversion, retrograde, or the retrograde of the inversion or a small cell which is developed from one of those melodic forms.

The titles of the ten movements are: Rosh HaShana, Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Chanukah, Tu B'Shvat, Purim, Pesach, Shavuot and Tisha B'av.

There will be programme notes about each of the festivals, and each movement will be preceded by a concise insight into each of the festivals, thereby adding a real learning element to the concert.

Both concerts will be performed by exceptional players and singers, including New London's own cantorial leads, Yoav Oved and David Djemal. I hope you will all come and enjoy the concerts, which will help to maintain and extend the excellent history of music in our synagogue.

*Tickets for each of these concerts are £12.50 for members or £15 for non-members. Book and pay at [www.newlondon.org.uk](http://www.newlondon.org.uk)*

## MEMBERS' NEWS

### Dido's Bar , 29 September 2022

NLS-er Josephine Burton is premiering an immersive theatre and production this autumn.

*Dido's Bar* is a contemporary retelling of Virgil's *Aeneid*, inspired by a friend and by the show's composer Marouf Majidi's extraordinary journey from Iran to Finland as a refugee.

The show, set among cabaret tables in a music club on the edge of town, will be in a specially built theatre in the disused Tate & Lyle Factory near City Airport. Book for Thursday 29th September; NLS members will be seated together at the show. Tickets are on sale at <https://www.dasharts.org.uk>

### White Bird

The film *White Bird*, based on RJ Palacio's 2019 graphic novel of the same name, will star our member Ariella Glaser. We hear that the film is complete and the studio is deciding on the best date for release.



The story expands on characters in Palacio's young adult novel *Wonder* and tells how a young Jewish girl was hidden by a family in a Nazi-occupied French village during the Second World War; and how the boy she and her classmates once shunned became her saviour and friend. We hope to let readers know the release date as soon as it is confirmed.



# A Franklin family 'roots' visit

New Yorker **Caroline Friedfertig**, whose grandfather Ellis Franklin was a founder of NLS, leads 22 of her relatives on a UK tour

Heritage and ancestry plays a very important part in my life and the New London Synagogue is a part of my family history.

My grandparents were Ellis and Muriel Franklin, and growing up I remember my grandmother talking about the synagogue, the new venture and working with Rabbi Jacobs. Unfortunately, I was not old enough to appreciate her work and mission in creating this wonderful synagogue that epitomises progressive thinking and commitment to Judaism.

I grew up in an Orthodox home, and although my grandparents were traditional, this was a breakaway movement and I never had the opportunity to attend services or visited the synagogue while growing up in London. Many years later, after moving to Israel and then New York, I decided that my children and grandchildren should learn about my family history and ancestors.

We have just completed a 'roots' tour with my group of 22 family members, comprising children, spouses and grandchildren. One of the highlights was visiting the New London Synagogue. It was a very emotional tour, absorbing the hugeness of the moment, looking up at the ladies' gallery, knowing that my grandmother sat there attending services and her involvement in founding the shul.

Standing next to the beautiful

chanukiah that belonged to my great-grandfather, Arthur Ellis Franklin, that was removed from the Jewish Museum to adorn the bimah, was awe-inspiring.

Seeing the legacy my grandparents left leaves me with a sense of great pride. I know that they are remembered fondly and I am very grateful for the warm welcome and personal tour that Anne Cowen gave us when we visited recently. Visiting the synagogue was a highlight of my trip.

*Editor's note:* Ellis Franklin, born in Kensington into a prominent Anglo-Jewish family, was a banker at Keyser & Co. His father, Arthur, was a senior partner of Keyser & Co. Ellis and his wife, Muriel (née Waley), had five children, the second of whom was the acclaimed chemist Rosalind Franklin, whose work was central to the understanding of the molecular structures of DNA.



Above and opposite: some of our American visitors explore their heritage during the visit in July



Caroline Friedfertig (right) with NLS's honorary archivist, Anne Cowen

## The story of the Franklin chanukiah\*

Prominent in the NLS sanctuary is the 5ft-high brass chanukiah, gifted to the shul in the 1960s. Colin Franklin, a son of Ellis and Muriel – who died in 2020 – wrote about its heritage:

*"This formed part of my grandfather's collection of Jewish antiquities, which I inherited from his son, my uncle Cecil Franklin, and which was on loan to the Jewish Museum. It seemed to me fully justifiable to take it from their care and present it to the New London Synagogue after my father's death [in 1964]. Ellis Franklin was of course devoted to the synagogue and would not have frowned upon the removal of this excellent piece of equipment from*



*the museum to its proper functional place."*

The chanukiah, which features the Arms of Amsterdam on a shield decorated with lions, acorns, balls and drops, probably comes from a synagogue in Holland.

\* Menorah or chanukiah? A chanukiah has eight candle holders for use at Chanukah. The term menorah (Hebrew for lamp) generally refers to the seven-branched candlestick used in the ancient temple in Jerusalem, which is now a symbol of Judaism, and an

emblem of Israel. Many people (especially in North America) use the term menorah for their Chanukah candlestick.



# 'It's been all about connection'

Participants – known affectionately as L'Hayimniks – describe NLS's conversion programme as like finding a new family or a new home



In the earliest stages of my conversion journey, many emotions arose, often contradictory. My identity and my values, already quite settled, were all of a sudden open for change again. Conversion seemed to be a terrifying yet equally exciting path. And this was still how I felt when joining the first classes at the L'Hayim programme.

After months of reflection and a few weeks of teaching, I know the path will be disconcerting often, joyful most of the time but always insightful. This is the nature of engaging with questions different to those you've made your life with so far.

It's for all that that I can't thank enough the L'Hayim group for their warm welcome. And one can never overstate the importance of the infectious joy and passion of Angela, our teacher. I still have many questions to answer (and even more to ask) – which seems to be the Jewish way anyway. But I feel very lucky I was able to start this journey with the L'Hayim programme.

**Laetitia**

Our visit to the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in memory of those lost and honouring those who survived was an unforgettable day. Angela sensitively guided us through the rooms as we explored this disturbing story through a variety of media and artefacts and she attentively answered all of our questions. I found the antisemitic propaganda, virtual tours of the concentration camps and the video testimonies of survivors particularly poignant.

**Nina**

Walking through the NLS door last week was a portal transporting us into the golden age of co-operation in medieval Spain: a communal table lit with candles, sharing food and wine, discussing Jewish history and the poetry of Shmuel HaNagid and Yehudah HaLevi in the flickering light as the sun went down. From engaging with Jewish life in the present to taking an immersive journey that connects us with its ancient roots, it is these kinds of learning experiences that make the L'Hayim programme so special!

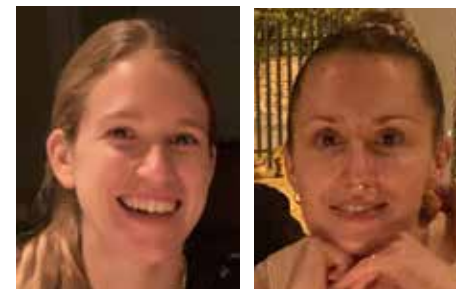
**Cat**

Angela's tour of Hoop Lane Cemetery enlightened me about the beautiful tradition the community upholds when caring for a lost and loved one. Something I once thought of as solely sad and clinical was unveiled as a series of considered, gentle and dignified steps in preparing a person for burial. Jewish tradition shows continued respect for those we lose, cherishing the life they lived, with every step signifying that even after death your body should be treated with the utmost care and consideration.

I particularly cherished the words that are said when the person is being bathed and wrapped in cloth. The words indicate acknowledgment that this is a human being, a valued member of the Jewish community and in this moment they require a tenderness. In saying the words aloud, it is as if we are including the person in the process, maintaining their humanity so not to treat them as if they do not exist in this moment as a person. Overall it feels like an extremely special and intimate process, something you'd want for your loved one.

**Corie-Lea**

I've been in the L'Hayim programme for just over a year now but already NLS has become my home and L'Hayimniks my siblings. We support each other – and disagree sometimes! – but we grow together. It sounds really soppy but I can't imagine my journey without L'Hayim and without New London.



Laetitia (left) and Cat

Daniel, Josh and I met on the programme and have since moved in together, creating the L'Hayim House (a bit like a Moishe House but not entirely). The sense of belonging we felt, we wanted to extend to other L'Hayimniks – new and old! -

**Mika**

Finding the New London Synagogue and joining its L'Hayim programme felt like coming in from the cold. The kindly, knowledgeable instruction of Angela and her various guests soon became a high point in my week. There have also been the weekly shiurim and discussion evenings, meals in members' homes and walking back from shul together. Kollel began to teach me how to learn.

The process has been much more than simply absorbing the weekly assignments, turning up for classes and advancing in knowledge and practice. To me it is and has been all about connection – with life and with my teachers, fellow students, the NLS community, its leaders, and all who have gone before us – becoming joined in. You have shared with us your history, languages and literature, the daily and festival services, times and seasons, joys and the tears, things both ordinary and extraordinary, the rhythms and jolts of the Jewish caravan's encounter with destiny.

Particularly remarkable, to me, has been your generosity. Your open-armed welcome, with willingness to do everything you can to help aliens and strangers to find a permanent place among you. At the outset, one of you said to me that for him it is about "solutions, not obstacles". I could have wept. Why? Because you received me – you beloved, peculiar people (like me, rebellious, stiff-necked and very difficult), this band of against-all-the-odds survivors, to whom it has been also promised, ... "v'yada'at et ha-Shem".

**Richard**

All photos by Nina Keinan

# 'In March I was on the phone 24/7 trying to house refugees'

NLS member and real estate expert **Inna Zhuranskaya** tells how she and her partner went into action following Russia's invasion of Ukraine

The story of my work with Ukrainian refugees began in early March, when I was contacted by Tehila Reuben, a deputy director of Masorti Olami's office in Israel, who is responsible for the movement's network of international communities and resource development. I know her through my girlfriend, Ruti Amal, who is on the board of New North London Synagogue as well as on Masorti Europe's board. Tehila heard that I was experienced in real estate [editor's note: Inna has more than 17 years of real estate private equity experience in major financial institutions and until recently she was the CIO of Rock Invest, a German fund manager]. She thought I might know property owners who would accommodate a group of Jewish refugees from Ukraine, and she was right.

For the best part of March I was on the phone almost 24/7 with owners of hotels and residential properties trying to accommodate

**Many volunteer groups looked at both host and guest solely in terms of 'number of bed spaces'**

Ukrainian Jews – and their non-Jewish friends – for short- to medium-term 'free stays' in Romania, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany. (The aim was partly to save money for Masorti, which would otherwise have had to pay market rates for the refugees in big capital cities, with high prices. In Europe there is no Homes for Ukraine programme

so families get nothing from the government.) I also assisted Tehila in arranging transport for these people out of Ukraine.

The best example of this effort was the offer by the Wombats Hostel in Budapest of free accommodation and food for about 15 people; maybe even closer to 20. Without the help of Marcus and Sasha, Wombat's (non-Jewish) owners, all these families would have been on the street for around two weeks. Rabbi Jeremy Gordon and Rabbi Natasha Mann also helped to co-ordinate with Wombats; and Rabbi Jeremy wrote a thank you letter to Marcus and Sasha from the Jewish community in London.

Because of this work for Masorti Olami, my and my girlfriend's names became known among London Jews and Ukrainians. I found myself included in all sorts of Facebook-based volunteer groups and started getting about 50 or so 'help' messages a day. At the same time, many prominent members of the Masorti community – such as the film producer Michael Kuhn, Rabbi Lee Wax and Rabba Lindsay Taylor-Guthartz of the the London School of Jewish Studies – had either not been matched at all or not with the right people. We noticed that many professional volunteer groups looked at both host and guest solely in terms of 'number of bed spaces' without taking into consideration who these people were: their personalities, their interests, their attitude towards Jews, and the host's level of observance.

As we were getting requests from both sides, we decided to match hosts and guests while taking all the above into account. The hope was that, by using a more scientific method, we could create a better dynamic between people. We also tried to make sure the guests we placed with families would become self-reliant as soon as possible. For example, we managed to help several Ukrainians obtain full-time roles: a science teacher is now teaching biology and chemistry in an academy in Bushey, several people have roles in the IT sector and one young man is coaching tennis in a tennis club in Finchley.

All in all, we have placed one family and one person with Jewish families in Chiswick, two families in Mill Hill, three people in Brighton, one person in Wakefield in West Yorkshire and 12 people/families in Hendon and Finchley (mostly in New North London Synagogue families). In terms of Ukrainian Jews we have helped, the numbers are more than 200 people – I've lost count of exactly how many.

Our Ukrainian guests have come from all walks of life: a school teacher, a biomedical scientist, a finance professional, an owner of

**One member ended up with a host whose grandma had been saved from pogroms by a Ukrainian family**

travel agency, a nurse, several people from marketing and several IT professionals. One of the people, a woman in her thirties, was half-Jewish and in her teens had been in a music band that performed at Sochnut



Inna (right) recalls getting about 50 'help' messages a day. She is pictured with her girlfriend, Ruti, and their cockapoo, Mickey

(Jewish Agency for Israel) events and has only recently rediscovered her Jewish heritage together with her seven-year-old daughter. The teacher did not even know she was halachically Jewish; she knew only that her "grandmother on the mother's side was Jewish". Another member, who considered herself an Orthodox Christian, had grandparents who were prominent members of the Moldova Hasidic community, about which she knew nothing. Another member, from Poltava in central Ukraine, ended up in a family whose grandmother was saved from pogroms by a Ukrainian family who took her in for more than three years.

So far, all the guests have been doing well, with many becoming regulars at events run by New North London Synagogue. I hope NLS will run an event in the new Jewish year.



# In search of the perfect shelter

**Edward Teeger** tells of his half-century building our sukkah, which has evolved from timber site cabin to user- and climate-friendly structure



As I retire from sukkah-building and decoration over *chamishim shanim* [fifty years], here are some thoughts, thanks and dedications.

When we joined the New London community, there were two classes of members: the founder members and the rest. It was a surprise to find that the members called the Rabbi "Louis" instead of by his title, Rabbi Dr Louis Jacobs. (Only Shula, his wife, referred to him as Laibel.) I think this communal familiarity reflected the closeness of the community that had created the shul in admiration and response to the rejection he suffered from the United (!) Synagogue a decade or less before.

Bess and I, with our two sons, were creating our own roots in Jewish London, having recently left our deeply rooted family Judaism in South African Orthodox communities and shul was, and is still, a life-long habit. I answered the call for sukkah builders (as I had done for Children's Service leaders) and found myself among a band of Jewish strongmen in their 30s and 40s doing very heavy lifting and assembly

work. The sukkah was a fully framed timber building, with heavy floor panels, walls with windows and doors, and roof trusses, that had been a site hut, designed for construction companies, to withstand all weather and to be used for years on different building sites. No doubt it would have withstood 40 years in the wilderness!

This carrying, assembly, bolting together, and later demounting and storing behind the kitchen entrance, was organised and led (for most of my adult life) by Cyril Korn, z"l. The decoration was supervised and carried out under the auspices of the Ladies Committee, led by Yvonne Korn and later by Marian Cohen. A team of dedicated women would thread all the fruit using the needles and garden wires that we still have, and the floral decorations were supplied from the gardens of members and handmade by Yvonne, Marion and members of the upper gallery congregation, including Lily Krikler and others.

Eventually we realised that not only was this major task demanding of guys used to sitting behind desks (probably dictating to

their secretaries), and whose weekly physical activities were a spot of gardening perhaps, or of golf, but the sukkah had become far too small for the growing congregation, which had more than 100 in the Cheder.

The courtyard outside the shul hall, together with the adjacent parking space behind the existing social housing block, had been part of the New London Synagogue property with a house and garden used as classrooms and playground for the community, when it was purchased under the noses of the departing St John's Wood United Synagogue community, all scheduled for demolition. In the intervening years the New London Council had approved the sale of that land for the construction of a Jewish Aged home, still called Ellis Franklin House. We discovered that our shul retains the right to use the current playground (and the parking lot adjacent) under a licence, under the deed of sale, and no doubt the shul council felt it was right and just to allow housing to be built on the site. I remember talking to previous council members who had not been so keen to sell such a valuable piece of land but *tzedakah* won out, and why not?

After taking advice from Rabbi Jacobs, we hired a metal-framed marquee every Sukkot for a few years, building a simple ceiling structure to lay the *schach*, and using ropes to pull the roof canvas on or



From left: Roberta Rosenfeld, Shirley Korn, Marion Cohen, a florist who helped out – does any reader recall his name? – and Yvonne Korn; sukkah decoration in progress, 2020



off the marquee depending on the use of the sukkah – and on the weather. Halachic guidance was provided by Rabbi Jacobs that the requirements of three walls were fulfilled by the side flaps, and even that a canvas covering above the *schach*, to shelter from a downpour, was permitted as it was made of flax or other plant-based material!

This expensive and temporary solution was superseded by the current pergola structure, designed by our engineer member the late Sam Graff. Not only is it of permanent use to the residents of the flats, but it is the right size and structure for our sukkah. Here are some pictures of the sukkah using woven palm or plant matting as temporary walls, (which were found to allow cold draughts from the east winds up our legs). Our team



of regulars also included the usual suspects such as Derek Coffman, Yahgosie Immanuel, the late and revered Freddie Lind, Len Krikler and Jeffery Bonn, and many others.

For this reason we started wrapping the sukkah in plastic sheeting outside the natural materials of the walls, and now we use green striped white seaside-type awning material which has hopefully, at least, a holiday flavour. The current square lattice timbers on the ceiling and some walls are in need of repair and some replacement, and include a central hatch for climbing up on the roof for schach laying and distribution. Cyril and I both found it easier to clamber over the roof beams (while being viewed with amusement from the shul office above), but age and

the eventual application of common sense gradually put a stop to that.

The more recent innovations have been willow fencing screens as walls, easy to roll-up, store and tie in position, and hanging baskets of flowers bought every year; that last well through the Yamim Nora'im, and the use of a temporary plastic sheet covering for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, so that the structure can serve as a buggy park.

For some years the Cheder children and parents have spent the Sunday before Sukkot threading the fruit and hanging it at ceiling level, and the internal decoration has been plants donated by members of the community, assembled by yours truly. As the volume of donated schach declined, we have used bamboo and reed matting, with schach as a visible underlay inside the Sukkah provided regularly for years particularly by Lester Kershenbaum and Teresa Kosmin. This year we plan to move to more sustainable decorations, which do not waste food and which are in keeping with ecological and climate crisis intentions. Coloured fabric decorations are proposed that can be recycled material, reused and degradable, as an example to our children and families as a commitment to the world in which we live.

Thanks go to the community for donations and participation over the decades, to the leaders who devoted time and effort in this rewarding work, to our shul office, staff and caretakers, in the past and to Lenin, who cheerfully does a lot of the schlepping, to the Cheder heads and teachers, the Chair, officers and council members, and to Rabbis Jeremy and Natasha, for their dedication, learning and inspiration.

The B'nei Mitzvah Class (2022-23)	
Alongside regular learning in the Cheder, all BM students are invited to learn on Shabbatot in which there is a BM, and to Tefillin Breakfasts: tefillah & learning with parents.	
<b>September</b>	<b>February</b>
Sunday 10 (9.45am)	Saturday 4: Cheder Shabbat
Sunday 18 (9.45am)	Sunday 19 (8.50am, With Parents)
Saturday 24: Cheder Shabbat	Saturday 25 (9.45am)
<b>October</b>	<b>March</b>
Sunday 2 (9.45am)	Sunday 5 (9.45am)
Sunday 9 (9.45am)	Sunday 12 (9.45am)
Sunday 16 (9.45am)	Sunday 19 (9.45am)
Saturday 22 (9.45am)	
Saturday 29 (9.45am)	<b>April</b>
<b>November</b>	Saturday 22 (9.45am)
Saturday 5 (9.45am)	Saturday 29 (9.45am)
Saturday 12 (9.45am)	<b>May</b>
Sunday 20 (8.50am, With Parents)	Saturday 6 (9.45am)
Saturday 26 (9.45am)	Sunday 14 (8.50am, With Parents)
<b>December</b>	Saturday 20 (9.45am)
Saturday 3 (9.45am)	Saturday 27 (9.45am)
Saturday 10 (9.45am)	<b>June</b>
Saturday 17 (9.45am)	Saturday 10 (9.45am)
<b>January</b>	Sunday 18 (9.45am): Prizesgiving!
Saturday 14 (9.45am)	Saturday 24 (9.45am)
Sunday 23 (9.45am)	<b>July</b>
Sunday 29 (9.45am)	Saturday 1 (9.45am)

# ‘Loving the stranger in your midst’ becomes a reality

**Anthony Berman** tells the story of the refugee charity HostNation

HostNation is an organisation that matches asylum seekers and refugees with local people in the Greater London area in befriending relationships. It was the brainchild of Anneke Elwes, who worked as a volunteer at the organisation, Freedom from Torture (FFT). She realised that the only contact many asylum seekers have with the ‘host’ community is in a professional capacity: case workers, lawyers, therapists, doctors and Home Office officials. She also knew that there were many altruistic Londoners who wanted to offer friendship to this isolated and often stigmatised group of people, but had no idea how to go about it.

The solution was to set up a sophisticated digital platform where criteria like geography, gender, age, personality and interests could be used to create suitable matches between the two groups. Two of the small management team she recruited to run HostNation, including me, had known Anneke when we were involved in a befriending project for unaccompanied minors at FFT, 12 years earlier. Five years since launching HostNation in September 2017 we have made almost 600 matches in London and have recently rolled out new hubs in Newcastle and Manchester.

We ask our befrienders to make a three-month commitment, where they meet up on a weekly to fortnightly basis with their refugee friend and do the sort of things that



Anthony has worked for HostNation since its inception in 2017

friends do together: visiting a gallery or museum, going to a street market, football game or a gym class, enjoying a stroll in the park or simply hanging out together. Three months after the introduction we contact both parties and get detailed feedback as to how it's gone – 84 per cent of our befrienders and refugee friends report a positive befriending outcome and of

these positive outcomes, and 45 per cent say they have formed a genuine long-lasting friendship.

For the refugees and asylum seekers, they often report that their English has improved and that they feel more included, confident and, perhaps most important of all, less lonely since getting to know their London friend. Feedback from the numerous refugee organisations who refer their clients to HostNation has also been extremely positive.

For me, the ethos behind HostNation is perfectly encapsulated in this quote from one of our befrienders:

“No matter the money you donate – no matter the marches, or the petitions you sign, or anything – being able to have a personal relationship with somebody and feeling that you can be part of a positive change in somebody's life, that's the best thing.”

For more information or to get involved, visit [www.hostnation.org.uk](http://www.hostnation.org.uk)

# A Stephen we believe in

Following Chazan Cotsen's retirement after a total of 17 years at NLS, we hear from some of the many people he has helped and inspired

## 'The voice of the shul'

Ever since I started going to NLS as a child, Stephen was the voice of the shul, and embodied its unique and wonderful character. Thinking back to how he taught me for my barmitzvah, I am struck by how patient, kind and open-minded he was, and how he somehow managed to get me on the bimah feeling part of the community and ready to sing my heart out. I will always be grateful for his presence and his melodies which feel so intrinsic to the soul of NLS."

**Johnny Lewin**

## 'A very kind teacher'

Rabbi Jeremy asked me to sing *Etz Chayim* at shul. Stephen said he would help me to prepare my singing. He invited me into shul to practise with him so I would feel ready. He was a very kind teacher. I really appreciated his help. When I performed my song, I felt excited and proud. I wish Stephen a very happy retirement!

**Zoe Futter, aged 7**

## 'I will really miss you'

Stephen, I will really miss you being our chazan. At NLS,



Stephen Cotsen retired as our chazan in June

your outstanding generosity and resilience will never be forgotten. I owe you a debt of gratitude for teaching me my barmitzvah even after all the mistakes that I'm sure I made. Because of what you taught me, I can now leyn from the Torah, read the haftorah and lead multiple services such as Musaf and the Torah Service.

Your teaching helped me grasp Hebrew to the extent that I can now teach in the Cheder. What you have

taught me I will use for the rest of my life. It's not just the barmitzvah aspect of your teaching. It's also that I've known you my entire life and you've always helped me to help in the synagogue service. For example, three years ago (two years before my barmitzvah), you taught me *Anim Zemiroth* and way before that you taught me *gelilah* (the dressing of the Torah). So thank you for helping me be the person I am today.

**Harry Gordon**

## 'Passion and discipline'

When my parents and I were discussing who should teach me for my barmitzvah at New London Synagogue, it was a total no-brainer. With his booming voice and infectious enthusiasm, Chazan Stephen was definitely the right person to help my shy and anxious 12-year-old self prepare for the big occasion, and perhaps even enjoy the experience! In large part thanks to him, this is exactly how it proved to be. Whether in person

or by video call, our lessons were never without at least a few laughs.

He taught me with passion, discipline, and kindness too – indeed, he seemed to instinctively know the exact moments I needed a break or just started to lose focus, and always seemed to have a funny story or two up his sleeve. As the big day got nearer, I resolved to make not only my family and friends proud, but Stephen too. On the day itself, 31

August 2013, walking up to the same bimah from which I had so often heard his incomparable reverberant voice was intimidating to say the least. But Stephen knew exactly what to whisper to me throughout to encourage me or make me feel at ease – and singing my Haftarah portion in front of a packed synagogue, with my family in the front row and Stephen watching proudly by my side, will remain one of the greatest memories of my life.  
**Jeremy Legmann**

## Then You Can Be a Chazan

*This is a version of the poem that Rabbi Jeremy recited at Stephen's retirement dinner*

If you can command a pulpit when rabbis all  
about you

Come and go, and the shul depends on you;  
If you can lead so all can follow you  
But make allowance for their leadership too;  
If you can sing all day and not be tired by singing  
Or make us tired when we hear your song;

If your weekday, Shalosh Regalim, Shabbat, Yomim  
Noraim Nusach is always impeccable;

If your Yitgadal and your Yitgadah are always  
evocative

Of correct time and place;  
If you start and – even more magically –

If you finish at precisely on the dot.  
If your Tefillat Geshem makes the heavens weep  
And your mere presence guarantees sunlight  
on the walk to shul

If you can fill the unforgiving Day of Kippur

With Avodah of beauty and of passion;  
If you can bury and wed - or both in one day

If you sit with spotty teen or home-bound  
congregant, and love us all

And we know that, so we love you in return  
If you can be the fulcrum of our thoughts and  
prayers

And keep that humility – for it's not to you  
we pray;  
If you can sing with passion and commitment  
And still know that being our Baal Tefillah isn't  
about your vocal pyrotechnics  
We'll love you even more.

And if, despite all our love for you  
You know there is no higher call than the care  
of your sister and mum  
Then there will always be a special place in  
our heart, in my heart, for you

We are all in you debt  
Our Chazan, our songstrel  
My friend and colleague good and true,

Then, indeed, yours is the Earth and everything  
that's in it,

And – what is more – you've been a mighty  
Chazan, my son!



# Kent's wartime refugee camp

**Julian Futter** describes how a derelict army base provided a haven for thousands of young German Jews, including his father, Hans

At a time when the subject of refugees is constantly in the news, a little-known story of an earlier period is worth telling.

Immediately after Kristallnacht in November 1938, the Central British Fund for German Jewry (now World Jewish Relief) persuaded the British government to allow into Britain unaccompanied Jewish children in an operation known as Kindertransport. What is less known, is that at the same time, it was agreed that men released from concentration camps would be allowed entry into Britain as long as it was understood that they would not be eligible for UK citizenship, they would not work and that they would leave for another country within 12 months.

As with the Kindertransport scheme there would be no financial cost to the UK government, a £50 deposit was raised for each refugee (about £3,000 in today's money) and all costs would be covered by Jewish organisations.

In January 1939, the CBF managed to rent a derelict First World War army base in Sandwich, Kent, known as Kitchener Camp, and two Jewish brothers, Phineas and Jonas May, were appointed to administer the project.

Eventually 4,000 men were housed in this camp. Most of them had been in concentration camps after Kristallnacht



and released by the Nazi government on condition that they had visas to leave Germany. Placed in an abandoned camp, these traumatised men, whose previous careers ranged from lawyers to bricklayers, made the camp habitable and within months the camp had 42 huts, two synagogues (so there would be one which no would go to), and a cinema donated by Oscar Deutsch, the owner of the Odeon chain. They even created an orchestra that gave concerts which were attended by the inhabitants of Sandwich and its surrounds.

At the outbreak of war nearly 1,000 of these men joined the Army and many were in the BEF when it was evacuated from Dunkirk. After Dunkirk, the fear of a German invasion made it seem unwise to have so many German men so close to the English Channel and the camp was closed. Some of the remaining men were briefly interned on the Isle of Man and some 250 were deported to Australia on the infamous HMT Dunera, most eventually joining the Armed Forces.

However, there was another, even less well known group that made it to the camp at the end of August 1939. It comprised 120 students from the Berlin ORT School and among these was my father, 16-year-old Hans Futter, and his brother. Arriving in Britain two days before the outbreak of war, they were warmly welcomed at the camp.



Berlin ORT students – including Julian Futter's father and uncle – pictured on 31st August 1939, shortly after their arrival at the camp, and Zoe and Ben (inset) with the photo of their great-grandfather. Opposite: the camp huts



In a letter to his parents on 1st September, which due to the declaration of war was returned as undeliverable, he wrote

*We were warmly welcomed. First there was fish with potatoes then the camp manager, an Englishman gave a speech. In the evening there were two buns and a large piece of butter then tomato soup with noodles- as much as we wanted and at 10.30 we went to bed. The whole camp is made up of about 40 huts all of which were totally dilapidated because they were uninhabited. Half of them have been repaired. There are around 3,500 people here who have been here for about 6 months. They work in carpentry, locksmithing, the cobblers shop, tailoring, the kitchen etc. There is also a large concert hall and an incredible cinema here. You can swim for half an hour a day.*

A few weeks later his brother wrote:

*In the first days we rather liked it but once we started to work at road building wearing only suit and shoes we had we lost our*

*enthusiasm. The food is like in the hostel only a little worse. I am working as a waiter.*

In Germany, before they left, their father had advised them to try to get work in the kitchens since, when he was in Sachsenhausen concentration camp, working in the kitchen meant that he was able to get enough to eat.

As in previous and subsequent waves of immigration, the rescue of these some 4,000 men made an enormous and lasting contribution to the prosperity and culture of this country. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 35a) teaches us that "anyone who preserves one life of Israel, the Torah ascribes to them as if they had preserved the entire world". Saving the life of Hans Futter allowed his descendants to flourish and enrich their world.

*L'dor v'dor...* in a small but not insignificant way it also allowed his great-grandson to write for this magazine (page 44) and for his great grandchildren to see his photo in the Wiener Library exhibition.



# A new start for community

A message from **Dr Matt Plen**, chief executive of Masorti Judaism

The Mishnah teaches that there are four new years in Judaism: one in Nisan, one in Elul, one in Tishri and one in Shevat (the last two are familiar to us as Rosh Hashanah and Tu Bishvat). I'm interested in the differences between the Nisan new year (closely associated with Pesach) and the one we're about to celebrate – Rosh Hashanah.

At both times of year, the Torah commands the Israelites to make a sacrifice. At Rosh Hashanah, the commandment is simply to "bring an offering by fire to God". (Lev 23) But in Nisan the kind of sacrifice is very specific:

"This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months" it shall be the first of the months of the year for you. Speak to the community leadership of Israel and say that on the tenth of this month each of them shall take a lamb to a family, a lamb to a household. But if the household is too small for a lamb, let it share one with a neighbour who dwells nearby...." (Ex 12).

This is the Pesach sacrifice. It takes place at the time specified by the Torah as the beginning of months, and at the moment of the Jewish people's rebirth during the Exodus from Egypt. I'm fascinated that this sacrifice – unlike the one at Rosh Hashanah – does not take place in the Tabernacle or Temple, and is inherently communal in its celebration.

This year, Masorti Judaism has also seen lots of new beginnings, and they too have been intensely communal. Noam has bounced back with summer camps and Israel tours for hundreds of young people, and more



Noam Israel Tour participants

year-round youth work in the community than I can ever remember. We've launched an exciting initiative to create networks of young adults, build relationships between them, our rabbis and our communities, and help them shape the Judaism they want at a time of life when they're not sure if synagogue is for them.

And the Masorti Judaism team has supported our communities with leadership training, professional advice, helping leaders share and problem-solve through networks like the synagogue chairs' forum, and training and recruiting new rabbis.

Just as the Torah marks the Israelites' new beginning with the Pesach sacrifice, our new beginning is all about community, relationships and working together to create genuinely meaningful Jewish life.

Shanah tovah from everyone at Masorti Judaism!

**Maccabiah 2022** Joe Shaw was part of Team GB's futsal team

## 'A mind-blowing experience!'

What an experience ... I don't think I realised when I was selected quite how big the Maccabiah Games are.

I went for trials to represent team GB U16 futsal. (This is similar to five-a-side football.) We started training for the games in spring 2021. Some of the boys had futsal experience but for me it was a whole new game. I thought if you can play football then how hard can it be. Let's just say this was slightly naive of me. The game is played at about 100 miles an hour and is tactically very different.

Fortunately I had some amazing coaches – with lots of Maccabiah experience – who managed to convert a bunch of U16 footballers into a competitive futsal team.

To be honest I don't know where to start when talking about the experience in Israel. It was totally mind-blowing. Walking through the airport dressed in red, white and blue knowing you were going to represent GB in Israel, what more could anyone ask for? But this was just the start and it got better and better.

We stayed in a hotel near Netanya with the whole GB U16 and U18 delegate. Team GB took over 2,500 athletes competing in every event including netball, football, tennis, futsal, and too many more to mention. This was our base and where we ate, slept and socialised. The togetherness and tightness of the group was phenomenal.



Some of my highlights were:

- Going to Beit Halochem (a care and rehabilitation facility). We played various sports with brave soldiers injured in the line of duty.
- Lining up with my teammates before our opening game against Spain, which we won 5-1!
- Singing *Hatikvah* before the games. It really was very emotional.
- And obviously beating Brasil 4-0!

The opening ceremony – walking out at the Teddy Stadium in Jerusalem in front of tens of thousands of people – will be a memory I have for the rest of my life. I feel honoured and so grateful to have been given the opportunity to represent my country in Israel. I truly loved every moment.

# Dates for your diary

## Rosh Hashanah 5783



### SEPTEMBER 2022

Saturday 17th	<b>Slichot</b> A liturgical celebration at 9pm (see page 43)
Saturday 24th	<b>Cheder Shabbat</b>
Sunday 25th	<b>Erev Rosh Hashanah 5763</b>
Monday 26th	<b>Rosh Hashanah 1</b>
Tuesday 27th	<b>Rosh Hashanah 2</b>

### OCTOBER

Saturday 1st	<b>Children's services: 10.45</b> 0-5s, 11am 6+ and 9-11s
Tuesday 4th	<b>Kol Nidre</b>
Wednesday 5th	<b>Yom Kippur</b>
Sunday 9th	<b>Erev Sukkot</b> Communal dinner in the sukkah following the evening service (pre-booked only; see page 17)
Saturday 15th	<b>Chol Ha Moed Sukkot</b> Hot soup kiddush and burekas in the sukkah after morning service
Saturday 22nd	The barmitzvah of Rafael Amitai Domjan
Saturday 29th	The batmitzvah of Sophie Lilly Midda
Sunday 30th	<b>Concert with Spiro Ark</b> at 7.30pm (see page 18)

### NOVEMBER

Saturday 5th	<b>Children's services: 10.45</b> 0-5s, 11am 6+ and 9-11s The barmitzvah of Ezra Wattenberg
Saturday 12th	The barmitzvah of Alfie Heslam
Saturday 26th	The b'nei mitzvah of Isaac and Jacob Pomeranzev

Weekly morning services are on Zoom, 8:30am Monday-Friday and 9am on Sunday  
Kabbalat Shabbat services take place on Friday from 6.30pm  
Shabbat morning services take place at 9.15am

### DECEMBER

Saturday 3rd	<b>Children's services: 10.45</b> 0-5s, 11am 6+ and 9-11s The barmitzvah of Noah Silk
Saturday 10th	The barmitzvah of Leo Brook
Saturday 17th	The barmitzvah of Joey Slotover
Sunday 18th	<b>Chanukah, 1st candle</b>

### JANUARY 2023

Saturday 7th	<b>Children's services: 10.45</b> 0-5s, 11am 6+ and 9-11s
Saturday 14th	The batmitzvah of Eva Ann Blau Wallis
Saturday 25th	The batmitzvah of Pippa Shepherd
Sunday 26th	The barmitzvah of Felix Barber

### FEBRUARY

Saturday 4th	<b>Cheder Shabbat</b>
Sunday 5th	<b>Fundraising concert</b> at 7.30pm (see page 18).

### MARCH

Saturday 4th	<b>Children's services: 10.45</b> 0-5s, 11am 6+ and 9-11s
--------------	---

### APRIL

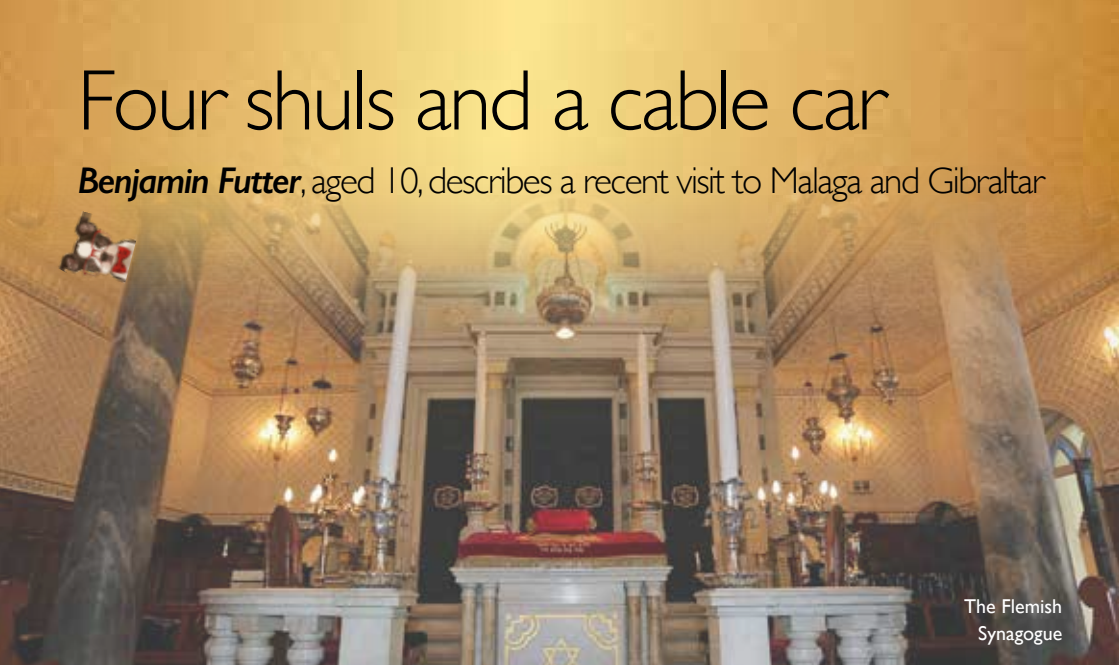
Saturday 1st	<b>Children's services: 10.45</b> 0-5s, 11am 6+ and 9-11s The barmitzvah of Ethan Roth
Wednesday 5th	<b>Erev Pesach, the first Seder</b>

All sanctuary services will be streamed on our 'set and forget' system:  
[www.newlondon.org.uk/digital](http://www.newlondon.org.uk/digital)  
For any queries, please email or telephone the shul:  
[office@newlondon.org.uk](mailto:office@newlondon.org.uk) or 020 7328 1026



# Four shuls and a cable car

**Benjamin Futter**, aged 10, describes a recent visit to Malaga and Gibraltar



In May 2022, I was privileged to go on a trip with my school (Naima JPS) to Malaga and Gibraltar to learn all about Sephardi Jewish heritage and culture, and I would like to share with you some of my experiences.

During the trip, I saw many amazing landmarks and palaces, including the Alhambra palace and the Rock of Gibraltar.

I would like to take you back in time to Wednesday 18 May 2022. My class and I ventured out to the statue of Solomon ibn Gabirol, in Malaga, about a 15-minute walk from 'the palace of symmetry', the Alhambra Palace. Ibn Gabirol was a poet and philosopher from the 11th century. There we composed speeches about friendship, like Ibn Gabirol did, to express his sorrow at not having any friends. We learned about his poetry, and I composed a haiku with another boy in my class.

Three days later, on Shabbat, we

went 'synagogue hopping' as there were so many different synagogues to visit in Gibraltar. We went to the Great Synagogue, the Little Synagogue, the Flemish Synagogue and the Abudarham Synagogue.

The Great Synagogue (Sha'ar Hashamayim Synagogue) is the main synagogue in Gibraltar and it has been rebuilt three times. More people go there than any other synagogue in Gibraltar. The Little Synagogue is one of the smallest synagogues in the world. The Flemish Synagogue (KK Nefusot Yehuda Synagogue)



Clockwise from bottom right: Benjamin in Gibraltar, the door of the Great Synagogue, the interiors of the Little Synagogue and Abudarham Synagogue, and the cable car, which runs from near the city centre to the Top of the Rock

was built by Moroccan Jews in the late 18th century, and the Abudarham Synagogue was constructed in 1805, so it is the newest synagogue in Gibraltar. Personally, my favourite synagogue was the Little Synagogue, because it was so small, cosy and welcoming.

On the penultimate day, I went to the Rock of Gibraltar and explored the caves and war tunnels dug by the British army during the

siege of Gibraltar. After our lunch, we went up and down the cable car to see the view from above the rock. We made the blessing that is made when seeing two seas at once, and then we had dinner on the beach with kumzitz (a musical gathering) and a choir. That was my favourite day of the entire trip, because of the amazing music and food, and I know I will remember my experiences on the trip for many years in the future!

## Answers to Back Page anagrams

### Jewish anagrams

1. Ner Tamid
2. Beth Din
3. Shabbat shalom
4. Rabbi Jeremy
5. Rosh Hashanah
6. Yom Kippur
7. New London Synagogue

### General anagrams

1. Boris Johnson
2. Prince William
3. prime minister
4. Queen Elizabeth
5. Prince Charles
6. Member of Parliament
7. Houses of Parliament



# The many stories of Tel Aviv

*50 of Tel Aviv's Most Intriguing Streets* by Miryam Sivan, Ziv Koren (photography) and Ellin Yassky (curation). Gefen, \$40

*Maror* by Lavie Tidhar; Head of Zeus. £8.79 (pbk)

Reviewed by **Julia Pascal**

My first night in Tel Aviv, as a 14-year-old, on holiday with my parents, was in an Allenby Street hotel. I had no idea who Allenby was or why English names were celebrated on Israeli streets. Certainly I knew that the Jewish state was founded after the British left but why was one street named after King George, another devoted to Lord Balfour? I longed for a book that would give me the backstory. Here it is and it is brilliant. It is fresh, beautifully written and presented. I want to give it to relatives and friends.

The name 'Tel Aviv' is quoted in Ezekiel 3:15. It is also referenced in Theodore Herzl's 1920 seminal novel *Alt Neuland/ Old Newland*. 'Tel' is an archaeological word for 'hill'. 'Aviv' means 'spring'. In this way, Tel Aviv, one of the youngest cities in the world, is both historical and modern. A sharply written and dense introduction explains the founding of the city. Avraham Saskin's 1909 landscape photograph shows families waiting on the beach to buy plots by auction. The book gives a clear understanding of how Tel Aviv was grown organically from the port of Yafo and how this beautiful Bauhaus city became a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Tel Aviv and Yafo/Jaffa were conjoined in 1950. Despite the 1960s commercial development of Yafo's historic port area into kitsch art galleries, Yafo has mainly kept its original Arab character whereas Tel Aviv has developed a contemporary, irreligious, metropolitan vibe.



This conurbation works and parties hard. It may be fiercely young and evolving but its history remains a constant reminder of the struggle for a Jewish state.

Miryam Sivan, an American-Israeli novelist and professor at Haifa University, writes: "Tel Aviv's street names are a walking guide to the historical and ideological agenda which is in synch with the national story of return." Israel is patriarchal and street-naming certainly reflects the over-representation of men as well as the absence of Arab history. However, the prominent street names do evoke the war between opposing different Zionist ideologues.

David Ben-Gurion Boulevard is not far from Menachem Begin Street. Both were Polish-born but political opponents. Also in central Tel Aviv is Ze'ev Jabotinsky Street. Jabotinsky, who died in 1940, is sometimes critiqued as a hardline militant. But Jabotinsky was not just a man of political action, he was also a Cassandra. He wrote:

"Eliminate the diaspora before the diaspora will eliminate you," and, "Better to have a gun and not need it than need it and not have it." Both have a post-Shoah pathos.

Hannah Semer Street informs us about the many achievements of the Slovakian-Israeli journalist who had been imprisoned in a forced labour camp and in Ravensbruck. Hardly known outside Israel, her inclusion

*'There are so many exciting histories within the 50 streets that I can give only a small a taste of how engaging this book is'*

redresses the balance. Of the Brits, Lady Rebecca (Rivka) Sieff is given her street to acknowledge her creation of WIZO with Vera Weismann. Henrietta Szold, Hadassah's founder, also gets a street, which is home to one of Israel's most important hospitals.

There are so many exciting histories within the 50 chosen streets that I can only give a small taste of how engaging this book is. The idea of naming a street after a mainstream Zionist is certainly unlikely in modern-day Britain but I note that in Kyiv there is a movement to de-Russify street names and that Ukrainian-born Golda Meir, Israel's only female prime minister, is soon to have her very own street.

Within the wide geographical span of Tel Aviv, this book does not focus on the underbelly of Tel Aviv's urban crime area near the central bus station. This is the territory of thieves and criminals in Lavie Tidhar's *Maror*.

The novel has a neat conceit. It is a series of interconnected crime stories, set in Israel over forty years. Narratives are lightly glued together with the character of the corrupt

cop Cohen. Where Tidhar really delivers is on the atmosphere of downtown Tel Aviv, Yafo, the West Bank and Haifa. He evokes the political swerve from Ben-Gurion's socialist Ashkenazi state to Menachem Begin's Mizrahi power base. I found Tidhar's mixture of real and fictional characters to be interesting but his problem with the book is that all the characters' voices sound the same.

There is an exhausting slick, American detective-style where the language jolts, unaccountably from Anglicised English to American. Every major character smokes non-stop, drinks non-stop and is about to burn out. The endless violence becomes boring. The women, who are mostly described as 'girls', talk like the men; the men monologue and dialogue in a monotonous, machismo tone.

Lurching from one gruesome plot point to another this relentless novel ultimately disappoints. Sadly, Tidhar's clever structural conceit is never fully realised. Even the fascinating geography of Tel Aviv cannot save it.

## Be part of *The New Londoner*

We welcome your ideas for our next edition, which will be published for Pesach 5783/

2023. Drop us a line if you can contribute words or pictures: [editorial@newlondon.org.uk](mailto:editorial@newlondon.org.uk), or phone the shul on 020 7328 1026.



# Remarkable life of a man who couldn't escape from himself

*The Escape Artist* by Jonathan Freedland. John Murray Press, £17.99

Reviewed by **Jonathan Silver**

The moment it was published, in June, Jonathan Freedland's excellent new biography was a hot topic of conversation both in and out of shuls. Then, in the summer, the book rose to become a fixture of the weekly UK bestseller lists.

The strapline above the title sums up the story: 'The man who broke out of the Auschwitz to warn the world'. In 300 pages, Freedman describes the amazing life of Rudolph Vrba, a Jew, originally known as Walter Rosenberg, from a secular family in Czechoslovakia who, at the age of 18, finds himself in grindingly awful circumstances in Nazi internment camps, eventually ending up in Auschwitz.

In intimate detail, we learn of the camps' regimes, the hardships and the brutality. Intimacy, however, is the one feeling denied to Walter. He recognises that he can trust no one and that he has to manage his emotions to survive. Walter experiences the agonies of backbreaking work, the inmates' fight for food, the mechanics of the gas chambers, and camp tragedies of degradation and despair. He is beaten viciously for an unsuccessful camp escape attempt but, by exhibiting remarkable strength of character subsequently, he manages to gain the respect of the camp authorities. At one point he is assigned to

work at the top of the ramp where he witnesses how the trains arrive and the victims are harried off the cattle trucks, to be selected to go left or right.

He works so diligently that he is reassigned from the worst of the camp conditions to the extraordinary 'Kanada' section. This is a restricted area where all the material possessions plundered and torn from the camp victims are accumulated: gold, jewellery, beautiful shoes, fur coats, luxuries of all kinds are available for plunder by Germans and select camp inmates.

Freedland's narrative is beautifully crafted and the story races along. I had to keep reminding myself that Walter is a character from real life – not someone from a Sam Bourne novel. The extreme circumstances of his life are described with exactitude.

This is all more remarkable as he died in 2006, and Freedland had to build his character and experiences through research and interviews, dipping in and out of events from Bratislava to Slovakia to London, and Canada.

Over his extended time in Auschwitz, Walter comes to realise that the success of the Nazi extermination regime hinges on absolute secrecy, ensuring that the outside world is denied knowledge of the death camps.

So he decides he has to try to escape once again, to let the world know the dreadful

facts and statistical secrets of the Final Solution. What marks out the story as scarcely believable is not only that he was able to "swerve" death again and again, but all the while he was training himself to memorise facts and figures about camp life, in preparation for telling the outside world. He realised that unless he had verifiable facts to recount, he would never be believed.

The suspense around the moment of the camp escape by Walter and a colleague is truly nailbiting, and we follow the difficult physical journey by which he eventually

*When a judge is shown Walter's report on Auschwitz, he doesn't think Walter is lying but he cannot believe what he is reading*

manages to hook up with partisans and together they author a detailed written report of the camps' atrocities.

Much to Walter's distress, the report does not become a call to action by the allies. The reasons are many. The politics of the war, and the fact that people will not absorb truth that is too difficult to process. In Hungary, for example, people were discreetly warned not to get on the trains as they would be killed at the end of the journey. Their response was to call for the authorities to remove those doing the warning. Insurrection that is so risky, and that takes such courage, is too difficult to contemplate under such oppression. In the US, when Judge Felix Frankfurter is shown a copy of Walter's report on Auschwitz, he says he doesn't think that Walter is lying, but he just cannot believe what he is reading. His heart and mind were working independently.

Freedland's research around Walter's life is rigorous, and the more we learn, the more

we are able to answer the obvious question: why is his amazing story not more widely known? Certainly, the facts of his escapes, and his report on the camps are alone amazing. Added to that, after the war, he assisted in the apprehension of Nazis and testified in their trials. He also built a successful scientific career, with a global reach. All this suggests that he should have become a household name. His exploits and achievements certainly warrant it.

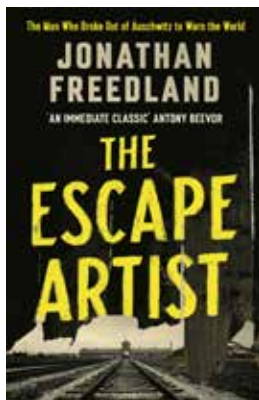
Freedland indicates that the answer to the question lies in the fact the mental and physical strength he developed in order to survive the horrors of the camps, and beyond, turned him into an obsessive and difficult family member, husband and colleague. He had trained himself to trust or confide in no one, and had no time for those he considered had failed to stand up against the Nazis and help stop the camps – whether the Jewish Kapos within, or the Jews in the rest of the world.

His obsessive temperament led to family breakups and even eventually to fall out with the man with whom he escaped from

*The mental and physical strength he developed in order to survive turned him into a difficult husband and colleague*

Auschwitz. Toward the end of his life, he had become so resentful and fixated that he was even excluded from local Holocaust commemorative events.

This book attempts to accord Walter Rosenberg/Rudolph Verba the recognition he never really achieved in his lifetime. It is not only a great read, it details a remarkable life about which few of us would otherwise have known.





# Misery that opens young eyes

*Please Write Soon* by Michael Rosen. Scholastic. £6.99 pbk. Reviewed by **Anastasia and Hermione Kruger and their mother, Gabriella**

This book is written as letters between Solly, who lives in London, and his cousin, who is Polish and fighting in the Second World War. Bernie had to fight but Solly got to stay at home, living a normal life but in fear. It's to inform children about the war and how terrible the Nazis were. The book goes back and forth between them to show how everything was really terrible and parts of the world were being destroyed. I went to Greece this year and I saw where my Nonna's family lived and they were all taken away by the Nazis. I didn't know so much of London was destroyed in the war because I don't think there are any parts that haven't been able to be rebuilt.

It seems like there was never a war. It's shocking that it seems like it was a very long time ago but there are still people alive today who lived through it. I didn't realise that wars went on constantly, that it wasn't even safe when you were asleep. It is not a book for seven-year-olds. I wouldn't necessarily recommend it to a particular age group because people can be different. I was very sad for Bernie because he never knew what was happening to his Mami and Tatte. I liked the book a lot and it taught me about the Second World War.  
**Anastasia, age 9**

This book should be called *The War Of Misery*. It's about Solly and how he always just wants to know that his cousin is safe. It shows people how terrible the war was and how people suffered from living through it.



I never thought before what it would be like living through a war. I feel like I know more about what it was like for Booba and Zeida being children in the bombs in London and being evacuated. I think people who haven't experienced the war should read this book so they know what their family before them experienced, but I don't think somebody who has already been in the war should read it because they'll remember the sad times. I felt especially sorry for Solly's mum, because she never got to see her sister again. But I liked finding out that there was a bear in the war! I also liked the illustrations because they're just red and grey. The red represents blood, and the grey is because it wasn't a happy time, it was dark and gloomy.  
**Hermione, age 7**

This is a great little book for an introduction to the Second World War. The main characters are two Jewish boys and yet the book is not predominantly about the Holocaust. The Holocaust is touched on, as is rationing, the Blitz, evacuations, Soviet Russia's involvement, and many other events. The book can be used as an entry point to further discussion of any of these themes, at a pace and level of depth suitable to the child. Michael Rosen of course is expert in drawing children in and keeping them enthralled. The book's main theme is family love, which is universal, and that is what makes this book perfect to resonate with the empathy of all children.  
**Mum**

## Home is where...

### Shabbat is shared.



Charity Reg No. 802559

At Jewish Care, we know what's important to you and your loved ones. It's not just the very best level of care in a warm and loving environment. It's the Jewish care. The values, sense of community and traditions that are so important to you and are no less important to us too.

Home is where you live. Home is where we care.

To find out more, please call **020 8922 2222**, email **LWJC@jcare.org** or visit **jewishcare.org**

care homes • retirement living • **JEWISH CARE**

# 'A Jew's most important work'

**Beatrice Sayers** reflects on a session at December's Limmud Festival

Limmud for many people is about making new friends and having fun, as well – of course – as Jewish learning. Those first two things are trickier to do when the events are online but the third still worked for me in December (I didn't have the technical difficulties at Festival that a few people had). Without needing to travel to Birmingham and run, coffee cup in hand, from room to room in anxious effort not to miss out, the learning bit can even be easier, and easier to reflect on.

Having to choose between tempting sessions in the same time slot was also no longer a problem as many could be found on catchup – including one that I found memorable.

The superlative in the title drew me in: 'The Most Important Work a Jew Can Do'. How could I not attend? The presenter was Joseph Dweck (Limmud does away with titles, but the presenter is senior rabbi of the S&P Sephardi Community in London). What would the work turn out to be, I wondered. Caring for the elderly? For young people? Which mitzvah was the one that was most important to fulfil?

The session turned out to be about an idea that didn't feel particularly Jewish, and can sound a bit new-agey and self-indulgent or, frankly, selfish: it was about self-love.

Rabbi Dweck began with what he described as a "remarkable statement". It is the well-known verse in Leviticus 19: *v'ahavta l'reicha kamocha* (You should love your neighbour as yourself). This pasuk is not, he argued, just telling us to love our neighbour; it is telling us to love ourselves, because love of oneself is the reference point, and therefore a prerequisite, for the love we must give others.

Again there is an arrow that points to the expectation that we love ourselves as individuals, he said: it is in the negative command that Hillel gives to the gentile wishing to convert to Judaism and wanting to know the most important principle of Torah: "What is hateful to you do not do to another person." *Ze hakol Torah* (That is the whole Torah), Hillel says. Yes, we must love



others and care for others. But once again, the reference point is oneself: if I am doing something to myself that is hateful, that is, if my attitude to myself is not one of love, then – as Rabbi Dweck put it – the foundation of every other action that the Torah commands is broken. A person's attitude to himself/herself/theirselves, and love for self, is at the centre of everything we should do as far as Torah as concerned.

Not everyone has difficulties with self-love or self-care, but many participants wrote in the Zoom chat, about feeling challenged with negative feelings that stem from childhood and become ingrained. Learning to love oneself is not a luxury. It is vital and at the centre of all we do.

*The Most Important Work a Jew Can Do* is available at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8rw6db>

Limmud Festival 2022 will take place from Friday 23rd to Thursday 29th December in Birmingham. After two online Festivals, work is ongoing to enable continued participation online

# We Go together

FREE, BESPOKE, JEWISH MATCHMAKING



## Single Men (30 - 80)...

We have many wonderful ladies ready to meet you

[www.wegotgether.net](http://www.wegotgether.net)

### MIGDAL OHR UK Chag Saveah for Children Rosh Hashanah Appeal

For 50 years Migdal Ohr has been Israel's leading nationwide educational network, providing a warm and accepting home for thousands of deprived, orphaned and at-risk children across Israel.

50 YEARS  
OF LIGHT  
MIGDAL OHR

### OPEN YOUR HEART

and help us ensure thousands of families will have food on their table this Rosh Hashanah

**£50**  
buys ONE  
food parcel

**£250**  
buys FIVE  
food parcels

**£500**  
buys TEN  
food parcels

**£1000**  
buys TWENTY  
food parcels

[migdalohr.org.uk/donatechagsaveah](http://migdalohr.org.uk/donatechagsaveah)

Migdal Ohr UK t: +44 (0)7310 305472 | e: [contact@migdalohr.org.uk](mailto:contact@migdalohr.org.uk)  
f: [@migdalohruk](https://www.instagram.com/migdalohruk) | Charity Number: 290371 [www.migdalohr.org.uk](http://www.migdalohr.org.uk)







New London Synagogue in conjunction with  
Spiro Ark are delighted to host a concert by  
New London Synagogue member  
Julian Dawes based on his CD

# Echoes of the Soul

7.30pm, 30th October 2022

£12.50 members, £15 non-members

Book & pay at [www.newlondon.org.uk](http://www.newlondon.org.uk)

*Creative interpretations of Hebrew texts, whether  
biblical, medieval poetry, Holocaust-inspired or modern  
Israeli are the remarkable achievement of composer  
Julian Dawes.*

(Jewish Renaissance Magazine)



WORKED WITH ALL  
LEADING CATERERS  
& BANDS

## JUSTSMILE®

EVENTS & PRODUCTION

STAGE, SOUND, LIGHTING, AUDIO VISUAL, PRODUCTION &  
MORE FOR WEDDINGS, CELEBRATIONS, BARMITZVAHS,  
BATMITZVAHS AND FUNDRAISING EVENTS

01923 750525 | [justsmile.co.uk](http://justsmile.co.uk) | [info@justsmile.co.uk](mailto:info@justsmile.co.uk)



# LOOKING FOR A JOB?

Resource offers a FREE full range of tailored services to help you find your next role

**A PERSONAL ADVISOR**  
to increase your confidence

**NETWORKING CONTACTS**  
to help you open more doors







Charity No. 1106331



**EXPERT CV WRITING**  
to secure you an interview

**INTERVIEW PREPARATION**  
to ensure you land the job

Take the first steps to getting back to work

**CALL RESOURCE NOW**  
on 020 8346 4000 or visit [resource-centre.org](http://resource-centre.org)





Creating Employment • Growing Business

# שנה טובה

CONTACT US TO FIND OUT HOW WE CAN HELP

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT BUSINESS SUPPORT SHARED WORKSPACE

020 8371 3280 [WWW.THEWORKAVENUE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.THEWORKAVENUE.ORG.UK)

REGISTERED CHARITY 1164762



## Swedecare


**Specialist staff from Sweden**  
Housekeepers, childcare, care for the elderly, live in/live out staff

**All have police/reference checks.**

**Available all year round.**

[swedecareuk52@gmail.com](mailto:swedecareuk52@gmail.com)  
[www.swedecare.info](http://www.swedecare.info)  
020 7435 1262  
07958 606084

## Man on a Bike will get you working fast!



**Rapid Response IT support for your PC and Mac**

Networks, virus problems, broadband, wireless systems, new computers and everything else you may need.  
For small businesses & home users.

*Call Ian Green, Man on a Bike on 020 8731 6171 • [www.manonabike.co.uk](http://www.manonabike.co.uk)*

More people are struggling with mental health than ever before.

# Together we can make A LIFE-SAVING DIFFERENCE





Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Donate today at [jamiuk.org/donate](http://jamiuk.org/donate)  
Thank you.

# Jami

Please help us to support everyone in the community who needs us.

JamiPeople | JAMIMentalHealth  
@jami\_uk | Jami UK

Registered charity no. 1003345. A company limited by guarantee. Registered in London no. 2618170





# CSN HOMES

Suite 484  
571 Finchley Road  
London NW3 7BN  
0208 452 5707  
[www.csnhomes.uk](http://www.csnhomes.uk)



Everywhere you  
turn there's  
**someone**  
in need of Norwood

**More people than ever need Norwood's help.**

In fact, one in four people will need Norwood over the next three years\*. We help support children and families in crisis, and people of any age with learning disabilities or autism. But we can't do it without you. **Please support Norwood with a donation this Rosh Hashanah.**

\*Source: [Survation, October 2021]



Call **020 8420 6970** to make a donation today.  
Alternatively, visit [norwood.org.uk/donate](http://norwood.org.uk/donate) or scan  
the **QR code** using your smartphone.



Patron Her Majesty The Queen Reg Charity No. 1059050

**NORWOOD**  
Taking on life together

# The Back Page only for

Young  
New  
Londoners

## Spot the Difference!

Chanukah this year begins on the evening of Sunday 18 December. Can you find six differences between the chanukiah on the left and the one on the right?



## Anagram time! (or should that be Meat a man rig?!)

Rearrange the letters to discover familiar phrases or names (answers on page 39)

### Jewish anagrams

*Of various sorts*

- 1 MAT DINER
- 2 BED HINT
- 3 ALMOST BAH BASH
- 4 BRIBER JAMEY
- 5 HON SARAH SHAH
- 6 POKY PURIM
- 7 DUNGEON LONGWAYS ONE

### General anagrams

*Politics/the monarchy*

- 1 JOSH ROBINSON
- 2 PANIC MR WILLIE
- 3 SEMI IMPRINTER
- 4 BENEATH EEL QUIZ
- 5 PENCIL CRASHER
- 6 FABLER MEANTIME ROMP
- 7 HOMOSAPIENS TEARFUL

**LOST DOGS** Sammy has now got three friends – Ella, Yoni and Rachel – and their owners are truly worried: they have all got lost somewhere in this magazine! Can you find them?



# Congregation News

## Mazal tov to our b'nei mitzvah...

**Ella Franks**, who celebrated her batmitzvah in May. Mazal tov also to her parents, Jayne and David, sister, Talia, and all her family

**Zac Saville**, who celebrated his barmitzvah in May. Mazal tov also to his parents, Sara and Daniel, sister, Nina, Adrian and Rachel Marks and all his family

**Freddie Bentata**, who celebrated his barmitzvah in May. Mazal tov also to his parents, Louise and Morris, sisters, Charlotte and Abigail, and all his family

**Leah Nilson**, who celebrated her batmitzvah in June. Mazal tov also to her parents, Brad and Julia, brothers, Eli and Benjamin, and all her family

**Lila Ongun**, who celebrated her batmitzvah in June. Mazal tov also to her mother, Veronique Dupont, sister, Apolline, and all her family

**Zoe Dickman**, who celebrated her batmitzvah in July. Mazal tov also to her parents, Sarah Greenberg and Jonathan Dickman, and all her family

**Leah Yacoubian**, who celebrated her batmitzvah in July. Mazal tov also to her parents, Bilyana and Robin, brother, Benjamin, and all her family

**Joshua Sandler**, who celebrated his barmitzvah in August. Mazal tov also to his parents, Danielle and Andrew, his brothers, Jake and Oliver, and grandparents, Gail and Michael

**Emily Shaw**, who celebrated her batmitzvah in September. Mazal tov also to her parents, Daniel and Lana, and her brother, Joe



Ella Franks



Lila Ongun