

# HaGesher הגשר

*The Bridge*

East London and Essex Liberal Synagogue January 2021 | **5781**

***In this issue:***

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***We look back at the Autumn Festivals and Chanukah***

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***We introduce our new Chesed Team and Inclusion Group***

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***Susie Barnett receives the British Empire Medal***

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***And so much more...***

## ELELS welcomes new members:

Janine Arnold with Sophie

Jennifer & Richard Barnett with Sadie & Tobey Arnold.

Jennifer Ellenbogen & Samandip Dhesi, Joining as an ELELS family

Agniya Dremach & Adam Cole Victora Senett with Ada & Orli

Gillian Saunders & Martyn with Alexander.

Anthony & Hanna Kerstein

Janice & Patrick Squire join as Friends.

Elizabeth Solomon

## Mazel Tov to:

The Hulberts! On the birth of their Granddaughter - we're pleased to report that mother and baby are doing well.

Shirley and David Forbes become grandparents of their new grandson.

Mazal tov to Gill Saunders and Martyn Rappoport, who were married by Rabbi Richard Jacobi under ELELS' auspices at Oaks Lane on 4th November 2020, just before the second lockdown came into force. We thank Deborah Roos and all at SWESRS for their co-operation in helping this simchah to happen.

## Our commiserations to:

The family and friends of our member Stephen Phillips who died on 30th August.

The family and friends of our member Alan Nathan who died on 4<sup>th</sup> November

The family and friends of our member Myra Kelly who died on 26th November.

The family and friends of our member Hilary Ferman who died on 29th November.

The daughter in law of Rosie and Geoff Simmons, mother of their grand daughter, Louise, died on 7<sup>th</sup> December.



**ELELS Membership Discount Offer - Get 10% off your membership by referring a new member**

*Liberal Judaism is currently celebrating 60 years in Redbridge!  
In honour of that landmark, we have extended our offer until March 31st 2021.  
This means that you can get a 10% discount from your membership fees for all new members that you refer to ELELS – and they get 10% off too!*

*For more information about this offer, and the terms and conditions, please go to our website: <https://bit.ly/ELELS10discount>*

Photo credit: GROWTH\_francesco-gallarotti-ruQHpuKrN7c-unsplash



## Editorial

In this issue, we review the events of 2020 with particular focus on the positive outcomes of the year. The congregation has gone from strength to strength. We've had our High Holy Days, and Shabbat services streamed live on social media, which have allowed not just our own members, but the members of the Jewish community far and wide to join us.

The digital world has also allowed us to have more collaborations with other congregations, we've welcomed new members and a huge testament to the teachers our Cheder classes keep growing!

Looking forward to 2021, as Stewart says I hope there's light at the end of tunnel and I look forward to seeing you all very soon. **Best wishes, Claire Bone**

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EAST LONDON & ESSEX LIBERAL SYNAGOGUE  
& Community with a New Song - שִׁיר לְנוּ אֶת הַשִּׁיר  
web: www.elels.org.uk Facebook: ELELSynagogue

## Looking back - a year of Zoom, and stepping forward to help by Stewart Spivack

***As we approach the end of 2020, we can all look back on a year that has been like no other in most of our lifetimes. The Coronavirus changed the way of life for each and every one of us. Our lives became very restricted. In our Synagogue, physical contact between the congregation was stopped – no cuddling, handshakes and instead 'elbow bumps' were the way of saying Shabbat Shalom and greeting each other.***

At the end of March, we all faced lock-down. We were only allowed out for doing essential work, medical appointments or buying essential supplies. Suddenly, there were no toilet rolls, pasta nor flour in our shops. We queued outside supermarkets, as many of us tried to get home deliveries.

Many shops, offices and factories were made to close and an old word, furlough, came back in to common usage. The government were to pay a percentage of people's salaries if they were 'furloughed.'

Life changed for us all. And here in our small corner of the world that is the East London and Essex Liberal Synagogue, we had to adapt quickly. No longer could our doors be open for communal worship, no more meetings or study sessions, and even our office in the building had to be closed. Sam, our very new administrator at the time had to work from home.

Our technological brains within the Synagogue, and thankfully, there are many, adapted. Another new word entered the vocabulary for most of us - ZOOM!! Our services, our meetings, our talks, our celebrations, and yes, the funerals of our community all went on zoom. All of us in our homes, separated yet very much together, sat round our screens meeting to learn, to study and to pray.

Volunteers, over one hundred and fifty members, stepped forward to help with phoning each and every member, keeping in contact and seeing how we were all getting on. Food and medicines were delivered by volunteers to those who could not get out, including those who were shielding. Technological support was given to many who learnt how to use this Zoom technology.

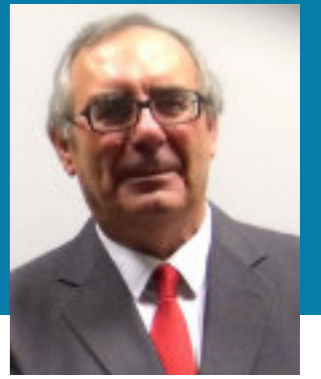
I still would urge that anyone who is feeling in need of support, be it practical or if you are just feeling down, please contact the office or my direct number. I have personal experience of mental health illness, and know only too well that it is a taboo subject, although it should NOT be. Please, please do not suffer alone.

I am now approaching the last few months of my three years as Chairman of ELELS. It was a tremendous honour to be appointed Chair. But this last year has made me feel so proud, as it should do us all. Our members stepped up in a glorious way. We have been able to offer so much in our services, our talks, study sessions, quizzes, the Eleveses group.

I know that the way our funerals were taken with sensitivity and feeling by our Rabbis did bring comfort to the mourners, and allowed us all to express care and sympathy albeit on screen but with meaning.

***Through all this time, remember, and be so pleased, in our motto that 'OUR BUILDING MAY BE CLOSED, BUT OUR COMMUNITY REMAINS VERY MUCH OPEN.'***

## Looking forward - to the year ahead



***During this year, we have seen a very significant increase in our membership and this is particularly so amongst the 'younger' generation! The numbers 'attending' at our Religion School have almost doubled, and many thanks for the inspirational teaching of Jonathan Young, our headteacher and all the others who have learnt to teach under Zoom conditions. The numbers at our Conversion classes have also increased by 100% this year.***

I know we have all been physically apart from each other, and there is no one more than myself who has missed standing at that door in Marlborough Road greeting everyone, but somehow I feel that we are more together than ever. Zoom is not the first choice of many as a form of prayer, but to have seen all the faces attending the services has been a joy. The actual numbers attending services have increased greatly since we transferred to Zoom. ELELS has been a very vibrant place this year.

Our Committee system has also been revamped. The work of the Finance Committee began a few months ago, and a review of our financial systems are being carried out. At this point, I want to give a tremendous thank you to Tina Gold, our Treasurer, for coping with this incredibly hard task alone for most of the past year.

The new Chesed/Care Committee was established by Sonia Muscovitch who has great experience in this field. This group will co-ordinate all different areas of how we keep in contact with each other, and look after each other.

Emma James is now leading an Inclusion Task Force. This group will aim to ensure that all characteristics of age, gender,

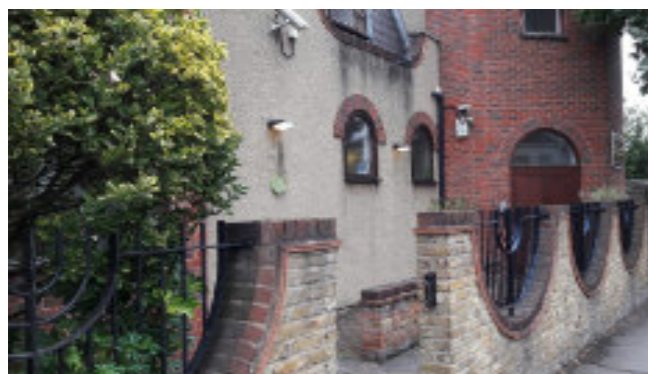
race and others will feel welcome and fully included within our community. Emma and Sonia have written in this issue about the work of their groups. As Emma and Sonia have been co-opted on to our Council, I would like to give huge thanks to those who have recently left Council. I mentioned the work of Merle Muswell and Alice Wilcock in the last magazine. For various reasons, Ashley Marks and Mel Millenbach have stood down as Treasurers. Both have given enormous service to our community. Mel was joint Treasurer at Woodford for many years. Ashley came on to Council when I was Chair at Bet Tikvah. He completely revamped the financial systems there, and contributed enormously in the creation of the systems here at ELELS. I personally, on behalf of us all, thank them for their work over many years. I am also so glad to see that Ashley's health continues to improve after his very long bout of illness this year.

As we look forward to 2021, there seem to be some light at the end of a very long Covid19 tunnel. There is much talk and excitement of vaccines being available. Please be assured that our own Cobra Group, headed by Bob Kamall will monitor the situation. Of

course, getting back to our building is very important for us all. But Bob and his group will review the situation and the risks. Please remember that, throughout this whole crisis, the health of our community has been paramount. We will never re-open our building whilst there is risk to anyone.

As I have said, the last year has been difficult for us all. But our own community has become a much more involved and caring place. This is what we need to take forward, not only here, but also within our country and, who knows, hopefully the entire world. I know we cannot change the world, but we can make a start. Let us all keep an eye out for each other, try and help those who need it, and never 'walk by on the other side of the street' If this is the lesson we can take forward into 2021 and beyond, then maybe all the sufferings and hardships we have suffered this year may well give us a better society.

***On behalf of Ruth and myself, and the entire Council, I wish you a very Happy and Healthy 2021***  
***Best wishes, Stewart***





## Looking forward to a year of peace without trust

*In my research for this article, I learned that the United Nations has declared 2021 as the International Year of Peace and Trust. While I have no problems with peace, I do have problems with the word 'trust'. Let me explain.*

Peace cannot be defined crudely as the absence of war, as there can be great tension, hostility and painful skirmishing. The word Shalom indicates more than just peace. Its root is the verb Shin-Lamed-Mem means wholeness or completeness. So, when we pray for a refuah sheleimah for those who are ill, we are expressing the wish for a complete healing or a resolution of their illness.

Shalom is much more about tranquillity – a sense of calm, sustainable, relaxed ease where tension has been dissipated away and is gradually forgotten. This is an almost messianic meaning of the word shalom, one to which we can and ought aspire, even though it might feel unachievable. I know we, at ELELS in 2021, will continue to support and help each other through this time, and provide as much shalom and enjoyment as we can.

The idea of trust is one with which I constantly grapple. It is such a powerful concept and it is one that often leads to bad outcomes: "She was too trusting and look where it took her." "He trusted the very nice-sounding person on the phone, and ended up losing thousands of pounds." I have a t-shirt that I've stopped wearing. Its slogan is "Trust me, I'm a rabbi!"

Well, here's my revelation: I do not want anyone to trust me for any superficial reason – my title, my appearance, or suchlike. I don't want you to distrust me either, but I do want you to "proceed independent of trust". This phrasing is one of the key concepts I teach rabbinic students, because anyone who makes something a matter of trust is taking a short cut. My words and my deeds may help you to feel that you can rely on me to most of the time do good things well. But I'm human and I make

mistakes; I act without full knowledge sometimes or I speak without having thought something through. I have my better days and I have my worse days.

You may well know the addition in business to "In God we trust" that states "everyone else pays in cash!" Religiously, this advice is good too. We can trust God, however we understand the divine and the Hebrew term for trust is Emunah, linked to the word Amen. Maybe that means we seek to rely on our consciences to make good decisions; maybe it means that we pause to pray / ponder a difficult decision.



However, when it comes to our dealings with other human beings, we should always follow the words of Hillel in the first century CE: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" Protect our own health and wellbeing; assert our needs in situations; ensure we don't allow ourselves to be overlooked or cheated. As the cabin crew would tell us: "Put on your own oxygen mask first, then help children or others with theirs."

In the same way, Hillel continued, "But if I am only for myself, what am I?" In answering this question, we shape our character and actions towards others. The great Jewish philosopher Martin Buber stated: "To begin with oneself, but not to end with oneself. To start from oneself, but not to aim at oneself." This is how we interact, and we human beings are interactors! If the first of Hillel's questions was about self-care, the second is about not being selfish and only attending to our own needs.

The Covid-19 pandemic has reduced our interactions in person, and we all feel this loss. We have found new ways to interact and renewed some old ways, like making more phone calls or going out for walks with friends. Through the Chanukkah and Christmas season, we again experienced the joys of giving that sometimes feel greater than the joy of receiving. Our ELELS community thrives on this truth and I feel blessed that so many more of our members are giving of themselves in different ways in response to the pandemic. I'm confident that this will make 2021 better for us all.

Lastly, Hillel stated, "And if not now, when?" January is the time for new year resolutions, so let me suggest one – if you can do something kind for someone else, do it now!

***I wish you a year of increasing peace and tranquillity that come from looking after ourselves and being kind to others, so that we can feel good within ourselves and help others to feel the same, whatever the world throws at us!***

**Richard Jacobi**

## ELELS' Covid-19 'Mini Cobra' group

***Gathering together to light Chanukah candles would be an appropriate way to end lock down. I am writing this update as we complete the first week of the second national lock down. I am fully aware that, because the lock down is due to end at one minute past minute on 3rd December, things will have changed by the time you get to read it - indeed it seems things are changing as I write!***

In the last few days there has been positive news about a potential new vaccine, even if it is too early to say if or when it will be available. Sadly, we have also heard the tragic news that the official number of Covid deaths in the UK has passed 50,000 - a sobering number and one that continues to rise every day. Once again, the NHS is coming under increasing pressure from Covid admissions leading to the cancellation of other procedures or treatments and (as has been the case since the pandemic started) the overall situation remains volatile.

The main priority remains to stay safe and do all we can to protect each other, even if that means our building remains closed.

It is not possible (at the time of writing) to say when we can reopen the building or what we will have to do to be able to reopen at the end of the current lockdown. However, it is likely

that some restrictions will need to be put in place like social distancing etc. The ELELS Covid Cobra group continues to monitor official guidance and remains ready to reassess the situation when new guidance is issued. There is also an ongoing dialogue with Liberal Judaism who have regular discussions with the Government about the impacts of the lockdown on Jewish worship, festivals, and life-cycle events such as funerals or stone-settings. This does mean that Liberal Judaism and ELELS are both continuing to monitor the situation, ready to react quickly as requirements or restrictions change.

There will only be a week between the expected end of lockdown and the start of Chanukah with the first candle being lit on the evening of 10th December. So, if we are able to reopen and if we are to have some sort of physical communal Chanukah

celebrations we will have to move quickly. It is, however, too early to say whether that will be possible or not - although gathering together to light Chanukah candles would be an appropriate way to end the lockdown.

Of course, by the time you read this, you will know if we were able to meet in our synagogue or whether we had to do our communal candle lighting online. However, you celebrated, the ELELS Covid Cobra group hopes you have had a warm, safe and healthy Chanukah.

***If you have any questions about the ELELS response to Covid or the work of the Covid Cobra group, please contact Bob Kamall (email [data.protection@elels.org.uk](mailto:data.protection@elels.org.uk)) or via the office.***

***Regards and stay safe  
Bob***





## Community development

**You may have heard on the news the candidates for Oxford Languages English Word of the Year. Among them were, furlough, lockdown, social-distancing, re-opening and of course, unprecedented, which speak volumes about the experience of the 12 months just gone. (Mail-in was also one of those words of the year....just sayin'!)**

Anyway, for us at ELELS, there would be other key words to reflect where we are at this time; there are terms relating to technology such as; Zoom, mute/unmute and latterly, livestream. Those words speak to the way that some of our old favourite words like Shabbat, shelanu, cheder, and even simcha have been adapted online.

However words like; volunteer, community, Phone-Tree, Care Team have also shone through at ELELS. They relate to the way that the ELELS community has rallied round in support of each other. We now have nearly 150 volunteers amongst our membership getting involved in different ways, and with that level of involvement, we have been able to respond with agility to the challenges of the past year, and to be a beacon of support for our community- which is what a synagogue should be; a true kehillah kedoshah (Holy community).

We are not resting on any laurels however, in the famous words of Rabbi Tarfon, 'Lo alecha hamlacha ligmor, v'lo atah ben chorin l'hivatel mimena'

You are not expected to complete the task, but neither are you free to avoid it' (Rabbi Tarfon, Pirkei Avot 2:21)

We wish to continue building in the new year and with the imagination, goodwill and character that the community has shown, we are well placed to do that. In the pages of this magazine you can read about new initiatives such as the Inclusion and Chesed Teams that have been established and speak to what we hope will be some of the key words and values for the community this coming twelve months. You can also read about some of our programmes for 2021 which we hope provide our members the opportunity to broaden their learning about Judaism, the world we live in and about each other. There is much to look forward to in 2021.

I would love to hear from you if you have suggestions for programmes that the synagogue may run or if you would like to be involved as a volunteer in some way. I can be contacted at the email address below.

**Thanks to all who have contributed so much in 2020. May we continue to respond to the inevitable challenges in a positive, innovative and constructive way and may 2021 be a year of further growth- and health!**

**Nick Young - Community Development Manager**

## From where I am (still) standing

Just before the high holy days my mum's stone setting was held, which will lead to another article another time (about something that, with Rabbi Richard's help and advice, was eventually sorted out). However, in the meantime, I wrote and read out a poem for mum. I was asked by some people if they could have a copy of it, so please indulge me as I repeat it here:

***I thought I was grown up now mum  
Never thought I'd cry  
Never even considered that one day you  
would die  
Didn't think I'd feel it  
Didn't think I'd care  
Thought I'd simply carry on,  
on the day that you weren't there  
No one ever loved me  
Just as much as you,  
No one ever will now,  
they simply cannot do  
I miss you saying you love me  
I miss that you did care  
I took these things for granted until they  
were not there  
You've gone to live with daddy  
I know that is your place  
I go about my daily life  
wearing a smile on my face***

***You've left me all alone now mum  
I have my family fair  
But you were an intrinsic part of this,  
but now you are not there  
I hold my head up in honour  
Of the way you taught me proud  
Of the lessons I learnt from watching you  
And the things you said aloud  
Today I said goodbye to you,  
I stood at your grave with tears  
In my heart you'll always stay  
Forever through the years  
One day mum I'll be there,  
with you and daddy too,  
I don't know when or where mum,  
but I feel you very near  
But mum it's very hard for me,  
because you are not here.***

As we approach the end of another year, a year that has been trying to say the least, we have all lost something or someone this year. Covid has made it an exceptionally difficult year, and of course, it isn't going anywhere soon. However, we can hope that the vaccines will help us begin to pick up our lives and start living again perhaps still with masks but without fear.

***I wish us all a healthy new year and let's look forward to Spring with longer evenings,  
birdsong, flowers and the promise of new life.***

***Be well and, as always, Shalom. Laurie Benton,***

**You are invited to The Inaugural  
Rabbi Harry Martin Jacobi Memorial Lecture**

*"Religion & Justice - from Leviticus to City"*

by  
**Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi PhD, JP**



Margaret Jacobi, the daughter of Rabbi Harry Jacobi, has been the rabbi of Birmingham Progressive Synagogue since 1994.

She will reflect on her father's concern for justice and compassion and the influence on his life of Lily Montagu, whose Yahrzeit is on 22nd January.

She will survey how religion and justice are intertwined and how justice has been variously understood, beginning with Leviticus and concluding with the writings and life of Lily Montagu and her enduring influence on Liberal Judaism.



**Sunday 24th January 2021, 2:30 -4:00pm**  
by Zoom from Southgate Progressive Synagogue  
log in available from 2:00pm

Registration is free - please contact the Synagogue office for the Zoom link  
office@sps.uk.com or 020 8886 0977 by 18th January 2021

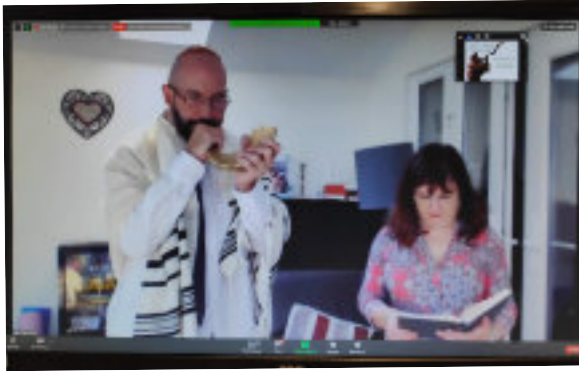
Should you wish to make a donation to SAFE PASSAGE, helping  
the plight of child refugees, it will be most appreciated.  
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/harryjacobi>




Southgate Progressive Synagogue is a constituent of Liberal Judaism  
and a supporter of the Leo Baeck College - Centre for Jewish Education



## Autumn festivals - the inside story



*The Autumn Festivals are the pinnacle of the Jewish year. Beginning with the Days of Awe, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they are quickly followed by Sukkot and Simchat Torah. Each of these festivals feature distinctive, "signature" rituals as well as particular dynamics that are cherished and help to bring the community together in the spirit of the occasion. The highlights include shofar blowing, eating honey cake, personal and communal reflection, sukkah building, completing and beginning the cycle of Torah readings and dancing around the synagogue in a parade of Torah scrolls.*

As we know, it was impossible for our community to meet for services in person, and so we needed to find innovative solutions. Rabbi Richard worked hard with the Rites and Practices Committee and others in order to dream up these festivals online to enable us to celebrate in ways that did justice to their meaning and significance.

If you missed anything, you can see the videos of our services on our Facebook page here: [bit.ly/ELELSvideos](https://bit.ly/ELELSvideos). As you can imagine, it wasn't all plain sailing, but we were very happy with the results, and everyone involved was rightly proud of their achievement. Read on for the inside story of our Autumn festivals, in the words of some of our members who were involved.

### **Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur High Holy Day Music by Hannah Jacobi, ELELS Music Director**

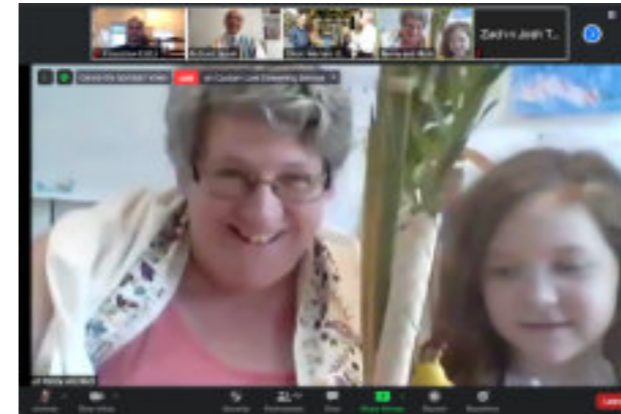
"In an ordinary year, the choir would begin rehearsing in the summer, slowly working our way through the four folders of music for each of the High Holy Day services. When it became apparent that we would not be meeting in person for this year's services, my dad, Rabbi Richard, and I began trying to work out how we might incorporate music into the Zoom services. We were adamant from the start that we would like our choir to be heard. In the knowledge that this year would be different in so many ways, the music was one way we could keep some familiarity for our community.

The how was slightly more complicated than we thought. Of course, this would involve pre-recording the music, but just as we made our plans a change in the guidelines and the introduction of the Rule of Six put another spanner in the works! That hurdle jumped over, our recording sessions began! We had done some work previously cutting the music lists down significantly so we only needed to record pieces of music that could be used more than once, but this still left us with a fairly ambitious list of pieces to record with limited time and compulsory ventilation breaks. The choir adapted amazingly to singing through masks, learning to over-pronounce consonants and up the volume.

It brought us so much joy to be able to sing together (socially distanced) again, I won't mention names, but there were some emotional moments.

After the recording was completed, each piece needed to be edited before being inserted into the liturgy to be shared over Zoom. During the services, our house, like so many helping with the technical side of the services, turned into what we described as the Gallery. Rabbi Richard in one room leading the service, Josh and I in another spotlighting and sharing music with my mum running between the two passing messages! This year will certainly stay in our memories for a long time to come!

**For the choir, and I'm sure many others, the music is such a big part of the High Holy Days. Whether that's setting the tone with Kol Nidre or a joyous romp through El Nora Alila at the end of Yom Kippur, we were so delighted, relieved and proud to still be able to sing our way through the services. Thank you for sticking with us and our technical difficulties and a HUGE thank you to the choir and Chris, our incredible organist for making this part of our High Holy Day services just a little more normal.**



### **Sukkot by our member June Bradbury**

**Having been very moved by the way Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur services had been so creatively and successfully adapted to Zoom it should have been no surprise to me that the later festivals proved to be equally meaningful and so enjoyable.**

From the moment of logging and being met with the photograph of a brightly decorated Sukkah displaying the familiar symbols of the Chag- a lulav and an Etrog; to Kiddush in Rabbi David and Fiona Hulbert's lovely Sukkah it was a truly special occasion.

There is no doubt that the input of the Cheder youngsters was a major highlight but Rabbi Richard's wise linking of the text of the Torah portion touched a chord with me. The theme of the portion centred on people's expectations of the behaviour of others and concluded with a positive message; Try not to pre-judge others, act in good faith expecting good intentions and help to spread that culture widely.

But to get back to the input of the Cheder children. The youngsters had left the Service for a while in Zoom breakout rooms to complete projects in their cheder classes with their teachers. Prior to their return we congregants were asked by Rabbi Richard to listen for the children "coming down the stairs" and one of ELELS' brilliant techies played what sounded exactly as if that was happening!



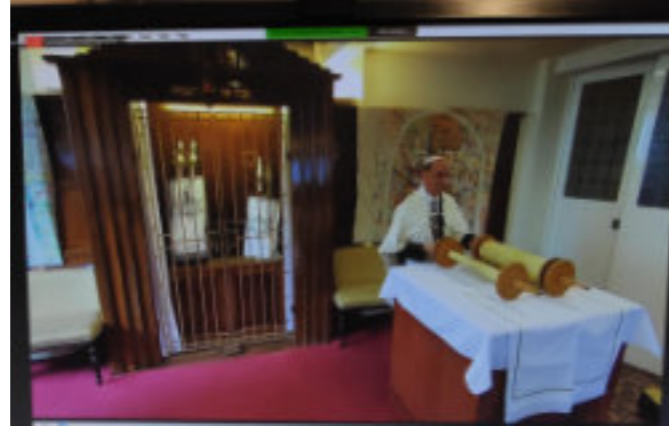
As the parts of the lulav and Etrog are believed to symbolise parts of the human body, our older cheder students had been set the task of finding objects in their house to represent the Sukkot symbols in a similar way. One thoughtful participant suggested the spine of a book related to a palm branch, and an apple which she felt was linking with the lip shaped myrtles because of its colour and using lips to eat it. Another located his Dad's wedding ring, representing the love between his parents, and connected that to the Etrog which is the symbol of the heart.



The younger members of the Cheder produced amazingly well constructed and imaginative mini Sukkot filled with fruits and decorations which they talked about with great enthusiasm.

I think we should acknowledge the wonderful work undertaken by the Jonathan Young and all of our young team of cheder Teachers for their inspirational ideas which translate into enthusiastic learning for the pupils."

## Autumn festivals - the inside story continued...



### Simchat Torah

#### Creating the montage of 46 members of ELELS reading Torah by Gary Bronziet:

"I was delighted to have been asked to play a small part in the Simchat Torah service. Usually the synagogue invites two members who have been very involved in the community over the past year to be Chatan or Callah Torah/Bereishit - in other words the people who read the last few verses of the Torah and the very first verses to restart the lectionary cycle. Over the past year, there have been so many volunteers that the idea was to involve as many congregants as possible. In total 46 of our volunteers wanted to read, and so each were assigned one verse of Torah. Each of the members were required to record themselves reading their verse, and send it in to Sam at the office. My job was then to string these together into one continuous video, with a little tidying up. Not a difficult job to do using iMovie but it was important to make sure that the readings ran smoothly.

In the end we managed it, although not before the names of our Head of Cheder Jonathan Young and his brother Nick (Community Development Manager) were mixed up at one stage. They both objected strongly (with tongue firmly in cheek!) but it was all sorted out easily enough.

The resulting movie was then shared with all the attendees as part of the online Simchat Torah service on Zoom and streamed on social media. If you missed it, you can see it on the recording of our Simchat Torah service on Facebook: [bit.ly/ELELSSTvideo](https://bit.ly/ELELSSTvideo)

#### Simchat Torah by Helen Grant and Viv Martin

"As someone who took part in the Torah readings, recording myself reading was something I had never dreamt I would do and having been given good instructions was surprised at how easy it was. Just like our Sukkot service, we enjoyed the work done by the children in their cheder breakout rooms where they made flags or scrolls. When the time came for the Torah scroll parade, the children all joined together to dance to a klezmer medley with these, as did some brave adults. This was followed by a quiet few moments for Kaddish before everyone being **invited** to unmute and sing a riotous 'Adon Alam'.

Thank you to all involved for putting so much thought and effort into how we could celebrate in a meaningful and joyous way and make these days special despite all being remote from each other."- **Helen Grant**

"I wanted to take part in the service as I have really enjoyed volunteering (albeit in a small way) in my Phone Tree role. Since the pandemic I feel there is a lovely sense of community in ELELS and I wanted to share Simchat Torah with everyone in the limited way we could which is why I was keen to read a verse from the Torah. I was a committed member and volunteer at Bet Tikvah and I now feel a real part of the combined community. Long may it continue to thrive!"

- **Viv Martin.**

**Due to my rather large amount of constant health problems it had been some years since I had attended the High Holy Day services. This year it was great to be able via zoom to attend.**

Although due to my diabetic eating regime we did not attend Erev Rosh Hashanah services but in the morning, our wi-fi reception was great and I think the people who did the technical work did a fantastic job. The choir although recorded felt very real to me and when Rabbi Richard Jacobi read from the Torah I felt that I was there with him. The novelty of all the people in their own home blowing shofars was something I did not expect but since I was a child I have always loved hearing the shofar being blown so for me this was an extra element of enjoyment to the service.

Yom Kippur was a most delightful time but unfortunately I was ill for most of it. I was not there for Kol Nidre. The next morning I felt a little better and again it was uplifting to attend and hear a service which I have heard so many times and yet it always seems new.

What a great group of people we have at our shul. I confess I did not remember how wonderful they were and I should like to say to you all thank you for everything.

I became unwell again and sadly had to go to bed around midday and when I came down again I found I had just missed Yizkor which I was so looking forward to being there for. Although I always feel sad that all those much loved people are no more but also pleased that we who are still here remember and miss them.

**It was a great close of a wonderful day but I missed my Honey and Apple.**

**To all the people who have worked so hard for the rest of us to attend an excellent Yom Kippur service, thank you so much.**

**Melvin Grant**

## Rosh Chodesh group

**This is my personal perspective on our Rosh Chodesh Group at ELELS. I have attended many of the meetings since they started up again a few years ago. The theme will vary each month, and are often linked to a festival or a Parsha that is being read. The sessions tend to fall on the week of the New Moon to celebrate the link between women and the moon cycle.**

Student Rabbi Eleanor Davis has been with us for over a year now and each month comes up with a great topic to discuss and mull over. We often start with a check in and a chance for all who attend to share a little highlight (or a stressor) that they have had since the last session. It is often a good chance for us to learn about new members of the group too. We then move on to discuss the theme for that evening. As the evening goes on I feel more energised and enjoy debating the different topics and thinking on different levels. It is lovely to hear the group talk about their own feelings and ideas, some are different, some are similar and we take time to listen to everyone too.

This month being Rosh Chodesh Kislev, is the month that Chanukah falls in. Our discussion this week focused around fashion and how/why we dress as we do, is it to please ourselves or someone else.

This was then linked to the story of Judith who dressed in appropriate "Armour" in order to deceive an invading leader (Holofernes) and free the Israelites from the Assyrians, (there is the link to Chanukah). As the discussion went on I could see that what I thought was a normal everyday action, is in fact something that we are sometimes unconsciously influenced in our choices - this could be if we are going into a work environment or being out with friends or dressing up for a special occasion. It was also interesting to link this theme to Judith who is mainly known for the act of cutting Holofernes head off but not for the smart thinking that she takes beforehand including making sure that she dresses the correct situation that she is in.

As the world moved to zoom, as did our sessions and - whilst a lot of people may suffer from zoom fatigue and not want to join onto another "session" during the working week - it is quite nice to know that there is a space once a month where we can gather and share thoughts on Judaism from a Woman's perspective (and learn new things too). I have never left a session feeling more lethargic than when it started, which is a sign of both Eleanor's success as our teacher and of how cathartic just talking to others can be.

**By Di and Rachel Kamall**



## **E<sup>2</sup> FOR THE NEW GENERATION**

***So, we come to the end of the Autumn Cheder term, and what a term it has been! From the High Holy Day's reflection, to Sukkahs, dancing, mitzvahs and B'nei Mitzvah's, it has been a busy few months, that have been a pleasure to witness***

We continued online via Zoom, refining the schedule of the morning to include more Hebrew learning as well as Jewish Studies.

Our teachers; Sasha, Isabelle, Ezra, Zach, Josh and Isaac, have been joined by Joshua and Maja as help teachers, who had their Bar/Bat Mitzvah's last year. That's allowed us to install a new Hebrew system that provides some quality one to one reading time for the students and the new help teachers proved particularly able in those roles. In fact, Maja will be following in her brother's footsteps, by receiving the Jack Petchey award for her leadership and contributions to the community this term, so well done to her!

We started off the year with the High Holy Days, incorporating new children's services including activities, discussion and stories, which were a great success, drawing involvement from Cheder & non-Cheder families from throughout the community. Children got to bang instruments and re-enact the story of Jonah, which was a particular highlight. This was closely followed by Sukkot and Simchat Torah with lovely community services, that brought all generations together.

Fantastic Sukkahs were built with cardboard boxes and Lego, that even featured penguins; and creative scrolls and flags were made, waved, and danced with, in a joyous celebration of the Torah!

Then on the weekend of the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, the Cheder based its Mitzvah Day around the principles of kindness, sharing and bringing together different faiths as we collaborated with Mill Grove, a Christian based Foster Home ([www.millgrove.org.uk](http://www.millgrove.org.uk)) in South Woodford.

## **B'nei Mitzvah and Chanukah**

And talking of B'nei mitzvah, I would like to say a huge congratulations to Sukhi and Talya Singh, and their cousin, Oren Noy for speaking with such wisdom and leading theirs, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, with such aplomb!

As I write this, we are looking forward to Iziah Duck's Bar Mitzvah on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December and our programme of Chanukah celebrations which you will read about elsewhere in this issue.

For the Cheder, the final session is also on the 12<sup>th</sup> and will be led by LJY-Netzer. They will be sending out Chanukah boxes to all the Cheder children and leading dreidel and Chanukiah making activities, in preparation for a family Chanukah lights Havdalah service in the afternoon, with Rabbi Richard.

***Our new term begins again on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, and in the meantime may I wish everybody a wonderful 2021!***

***Jonathan Young, Head Teacher***

## **Mitzvah Day**

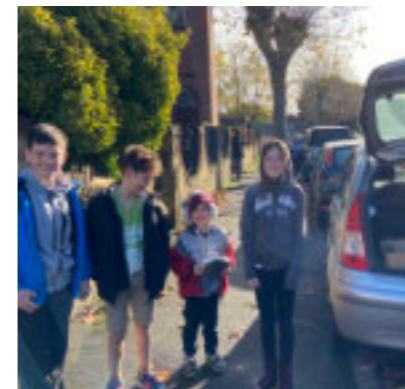
**15th November 2020**

As such, we baked cakes to go to the twenty children and adults living at the home which also incorporates a pre-school and school for children with cerebral palsy; ahead of meeting and learning from the directors of the home on the Sunday. One of the leaders Keith had this to say:

***'We have had enthusiastic responses from all who have tasted the cakes, so please pass on much thanks to all who baked them. It was a blessing to connect in so many rich ways and at a range of different levels.'***



Under the banner of Middah Torah, regular Cheder sessions featured explorations on the stories of Cain and Abel, creation, and Daniel and his dreams, with some superb artwork created by the younger classes of Bereishit and Shmot. The oldest class, Vayikra's sessions have included delving into what makes a good D'var Torah, in preparation for their B'nei Mitzvah, as well as looking at the notion of privilege and developing an anti-racism statement

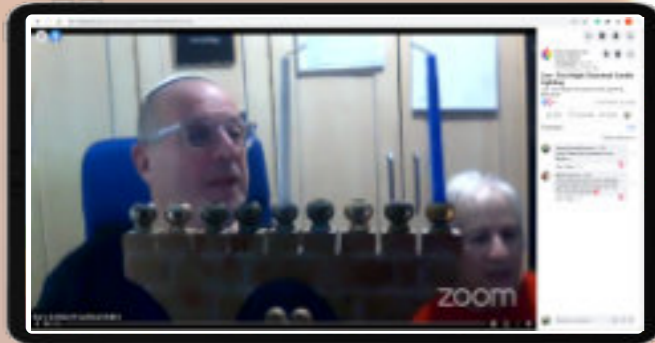


***From the superb baking efforts of the kids, to the parental delivery of the cakes and to the lovely, informative & connecting chat with Keith and Ruth at Mill Grove! What a wonderful weekend of mitzvahs it was!***

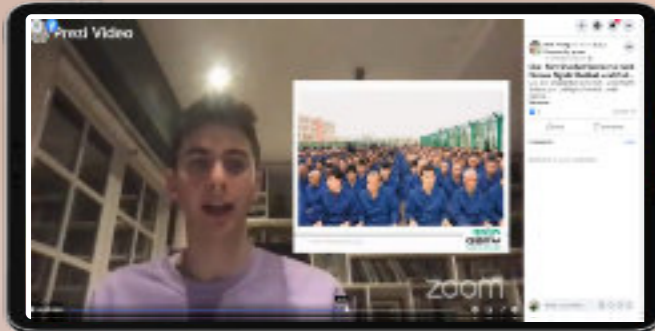


# Chanukah in 2020, eight nights of light

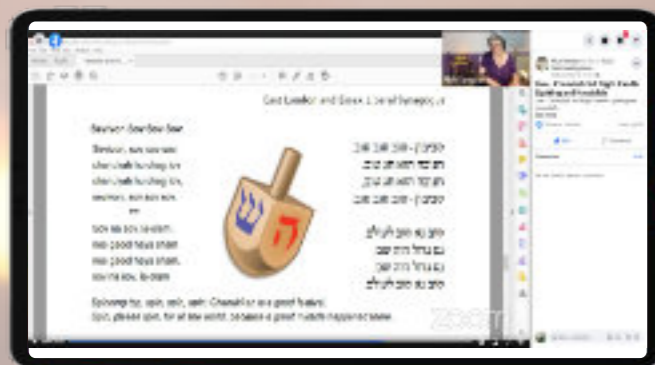
**ELELS presented a range of online events which took place, online, over the eight nights of Chanukah. There were so many highlights - including a candle lighting on Human Rights Shabbat, Tots Chanukah and Havdallah with the cheder, a Doughnut/latke cook-along, a Chanukah Quiz, Chanukah with the Szim Salom Hitközség community in Budapest, a special open Rosh Chodesh session and Chanukah Shelanu, concluding with an inclusive Chanukah service on the final night. We've shared a handful of the highlights, but for more, please do go onto our ELELS Facebook community page to see more: <https://bit.ly/ELELScommunity>**



The first night of Chanukah candle lighting led by our Elevensies group who meet daily for coffee and a chat. The event will include candle lighting, Chanukah blessings, songs and reflective readings as well as the chance to talk and share Chanukah greetings.



Live- Erev Shabbat Service to mark Human Rights Shabbat, and 2nd Night Chanukah candle lighting. The service was led by Rabbi Richard Jacobi and included the participation of Amy Bentham and Jack Lubner, from the Rene Cassin organisation. Amy and Jack also spoke to us about the plight of the Uyghur Muslims in China.



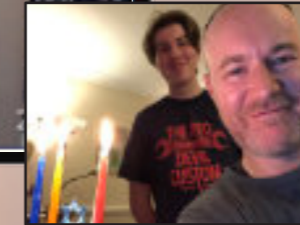
Live - Chanukah 3rd Night Candle Lighting and Havdallah. Led by Rabbi Richard Jacobi with Mich Sampson and featured the children of our cheder.



4th Night Candle lighting. The service was led by David and Tina Gold. This weekend we also had a spectacular Doughnut and Latke live Chanukah cook-along with Alice Wilcock (pictured left), a fantastic afternoon - enjoyed by many, particularly our Cheder members Daniel Delow and Emilia Hulbert (pictured left).



The fifth night of Chanukah candle lighting we joined up with our friends in Budapest, Hungary from the Szim Salom Synagogue. Our lighting was hosted by Rabbi Richard Jacobi and Rabbi Katalin Kelemen featuring the participation of Cantor Diana Senechal.



Pictured left Nick Young, our Community Development manager, with his son Dominik (14) who was born in Budapest and blessed at the Szim Salom community in 2010.



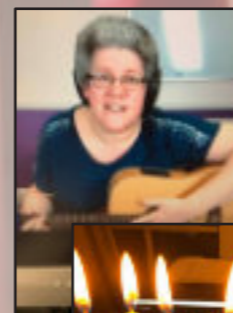
The 6th Night of Chanukah Candle Lighting was led by Rabbi David and Fiona Hulbert. We were also joined by Ruth Seager, Chair of LJ and ELELS member.

Ruth talked about her role as Chair and then answered questions.



The 7th Night Candle Lighting led by Student Rabbi Eleanor Davis and the Rosh Chodesh Group with guests including Councillor Jas Athwal, leader of Redbridge Borough Council.

In this Chanukah inspired special session, open to all regardless of gender identity, we took another look at traditional Chanukah foods and the miracle behind them, then discussed what challenge a Chanukah heroine might offer us for the coming month of Tevet.



A wonderful 8th and final night Chanukah Shelanu Service led by Rabbi Richard, Mich Sampson and Tommy Precious. Lets hope we can keep the light and hope alive. Thanks too to June Bradbury for hosting the event.



**"Tonight marked the end of eight nights of ELELS communal lighting where so many of our members, friends and guests joined in. It has been so moving and meaningful for us all to join together, albeit on Zoom, a wonderful community. Thanks to everyone who organised this, led the services and all who took part. Chag Sameach Chanukah"** Stewart Spivack

**"Thanks entirely to Rabbi Richard, Mich Sampson and Tommy Precious who made the Shelanu service such a joyous meaningful occasion and as for me, being host was a pleasure. However a big thank you must also go to all the enthusiastic participants without whom Shelanu could not happen"** June Bradbury

## Chesed team

***It is something for us to be totally proud of, that so many members of the synagogue have volunteered, prior to and during covid, either with KIT (which has been in place for some time), or the Phone Tree, which was set up out of the current situation.***

The Synagogue wished to establish a Care Committee, to ensure we continue to connect with and support our members. Rabbi Richard, Nick and Stewart are involved with the group. I was asked to take the lead for the Chesed Team, which I accepted and am pleased to inform, the Chesed Team has recently been set up and our first meeting took place in November.

A huge thank you to those members who have offered to be part of the Chesed Team.

The purpose of the Chesed Team is building on our vision of creating a caring community at ELELS. The Chesed team is a collaborative effort of our Rabbis, staff and volunteers to reach out to members who are alone,

convalescing, bereaved, have mental/physical health issues, are responding to life-changing events (e.g. new birth, divorce, retirement, trauma/loss etc).

The goal of the Chesed Team is to ensure that all members of our community have an opportunity to have regular, friendly and personal support and contact with fellow congregants. The resulting relationships enrich the entire community.

***If you would like further information about the Chesed Team, please get in touch with me via the synagogue email address.***

***Sonia Muscovitch***



## ELELS inclusion action group

***I am delighted to introduce the new ELELS Inclusion Action Group to you. The Group will be looking at what can we can do as a community to ensure that everyone no matter their age, race, gender, sexuality or disability feels safe and welcome in our synagogue.***

It is so important as a community that we commit to being active and making a conscious effort to work against all aspects of racism and prejudice in wider society. We need to be more than educated and informed; we need to help tackle discrimination both inside and outside of our community.

The Jewish community has a long history of campaigning and speaking out for human and civil rights across the world. Jewish people were the most actively involved non-black group in the American civil rights movement and the anti-apartheid campaign.

Hopefully we can continue to be proud to play our role in the causes and challenges of today. For example, it is clear that racial injustice is not just an issue in the US and that many black people living in Britain feel the injustices they face are often not even acknowledged let alone addressed.

With the digital revolution seeing a rise in spreading hate and division - it's more important than ever that we stand together.

We will be organising some educational events through the year and encourage everyone to join our events - whether you want to help, find out more or especially if you have questions about the issues.

If you would like to get involved in the committee please feel free to contact me via the office or by:  
[emma\\_sandler@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:emma_sandler@yahoo.co.uk)

***It has been a difficult year and this is one of the ways we can look to the future and end it on a hopeful note by coming together to ensure all of our community are welcome and included.***

***By Emma James***

## Criteria – Naomi Joseph in conversation with Emma James

***We were delighted in October to host a screening of synagogue member, actress and writer Naomi Joseph's award winning and extremely poignant short film 'Criteria'.***



***Criteria started off as a live spoken word companion piece to Naomi's solo theatre show Motherland, performed at the Lyric theatre Hammersmith, before being turned into a short film released in 2019. She describes it as "an exploration of identity through the eyes of a young woman who has been forced to grow up too quickly".***

We were recommended to watch this short film before we all Zoomed in at 7.30 and then spent an hour or more in a relaxed and open conversation talking about Naomi's family, through her eyes living in a mixed Jewish family, Sephardi and white Ashkenazi and how the loss of her Mum has defined her.

The introduction or the scene was set with Naomi filling in an interview pro forma which was then used as a basis for exploring the rich mix of her family background. As a platform to look at her own attributes around the key topics highlighted in the film: confidence, sensitive, team player, responsible.

It was interesting to hear how Naomi described herself and how she coped with the questions from others as a young person, "the looks we got as a family"; the questions around being mixed race; and after her Mum passed away "now we are four minus one". How as a young woman thinking about her imagined role in the home as "something put upon me" but "I am not the woman of the house". But "am my mother's daughter and through me in some way she lives on".

The film ends with her being an eligible candidate because she succeeded in ticking every box in equal opportunities section of the application form.

The film explored Naomi's unique and complex situation, using her own life circumstances/experiences. I felt that this was a very brave thing to do and am very thankful to Naomi for doing this. Comments from viewers on ELELS Facebook page also expressed gratitude.

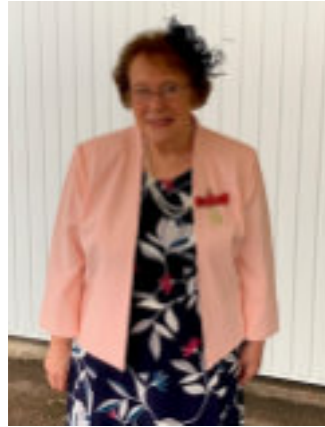
One of the messages of Naomi's powerful piece seems to be that there is no perfect way for inclusion to work; it is an ongoing conversation. It is about celebrating peoples differences, cultures and traditions.

In case you haven't seen the film, I would strongly recommend you watch it, which can be found on Vimeo: <https://bit.ly/VimeoCriteria>. The film gives an insightful and positive way of thinking about inclusion, tolerance of others and a way forward.

Naomi, as a performer, has felt the impact of the pandemic as everyone in her industry. However, as we spoke, Naomi was busy working on fun online activities for 5-8 year olds during the half term in Barking and Dagenham. She is also exploring other short films raising awareness on hope during this pandemic and beyond.

***We were really pleased that so many members joined us for this extremely interesting and thought provoking event. The feedback since has been excellent and we hope that we can do more events with Naomi in the future. Thanks once again to Naomi for making this important film and for sharing it with us. It was a very proud and moving evening for our community, especially those of us who remember Naomi and have known her family well over the years.***

**By Jane Porte and Emma James**



## **Susie Barnett received the British Empire Medal in January 2020 for 'Services to Holocaust Education and Awareness'**



ELELS member Susie Barnett received the British Empire Medal in January 2020 for 'Services to Holocaust Education and Awareness'. For many years Susie has given talks to numerous schools and community groups as a survivor of the Holocaust and in January 2021 she will share her story with us at ELELS.

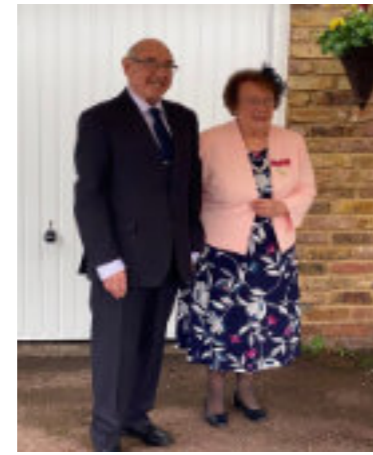
Although all of the members of her immediate family managed to escape, they ultimately paid the price as a family.

After the extraordinary challenges of her younger years, Susie found happiness in adulthood, becoming a French teacher with pastoral responsibilities, living in Woodford with husband

David, and her children, a son and daughter. She was for many years a member of the Woodford Liberal community. As a member of the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), she attended a talk by a speaker from the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET). After the talk, she was asked by the speaker to herself give talks for the HET, telling her own story.



Born in Hamburg, in Nazi Germany as the youngest child of four, her father was imprisoned in Sachsenhausen and her one brother and two sisters were taken separately to England on kinder transport. Baby Susie was left with her mother in Nazi Germany and they only managed to escape the horrors of the Holocaust due to a 'miracle'.



Since then, Susie has spoken in colleges and schools, public libraries, town halls, churches, synagogues and has also been a keynote speaker at various Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations around London. According to a count issued by the HET, Susie has reached at least 5000 people, although she knows that the number is actually much



higher due to the many unofficial talks that she gave before speaking officially for HET. The British Empire Medal is awarded for 'hands-on' service to the local community. This could be a long-term charitable or voluntary activity, or innovative work that has made a significant difference.

Susie first heard from the Cabinet Office in confidence in November 2019 that she was to be awarded the medal in the New Year's Honours List in 2020. When she found out, her first thoughts were disbelief. "Coming from my background I could never have imagined receiving such an honour."

As she was unable to attend the investiture ceremony for the award of her BEM because of Covid, the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst, came to her front garden to present it to her. Friends, neighbours and family were able to watch the ceremony from the street. According to Susie, it felt very surreal as the medal was presented under a marquee that had been specially erected by her neighbours.

Susie continues, "After the presentation I had the opportunity to thank neighbours and friends for the many kindnesses that have been shown to us during the pandemic. The local vicar, a lady, who lives in the road and was at the ceremony wrote to me next day to say

that things like this don't normally happen in our road. It was all very special."

Speaking about her work in Holocaust education, Susie says that she has been continually struck and thrilled by the dedication, sincerity and enthusiasm of staff organising these events in schools and their commitment to Holocaust education

"It's heartening to know you are doing something that educators in schools want to do and that they will carry on the work and the education. It doesn't happen in America, for example"

Speaking with typical humility, Susie says, "I'm pleased to be a small part of the tremendous impact of organisations like the HET and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. The fact that they are government backed is a positive reflection on our society, and we should be very proud of their work"

We at ELELS join Susie's family and local community in expressing how proud we are of Susie in her achievement and the recognition she has

received. We send a heartfelt and appreciative "Mazal tov" along with immeasurable gratitude for her work in sharing a message of peace, resilience and shared humanity, regardless of creed, colour or any superficial difference.

**Susie will be sharing her family's story with us at ELELS on 26th January. The talk will take place the day before Holocaust Memorial Day, which will happen on Wednesday 27th January.**

**In order to register for this talk, please email Sam at [administrator@elels.org.uk](mailto:administrator@elels.org.uk)**

**By Nick Young with Susie Barnett**

# How to start a food bank

**On 26th November, JW3 Social Action and Volunteer Coordinator and ELELS member Jacob Forman gave us an illuminating talk about the foodbank and meals on wheels service that he had established and coordinated at JW3.**



In setting the scene, Jacob told us that he hails from Newbury Park and though he grew up as part of the New Essex Masorti community, since March he has been a member of ELELS with his wife, Paul Anne.

JW3, where Jacob works, is the Jewish community hub at the Northwest corner of Camden surrounded by areas that are perceived as being among the more affluent in London such as Hampstead, Swiss Cottage and Belsize Park. Prior to Covid, the centre hosted over 150 classes, activities, plays, screenings and other events per week as well as housing a restaurant and nursery. All of that came to a halt as lockdown hit in March.

At that point, Jacob was tasked with setting up some kind of social action project that would make use of the building and make a difference. The Trussell Trust, a nationwide foodbank identified an 89% increase in food insecurity in April, which translates to 5 million people including 350,000 children not having enough to eat. This realisation helped to navigate Jacob towards discussions with an organisation called Feast!, who provided food for people in places like homeless shelters and women's refuges. With Feast! having lost the use of their kitchens, Jacob offered to let them use the one at JW3 as well as the food that was in stock at the restaurant.

Following a shout out for volunteers on social media, they were able to recruit people to prepare meals and also for deliverers so that the Feast! recipients wouldn't go hungry. And so, it turned out that a total of 32 meals were cooked and sent out in that initial batch, but this was only the beginning.

Having continued to cook and deliver, Jacob then received requests for food packages and got in touch with the Doorstep Homeless Families Project as well as Camden City Council. With more food being needed, they put out an appeal for food from the public, which drew an amazing response. Jacob told us that members of the community set up food drop off points in their garden inviting neighbours to bring tins and other foodstuffs when out and about on their daily 'lockdown 1.0' exercise. Through these efforts, they were able to provide 48 food packages in addition to the cooked meals.

In the meantime food was also being donated by local supermarkets- with Marks & Spencer getting a special mention. For a period, Jacob and PA were spending their evenings touring Marks' stores in London and picking up the produce that they couldn't sell and bringing it back to JW3 to be sent off as food parcels. It was a landmark moment when the project reached 10,000 meals provided.

Jacob relayed how they really "hit the big time" however when Camden Council got in touch with a massive donation from the Arsenal Foundation which consisted of "tonnage" that could be added to the provision of food for needy recipients. A later connection with the Felix Project- who bring in fruit and veg that supermarkets can't sell on a large scale, has provided a further source of food that could be redirected.

With significantly more food coming in than before the summer, Jacob looked for others in need, and through the charities JAMI, Gift and the Single Homeless Project they were connected to many more including local mutual aid groups.



And so, from a humble start of cooking 30 meals for local vulnerable individuals, JW3 is now sending out 2,500 meals every week and seeing demand rise with every passing day. JW3 have become one of Camden's 'anchor' (permanent) food banks- and have sent out over 75,000 meals and counting!

After his presentation, Jacob answered questions from the audience, one of which was the future of the food bank at JW3. Jacob told us that the food provision won't stop in the short-medium term, and its continuation in the longer term will be discussed next year but is likely to be a question of funding.

Many thanks to Jacob for his efforts and achievements with JW3, and also for sharing the story with us. It provided a timely and stark reminder of the many who are in need especially during the winter and even more so during the pandemic, even in supposedly affluent areas. As Jacob pointed out, this initiative also shows the kindness and goodwill that is out there in society, upon which this tremendous support effort is based, whether through donors or volunteers. As Jacob put it, "What we've seen

shows that the public are wonderful, if you give them the chance".

It also raises the question- what we can do to help? As Jacob pointed out- we don't know exactly where the 350,000 hungry children are, but there are almost certainly many in need in our local area.

To find your local foodbank, click here for the Trussell Trust, who run local centres and a helpline for those in need: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/>

To find out more about the work of JW3 including how you can volunteer, click here: <https://www.jw3.org.uk/support-us/volunteer>

If you would like to help us to set up an initiative to help to address the problem of food insecurity in our local area, please get in touch with me at [community.development@elels.org.uk](mailto:community.development@elels.org.uk).

***In order to see for yourself the video of what was a fascinating, and illuminating talk, click here on our Facebook page: <https://bit.ly/FoodbankJW3>***

***By Nick Young***



## **SLICHA, EIFO HA'SHERUTIM?** **Learning to speak Hebrew like an Israeli at ELELS**

OK, so you will probably be able to find the bathroom when you're next in Israel, even if you can't ask for directions in Ivrit, But wouldn't it be fun if you were able to?

ELELS teamed up with the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) in 2020 to provide two year-long Ulpan classes. The idea of the classes is that by studying for a year with an experienced, qualified native speaker teacher, our students would make clear progress- and so it has proved, with classes set to restart in 2021.

The class teacher is Hagi Cohen, an Israeli who studied Law at university in the UK and trained to teach Hebrew as a foreign language. We were only expecting to begin one Ulpan class, but such was the interest in the programme, that we were able to set up Lower-Intermediate level class beginning in January, and a Beginner's Group in February.

Hagi says, "Of course the pandemic hit in late March, and lessons moved onto Zoom which has proved to be effective and entertaining. Each lesson is accompanied by clear presentations shared to the screens of students; and a digital textbook and materials have been provided by email.

"Breakout rooms are popular with students for informal conversations and role playing. All this takes place while you're in your slippers, enjoying your favourite drink in the comfort of your own home".

The course is not only about learning to speak the language, but also incorporates Israeli culture, and Hagi likes to sing along to an upbeat song in Ivrit, showing photos, and cuttings about Israeli current affairs and culture, and share highlights of her Israeli social-media feed.

The WZO have also added a wonderful variety of free online lectures, talks, virtual tours of Israel, singing classes and a very successful Hebrew Social Club for advanced Ivrit learners, and it includes people from all over the country who join informal chats in Ivrit about topics such as Jewish humour, food, cultural differences, Israel, dreams, architecture, gardening etc, while others prefer to just listen and follow the conversation.

Mel Millenbach is an ELELS member who joined the Lower Intermediate class. He says of his experience as an Ulpan student in 2020:

**"I have learned to speak more Ivrit and also to write in Hebrew, but I think the main highlight of the course was having Hagi as the teacher. I would definitely recommend learning Hebrew through an Ulpan course like this; it felt that all who took part were eager to learn and Hagi taught at a pace that was very easy to follow. I look forward to the continuation of the course in 2021"**

Lynn Brown, a fellow student in Mel's class, said, "I wanted something to get my brain working and I found it with my Ivrit Ulpan lessons at ELELS. I used to be quite fluent speaking Hebrew as I lived in Israel many years ago but I knew that I was very rusty. The lessons have certainly improved my written Hebrew and reminded me of vocabulary that I had forgotten. As a result of the pandemic, most of our lessons this year have been on Zoom and I do hope that in the next year we can return to live sessions. It is a very friendly group and I do enjoy when we have 'breakout groups' and have a chance of more personal interaction.

**"I have learned to speak more Ivrit and also to write in Hebrew, but I think the main highlight of the course was having Hagi as the teacher. I would definitely recommend learning Hebrew through an Ulpan course like this"**

I would certainly recommend the course to anyone who would like to be able to converse when they (hopefully) visit Israel. The practice of reading Hebrew also will help with being able to follow the Shul service. Whether a beginner or more advanced in their knowledge, Hagi is a very patient teacher who manages to involve all the group no matter what level their Hebrew or their confidence to speak."

**We are aiming to open Beginner and Intermediate Ulpan classes in January 2021 with 30 sessions for each group across the 3 terms in 2021. Classes will take place on Tuesday evenings (Beginners) and Wednesday evenings (Intermediate), 20:00-21:30 pm on Zoom, until we are able to meet in person. The classes are affordable, as they are heavily subsidised by the WZO and as you read above are great fun and an excellent way to learn Hebrew. For details check out the poster, visit our webpage (<https://bit.ly/ELELSulpan>), email Nick Young at [community.development@elels.org.uk](mailto:community.development@elels.org.uk) or feel free to call/email Hagi directly at 07792160111 or [ivritforyou@gmail.com](mailto:ivritforyou@gmail.com)**

**WANT TO SPEAK HEBREW LIKE AN ISRAELI?**

New subsidised online Hebrew Ulpan evening classes for Beginners and Intermediate students starting in January 2021 at **East London & Essex Liberal Synagogue** taught by a qualified, native speaker teacher. Sessions will be online to begin with until blended online/in-person sessions are possible.

**Beginners- Tues 8-9.30pm**  
**Intermediates- Weds 8-9.30pm**

5 terms of 90 minute lessons across 2021 from January-Autumn  
Cost £180 for ELELS/LJ/MRJ members, £210 for other guests.  
Classes will go ahead subject to minimum numbers registering.  
Contact Nick Young for more information at [community.development@elels.org.uk](mailto:community.development@elels.org.uk) or 0208 989 7619



## My dad and the Western Desert campaign

*Elliott Porte gave a really interesting talk on his father's Army career on a very appropriate day – November 11 – Armistice Day. Harold Charles Porte joined up in 1941 when he was 21. He came from the East End and lived in Skidmore Street; the area was, by the standards of the time, relatively prosperous. However, Harold was always aware of the activities of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in the area and became involved as a teenager with active resistance groups.*

One of his great interests was amateur radio and he built crystal sets; an early form of radio that used a crystal and fine 'hair' or filament to pick up radio waves. At the age of 10 Harold built his first set made of Bakelite with headphones and soon became an expert. In 1938, when only 18, he applied for and joined the prestigious Radio Society of Great Britain. As a consequence, becoming the only Jewish HAM in the East End – something he found hard to live down!

***When he joined up, he was posted to the Royal Artillery Signals as a bombardier. His first posting was to a battery of gun at Seaton Down, Devon. The 'guns' were large and impressive but were actually logs painted to fool the Germans.***

He was transferred to the newly formed 8th Army and, following the first battle of El Alamein, promoted to sergeant. He took his precious crystal set with him. He spoke Yiddish and, latterly, Italian and came to the attention of senior echelons as someone useful to them in gathering Intelligence of enemy dispositions etc.

As a consequence, he attended an advanced signals course and became friendly with a signals specialist from the Brigade of Guards. This developed into an offer to become attached to the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG), something he undertook on a number of occasions where he had the dangerous job of going out on patrol behind enemy lines, whereupon, as he said, 'bury himself into a sand dune' and listen to enemy signals traffic.

Harold had a number of 'adventures' with the LRDG but his real job was to direct artillery fire and to make his seniors aware of enemy artillery movements.

In fact, he often spoke of the frustration he felt when at the second battle of El Alamein, he was ensconced twenty feet under the sand directing an artillery battery when the huge bombardment of enemy lines began. So frustrated in fact that after a while he and his Officer could stand it no longer, they clambered up the escape hatch and joined the advancing 51st Highlanders each armed only with a pistol.

He was demobbed in 1946 and came home and joined the anti-fascist Group 43 to bring to justice those in the British Establishment who supported the BUF. He worked as a hatmaker and later as a Toastmaster, well known in the City and West End. Of the War, he always maintained that said he found it exciting and was 'too frightened to be frightened' but ordinary life must have been an anti-climax after such brave deeds.

***By Stephanie Kerstein***



Picture of Elliot's dad at Elliot and Jane's daughters wedding



## The truly remarkable life of Edith Morley

*The next time you're walking along the Strand, going west towards Trafalgar Square, stop for a moment and look at the pictures outside King's College. They are of 30 of the most distinguished people ever to have been associated with King's and among them is Edith Morley, who was one of the first women to obtain a degree from King's Ladies' Department. She went on to become a literary scholar, a suffragist and the UK's first female professor. She was the subject of David Barnett's fascinating talk on the evening of 1st October, as part of the shul's Learn Together/Grow Together programme.*

David lives in Billericay. He retired in 1991 as Director General (chief executive) of the Road Transport Industry Training Board. After retirement he studied for a PhD at the University of Nottingham, and wrote a book: 'London, Hub of the Industrial Revolution', based on this research which was published in 1998. He is currently working on another book. David was Volunteer Exhibitions Manager and Walk Guide at London Canal Museum 2001-12. He is currently Deputy Chairman of trustees of a major pension fund and is a member of ELELS. He gives talks about Edith as she was connected to his wife's family, although he regrets never having had the opportunity to meet her in person.

Edith Morley OBE (1875-1964) was one of the most remarkable members of the Anglo-Jewish community of the last two hundred years. Born into a wealthy upper middle class Jewish family, in her early years, she was an active suffragette and an early feminist and socialist. She went on to become the first woman ever appointed as a professor at a British university and an internationally renowned literary scholar. In later life she became a magistrate, a prison reformer and active in the probationary service. After her retirement, she was hugely involved in working for Jewish refugees from the Nazis before, during and after World War II. David also told us that University College, Reading, became a university in 1908 while Edith was lecturing English there.

She was the only head of department not to be awarded a professorship, simply because she was a woman. Outraged at yet another unacceptable discrimination, Edith successfully fought for her right to be named a professor, and succeeded.

In 2017, a student-led campaign resulted in the Humanities and Social Sciences building at Reading University being renamed in Edith's honour.

Edith's time at King's also encouraged her to take a strong interest in politics and she became a member of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). She marched, attended demonstrations and once used her professor title to sign a letter to The Times on behalf of the WSPU at Emmeline Pankhurst's request. Edith also continued to teach English at King's and was one of the original members of the London branch of the British Federation of University Women.

***"She was the only head of department not to be awarded a professorship, simply because she was a woman. Outraged at yet another unacceptable discrimination, Edith successfully fought for her right to be named a professor, and succeeded."***

She committed herself to helping refugees during World War II, sealing her reputation for being a courageous and passionate fighter for human rights and freedom.

***You can read more about Edith's life in her autobiography 'Before and After', described by June Purvis of the Times Higher Education as***

***"a poignant first-person account by a pioneering feminist who struggled for recognition in her academic life. Her story will resonate with many female academics today"***.

***By Jan Martin-Ellis***

## Newgate Prison and the Old Bailey – a talk by Eleanor Bloom



***On 20th August Eleanor Bloom gave a very interesting talk (via Zoom) on Newgate Prison and the Old Bailey, representing one thousand years of criminal history all woven into London's folklore: villains and debtors, their crimes, punishments and executions. Tour Guide and ex-Metropolitan Police Officer Eleanor Bloom took us through the grim and grizzly history of one London's most notorious locations.***

The symbol of the Old Bailey is the 'Statue of Justice', a 12" high by 8" wide solid bronze statue built in 1902. 'Old Bailey' is actually the name of the street where the Central Criminal Court is situated, but the actual site, previously Newgate Prison, is always known as the Old Bailey. Prior to the building of Newgate Prison executions were held at Tyburn (today known as Marble Arch) for the lower classes and Tower Hill for those of higher social standing. Executions took place as punishment for many reasons: witchcraft, treason, debt, heresy, as well as murder.

Executions were carried out on about 20 prisoners at a time, about 6-8 times a year. They were considered by many as entertainment and a good day out.

There were many side shows and a fairground atmosphere along the route of the wagon taking prisoners to the execution site: the saying 'one for the road' came from the wagon stopping at a pub on the way to the execution where

some prisoners were able to have a last drink, and 'on the wagon' comes from those were unable to get off for a drink. The Magpie & Stump pub, about 30-50 yards from what is now the Old Bailey, gave a very good view of the gallows, and it was possible to pay the landlord for a window seat. The bell of St. Sepulchre's Church would toll at execution time. After the hanging, the prisoners' bodies would be thrown into a burial pit containing liquid lime which would help the bodies to decompose. Before the 1830s bodies were often taken to the Royal College of Physicians, near the back of the prison.

In around 1868 Charles Dickens and other social reformers lobbied Parliament to stop public executions, for which the public could buy tickets. Other forms of punishment for various crimes included whipping, flogging, pillories and the stocks. 200 different crimes could lead to the death sentence until 1868, after which many prisoners were transported from Newgate. From 1902 to the 1960s all condemned prisoners were taken to No.1 Court at

the Old Bailey to be sentenced. The last execution in this country took place in 1965.

This was a very interesting talk, containing far more information than that given above, but unpacked for us by Eleanor in a way that was accessible as well as being illustrated by photographs of the various locations including those that constituted the 'Dead Man's Walk' from which nobody ever returned - (apparently 11th hour reprieves were unheard of!).

***Thanks to Eleanor for her talk. I'm also very grateful for all the courses, quizzes and talks which have been provided for us by the Synagogue in these difficult times.***

**By Ruth Harris**

## Ben Dror Yemini at ELELS: A few personal observations



***The following article was sent in by one of our members who attended a speaker event back in February 2020. Unfortunately, it did not appear in the September edition, and so we are publishing it here. As an open community, we value hearing differing perspectives and encourage discussion and education.***

The May edition of HaGeshar included a short report on the talk given by Ben Dror Yemini at a Friday evening service on 7 February which was based on his book, *The Industry of Lies: Myths and Facts about the Israeli-Arab Conflict*. I feel that the presentation deserves more scrutiny than the brief article in HaGeshar suggests. From various questionable points he made I will concentrate on just two issues, first the population situation during the Ottoman period in the area which later became the 'Palestine' of the British Mandate and second the 'Nakba'.

Yemini showed us an Ottoman period map in which the few urban areas delineated such as Jerusalem and Jaffa were very small. He said this meant that the whole area was underpopulated. What was the population situation? The Wikipedia article 'Demographic history of Palestine (region)' shows that this was simply a pre-industrial, not very urbanised society.

The Nakba, the Arabic word for 'catastrophe', means the events in the 1948 war that led to about half the Palestinian population leaving their homes and becoming refugees. Yemini disagreed with this being called a crime and the result of Israeli mass

expulsion, as an American political science professor has written. He put forward two lines of argument about the Nakba. First, the familiar explanation that the local inhabitants left their homes because they were simply obeying instructions from their leaders. This has long been disproved, particularly from the late 1980s when the 'new' Israeli historians (Tom Segev, Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé) started publishing their researches based on Israeli archives. They showed that there was a clear Israeli policy of expelling Arab residents, often by force, and preventing them from returning after the fighting had ended.

But second, and somewhat contradictorily, Yemini said it was like other 'population exchanges' which have in the past been internationally accepted, such as the those which followed the 1919–1922 Greco-Turkish War. In support, he referred to the movements of a comparable number of Jews from Arab countries after 1948. The idea that there was a population exchange does not bear investigation. Arab Jews left countries including Egypt, Iraq and Yemen under varying circumstances which certainly included persecutions but also often involved Zionist promotion, and were

accepted in Israel as citizens. By contrast, Palestinians landed in quite different countries, Jordan and Lebanon, where they were not welcomed, with the result that they and their descendants continue to live in refugee camps. While forced population transfer, 'ethnic cleansing', unfortunately has not ended, the action taken against the Rohingya in Myanmar being a recent example, it is now established as being wrong in international law as well as, of course, being immoral. It is beyond me to understand how any Jew, knowing as we do our own melancholy history of expulsions, can condone us doing the same thing to other people which is how I understood Yemini's justifications.

***This piece is intended to provide an alternative perspective on some of the statements those present heard from Ben Dror Yemini. No doubt, the situation of Israel and the Palestinians will continue to concern us all.***

**By Miriam Greenwood,  
May 2020**

## Directory - organisations offering support

The directory below is our Charity directory, providing non profit making support services to those in need. if you, or you know of anyone who could benefit from talking to someone please do pass on the details.

CHARITY DIRECTORY		
CHAI CANCER CARE:	<a href="http://www.chaicancercare.org.uk">www.chaicancercare.org.uk</a>	0208202 2211 0800 808 4567
JAMI - JEWISH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE	<a href="http://www.jamiuk.org">www.jamiuk.org</a>	0208 4582223
JEWISH BLIND & DISABLED	<a href="http://www.jbd.org">www.jbd.org</a>	0208 371 6611
JEWISH CARE	<a href="http://www.jewishcare.org">www.jewishcare.org</a>	0208 922 2222
KESHET FOR LGBTQ EQUALITY IN JEWISH LIFE	<a href="http://www.keshetuk">www.keshetuk</a>	
LEAGUE OF JEWISH WOMEN	<a href="http://www.lgw.org">www.lgw.org</a>	0207 242 8300
AHADA BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT	<a href="http://www.ahada.org.uk">www.ahada.org.uk</a>	07758 727328
LONDON BOROUGH OF REDBRIDGE	<a href="http://www.redbridge.gov.uk">www.redbridge.gov.uk</a>	0208 554 5000
EPPING COUNTY COUNCIL	<a href="http://www.eppingforest.gov.uk">www.eppingforest.gov.uk</a>	01992 564000
LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST	<a href="http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk">www.walthamforest.gov.uk</a>	
JEWISH WOMEN'S AID, DOMESTIC ABUSE LINE	<a href="http://www.jwa.org.uk">www.jwa.org.uk</a> / <a href="mailto:clinetsupport@jwa.org.uk">clinetsupport@jwa.org.uk</a>	0808 801 0500
DINA SEXUAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT LINE	<a href="mailto:dana@jwa.org.uk">dana@jwa.org.uk</a>	0808 8010656
SAMARITANS.	<a href="http://www.samaritans.org">www.samaritans.org</a>	Free phone 116 123

## ELELS contact list

The directory below is our ELELS contact list - please do get in touch with us!

PROFESSIONAL / ELELS OFFICE			
Office administrator	Samantha Ly	<a href="mailto:administrator@elels.org.uk">administrator@elels.org.uk</a>	020 8989 7619
Rabbis	Richard Jacobi Emeritus Rabbi Hulbert	<a href="mailto:rabbi@elels.org.uk">rabbi@elels.org.uk</a>	Contact through the office
Community development manger	Nick Young	<a href="mailto:Community.development@elels.org.uk">Community.development@elels.org.uk</a>	
Address	ELELS, Marlborough Road, South Woodford, London, E18 1AR		

COUNCIL			
Chairman	Stewart Spivack	<a href="mailto:chair@elels.org.uk">chair@elels.org.uk</a>	07745 790869
Vice-chair	Elliot Porte	<a href="mailto:vice.chair@elels.org.uk">vice.chair@elels.org.uk</a>	
Hon.Secretary	Richard Stevens	<a href="mailto:hon.secretary@elels.org.uk">hon.secretary@elels.org.uk</a>	
Treasurer	Tina Gold	<a href="mailto:Treasurer@elels.org.uk">Treasurer@elels.org.uk</a>	
Rites and Practices	Ben Glassman	Contact through the office	
GDPR / communications	Bob Kamall	<a href="mailto:Data.protection@elels.org.uk">Data.protection@elels.org.uk</a>	
Inclusion	Emma James	Contact through the office	
Chesed/Care	Sonia Muscovitch	Contact through the office	
IT	Michelle Levy	Contact through the office	
Safeguarding	Josh Newman	<a href="mailto:Safeguarding@elels.org.uk">Safeguarding@elels.org.uk</a>	
Development	Phil Aston	Contact through the office	
Property Action Group	Darren Green	Contact through the office	

OTHER COMMITTEES			
Burial Officers	Sue Nathanson Jane Porte Judith Konzon	07922 904643 07922 904643	Contact through the office
Friendship club	Di Kamall	Contact through the office	
Cheder	<a href="mailto:Cheder@elels.org.uk">Cheder@elels.org.uk</a>		
Membership	<a href="mailto:Membership@elels.org.uk">Membership@elels.org.uk</a>		





## Connect to and Support ELELS by following/subscribing to us on Social Media

*Are you fully up to date and connected with ELELS? We have a public and community group Facebook page as well as a YouTube page and Twitter feed.*

*If you use any of these social media platforms and you haven't already connected to us then doing so would be a great way to support us, and to tune into and interact with the community. Click on the titles below to access our social media pages.*



ELELS Members Only Facebook Group: <https://bit.ly/ELELScommunity>



ELELS Public Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/ELELSynagogue>



ELELS YouTube: <https://bit.ly/ELELSYouTube>



ELELS Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ELELSynagogue>

## Safeguarding

***East London And Essex Liberal Synagogue is committed to the safeguarding and well-being of all of our members.***

In our welcoming and inclusive ELELS community, we wish to create an environment where everyone feel comfortable, supported and safe.

However, if you are concerned about a member or if a child or adult discloses information to you that makes you feel concerned about their safety or welfare, or the safety or welfare of another, please inform one of the names Safeguarding Team below by phoning the office on 020 8989 7619 and leaving a message for them to call you or emailing: [safeguarding@elels.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@elels.org.uk)

Remember that it is never wrong to feel concerned an it is better to inform one of the Safeguarding Team than do nothing at all. Please visit our website for our safeguarding policy and further information: <http://eastlondonandessexliberalsynagogue.org/home/safeguarding>



Josh Newham



Jonathan Young



Di Kamall



Sonia Muscovitch



Sharon Pinhas