



new london  
synagogue



## Israel and Synagogal Muscle

I'm feeling very proud of our community. Pesach was magnificent. The Yom HaShoah commemoration of Yom HaShoah was moving and well-attended. The Shabbat service in honour of Chazan Stephen was outstanding. And, on Wednesday, we held a Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'Atzmaut commemoration which was, again, powerful. I was particularly touched to have such warm feedback from many who attended on Wednesday – from a wide range of backgrounds and connections to Israel – who shared their appreciation for the space created, in the Shul, for reflection and

engagement.

I have written here, and shared elsewhere, of fears that we will somehow fail to manage the competing tensions of our time and our communal efforts will, God forbid, cause fracture and bitterness. So much attention is given to voices of polarisation and weaponised alterity that it can be difficult to imagine another way is even possible, let alone deeply powerful.

The other way is however powerful. The other way is a path on which we gain strength through joining together in community and in difference, to praise, remember, share, seek knowledge and admit, in humility, our physical and intellectual fragility. That's what a good Synagogue should be trying to facilitate. There is always more to do, but I think that is what we have been doing these last weeks, and indeed these last 60 years – the life of New London Synagogue.

I wonder if we have the wrong image in our mind when we think of 'religion' as ethereal. Perhaps a better approach would be to think of religion as a muscle that requires exercise, and even stress, to develop and be sustained. The more we return to our Synagogue as multi-gym, with its various pulleys and weights and the rest of it, the more we develop our capacity to stand strong in the face of, not so much the physical, but the existential challenges of our lives. We develop capacity and language to navigate for ourselves, and others too, the world in which we live and maybe even draw the world into a places of greater compassion and justice.

Keep practicing. We have many more opportunities to train these religious muscles ahead – starting with our Shabbat Services tonight and tomorrow – where I'll be sharing a sermon on Israel.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Jeremy