

HaGesher הגשר

The Bridge

East London and Essex Liberal Synagogue May 2021 | 5781



Inside this issue:

Our Chairman's swansong

We look back to Purim and the fancy dress parade

Meet our new membership team

Three Faiths Israel trip

and so much more!

ELELS Lifecycle

ELELS gives a warm welcome to:

Hava Carvajal

Efraim Hazzan

Sule Elkatip

Julian Dawson

Stephanie Dawson

Ultima Leal De A Joseph

Mazel Tov to:

Merle Muswell and family on the birth of her Grandson Leo

Our commiserations to:

The family of Sylvia Abrahams, died on 08 January 2021

The family of Anita Golding, died on 08 January 2021

The family of Peter Benschel, died on 23 January 2021

The family of Vivienne Allen, died on Sunday 9th May,



Raise money for ELELS when you shop online

Everybody shops, and we know that some enjoy it more than others. However, when you shop, there are two ways that you can raise money for ELELS at the same time; and this is by shopping with either Amazon Smile or Give as you Live.

Amazon Smile

All you need to do is sign up to Amazon Smile through your Amazon account. If the option to do so isn't in your toolbar, then go to <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/> and follow the instructions. Select 'East London and Essex Liberal Synagogue' as your charity, and then whenever you buy from Amazon, they will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to ELELS.

Give as you Live

This works in a very similar way to Amazon Smile. It's basically a website that has links with lots of high street shops. Register for an account with Give As You Live, select 'East London and Essex Liberal Synagogue' as your charity, and then whenever you want to buy something, go to the website, select either the shop or the type of item you wish to buy, and you will then be able to access the store and its wares.

When you buy, Give as you Live donates a varying percentage (typically 0.75-1.5%) of what you spend to ELELS. To sign up for Give as you Live, click here:

<https://www.giveasyoulive.com/>

Many thanks, in advance, for your support.

Welcome to our Spring edition of HaGesher



We've featured a variety of articles, which we hope you'll find interesting. My particular favourites are on pages 22-23 where we look back to the thoroughly entertaining Purim spiel, and the communal Seder with over 100 of us, gathered around the virtual seder table - another fantastic event, enabling us to continue to join together. Thank you to all involved behind the scenes!

Finally, I'd like to highlight Stewart Spivack's final swansong, as he steps down as chairman, Thank you to Stewart for all of your hard work and your commitment over the last three years.

Please don't forget, we invite and would like to encourage all of our readers to respond to any of the articles we feature in HaGesher magazine, which will be reviewed by our Editorial Team and if, approved, may be published.. **Best wishes Claire Bone**

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Chairman's Swansong

Hello all. I am now coming to the end of my three years as Chairman. I am obliged to step down at the next AGM and I must admit it will be a bit of a wrench!! The last three years have certainly not been uneventful!! We have had the normal synagogue services, debates, meetings and a few arguments along the way!! But we were also, suddenly, overwhelmed by the virus that arrived on our shores sometime around the start of 2020 which led to the original lockdown of March 23rd. Indeed, the announcement of the lockdown was made during one of our Council meetings. Life at ELELS changed immediately.

Being Chairman of our Synagogue has been a complete honour and privilege. Some of you will know of health and financial problems that Ruth and I suffered in years past, and how kind and thoughtful the community was to us. It has always been in our make up to help within our community, be it when younger on charity committees raising money for the then Jewish Welfare Board, to becoming involved in the life of local schools on parents committees and governor groups, and it became natural to us to be involved in our Synagogue which we joined in 1996.

My time as Chair began when ELELS was only a year old, and our two legacy communities, Bet Tikvah and Woodford Liberal were learning to grow together. In all honesty, this was always going to be a difficult thing to do. Two communities with long histories of tradition and minchag, were going to take time to come together and the process is not yet finished. But I do feel sincerely, that over time the identity of ELELS has become very established. Many new members have joined who do not know of our legacy, and many of them now contribute to the life of our synagogue.

I have been Chair during some very special occasions. Our communal seders were legendary, huge events, the High Holydays beautifully managed and organised, Purim and Chanukah parties were joyous occasions and the Purim Spiels were works of brilliant literature! We suffered loss as both our original joint Presidents, Peter Benscher and Joe Swinburne sadly passed away. They were such fine gentlemen, and gave, and give, great inspiration to many. During my time, Rabbi David Hulbert retired and has become our Emeritus Rabbi. Luckily with Fiona, they still give great service and input into our community.

Our Council over the years have worked tirelessly blending the legacy communities and bringing all the administration and finance systems into an efficient seamless operation. Thanks go to so many who have served on Council and various Committees. It would be invidious to name anyone in particular. But I do wish to give special mention to Tina Gold as she has been the sole treasurer on council for over a year now. She has worked tirelessly for all of us and does deserve special recognition. I hope I do not offend any others who have given years of service to our community and also, continue to do so. We owe them all a great deal of thanks, and it is they who keep our ELELS running.

I have also enjoyed a working relationship with our very own Rabbi Richard. He has proved a font of wisdom for me over these past three years. We have, at times, had some lively discussions but Richard's work ethic, and devotion to our community is remarkable and I sincerely thank him for the pleasure of being able to work together.

Of course, I must admit that one matter that I had hoped to settle during my time as chairman, was the question of a future building. There were difficulties with this before the pandemic. Very, very few properties and sites were found to be suitable, and then they were purchased by developers with deeper pockets than we had. Since the pandemic, of course, the whole world has changed, including the property market. Indeed, the whole question of Zoom may change the way we look at synagogue attendance and services in the future. But that is a discussion for the future. All I will say is that our ELELS community is more than a pile of bricks, windows, doors and cement. It is our members, our community, every single one of us.

Now going back to that virus. Everything changed for us on that March day in 2020. Our building had to be closed. But, in a phrase that was to come so true over the next fifteen months,

"Our building may be closed, but our community remains open."

The efforts of so many in ELELS in the period following lockdown were remarkable. Over 150 of our members became involved in the Covid Phone Tree, when every one of our members were contacted by phone to see if they needed any help and how they were coping. Deliveries of food and medicine were made to many homes of those who could not go out. Technical help was given to those who were not so adept at computers. And, of course, Zoom came into existence. Our services were available on Zoom, then our Elevensies group, then talks on all sort of subjects and even Purim and Chanukah parties. Then there were the High Holyday services with the re-working of the liturgy to fit in with Zoom and the brilliant and memorable Simchat Torah service with readings from the Torah.

This last fifteen months should give us all great pride in our wonderful community. It could not have happened without, of course the expertise of our Rabbis, Nick Young as Community Development Manager and Sam as our Administrator. But it could not have happened either without the volunteering spirit of so many within our ELELS. That has made me very, very proud and so thankful to be a member, with Ruth, of our wonderful Synagogue.

Thanks to everyone for letting me be Chairman for the past three years, and very best wishes to the next Chair.

Stewart Spivack



ELELS AGM - Tuesday 22nd June 2021. 7.30pm

Our Annual General Meeting will take place using Zoom conditions, and I hope that many of you will choose to attend to not only reflect on a most remarkable year in the history of our Synagogue, but also look forward to the next year and beyond.

A number of Council members will be stepping down from Council at the end of this year and so we shall be thanking them during this meeting.

The AGM gives a chance to others to now become involved, and help is always welcome and needed. On 22nd June, we shall be electing members to Council, and hopefully, they will become involved in the work of Council in various areas and join one of the sub-committees of Council. Some of these are Rites and Practices, New Generation, Social, Chesed (Care and kindness), Finance and many others. We shall be looking to elect a new Chair at the AGM along with other officers, (Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Honorary Secretary).

Of course, you do not have to be on Council to be involved in the running of ELELS. You can serve on one of the committees as well, and any input will be greatly appreciated.

So many of you have stepped forward over the past fifteen months to help our community. It would be wonderful if some of you could now get involved in the structure of ELELS and help it grow even more into the future.

Rights of Members:

Members who are not in arrears of their membership fees, are entitled to submit written resolutions in advance of the meeting.

Members, who are not in arrears of their membership fees, are entitled to vote on resolutions and elections taking place at the AGM. Members can also vote by proxy as stated above.

Under the ELELS Articles of Association notice of the AGM must be made 28 days before the meeting – by 25th May.

Written resolutions must be notified within ten days of the issue of this notice of the AGM.

This notice will first appear in the May issue of HaGesher and will be republished in weekly email notices after the issue has been sent to all members. The date of posting is therefore the date of sending of this issue.

Any written resolutions, received by the published submission date, will be published on the ELELS website as soon as possible after the submission

date. At this time, a proxy voting form will also be published so that members can appoint and instruct a proxy to vote on their behalf.

If you have any queries about this, or would like to express an interest or learn more, please either contact the Office or call me on the number below.

Nominations for Council and Officers are needed by 30th May.

Voting slips will be sent out on 7th June.

Voting slips to be returned by email or post by 20th June.

Stewart Spivack – 07745 790869



Opening Up

A month ago, we ushered Spring in as part of our celebration of the festival of Pesach – ." So wrote the author of the Song of Songs (NOT Solomon, but that's a discussion for another time!) well over two thousand years ago.

During this Spring season, nature opens up. Gardens and open spaces become more colourful through blossom and bloom, ducklings, lambs and all sorts of other new life convey the sense of natural renewal and optimism. It's no coincidence that, aided substantially by the wonderful NHS Coronavirus vaccine programme, we are seeing an opening up of business and recreational activities. This encourages us to feel that the worst of the traumatic experience of the pandemic might perhaps be behind us.

Of course, the antonym for 'open' is 'closed' and I don't know about you, but I have felt closed in for so long that I've become used to it. Not only is the idea of opening up challenging, but the muscles – both literal and metaphorical – needed to open myself up have lost their tone and suppleness. And I know that I've had a less traumatic time than many. Although I've officiated in unprecedented ways for people over the past year or so, it's not been my close relative whose funeral I could not attend in person, or my ill relative I could not visit in hospital.

Some of us will have pent up anger locked away while we were closed.

Some of us will have grief that has lain dormant. Some of us will feel we've lost our social skills. Some of us will need the pub, bar, restaurant or nightclub experience so badly that we might end up abusing it or ourselves because of how much is pent up inside us.

"As nature is opening up and we are being given opportunities to open up, don't expect it to happen for us completely naturally. Be kind to yourself, be gentle and forgiving of yourself."

It's a neat coincidence for me that the next phase in the government's road map is due to happen on Shavuot – May 17th. From then, more socialising, more exercising, more opening up is due to happen. Shavuot reminds us that after the freedom of Pesach has to come the accepting of responsibility that came at Sinai. Part of that responsibility has always been to interpret the rules and guidance that enable an open and civil society.

We might, many of us, need help to unfurl or unfold ourselves from the closed state to which we have become accustomed. We might need physical, psychological, spiritual or

social support to enable us to find positive ways of being open. One favourite aphorism of mine is: "A mind is like an umbrella; it's only useful when it's open!"

As nature is opening up and we are being given opportunities to open up, don't expect it to happen for us completely naturally. Be kind to yourself, be gentle and forgiving of yourself.

Take whatever help you can to make the unfolding and unfurling a little easier – speak to friends or relative, your rabbi or fellow congregants.

Then seek to apply these same traits to others. You might witness others opening up in ways that you find uncomfortable – try not to judge them harshly. Slowly, steadily, over coming weeks, maybe we, like nature, can blossom and bloom once again. "For lo, the winter is past..."

By Rabbi Richard Jacobi

ELELS' Covid-19, 'Mini Cobra' Group

Covid Lockdown and Reopening Marlborough Road



In February, the government published its plans for easing current Covid restrictions and hopefully coming out of lockdown.

There are four tests that the government has set and these need to be continually met to allow for the staged removal of all restrictions. On 5th April, the government confirmed the four conditions continue to be met across England. As a result, from 12th April restrictions were eased to allow non-essential shops, pubs, gyms, and hairdressers or barbers reopen.

Previous updates explained how ELELS Council created a Covid committee to review changes to the regulations; all the latest guidance, from various sources; and provide advice to ELELS Council. At the end of February that committee reviewed the government's plan for easing restrictions and how - given the layout at Marlborough Road - these changes will impact on the continued closure of the building.

Even with the changes on 12th April, there is still a requirement to maintain social distancing and - because of the layout of the building, especially the entrance lobby - ELELS would require a system to maintain safe entry into or out of our building. There are still restrictions on the number of people or households that can gather indoors so, given the size of our sanctuary, ELELS would have to enforce limits on the numbers who could attend services etc.

Therefore, the Covid committee concluded that ELELS cannot safely reopen until all the restriction are lifted. Under current plans that is not expected to be until at least 21st June.

There is a lot that can change between now and 21st June. Sadly, there is a third wave of Covid cases on the continent, so now is not the time to be complacent. While we all hope to be able to reopen in late June, any plans made at this time will need to be flexible until we have more certainty about the ending of all restrictions in June. Therefore, ELELS continues to keep the situation under review and will continue to ensure we have contingency plans (such online virtual alternatives via Zoom) in place until it is safe for all us to return to Marlborough Road.

By Bob Kamall

Roadmap out of lockdown

Further information on the government's roadmap to ease us out of lockdown is available on the national website.

NHS
The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Date	Event
29 March	6 people or 2 households can meet outdoors. Outdoor sports will start.
12 April	Opening of non-essential retail and indoor leisure facilities (but only for use by people on their own or with their household). Most outdoor attractions and settings, including outdoor hospitality venues, will re-open.
17 May	The government will look to continue easing limits on seeing friends and family wherever possible.
21 June	The government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact but it is likely that we will need to maintain social distancing and adhere to hands, face and space principles.

Healthcare at its best
with people at our heart

A response to Miriam Greenwood's letter published in January edition of HaGeshet

As Liberal Jews, members of our community have diverse views regarding levels of observance and politics. Whilst free speech is a cornerstone of our democracy, I feel that we are all united in rejecting the views of both the far right and extreme far left.

In the context of my comments, I take issue with Miriam Greenwood over her statement "Arab Jews left countries including Egypt, Iraq and Yemen under varying circumstances which certainly included persecutions, but also often involved Zionist promotion"

Shame on her for implying that the victims were manipulated by Zionism.

In the years leading up to 1948 through to present day Jews lived for generations albeit as second-class citizens in Arab lands and elsewhere. In the years leading up to the eventual creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and after.

As a direct result of the Arab countries government's anti-Israel / anti-Semitic policies, the long-established Jewish communities of these lands were decimated, often forced at very short notice to leave their homes and their property. This persecution is still ongoing in Syria and Iran.

Let us not ignore the fact that Israel is the only democracy in the entire middle east region and beyond, it is not a perfect society and criticism is to be expected. However, to see such an anti-Zionist, and some may say anti-Semitic comment published in our shul magazine is an insult to our members particularly those who

themselves were either expelled or had relatives expelled from the Arab countries.

Finally remember no matter where or how we live, we all conclude our Seder service "Next year in Jerusalem".

By John Morrison

Thank you to John Morrison for your response. We always invite and would like to encourage all of our readers to respond to any of the articles we feature in our HaGeshet magazine.

Please do be aware that all articles are subject to approval of the Editorial Team.

A poem about gratitude

Patricia Hinson, a congregant from Finchley, attended our Shelanu service on Saturday 10 April. She was very moved and inspired, so she wrote this poem about Gratitude

Grateful to attend this service today
Grateful that we could together pray
Grateful for the music I heard play
Grateful for all that came my way.

Grateful for the eyes to see
All that surrounds me
Grateful for ears to hear
All that brings me cheer.

Grateful to be surrounded by friends
Grateful for all that the Eternal One sends
Grateful for all around me
Grateful above all to be free.

Grateful to have a voice
Grateful to be able to rejoice
Grateful to have freedom of choice
Grateful to be able to distinguish between colours including turquoise.

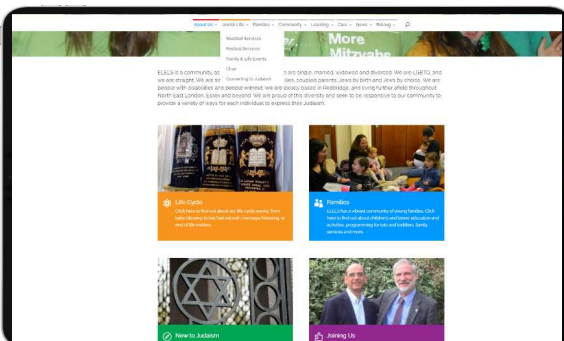
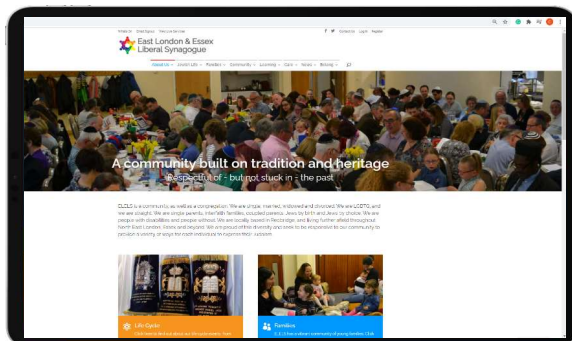
Grateful to be able with others to communicate
Grateful that in services I can fully participate
Grateful to have senses five
Grateful to be alive.

I acknowledge with gratitude all that I have and am able to share
Grateful that You, Eternal One are everywhere.



Community Development The new ELELS website is up!

Just a week or so ago, ELELS proudly unveiled our brand new website at www.elels.org.uk
The website actually came into being just at the end of April, giving us a couple of weeks to tweak it before we launched officially in time for Shavuot.



I wanted to use this opportunity to invite you to have a look around, and to introduce you to some of its features which you might find helpful. I would also be grateful for any feedback, thoughts and suggestions on the site- you can find my email address below.

The first thing that you may notice when you land on the front page, is that the site features the ELELS logo, and the colours of the menu items and the branding of the site in general is based on our logo colours (although we had to add a couple more- which is no bad thing and extends the logo's reflection of the diversity of our community).

Hopefully the new front page, through the images and the colours, conveys a sense of the warmth and welcome at ELELS, exemplified by the statement that sits just under the carousel of photographs. We hope also that the rest of the front page as you scroll down, with its colourful boxes, Facebook feed, display of upcoming events and Rabbi's 'thought for the week' offers a more open window of who we are and what we're up to as a community.

Our aim was to make the new website easily accessible and straightforward to navigate around, and a big part of this is our menu at the top of the screen which operates under the following headings; About Us, Jewish Life, Families, Learning, Community, Care, News and Belong.

Please do have a look and see what pages are grouped under each heading. Hopefully they all make sense, but if not, it would be great if you could let me know.

A practical feature which we're very proud of, that many of our members have asked us to incorporate, is the interactive calendar. That can be found at <https://elels.org.uk/events/>. You'll notice on a computer or larger screen that you can see, at a glance, all of the events that are taking place in the synagogue in the upcoming period, whether services, educational, social events and more (a mobile screen doesn't offer the same overview, due to the smaller space - but we hope it provides the information you need, (nevertheless). You can hover over each event for slightly more information, and click on the event for further details. We actually hope to be able to include Zoom links which will be visible to members only, in due course, but to do that, our members need to register themselves....

The ability for our members to register on the site is also another new feature that excites us. To register, click on the option on the top left. You'll need to choose a password, but you can ask your browser to remember you, so you only have to log in once. What are the benefits of registering and logging in? Well, over time we will be uploading some content that will be available for members only, like Zoom links (as mentioned), but also certain events, papers for AGMs and any other content that it would only be appropriate for our members to have access to, and not guests who happen to be browsing. So, please register on our new site, as soon as you can!

I could write ad infinitum about the new website and the features that should make it more user friendly for members, guests and also for us as administrators (it's helping us to create a new design for our weekly emails too!), but the final page that I wanted to point you to is our Council page which features the smiling faces of all of our Officers and Council members. We hope that by giving faces to names, this will make us all more accessible and approachable. You can find Council, in all their glory, on this page, <https://elels.org.uk/home/council/>

There's so much more, but the best thing I can do is to invite you to go and take a look around the website for yourself. As mentioned above, we would very much welcome feedback, especially your thoughts on how visually appealing and accessible the site is, and how easy it was to find information, although any feedback is appreciated. We also know that some of the pages need their information to be updated- so if you find that to be the case, please tell me. If you would like to have a go at updating any text yourself, I would also be very glad to know!

A big thanks to Claire Bone, the Communications Team, and others for their feedback and input so far, along with our developer, Stefan Roos.

I look forward to hearing from you. Happy surfing!

Nick Young community.development@elels.org.uk

Hidden Pleasures

Our ELELS members share their hobbies, passions or interesting experiences.

In February and March we held our first ever so-called 'Hidden Pleasures' talks. At these sessions, ELELS members share their hobbies, passions or interesting experiences. For our first session on February 17th, Fiona Hulbert spoke about her love of ceramics, while June Bradbury talked about her time as a guide at the Tate Gallery. On March 24th it was the turn of Tracey Grant and Dan Janoff who talked about the joys of their allotment, and Nick Young who reminisced about his life in Japan in the early 2000s. Each of these sessions have been very well attended, gained excellent feedback and we hope to continue to hold these monthly sessions for the foreseeable future, especially as we know that so many of our members have fascinating stories to tell.

A passion for ceramics.

Our first Hidden Pleasures speaker in February was Fiona Hulbert, who talked about her passion for ceramics. Fiona provided a slideshow of photographs highlighting different pieces that she had created over the years, from pots, to Judaica and wonderfully ornate decorated pieces such as coasters with oak leaves imprinted on them.

We were shown all of the stages of creating a ceramic piece, from working with the wheel to the glazing and firing and the end product.



Fiona told us that part of her fascination with ceramics was the way that the parts of a piece that she creates are similar to the parts of the human body. For example, a vase would have a neck, a body and a foot. She also loves the human dynamic of movement involved in working with and sculpting ceramics.

Fiona told us that, "You're never quite in control. It's a bit like alchemy in that you're never completely sure what you are going to come out with", adding that, "Even where mistakes are made, they give a piece extra character and can be kept".

Fiona's favourite items to make are either yahrzeit candles or things for people that she loves, such as a range of mugs that she'd created for members of her family. A striking example of the latter is a mug shown to the right hand side, adorned with a rat that she made for her daughter Alicia (as rats are her favourite animal), with the tail very cleverly forming the handle as you can see by the photographs.

If you would like to start with ceramic making, Fiona says that it's always best to take classes because teaching centres give you access to a huge range of glazes, underglazes, oxides and tools that otherwise you wouldn't have access to. Fiona, for example, attends sessions locally at Gearies school, but the City Lit is also recommended.



Tate Modern Tour Guide



June began her talk telling us about her history as a tour guide. She had come to it somewhat late in life. Although she had always keenly attended galleries and exhibitions, taking a Masters Degree in History of Art at Birkbeck in her fifties enabled her to explore her interest more deeply. And so, after a stint guiding at the Tate Modern, she switched over to the Tate Britain which she said suited her better both in terms of her preference for the artwork as well as the layout of the building and the dynamics there.

June explained that the tour guides at the Tate don't have a script but are expected to do their own research and create their own tours. Part of the learning process involves following guides and listening to their talks before you start to lead your own. June also dropped the "trade secret" that the Tate have 'secret gallery goers' who would spy on the guides and "make sure you weren't spouting nonsense!".

When asked about tips for aspiring guides, June told us that there is simply no substitute for doing it. We were advised to remember that the people taking the tour are there because they are interested which always makes for a nice atmosphere. June assured us that nobody would be there looking to catch you out!

June explained that she didn't have a favourite painting to present, but it would depend on her mood (although guiding around the Turner gallery was always a real joy!).

For this session, June wanted to highlight one particularly striking piece of artwork, and so she chose a piece by the Jewish artist, Marc Gertler. Gertler was born in London in 1891, but spent his early childhood in his parents' native Austro-Hungary before the family returned to the UK in 1896. In 1916 he painted the work 'Merry Go Round' (pictured right)..

As you can see from the photograph, this is an arresting, fascinating and very disturbing work. The picture, painted during the First World War, makes a clear anti-war statement, with the cast of establishment characters sitting bolt upright, mouths open, astride the horses with their rifle butt legs endlessly revolving in a cycle of what we presume to be warfare.

In common with many artists, Gertler was a tortured soul who, despite his genius, became suicidal following a love that was unrequited. He gassed himself in 1933 sadly and is buried at Willesden Jewish Cemetery.

June's discussion of Gertler's piece provoked a good deal of discussion amongst those present and whetted our appetites for her to conduct further virtual tours of the Tate Gallery where we can explore more of it's treasures under her guidance. In fact June did lead an extended session touring virtually around the Tate which took place just before we went to press with this issue.

If you have a story to tell of a passion, life experiences or from your career, then please get in touch with Nick Young at community.development@elels.org.uk We'd love to hear from you.



Allotments

A key benefit of our regular Zoom evenings has been that our community is now clearly visible not just to our regular shul attendees, but also the wider community whether they are members or not.



Earlier this year at the end of March two of our members gave a very interesting and enthusiastic presentation of their passion for the "Good Life" no not Tom & Barbara, but our very own Tracey Grant & Dan Janoff who share an allotment within a stone's throw of our shul building almost overlooking the North Circular Road.

Their enthusiasm in presenting their practical gardening skills was clearly apparent, from growing tomatoes, cucumbers and other vegetables through to the unenviable task of composting.

As someone who has prided himself on his own cucumber & tomato growing it was great to view demonstrated and showed us armchair gardeners on what is realistically possible for a small cost and a little bit of effort.

Perhaps this could be a seasonal presentation so the community could follow the progress of their efforts throughout the year.

By John Morrison



Puzzles on Zoom

On Monday afternoons from 4.00 for about 45 mins I host an informal puzzle games session on Zoom. We play Boggle and also try our hands (and brains) with Word Wheels. Each game lasts for 5 minutes or so, and then we compare notes and see how many words we have found. It is surprising that even with puzzles that appear at first glance to be difficult, when we share them as a group we can find a lot of different words. It is non-competitive and as someone said "We would not come back if we did not enjoy it"

If it sounds like something you may be interested in then please come and join the group. We are very friendly and welcoming to newcomers. The Zoom link is on the updates but we ask that you please have your name visible.

We look forward to seeing you. For more information contact me via the shul office, or Nick Young at community.development@elels.org.uk.

By Judy Berkowicz



Knit & Natter

We are a group of people who meet once per month on a Sunday afternoon, and most (although it is not obligatory) bring some type of craft to do while having a chat and enjoying a cup of tea and cake. We have, in the past, knitted squares, sewn them together to make blankets and sent them to a charity.

The atmosphere is relaxed and new members are very welcome to join. Although we're online for now, we look forward to coming together in person when it's appropriate to do so.

We would like to start a project and are liaising with a local charity about doing some knitting/crocheting some items for them.

The next Knit and Natter will be on June 13th. For more information about the sessions, which are led by Di Kamall and Lyn Jacobi, please contact Sam at administrator@eels.org.uk. Links are included in our weekly emails. **By Di Kamall**



Hidden Pleasures: Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur



Date: Tuesday 25 May. At: 7.30pm - 8.30pm

John Morrison shares his passion for Arsenal, while Gary Freedman tells us about his love for Spurs.

Highlights, Trophies, History, Rivalry,
15 minutes from each speaker, 15 minutes of Q&A

To register, people should go to bit.ly/arsenalvspurs



The original social influencers



JEWISH CARE

ELELS is proud to have June Bradbury, who is on that esteemed list, as a member of our Synagogue.



Many of you will have read in the Jewish News of a list of 120 of the more mature (over 80) people, who have influenced and helped grow the Jewish community.

ELELS is proud to have June Bradbury, who is on that esteemed list, as a member of our Synagogue.

June has been a very vital part of our Covid 19 volunteer group over the last year and more, but also has a history of service to ELELS.

June was one of the pioneers of those who set up Shelanu (Inclusive) services in our Synagogue. These services, which are more sensitive to the individual's particular needs, bring great pleasure to many who may not have access to other Synagogue

services. They also create a huge feeling of wellbeing amongst the congregation. They are full of music and joy, and have recently benefited from the introduction of Makaton signing. June's inspiration in the creation of these services was so valuable.

June has also been involved in the Rosh Chodesh group which hold female led services in our Synagogue. Recently, this group held a special service to mark the 100th anniversary of womens suffrage, and this proved a most moving occasion.

When the Covid 19 outbreak caused lockdown way back in March last year, June was one of the first to help and create the 'Covid Phone Tree' which meant that every single one of our members were contacted. June has made many, many calls to our members just keeping in touch and seeing if we can be of any help such as with food and medical deliveries.

We created an 'Elevensies' group which has met every single weekday throughout the pandemic. This has provided invaluable support to isolated members who would be able to chat, online, with other members and friends, and more importantly see other faces!! Along with Gary Freedman, June has shared the hosting of this wonderful group.

June has given virtual 'Zoom' talks to the community on subjects including her knowledge of art, and has participated in so many of our varied Zoom events and services.

With her exquisite voice, and her understanding temperament, she is truly a very special person, who richly deserves her place in this list, and is one of the many treasured members of ELELS.

By Stewart Spivack

Stepping down but not away!

After 15 plus years as Membership Secretary I have finally stepped down! An exciting time to create new and fresh ideas to continue our success in gaining new members. Time to find new platforms and post Covid 19 probably very different avenues.



I am delighted to hand over the roll to four of our members. They will be known as our "Membership Champions" and each deal with a different age group.

Before signing off, I would like to thank all who have greatly helped me along the way. Particularly, Stewart Spivack and all the past Chairs I have served under, the Treasurers past and present and of course the Rabbis Rebecca, Rachel, Richard and David. Last but not least thank you also, to Nick Young. I'm not signing off completely - I will still be working on PR for ELELS and Mitzvah Day.

Introducing our new membership champions



Anna Federman

Your new membership champion for families with young children (ages 0-11).

My husband and I, along with our two young children, are in our third year of membership at ELELS. We have found here the warm, welcoming, and inclusive community we were looking for, and a fantastic place for our children to learn Liberal Jewish values and Jewish Heritage - including lots of fun celebrations! I am excited to help families who are looking for the right cheder and shul for them.

Best, Anna



PA Quibael Forman

Your new membership champion Young Professionals (age group between 21-35)

When I was invited by Nick to be part of the team, I felt honoured and overwhelmed with the opportunity. As a new member of ELELS, I felt welcomed and felt like I was part of the community long before I joined. When Nick spoke to me, I feel a bit hesitant to say yes because I am new in the community but knowing that I have a passionate team, I agreed. I would like to give back and make new members feel welcomed the same way I felt when I joined the community. **Best, PA**



Rosie Simmons

Your new membership champion for Ages 60+

I'm married to Geoff for over 60 years, we have 2 sons, one of whom with his wife is also a member of ELELS, and 5 grandchildren. We are both retired social workers. I worked for Haringey council for a numbers of years and Jewish charity Norwood in Hackney for nearly 20 years. We live in Highbury Islington. I have lived there for most of my life. it was a very big Jewish area when i was a child but not any more.

We love singing and have sung in a number of different choirs over the years including some Jewish and Geoff has also been interested in Yiddish and jazz singing. We are very family orientated and take great pleasure in our regular family get-togethers. in the past year ELELS has been a life saver for me.

We go to shul regularly now, love all the interesting talks, making new friends and for me, chatting on "elevensies" is a real uplift. I feel very privileged to be part of the membership team..

Regards Rosie



Jason Levy

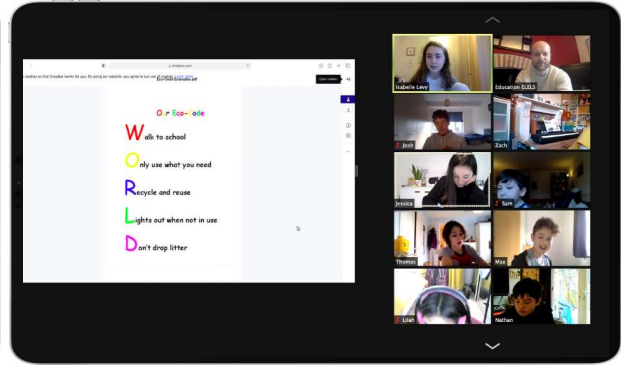
Your new membership champion for 40s/50s, (new members in that age group or with children aged 11+)

I've been a member of ELELS since 2018, and I'm still glowing with pride at my twin boys' online B'nei Mitzvah last June 2020, which was a truly moving experience.

As a Membership Champion, my role is to look after newcomers to the synagogue who have teenage children, like me, or are in their 40s/50s. Prior to taking this role on, I had volunteered with ELELS as a Zoom host, and also was part of a group that met prior to lockdown to examine how we "on-board" new members. I very much want to see the community grow and strengthen, and so I was happy to be asked to take on this role. **Best wishes, Jason**

FOR THE NEW GENERATION

Here we are, finally seeing some light, after the exertions of a strange year, that nonetheless has seen the Cheder go from strength to strength!



The Cheder has successfully continued online via Zoom and has grown to a healthy 27 registered students. Our teachers Sasha, Isabelle, Ezra, Zach, Josh, Isaac, Maja and Joshua have been developing their practise through weekly meetings with myself and monthly training sessions with the Liberal Jewish Synagogue which has taken in topics including teaching Jewish History and The Holocaust, Israel, and Hebrew.

The year began with Tu B'Shevat, and each child received packs of poppy and cress seeds kindly sent by our Rites and Practices Committee and PJ Library. This helped the children to learn the importance of taking care of the environment. This was quickly followed by the one, and hopefully only, Zoom Purim Spiel, Cinder-Esther which was a delight. All of the students contributed with artwork for the various settings of the play, as well as baking hamantaschen together online.

A huge thanks to the teachers and my wife, Jennie (who is an actress), who all did an amazing job with the performance (You can learn more

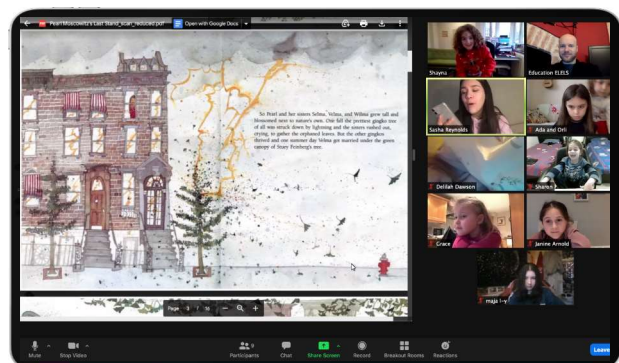
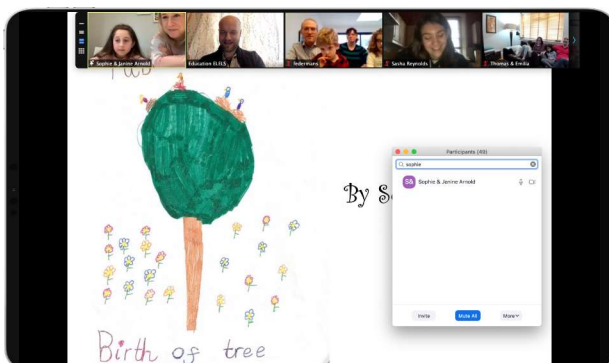
about our community Purim celebrations on other pages of this edition!) Then we completed the term with Pesach, which was led by LJY-Netzer madrichim. This time we partnered with LJY to send out packs that included resources for the session for each child that allowed them to make finger puppets and decorate cups and glasses.

For the younger classes, Bereishit (4-6) and Shmot (7-10), the overall term theme was Middah Lev Tov (Good Heart), with sessions delving into the wisdom of Solomon, the leadership of Joshua, what makes a hero, and exploring notions of God. The oldest class, Vayikra learnt about Jewish ethics including that of Pikauch Nefesh (saving of the soul), and equality. They also were very fortunate to have Rabbi Richard lead a session on his father's experience of the Kinder Transport as well as one led by Annie Cohen, an experienced educator who curated an exhibition on the Kindertransport through the Weiner Library, named 'A Thousand Kisses', which she shared with the class.

As I write this, we have just celebrated Israel's 73rd birthday, as well as Rabbi Richard's 60th, so a huge Mazel Tov to him and Israel! We're also now at the beginning of the summer term which includes a joint progressive synagogue Shavuot Shmooze event on the 16th of May, which will replace the usual Cheder class on the 15th of May. The event is open to all children in the community, so please get in touch if you'd like to know more. Another date for your diaries is a family service on the 22nd of May which will be led by the Cheder, Nick Young (my brother, and ELELS Community Development Manager), and myself, who will look to emulate the lovely family services of the previous months!

We hope to see many of you then!

**Best wishes,
Jonathan Young, Head Teacher**



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](https://bit.ly/ELELScommunity)

 [ELELS Public Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/ELELSynagogue](https://www.facebook.com/ELELSynagogue)

 [ELELS YouTube: https://bit.ly/ELELSYouTube](https://bit.ly/ELELSYouTube)

 [ELELS Twitter: https://twitter.com/ELELSynagogue](https://twitter.com/ELELSynagogue)

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 feels 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 named 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.

Alternatively you can call Redbridge Social Services directly:

Children's Social Services: 020 8708 3885 (Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm) or 020 8708 5897 outside of these hours

Adult Social Services: 020 8708 7333 (Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm) or 0208 553 5825 outside of these hours

Remember that it is never wrong to feel concerned and 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.

In an emergency dial 999



Josh Newham

Designated Safeguarding Lead



Jonathan Young



Di Kamall



Sonia Muscovitch



Sharon Pinhas



Elevensies

Elevensies is a 11 o'clock daily meet-up on Zoom which began at the start of the first lockdown but has proven so successful in providing a platform for our members to meet up and stay connected, that it is now a central part of what we offer as a community.

At the beginning of the first lockdown back in March, Rabbi Richard started a Zoom meeting every weekday morning so people could just say hello, have a cuppa and chat for 20-25 minutes (which is now 30-60 minutes, but what's 30 minutes between friends?" After a short period he asked me if, as a regular attendee, I would host the meetings. My answer was; "Of course, it would be a pleasure, Rabbi".

Being new to Zoom panic suddenly kicked in, and I would ask Helen (my wife), "What have I done?". Then I remembered my father saying to me, "Never volunteer son"!

Too late! I'd gone and done it! I'm so glad that I didn't change my mind as it has been one of the most rewarding things I've done in my life. I've met new people, who I can now say are good friends, caught up with old friends, but as you can read below, made a difference to so many people's lives. Last but not least, I would like to thank June for hosting a couple of days a week. **Gary Freedman**

Who can join? There are different people online every day, and newcomers are more than welcome. So, in other words everyone is invited.

How do I join? The Zoom links are posted in our weekly emails, so please contact Sam at administrator@elels.org.uk

if you aren't receiving emails. It's also possible to join by telephone only so please contact us if you would like the phone numbers.

What do the participants say?

“ Elevensies has become a daily highlight for many of our members- but don't just take our word from it, read the words of the people involved including Gary and June the hosts.

"It is just the same as a group of friends meeting in a cafe or at someone's house. No one is muted and any topic is discussed. Only thing is everyone has to make their own tea, coffee or whatever they wish.

For anyone feeling isolated or lonely or in need of support it is a great way to spend 40 mins among friends and to know that you are not alone. This has been a lifeline for me during these strange times. I know that when I switch on my computer and log onto Zoom there will be other friendly faces there as well with whom among other things, we can have a laugh. It is also a good way to get to know other members of the shul whom you may not have known about. It also gives me something to wake up for in the morning and to get out of PJ's etc.

So, what about giving it a try?

The link is always sent out with the weekly update. Just look for the icon of a cup.

Look forward to seeing more of you at the Shul Zoom Cafe."

Judy Berkowicz

“ On average 10 or 12 people all of whom are in their own homes, meet, at 11.00a.m. via Zoom – cup of coffee or tea in hand- for lively discussion every weekday morning. It is a huge success- so popular that several participants are ready and waiting enthusiastically at 10.50! Gary and I (we share the honour of being hosts) make sure that the 'door' is open for them. As regular hosts of Elevensies we have been 'blown away" by the manner in which group participants have supported one another in times of troubles, and rejoiced together when there is a happy event. The topics discussed are far ranging, ailments, inevitably, and current affairs. In addition, it is so interesting to hear people's stories, to share memories of the East End, conversations which are enjoyed by all of us." **June Bradbury**

“ I find Elevensies really good for me. I live on my own and it brightens up the day just chatting to people or listening to everyone."

Miriam Sanders

“ I would like to say how glad I am that I decided to join the Elevensies group at the beginning of the first lockdown. Some of the people I had the pleasure of knowing before and the others I have since got to know.

We meet every morning Monday to Friday and I make a point of arranging my day around the meeting if possible, I have found everyone to be very friendly and we discuss a wide range of topics, sometimes we have also had the pleasure of our two rabbis pop in and join us.

Please come and join us with your cup of tea or coffee and I am sure you will enjoy it and come again." **Hazel Isaacs**

Elevensies Purim Schpiel

Just before Purim, Rabbi Richard called me to ask if I would, on behalf of the Group, accept the offer of reading the Megilah eruv Purim on Thursday 25th February.

At the following morning's Elevensies meeting, I asked if everybody would be happy to accept a role in this very special production. Nearly everybody volunteered to do so, and I was delighted to also include people who don't usually 'take part in services'. With a full cast assembled, I set about giving out parts and sending readings out to all.

Fast forward to the night; Rabbi Richard set the scene with his own 'Where's Wally' costume, and many of the participants had their own particular costumes, as well as the cast of the spiel with their wigs and finery for the occasion. Even though we were on Zoom, we were all well and truly into the Purim spirit.

Our reading seemed to be a great success. I hope those attending the service, enjoyed the group's rendition of the Megilah as much as we did in performing!

We spoke for a long time the following morning, at Elevensies. King Ahashverosh (Peter Ordever) left his beard and gold crown off, and we all agreed it was great fun!



“ Since Covid 19 arrived I have made lots of wonderful new friends through the Elevensies group. It's really been a lifesaver for me.” **Hilary Barclay**

“It's good to meet new people we didn't know, discuss a wide range of topics and it's always enjoyable. It's good to put a face to some of the names we have heard of but not met.”

Pam & Peter Ordever

“ The idea of Elevensies, of coming together on Zoom for a chat is one of those simple and inspired ideas that has implications far beyond our regular group meetings. In our scattered community, meeting regularly on Zoom is a godsend. Loneliness amongst older and sometimes housebound people was a problem way before the present pandemic and this is one very good way of helping alleviate this problem.” **Anthony Kerstein**

“ As a disabled person who finds it difficult to walk or indeed to stand for very long, I have found Zoom to be an excellent medium of communication. Being able to log into services has brought me back to my faith.

I live in an area where there are almost no Jewish families so when it became difficult for me to go to Shul I became isolated from Jewish people and the only contact that I had was occasionally receiving a call from Rabbi Richard Jacobi. A very welcome call from a very busy man.

The Elevensies sessions have shown me how great it is to be daily meeting with other Jewish people, sharing memories of long ago and not so long ago, sharing our thoughts and discussing what is happening in the country and the world. Some mornings when the pain is harsh and my legs are wobbly and I don't feel I can move, I look at the time and it gives me a reason to force myself to get up. Although now a close group we support each other when it is needed and when new people log on they are welcomed with open arms we are so

pleased to see them. I am well known for making jokes but for me, having lost touch with cousins and family generally, Elevensies has reminded me how great it is to be Jewish and what a wonderful community I belong to.”

Melvin Grant

Italian Cooking – Zoom Style



ELELS held a series of Italian Cooking sessions – Zoom Style

From January to March, ELELS held a series of Italian cooking sessions via Zoom style, based on Italian Jewish recipes led by well-known chef Silvia Nacamulli (Pictured below)



The idea for this started when several of us joined together and did a cook-along with Alice Wilcock on Zoom last Autumn and learned how to make the perfect honey cake. It was fun and the honey cake was delicious too.

As the old English proverb says – “great oaks from little acorns grow”. What followed was an email from Nick suggesting that ELELS run an Italian cooking course led by a top pro. Silvia is well known in the Jewish world, cooking domestically and internationally, having her own regular column in the Jewish Chronicle and having featured in publications such as Elle magazine.

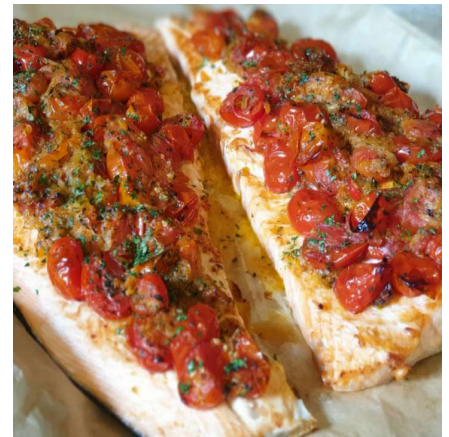


Her website, <http://www.cookingforthesoul.com>, explains that she loves to share Italian recipes that people didn't realise had their origins in Jewish cuisine- and this was the aim of the course. Menus were chosen and dates arranged – four sessions, fortnightly, Sunday afternoons from 2.30 – 3.30 and all for £10!

- Week 1 – Porcini mushroom risotto and sauted broccoli
- Week 2 – Chicken breast with pomegranate & honey and couscous
- Week 3 – Salmon fillets with mixed herbs, tomatoes & white wine and roasted sweet potato wedges with fresh herbs
- Week 4 – Pistachio & lemon amaretti and spinach frittata with pine nuts and raisins.

The scene was set and menus were duly forwarded to all participants approximately a week before the allotted sessions. This gave us time to gather the ingredients together so that if wished we could cook along with Silvia. The majority of us watched as the dishes were prepared but there were a few among us who cooked along.

On Sunday, 24th January, 2021 fifteen of us logged on with Vicki Delow acting as our “Smooth Operator” Zoom host (Anyone remember the song?).



From the very beginning Silvia had a very natural way about her, bringing people together with plenty of opportunity to interact. The sessions were very relaxed and easy to follow.

All were actively encouraged by Silvia to stop her and ask questions at any point. At various points she would stop and show the dishes on screen for us all to see.

And by the end of each session two dishes, a main course and vegetable side, were cooked and ready to serve.

A quote from one satisfied person who thought the sessions “were fantastic – and the end results were delicious.” “They certainly brightened up a grey Sunday afternoon in lockdown”

We hope to welcome Silvia for another series of cookery sessions later in the year. We are also looking to hold further cook-alongs led by our members. If you would like to host a cook-along, sharing a favourite recipe, or register your interest for future courses led by Silvia, please let Nick know at community.development@elels.org.uk.

By Jane Porte

London Jewry; Jewish Blueish Plaques



Caryle Webb-Ingall writes about the two part course she presented in the Spring exploring London's Blue Plaques of Jewish origin.

"If you watch the TV quiz show you'll know the format – what connects a pugilist, the person who created the Belisha Beacon, the first supermarket entrepreneur and the angel of Cable Street? Well they are all Jewish and all have commemorative plaques in London. For my latest Zoom course 'London Jewry; Jewish Blueish' we explored some of the many commemorative plaques in London, focussing particularly on the English Heritage Blue Plaque scheme and the Tower Hamlets heritage plaques.

There are over 1000 English Heritage plaques across the metropolis and at least twenty of the people have a Jewish background although its not acknowledged on the plaque. So it was an interesting piece of research to discover these people looking at clues in their names (not to be too stereotyped), achievements and place of birth to which I needed to add some general knowledge and advice from colleagues. I'm sure I have missed some of them and inevitably in two sessions we could only discuss a selection of the people.



In answer to the question posed at the top of this article, the inventor of the Belisha Beacon was the Minister of Transport Lord Hore Belisha and the first beacon was erected near Hyde Park in September 1934. Despite his privileged background he was unable to continue his political career due to anti Semitism.

And the pugilist? Well there have been several Jewish boxers but I'll just mention Daniel Mendoza. At a time when Jews in England were second-class citizens, a short, ill-tempered Jewish boy from Aldgate brought his rage to the stage to rebut derogatory stereotypes with fast-paced footwork and a mean straight left. He was fiercely proud of his ethnic



background although he was called 'little black bruiser' or 'the fighting Jew'.

Hannah Billig, MBE, GM, born 1901 in Hanbury Street, was a Jewish doctor who practised at a time when there were not many women doctors in the Jewish Maternity Hospital in Whitechapel. By 1935 her practice was in Cable Street, where a blue plaque commemorates her work. She was awarded the George Medal for her bravery during the Second World War, when she volunteered to provide medical assistance to air raid shelters in Wapping. Locals in the area began calling her "The Angel of Cable Street",

And finally Jack Cohen of Tesco fame born in Whitechapel, in 1898. After the first world war he spent his demobilisation gratuity on surplus NAAFI foodstuffs, fish paste and golden syrup which he sold in a Hackney street market and it was in the market that Jack Cohen developed his first, and best-known slogan – "Pile it high, sell it cheap". By 1924 he was the owner of several market stalls, and was able to launch a wholesale business. Cohen's stalls were easily recognisable in the markets, bursting with produce, tins of food and other groceries tumbling over each other in a colourful array to draw the customer in. In 1924 the

Tesco brand name was created from the initials of his tea supplier, TE Stockwell, and the "co" from Cohen and in 1932, the first shops opened under the Tesco name at Becontree and Burnt Oak; by 1939 Sir Jack had acquired a hundred stores in the London area. Tesco's first supermarket opened in 1956 and by 1968, Tesco was the fourth largest chain in Britain. One of Jack Cohen's regular gifts to favoured young men in the business was a tie-pin bearing the letters "YCDBSOYA" It would be presented with a twinkle and the message that it was "a little bit of Yiddish humour". In fact, as he was quick to tell people, the letters stood for another Jack Cohen mantra: "You Can't Do Business Sitting On Your Arse".

The sessions as always were far too short and went quickly with stories and pictures of the other characters we talked about. A theme which ran through the lives of the people we looked at was how they overcame adversity, especially in confronting discrimination because of their Jewishness.

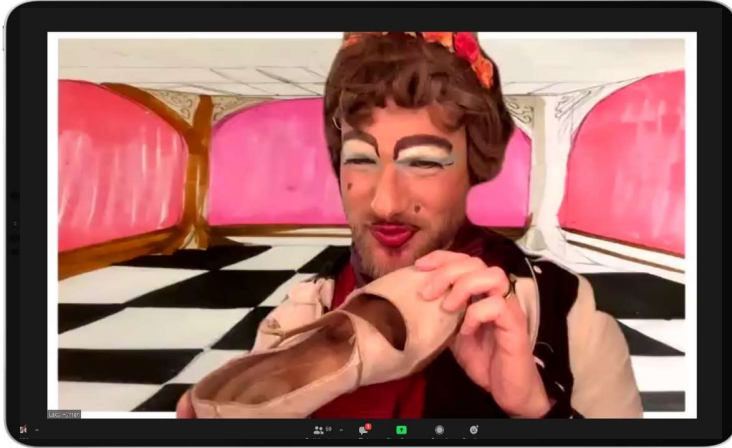
Members of the group added their own memories of some of the personalities and places we discussed which just made them that much more real – so thanks for all those contributions. If you're interested in the history of London Jewry watch out for the next course 'London by the sea' which will look at Jewish history in Brighton on June 15th. Contact Sam (administrator@elels.org.uk) to go on the registration list.



Purim spiel and family celebrations

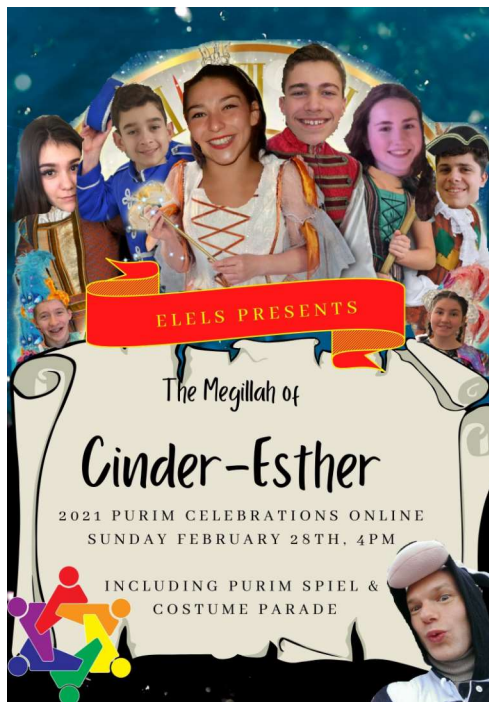
Late February saw us celebrating Purim online this year.

Although the Megillah was read in full on Erev Purim, Thurs 25th Feb, the children's events kicked off on Erev Shabbat, with Mich Sampson and her amazing musical talents leading our youngest community members in an afternoon Tots Purim....ents kicked off on Erev Shabbat, with Mich Sampson and her amazing musical talents leading our youngest community members in an afternoon Tots Purim and Shabbat celebration. Shakers were shaken, songs were sung, fun was had by all!



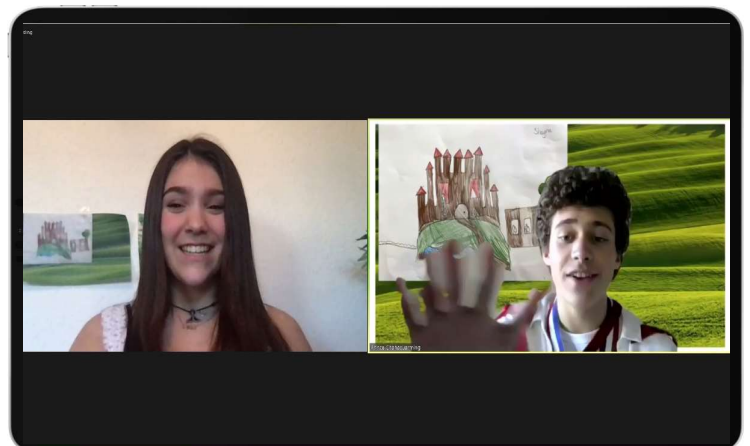
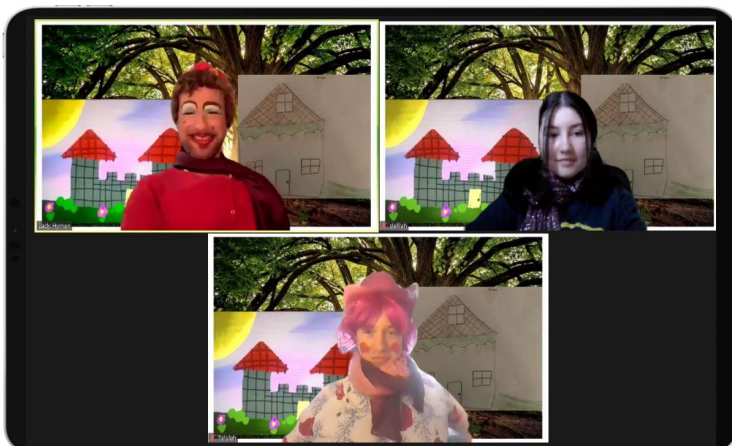
Cheder on Shabbat morning was packed with Purim themed making and baking. Cheder teachers helped the children get hands-on baking the most delicious looking (and tasting) puff-pastry hamantaschen in a video bake-a-long, as well as a DIY make-a-long to create a grogger (noisemaker) to blot out Haman's name, "BOO Haman!".

On Sunday 28th, the whole community came together to enjoy an exclusive live theatrical WorldPremière, "Cinder-Esther". Cheder Head Teacher's Jonathan Young's re-working of panto favourite Cinderella. Jonathan expertly transformed the traditional fairytale into a slickly produced Zoom Purim Spiel. With puns aplenty, references to Shakespeare's "Othello" and "Some Like It Hot", and a generous dose of earthy humour, there was something for everyone to enjoy.



As well as teaching on Saturday, Cheder teachers took on the starring roles and all performed magnificently, despite they were all performing separately via Zoom this year because of COVID restrictions. The cast's adaptability, dedication and talent for comedy shone through our screens and into our homes.

The spiel was narrated by the delightful fairy Adonai-Mother, Jennie Dunne (aka Jonathan's wife and a professional actress). Cinder-Esther (Cinderella) was played by Isabelle Levy with Isaac Nathanson-Parry as Baron Hi-de-chai (Mordechai). Maja Lorinc-Young and Josh Esst were Cinder's ugly sisters, while Joshua Rosenthal was Buttons / Muttons, Zachary Krisman was Prince Ch-ahasuar-ming (Ahasuerus), and lastly, but by no means least, Sasha





Reynolds played Vushti (Vashti). Strangely, Jonathan didn't seem to take a part this year, but we were entertained with an unexpected cameo from Marilyn Monroe herself as Cinder-Esther's Stepmother, Lady Hymen unless I'm somehow mistaken..? Praise was heartfelt and enthusiastic in the EL-Squared Cheder parents WhatsApp group; "This is hilarious", "well done! Really funny :D", "fantastic stuff!", and "Thank you, Jonathan, Jennie and all the Cheder teachers, it was brilliant.", were some of the comments. I couldn't have agreed more.

The afternoon came to an end with the traditional costume parade and competition hosted by Merlin the wise



old wizard (who some felt bore a passing resemblance to Rabbi Richard). We were treated to many wonderful costumes as we Zoom-jumped from home to home and with adults in funky costumes too! After some tricky deliberations the judges chose the winning outfits: Aaron Federman was the youngest winner as Batman in the under 4s category; April Wheeler won the 4-7s with (if memory serves) her Jasmine costume; Lilah Christian's refugee from the 1980s costume won the 7-11s and Talya Singh's Devil outfit won the over 12s. Congratulations to everyone who took part!

Each winner was sent book tokens from the synagogue. I'm sure the hamantaschen is now a distant memory, but the happy memories we made as a community in difficult times will certainly last longer. Next year, let's hope we get to celebrate in person. **By Jo Twyman**





ELELS Communal Seder held on Sunday 28th March 2021

The ELELS Communal Seder is one of the highlights of the ELELS Calendar and for the last few years has been enjoyed in a pleasant hall with much audience participation. 'Back' in 2020, the Covid restrictions dramatically suddenly changed the venue to the then-new technology of Zoom. Being the stoics that our Rabbis, leaders and congregants are, it was a great success. I'm sure I'm not alone in having thought at that time that it would be a 'one off' experience and all would be back to normal this year. It didn't take long for me to realise that would not be the case.



So once again, this had to be an online Communal Seder but with over 70 screens/households online, there must have been over 100 of us gathered round an imaginary virtual Seder table and of course our own. As always the organisation of the service was brilliant and I am in no doubt that many hours of dedicated work went into the planning of the evening for which 'thank you' nowhere near 'fits the bill.' Rabbi Richard Jacobi was determined that none of us should be looking at screens for hours on end and ensured that everything went to time.

From my perspective, I believe that the ELELS Seder not only fully encapsulated the tradition of the occasion but also, through innovative, creative, and thought-provoking additions intensified the central message of celebration of our freedom from slavery in Egypt. We had the privilege of no fewer than three inspiring Rabbis and many gifted readers to take us through the Haggadah and linked readings. Namely, Rabbi Richard Jacobi, Rabbi David Hulbert and Rabbi Larry Becker. It was a truly uplifting evening on what was both a joyous yet serious occasion.

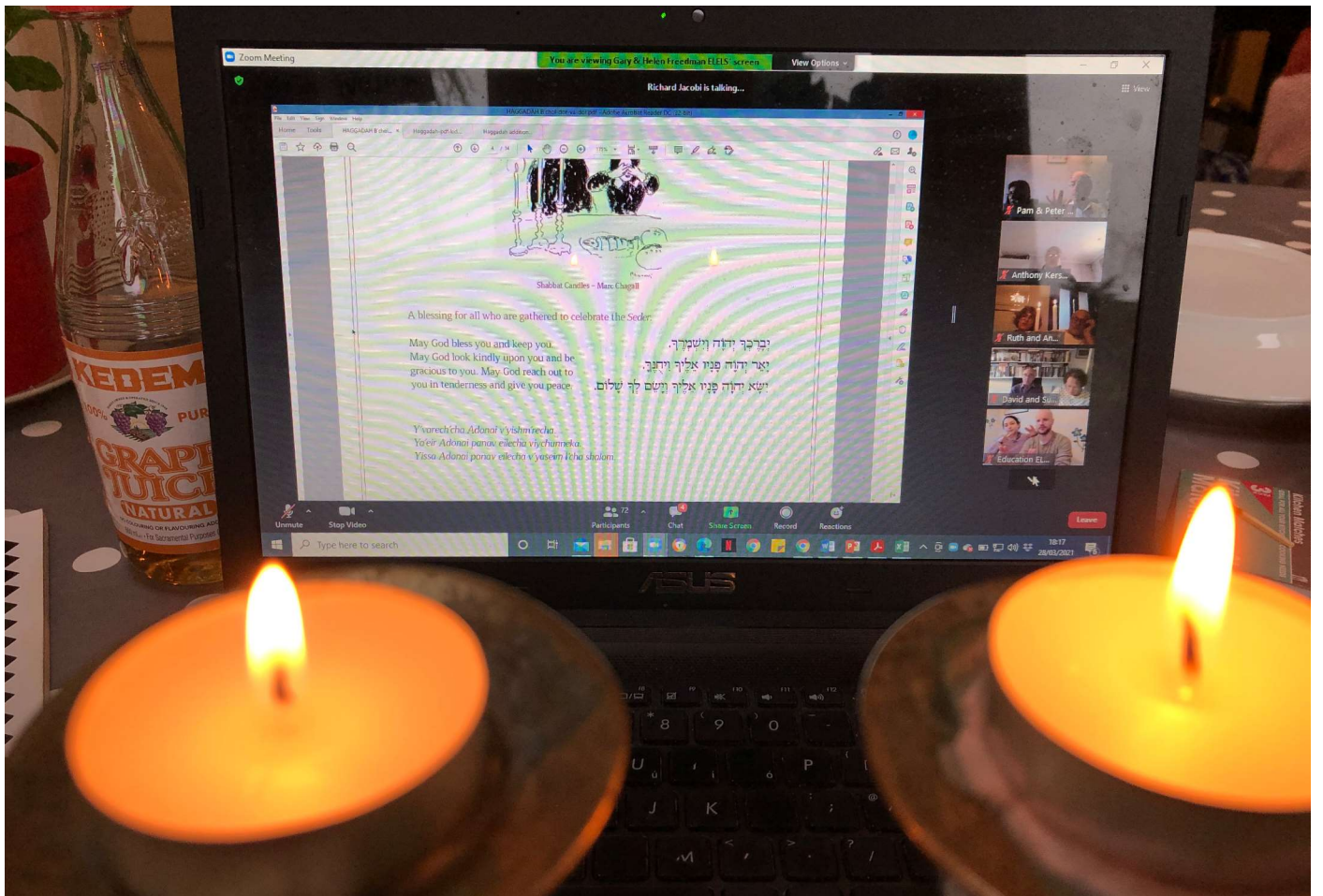
As the story of the Exodus unfolded, the 21st century was brought sharply into focus. Following the traditional and delightful part of the Seder when four children ask the familiar "Ma Nish tana" questions came the first of several innovatory moments for me. Four questions put by four parents each relating to a modern-day concern. Initially the treatment of Asylum seekers "The Israelites were sent Manna- are we treating today's escapees with such compassion?" Another asked the salient question about hate crime "There is nothing more bitter than hate. What have we done to recognise hate speech and hate crime, including misogyny, and what will we commit to do to combat this poison?" The next made a strong link to the Seder itself asking "On this night, when we dip herbs into salt water, we know that many people are shedding tears even now because of domestic abuse. What more can we do to prevent further tears?" And finally, a question on modern slavery. "As we recline in comfort will the pieces of cotton and yellow raisins remind us of the items made by the Uyghur Muslims in China for too many well- known

brands? Will 'never again' mean that we won't stand by while they are persecuted? What will we do to bring the hope to them-, represented by yellow raisins?"

Continuing the theme of bringing current issues to our Seder table Rabbi Richard held up an orange which he had placed on his Seder plate giving the explanation written by Susannah Heschel, daughter of Rabbi Abraham Heschel. Susannah's idea was that each person should take a segment of the orange, make the blessing over fruit, then eat the segment as a gesture of solidarity with Jewish lesbians, gay men and others who are marginalised within the Jewish community such as widows. I would add 'Chained' women whose ex-husbands do not agree to a get.

There was a break for everyone to have a quick meal and then we moved to the closing part of the evening which of course included the many jolly songs including the brilliant Red Sea Shanty which is going the rounds on Social media.

When the Communal Seder takes place in a hall and we sing the lively songs towards the end of the evening



there is considerable audience participation and this is an annual highlight for me. I am thinking particularly of Chad Gadya when the Rabbi assigns either an animal or character that appears in the song to several adults and children all of who are required to make the appropriate sound when their designated role is mentioned. (E.g. loud miaowing for the cat, barking for the dog and so on and so forth – and of course a gruesome sound for the Shocheit!). As it was, we couldn't do the same this time around,

but nonetheless, Rabbi Richard gave a great rendition all on his own (minus the sound effects, I hasten to add).

All too soon it was over with, I think, everyone having had a very special, meaningful Seder but praying that next year, if not in Yerushalayim, at least in a hall! Huge thanks to our Rabbis, Rites and Practices Committee for organising, and to all who participated.

By June Bradbury

ELELS member and Chair of LJ Ruth Seager led a Pesach cook-along for the Liberal Judaism movement on Sunday 28th March which was the first day of Passover.

Ruth demonstrated three favourite Pesach specials, which were macaroons, cinnamon balls and coconut pyramids. These were all chosen for their taste (of course), but also because they would be easy to

cook for children- which was important, because those attending the session were of all ages as well as being spread throughout the LJ community in the UK!





A tribute to our late President, Peter Benscher z"l - A man who lived life to the full- by his son, Simon Benscher

Peter Benscher was born 16th October 1927 in a different world. Although born in central London, he spent his youth and most of his formative years in and around Brighton.



Dad was Head Boy at Patcham School although his education was interrupted by an almost year long stay in hospital with tuberculosis. He had a few jobs but working at the garage in Patcham certainly was the chrysalis of his early ambitions and the start of his life long near obsession with cars.

His parents were Dorothy (Tots) and Harold. Harold was a secular Jew with no affiliation to Judaism but Dad always knew he was Jewish. He joined Brighton Maccabi where he met our mum, Betty z"l. It was initially a friendship that quickly became a love affair that was to last a lifetime.

His paediatric illness meant he was not able to do National Service, so he applied and got a position with the United Nations Relief (UNRA) schlapping back and forth between Brighton & London every day. He never discussed the work he did but was the proud recipient of a certificate acknowledging his contributions.

After the war, the family moved back to Mum's home in East London where her dad was the landlord of an East End docklands pub (opening at 6.30am and closing at 11.00pm) 6 days per week and Dad became the manager.

There we all stayed until 1964 when Grandpa Levy wasn't well enough to stay in the pub so Mum and Dad bought a house in Buckhurst Hill for the 5 of us - cost? £5K bought on a mortgage with no savings and no income.

They decided that the only thing other than pulling pints they both knew about was kitchens and cooking and the opening of a hardware shop was done with loans from the bank and a commitment that graft would get them through. The first day's takings were £19. 57. Years later I'm still running Mum and Dad's company

During my reflections on Dad I have come to realise that our parents had a sort of open marriage. Mum was fully aware of Dad's love affairs of which I have to say there were many.

All these extra marital affairs had one (or in fact 4) things in common and they were wheels.

Without doubt Mum was the most important thing in his life but he would admit that cars came a very close second.

Humbers begot Jags. Jags begot Daimlers. Daimlers begot Bentleys and then finally a Rolls Royce.

But it has to be said that he had no issue with delivering dustbins out of the back of a Bentley and was in his element cleaning and polishing his pride and joys.

He was well into his 8th decade when it was suggested that it was time to "downsize" and surprisingly he agreed.

A few weeks later he called me to say the he had part-exchanged his Rolls for something else. That something else turned out to be an American Chrysler nicknamed the baby Bentley. I don't think mum and dad spoke for while when she found out. Dad had other passions, his family and his business and soon after making aliyah to Essex and joining his new community, the Woodford and District Liberal Synagogue (where mum's brother Alf was the treasurer), the community became another passion. He sat on numerous shul committees, eventually becoming Chair and after retirement was proud to be the Honorary Life President. He didn't mention too often the times he would spend the night in Marlborough Road because of a threat of vandalism or the number of Jewish graves he repaired that had been desecrated.

He was mums schlapper during the many years she was Marriage



Secretary and took over the role when her failing eyesight prevented her from carrying out the honour. I can't imagine how many weddings they attended and it was always a source of amusement to me that so many grooms when they smashed the glass didn't realise that in fact inside the bag was a 60watt light bulb. Cheaper than replacing glasses, he insisted.

We didn't discuss religion and to this day I'm not sure what or who he prayed to, but we often discussed the importance of community and his belief that all should contribute in some way.

He took great pride when my brother Paul became a magistrate and I followed in Dad's footsteps by taking an active role in synagogal life. He was never critical but he sometimes commented that decisions I had made would not necessarily have been the ones that he would have, a skill he shared with his Friday night shul buddy Rabbi Harry.

Dad and I spent many a Shabbos together traipsing around the UK when he joined me on my shul crawls (during my time as Chair of Liberal Judaism) and he was always greeted and welcomed so warmly. He so enjoyed meeting new people.

On the walls of his office he displayed the certificates that were given to both him and Mum acknowledging and thanking them for the devotion they had given to Liberal Judaism and pride of place was his Freeman of the City of London scroll. I never got to find out where to buy a silk hangman's rope.

Right up to the end he never lost his sense of humour often giving me back the same sarcasm that I gave him.

He was always so grateful for the care he received from so many people, doctors, nurses, carers but most of all from his granddaughter. The love, care and devotion Janine gave to Dad over the last few months without doubt extended his life and made it bearable- and we are exceptionally grateful.

Mum's passing highlighted that being her eyes was his raison d'être. From the moment he woke to the time he went to sleep he constantly watched out for his beloved "Bet" and suddenly he had to find a reason to wake up in the morning. This was difficult at first but to his credit he slowly but surely found a way to give his life meaning.

He loved his music, he loved attending shul, he loved his family and friends. He also loved coming out to eat with Lois and me every Sunday evening, always choosing the soup option. We teased him that we would engrave on his headstone "I'll have the soup"

Dad – enjoy the soup, give Mum our love, don't drive too fast and thank you for being the loving, caring father and friend that you were.

By Simon Benschler

Our ninth guided tour to Israel and the holy land



Sunday 5th December – Sunday 12th December 2021.

Led by: Rabbi David Hulbert, Revd. Richard Wyber & Imam Dr. Mohammed Fahim

Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit places in the Holy Land (both Israel and the Palestinian territories) sacred to our three faiths:

- Jerusalem Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock
- Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Jesus' tomb)
- Western Wall
- Yad Vashem (Memorial to Holocaust victims)
- Bethlehem Jesus' birthplace
- Hebron Tombs of the Patriarchs
- Nazareth Jesus' home-town; site of the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary
- Caesarea Capital of Judaea and major port in Roman times
- Boat-trip across the Sea of Galilee
- And many more!

COST £1,500 per person, sharing twin room.

Includes:

- Return coach from Woodford to Luton & Gatwick Airports
- Return flights
- Half-board in top-quality, modern hotels
- Travel in comfortable air-conditioned tour coach
- Qualified tour guide, with us for the whole week
- All entrance fees

The cost is made up of a deposit of £300, payable immediately, that will buy your EasyJet ticket. The flight tickets will go up in price as the plane fills up, so it is important to commit yourself and secure this price as soon as you can.

The balance of £1,200, covering the hotels and the tour, will be payable at the beginning of November. This price is unlikely to change, unless there is a major change in the value of the £ against the \$.

If you would like to come, please send your name and full postal address to: david.hulbert@whsmithnet.co.uk and you will be sent all the details and the booking form, with full Terms and conditions.

Post Coronavirus

As you know, at the time of writing, both Israel and the UK have vaccinated a high proportion of their populations and levels of infection are currently very low. So tourist travel between the two countries is likely to be reopened. Israel is likely to be on the 'Green List' to be announced on May 17th. But we assume that individuals will only be allowed to enter Israel and Palestine if they can show that they have been vaccinated or tests show that they are free from the virus. Obviously the situation may change in the seven months before December. We do not at present know if we will have to pay for tests on entry and exit, or how much tests might cost.

Please be assured that costs for flights and the tour will be refunded if, for whatever reason, we cannot go ahead. You will be kept informed of developments.



Further details:

The Middle East is the cradle of all three Abrahamic faiths and Israel/Palestine is full of holy places sacred to all three faiths. Jerusalem is a holy city, a place of pilgrimage for Jews, Christians and Muslims. The magnificent Dome of The Rock is the earliest mosque in the world, marking the Night Journey of the Prophet from Makka. Many of the present-day inhabitants of the Holy Land are still guided by their religious faith in their lives. Visiting the Holy Land, and praying to God there, in the company of other people of faith, is the journey of a lifetime.

This tour will be led by Rabbi David Hulbert, Revd. Richard Wyber & Imam Dr. Mohammed Fahim. The itinerary mostly duplicates those of our earlier eight very successful visits, and we will be led by a professional and licensed tour guide.

We have tried to include as many significant sites of religious pilgrimage as possible in the seven days available, and we have also tried to achieve a good balance of sites of Jewish, Christian and Muslim interest. But members of the Three Faiths Forum will recognise that the trip is an opportunity to learn about the holy sites of the other two faiths, as well as venerating their own. The weather will be warm and beautiful. Although the tour is quite intensive, there will be some free time and there will be plenty of opportunities to nap on the coach!

Background information

* Tourist visas are normally granted to British passport holders on entry to the country. You must have at least six

months' validity left on your passport after the end of Dec. 2021. Please check now! For those who wish to use their passports to visit countries such as Pakistan, you can be assured that the border control people will put entry and exit stamps on a separate, removable piece of paper in your passport.

- * You should expect very stringent security checks, both at Luton and upon arrival in Israel. Please be calm and patient!
- * You do not need any medical jabs. Drinking water is safe. Just pack some Diocalm to soothe 'holiday tummy'.
- * You do not need to take travellers' cheques or cash - there are plenty of cash machines that work with British credit or debit cards.
- * Food is 'Mediterranean', with plenty of dairy food, fresh salads and rice. All meat will be kosher/halal. Hotels operate an 'eat as much as you want' buffet service.
- * Prices are much the same as they are in Britain. You are expected to bargain for souvenirs in Arab shuks, although Israeli prices are fixed.
- * As part of a guided coach tour, you are expected to be punctual for all departures, especially first thing in the morning! You will be expected to keep with the group, and not wander off to 'do your own thing' - although there will be free time and time for regular prayers.

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:	Www.Chaicancercare.Org.Uk	0208202 2211 / 0800 808 4567
JAMI- JEWISH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE	Www.Jamiuk.Org	0208 4582223
JEWISH BLIND & DISABLED	Www.Jbd.Org	0208 371 6611
JEWISH CARE	Www.Jewishcare.Org	0208 922 2222
KESHET FOR LGBTQ EQUALITY IN JEWISH LIFE	Www.Keshetuk	
LEAGUE OF JEWISH WOMEN	Www.Lgw.Org	0207 242 8300
AHADA BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT	Www.Ahada.Org.Uk	07758 727328
LONDON BOROUGH OF REDBRIDGE	Www.Redbridge.Gov.Uk	0208 554 5000
EPPING COUNTY COUNCIL	Www.Eppingforest.Gov.Uk	01992 564000
LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST	Www.Walthamforest.Gov.Uk	
JEWISH WOMENS AID, DOMESTIC ABUSE LINE	Www.Jwa.Org.Uk	0808 801 0500
DINA SEXUAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT LINE	Dana@jwa.Org.Uk	0808 8010656
SAMARITANS.	Www.Samaritans.Org	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	administrator@elels.org.uk	020 8989 7619
Rabbis	Richard Jacobi	rabbi@elels.org.uk	
	Emeritus Rabbi Hulbert	Contact through the office	
Community development manger	Nick Young	Community.development@elels.org.uk	
Address	ELELS, Marlborough Road, South Woodford, London, E18 1AR		

COUNCIL			
Chairman	Stewart Spivack	chair@elels.org.uk	07745 790869
Vice-chair	Elliot Porte	vice.chair@elels.org.uk	
Hon.Secretary	Richard Stevens	hon.secretary@elels.org.uk	
Treasurer	Tina Gold	Treasurer@elels.org.uk	
Rites and Practices	Ben Glassman	Contact through the office	
GDPR / communications	Bob Kamall	Data.protection@elels.org.uk	
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	Safeguarding@elels.org.uk	
Development	Phil Aston	Contact through the office	
Property Action Group	Darren Green	Contact through the office	

OTHER COMMITTEES			
Burial Officers	Sue Nathanson	07922 904643	
	Jane Porte	07922 904643	
	Judith Konzon	Contact through the office	
Friendship club	Di Kamall	Contact through the office	
Cheder	Cheder@elels.org.uk		
Membership	Membership@elels.org.uk		



EAST LONDON & ESSEX LIBERAL SYNAGOGUE
ק"ק שיר חדש - A Community with a New Song
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