



Belsize Lehrhaus



9th November 2014
Belsize Square Synagogue, 51 Belsize Square, NW3 4HX

Presenters and their sessions

Rabbi Stuart Altshuler

Rabbi Stuart Altshuler has been the rabbi and spiritual leader of Belsize Square Synagogue since January 2011. In addition to his pulpit experience since his ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1980, Rabbi Altshuler also has a doctorate in Jewish history (JTS) and has taught as professor in Jewish Studies at Chapman University (Orange, California), Loyola-University of Chicago and Old Dominion University (Norfolk, Virginia).

Rabbi Altshuler has written a history of the Soviet Jewry movement in America, entitled, *From Exodus to Freedom* (Rowman and Littlefield), and his currently working on a book entitled, *From Mesopotamia to Messiah*

Sessions:

10:00 *The ethical foundations of the biblical dietary laws (Kashrut)*

This session will explore the Biblical foundations of Judaism's dietary laws. The Torah (Bible) gives more instructions regarding the dietary prohibitions and allowances than any other ritual including Shabbat, Holidays, circumcision and more—why is that so? Kashrut is a core tenet of Jewish life—we will find out why that is so.

13:30 *Theodicy: A Jewish view on why bad things happen to good people*

Perhaps the most instructive way to learn about the differences between religions and other non-religious ideologies, is to explore how each religion attempts to resolve the most important religious question regarding the existence of a Just and Loving God contrasted with the realities of our earthly existence including human-made and natural suffering. Judaism, beginning with the book of Job, has its own particular way of dealing with this central religious question of theodicy—that is, justifying God despite the existence of evil.

Professor Glenda Abramson

Professor Glenda Abramson is a retired Professor of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University of Oxford and Editor-in-chief of the Journal of Modern Jewish Studies.

Session:

13:30 *Great Works: Holocaust representation: 'Todesfuge' and Maus*

To commemorate Kristallnacht we will discuss the question of Holocaust representation, using two well-known examples: Paul Celan's *Todesfuge* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.

Ben Barkow

Session:

11:30 *'Kristallnacht' and the Holocaust*

Annette Boeckler

Dr Annette M. Boeckler is a lecturer for liturgy and bible at Leo Baeck College and responsible for the college's library. She is the translator of the German Liberal prayer book in use today and author of books and various articles, especially on the history and ideology of German Liberal liturgy, as "Service of the Souls" (Seelenfeier): The origin of Modern Memorial Services 1819-1938 (in: L.A. Hoffman [ed.], May God remember, 2013); Monotheism, Mission and Multiculturalism (in: L.A. Hoffman, All the world, 2014).

Session:

11:30 *One prayer book, four continents*

On four continents synagogues are celebrating these days their 75 anniversaries, synagogues founded by German immigrants. Some even started with "our" very own first prayer book, the "*Einheitsgebetbuch*". But while we translated it into English one day, they translated it into Dutch and Brazilian Portuguese. We will get a glimpse into what happened in our sister congregations during the past 75 years, how and why their liturgy changed, and where it is till today still exactly like ours.

Hilary Curtis

Hilary Curtis is an independent consultant who works with clinicians to improve healthcare, mainly in relation to HIV/AIDS. She is a trained scientist with many peer-reviewed publications, but her interest in history is self-taught.

Session:

10:00 *Jubilee: Anniversaries and Jewish values*

This session will examine Torah commandments relating to the Shmita (seven) and Jubilee (seven times seven) year cycles. Although no longer applicable, these illustrate values relating to social justice, freedom and bondage, and ties between the people and land of Israel. We will look at a recent study on slavery within Jewish communities in 10th-13th century CE Egypt, to further explore how past ideas about individual liberty and the collective differ from our own.

Deputy Israeli Ambassador Eitan Na'eh

Mr. Eitan Na'eh is Israel's Deputy Ambassador to the United Kingdom, a position he assumed in August 2013.

Mr. Na'eh joined the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 1991. Throughout his career he specialised in Turkish affairs, and was posted to Ankara in 1993 where he served as Second, and later as First Secretary. From 1997 to 1999, he served as

Deputy Consul General for Press and Information at the Israeli Consulate in Chicago and later as Head of the Turkish, Greek and Cyprus desk in Jerusalem. His most recent foreign posting was to Baku, Azerbaijan, where he served as Israel's Ambassador between 2001-2005. Prior to his arrival in London, he served as the National Security Council's Senior Director at the Diplomatic Secretariat, within the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Na'eh holds a BA (Hons) in Political Science and Middle Eastern History from Tel-Aviv University.

Session:

16:00 *Panel debate on the future of Judaism*

Cantor Paul Heller - International Member of the Cantors Assembly and European Cantors Association

Born in Bogota, Colombia, Cantor Heller is the sixth Cantor at Belsize Square Synagogue, with its rich musical tradition. Prior to Belsize Synagogue, he was at the Great Synagogue in Stockholm for eleven years and also acting Rabbi in Quito, Ecuador and in Medellin, Colombia. Trained in five different countries, he received a doctorate in Dental Sciences from the University of Javeriana in Bogota.

Sessions:

11:30 *Siddur's geography*

This book is the most read of the Jewish people. It is used several times a day as part of prayer. It will be the aim of this session to discover how it is structured and why it has become so central to Jewish practice. Before doing all this, however, we will take a detour into the question of how the Siddur came to the Jewish people in its present form.

14:45 *God's particle*

In this session we will be looking into the big bang theory and the recent discovery of "the Higgs boson" - so central to the state of physics today and so crucial to our final understanding of the structure of matter, yet so elusive, that it has received a nickname: the God Particle. We will analyze it in Jewish sources as already mentioned in the 13th Century by the respected Jewish scholar Moshe ben Nachman, "Nachmanides" and other ancient Jewish sources, as the **supernal point** in the Zohar. God has used the laws of nature to create the universe and this is entirely consistent with regard to the biblical accounts of God's actions, we will read Genesis through another lens. A theme that fascinates me, combining two of my fields of knowledge, religion and sciences.

Antge Nisimblat Heller

Antge is a Culturologist, has a Masters in Art History and Masters in Educational Sciences from Stockholm's University in Sweden, specialising in Jewish Education at Paideia, the European Institute for Jewish Studies in association with the University of Tel Aviv. She is an Authorized Cultural Guide of the city of Stockholm, Uppsala

and Sigtuna in four languages and a Certified Foreign Language Teacher in Hebrew and English.

Session:

What do you see? (Children's programme)

Let's look, see, watch and describe different paintings, viewing them from different perspectives. What do you think the colours express to us? What do you think the artists will transmit to us?

Michael Horowitz QC

I was born in Hampstead in 1943. My mother came to London from Aachen in 1939 and my father arrived from Antwerp in 1940.

I am a retired Family lawyer. After North West London Jewish Day School and St Marylebone GS, I read law at Cambridge where I was Maintenance Officer of the Jewish Society and President of the Union. I have written a little on Matrimonial Property and Family Law & Human Rights. I wish I paid more attention to my Talmud lessons with Rabbi Jacob Heschel, z'l, of Edgware Adath.

Session:

13:30 *Blutheschuldigung*



In August 1903, 6 months after the Kishinev pogrom, the Rabbi of Krakow, my great great grandfather R Chaim Ariele Horowitz presided over an international Rabbinical Congress which denounced the blood libel. The participating Rabbis swore a solemn oath on the sifrei torahs of the Great Synagogue declaring Jewish innocence. I explore what lay behind the event using family papers and discuss how the Congress opens a window onto Jewish life in the twilight years of the Habsburg Monarchy and Jewish life itself in Poland.



Rabbi Markus A Lange, MA

Markus has been the full-time Chaplain-in-Residence at the Marie Curie Hospice Hampstead for four and a half years. He studied for the rabbinate at the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, and the Leo Baeck College, London and holds an MA in Jewish Studies from King's College, London.

Markus received his Bibliologue training in Germany and is certified to use the method with narrative and non-narrative texts. He uses this approach alongside other bibliodramatic and psychodramatic elements successfully and effectively in religious education; adult Torah study; clinical supervision/reflective practice of healthcare professionals as well as in Spiritual and Pastoral Care workshops.

Session:

14:45 *Bibliologue – encountering biblical texts in new, creative and midrashic ways*
In an experiential way, this session introduces the method of Bibliologue—a form of engaging with biblical stories, characters and themes by means of solely verbal imaginative role-play. The members of the group are invited to fill in the ‘gaps’ in the text while tapping into their own personal wisdom and life-experience. By doing so, the group creates a tapestry of thoughts and ideas, a new and living midrash. All you need is a bit of curiosity and the wish to have fun with biblical texts.

Andrew Levy

Andrew Levy grew up in Belsize Square and organised the Belsize 60th Anniversary Lehrhaus fifteen years ago (almost to the day). He then chaired the Limmud conference in 2000.

Session:

13:30 *Are haftarahs too hot to handle?*

Why do we focus on studying the Torah portion to the exclusion of haftarahs? Was Abraham such a saint? Was David such a sinner? Put the two of them together and you might find that the liturgy can be extremely radical.

Bea Lewkowicz

Dr Bea Lewkowicz is a social anthropologist and oral historian. She has co-curated the ‘Continental Britons’ exhibition at the Jewish Museum (2002) and is Co-Director of the *AJR Refugee Voices Audio-Visual Testimony Archive*. She is currently the director of *Sephardi Voices UK* and is a member of the Research Centre for Austrian and German Exile Studies. She directed and produced many testimony based films for projects and exhibitions, among them *Refugee Experiences*, on permanent display in the Jewish Museum London. In 2012, together with Andrea Hammel, she edited a book on the Kindertransport (*The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39. New Perspectives*. Amsterdam/New York, NY).

Session:

10:00 *‘Our Heart Belongs to Belsize Square’: Belonging, community, and religion among German-Jewish refugees*

In this session I will present the findings of my research on the history of Belsize Square Synagogue, based on extensive oral history interviews with members of the synagogue. I will explore what role *Belsize Square Synagogue* played in the lives of the German and Austrian Jewish interviewees.

Larry Miller

Larry Miller and his family have been Belsize members for 20 years. Originally from Washington DC, Larry settled in London in 1976. He is a broadcast journalist and reports on British and European news for the US radio networks CBS and National Public Radio

Session

11:30 *The Pew poll on shift in Jewish identity and approach to Israel*

This session will focus on the Pew study on the changing nature of Jewish identity, and how that may impact current attitudes to Israel. Although the research was carried out among American Jews, it may also mirror the outlook here in Britain.

Neil Nerva

Neil represents the Queens Park ward on Brent Council, is Vice Chair of the Jewish Labour Movement and is on the steering group of the London Jewish Forum . A member of Belsize Square for over 15 years, Neil has enjoyed and valued the debate and challenge offered by the Sunday discussion group

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Session:

10:00 *Dissecting UK responses to the summer 2014 hostilities between Hamas/ Israel, and the wider Israel/Palestine conflict?*

This interactive session will consider:

- Does being a critical friend of Israel mean that we have to "keep it in the family"?
- What can we learn from the Tricycle?

Alasdair Nisbet

Alasdair Nisbet was Chairman of Leo Baeck College until April this year and is now an Honorary Fellow. He is passionate about studying the Bible and looks for the background verses that add colour to Biblical stories. He is also CEO of Natrium Capital, a financial advisory business.

Session:

13:30 *Trading in the Bible: Global trade in the time of the prophets*

The Phoenicians were the sea faring traders in Biblical times. Apart from the purple dyes, after which they were named, they traded in materials, such as woods and metals, crops and slaves. All are described in detail in the Tanach. Often these passages make Bible stories come alive and link them to archaeological evidence.

Rob Nothman

Rob Nothman has been a familiar voice on BBC Radio's Sports coverage over the last 25 years.

He can be heard reporting on football matches, interviewing some of golf's greatest players at the Open Championship, or presenting sports bulletins on Radio 4's Today Programme or 5-Live.

He's been a Board member at Belsize Square Synagogue for over 20 years, and sings - not always tunefully (Rob's words!) - in the Community Choir.

Session:

16:00 Chairman for the *Panel Debate on the Future of Judaism*

Professor Tessa Rajak

Tessa Rajak is Professor of Classics Emeritus at the University of Reading, Senior Research Fellow at Somerville College Oxford and a member of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. She is the author of a number of books on Jewish history in the Graeco-Roman world, and she has been editor of the *Journal of Jewish Studies*. As a student, she took part in the Masada excavations.

Session:

14:45 *Making sense of the Masada suicide*

The spectacular fortress of Masada on the Dead Sea was the last stronghold to fall to the Romans three years after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. The suicides of some 960 defenders and their families, as dramatized by the historian Josephus, have entered our collective memory as a legend of resistance to the last. It has inspired Jews from mediaeval martyrs to the Shoah. Looking both at the narrative and at the astonishing archaeology of the site, we shall highlight Masada's key role in Zionist life and thought, and we shall also evaluate some of the recent criticisms.

Rabbi Danny Rich

Rabbi Danny Rich has been the Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism since the middle of 2005 and was Rabbi to Kingston Liberal Synagogue for nearly two decades. Rabbi Rich is a Justice of the Peace, and a hospital and prison chaplain.

He is a President of the Council of Christians & Jews and a member of the Council of Imams and Rabbis.

His publications include *Liberal Judaism and Mixed Marriage* (2004), *Zionism: The Case for Fair-Mindedness On All Sides* (2010), *Muslim Perceptions Of 'The Other'* (2011) and *Israel Mattuck: The inspirational voice of Liberal Judaism* (2014).

He has recently campaigned on the living wage and caring for carers, and gave live and written evidence to the Falconer Commission on Assisted Dying and the Parliamentary Public Bill Committee on the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill.

Session:

14:45 *Israel Mattuck: The inspirational voice of Liberal Judaism*

The session will explore the contemporary force of Mattuck's views through an examination of a selection of his sermons. The book *Israel Mattuck: The inspirational voice of Liberal Judaism* will be available for purchase in the Kiddush room.

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg

Jonathan Wittenberg was born in Glasgow, to a family of German Jewish origin with rabbinic ancestors on both sides. He trained for the rabbinate at Leo Baeck College London, receiving ordination in 1987, and continued his studies to gain a further rabbinic qualification from his teacher Dr. Aryeh Strikovsky in Israel.

Since then Rabbi Wittenberg has worked as the rabbi of the New North London Synagogue and has taken a leading role in the development of the Masorti Movement for traditional non-fundamentalist Judaism in England. In 2008 he was appointed Senior Rabbi of the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues UK.

He has a strong interest in pastoral work, particularly in the care of the sick and dying and is deeply engaged in Jewish / Christian and Jewish / Muslim interfaith dialogue. He lectures widely and writes frequently for the Jewish and interfaith press. He has broadcast for the BBC on Prayer for the Day, and on Al Mustakillah television.

His publications include: *'The Three Pillars of Judaism: A Search for Faith And Values'* (SCM Press, 1996); *'The Laws of Life: A Guide to Traditional Jewish Practice at Times of Bereavement'* (Masorti Publications 1997) and *'The Eternal Journey; Meditations on the Jewish Year'*. *'The Silence of Dark Water: An Inner Journey'* was published in November 2008. Since then he has produced a popular children's book *'Shmendrick and the Croc'*, beautifully illustrated by Barbara Jackson (Masorti Publications 2010). His latest book is *'Walking with the Light: from Frankfurt to Finchley'* (Quartet Books 2013).

Sessions:

11:30 *Encounter with the past on the walk from Frankfurt to London*

An extremely keen walker, the idea of walking from Frankfurt to Finchley came to Rabbi Wittenberg when he read his grandfather's memoirs on the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht just before his Finchley congregation was rebuilding its synagogue.

Armed with a battery-powered ner tamid and accompanied by his faithful dog, Mitzpah, Rabbi Wittenberg walked from Frankfurt to the Hook of Holland, musing along the way on the history of German Jewry and connecting with righteous gentiles who supported Jews during the Holocaust. In this session Rabbi Wittenberg will recount encounters on his journey.

The bearing of the light from the land of the Holocaust to freedom in London became the subject of both the film, *Carrying the Light*, and the book, *Walking With The Light - From Frankfurt to Finchley*. The book will be available for purchase in the Kiddush room

16:00 *Panel Debate – The future of Judaism*

Online booking: <http://www.synagogue.org.uk/event/belsize-lehrhaus/>