



A JEWISH RESPONSE TO CURRENT CRISES

Shalom Haverim,

We are entering the summer months and, as I write, it appears we are still far away from being able to resume normal synagogue life. The uncertainty in many ways is worse than all else. In addition to the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the world, we have also witnessed social unrest in response to horrific police brutality/murder in Minneapolis.

This is a good time to stress some Jewish responses to both crises – the spiritual uplift and reminders can help us during difficult times to absorb the changes in our lives and the world.

First, the coronavirus pandemic:

1) This horrendous disease that has taken the lives of thousands of people here and around the world reminds us of the precarious nature of life. Being alive today is no guarantee of tomorrow. We learn to take each day as a gift, a miracle. That is why our ancestors were so committed to prayer: acknowledging each day, thanking God for allowing us to breathe, talk, study, walk, see, hear and all the miracles that we too often take for granted. *Limnot yameinu* – the Psalmist tells us to 'count our days'. Make each moment count, stop to recite a *bracha* when you eat and drink, acknowledge that it can all be taken away so quickly. By doing so, when we are able to return to normalcy, we will be able to embrace our lives with a renewed feeling of exhilaration at being alive and be sensitive to everything we say and do.

Expressing our gratitude for everything we have, we become more sensitive to

those who have lost their livelihoods and health during this difficult period. We must use this time to grow closer to the ones we love, thankful for the short time that we have with each other.

2) The time at home has given us the opportunity for silence and quiet, perhaps for more study and reading. It certainly has been a time of reflection about our lives, what they mean, how we shall live in the years ahead. Studies have shown that people across the globe have used this time to ask more questions about God, humanity, morality, to undertake serious philosophical and religious meditation. We have slowed down enough to realise how crucial it has been to spend this *hitbod'dut* (solitude time) to try to understand ourselves and what life means to each of us.

3) This pandemic has also taught us the importance of community, congregation, our tradition of linking with a minyan, being with our fellow Jews. Our sense of *hevruta*, of being bound together, reminds us of our obligation to each other. I have been very proud of the number of volunteers who have come forward to deliver food, make phone calls and simply to bring cheer to so many of our Belsize family unable to leave their homes at all.

Second, the issue of race:

1) We Jews know that the first premise of our Torah is that ALL human beings are created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God, meaning that every human being carries within him or her, no matter our race, background, religion, ethnic group, physical abilities and more, a part of God. Therefore, every human life is inviolable and sacred; the loss of one human life is as if an entire world is lost (*Mishnah Sanhedrin*). We must show that racism of any sort is

intolerable, not just for a week but each and every day, in the way that we conduct ourselves on the street, at home, at our places of work. It's the basic supposition of our entire religion, it is the Torah, and what flows from that principle is our obligation to treat every human being with dignity, 'to love one's neighbour as oneself' (Lev.19). There should, one day, be no such thing as race, because we are all part of the human race. Black-white distinctions, prejudice, are harmful to the human soul and must be eradicated. There is no debate about that at all. Moses, after all, married a Cushite woman, Tziporah, who was black, and Judaism knows no racial boundaries.

2) Judaism rejects violence as an answer to social problems, the needless deaths, looting, rioting, burning, attacking law enforcement officers. Responding to justifiable anger about racism should not lead to reverse hatred and violence against innocents. Martin Luther King Jr is my spiritual guide here. He worked hand in hand with one of our great rabbis of the 20th century, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. He taught all rabbis who had the privilege of getting our rabbinic education at the Jewish Theological Seminary that peaceful activism and protest was the answer to social woes that needed addressing, vigorously but not by violence or terror.

That principle of non-violent protest has been ingrained in the Jewish people throughout our history, by Yohanan Ben Zakkai and the Rabbis who established the first rabbinic yeshiva in Yavneh in the first century CE, who taught us that the way to God would ultimately be through study of Torah, prayer and mitzvot.

The state of Israel, which has been called upon to defend the Jewish people's right to exist as a sovereign entity in our native land, has had to use

IN THIS ISSUE

- Page 2: Cheder goes online
- Page 3: Tikkun Leil Shavuot
- Page 4: Our centenarians; News from Abernethy Mansions
- Page 5: Charity news
- Page 6: Community news; Adult Discussion Group
- Page 7: A Cantor in Corona Times
- Page 8: Synagogue contact details

Continued on page 7





CHEDER GOES ONLINE

by Caroline Loison, Head of Cheder and Youth Activities

Sunday 29 March saw BSS Cheder go online for the very first time. Nobody knew quite how many children to expect to log in to the Zoom session but I was pleasantly surprised to find nearly 40 pupils joining us on our new digital adventure. This solid number has continued every week as children have logged on for Assembly at 11am which includes Havdalah and the first paragraph of the Shema and is followed by 30-40 minutes of Jewish Studies in mixed classes.

Years 1 & 2 are being taught by Susannah Alexander who has done some delicious cook-alongs, making carob truffles on our Lag b'Omer morning and chocolate cheesecake on our Shavuot morning, as well as some great arts and crafts projects such as making a diorama of Jerusalem on our Yom Yerushalayim morning.

Years 3 & 4 are being taught by Benji Nathan who has had great fun creating various tricky Kahoot quizzes with his class as well as designing an amazing Lag b'Omer Battleships game and making ice cream in 5 minutes for Shavuot.

I am teaching Years 5 & 6 and they have also had a very creative time, going on a virtual tour of Israel on Yom Ha'atzmaut, which included a live visit to the Kotel via 'Kotelcam', making 's'mores' (cracker sandwiches with warm marshmallows and chocolate) on Lag b'Omer, which were enjoyed around a virtual campfire with stories and silly songs, and creating an origami set of the Ten Commandments on our Shavuot morning.

Years 7 & 8 are taught by Jeannie Cohen, who has come up with some

brilliant topics for our bright B'nei Mitzvah students to think about and discuss, including learning the origins of the Hatikvah on Yom Ha'atzmaut and the history behind Yom Yerushalayim and why it is such a cause for celebration in Israel.

Our iGCSE class has also been meeting online every Sunday morning and Marion Godfrey has been providing them with plenty of food for thought as they discuss and debate a variety of hot topics, ranging from faith schools, state religions and whether the Jewish people need a Jewish state today.

On 7 June BSS Cheder returned after the half-term break for a very special session as we welcomed author and BSS member, Francesca Simon. Francesca agreed to talk to our pupils about her personal story, her Belsize connection and how she got in to writing Horrid Henry and her other stories. The children listened, fascinated, as Francesca explained how she and her son Joshua joined Belsize after they went 'shul shopping' and had a far more welcoming experience at BSS than at any other synagogue. She talked about her love of alliteration explaining why she chose Horrid Henry and Perfect Peter as character names, and how she often thinks of two unlikely ideas to link together which she uses as the basis for a story.

Francesca then invited our pupils to ask her any questions that they had. She was impressed that despite the thousands of author visits she has done in the past, BSS Cheder pupils were still able to think of some original questions for her. These included 'Do you know anyone as horrid as Henry?' from Joseph, 'Who is Great Aunt

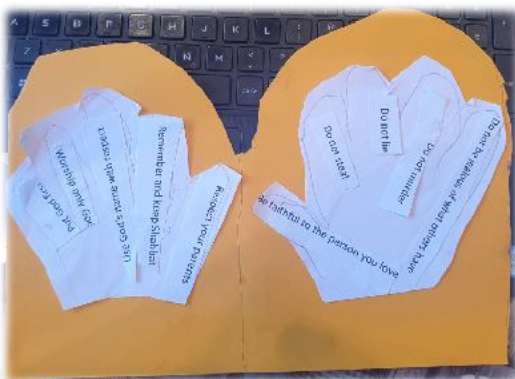
Greta based on?' from Celeste, 'Whose idea was it to make Horrid Henry into a TV series?' from Celia and 'Who is your favourite character apart from Horrid Henry and why?' from Sonny. Cheder staff also got to ask questions with Benji Nathan asking Francesca what it had been like to attend the banquet for TV show The Great British Menu. Francesca revealed it had actually lasted for seven hours and had concluded with the most amazing edible book for dessert.

Our 'virtual visit' from Francesca went on for well over an hour and was full of hilarious anecdotes as well as several helpful tips on how to write a great story (and even how to write a play script, which one of our pupils told us that she is doing!). Francesca was so generous in giving up her time on a Sunday morning, we thank her warmly and hope to welcome you back to BSS Cheder in the future.

For the second half of the summer term BSS Cheder continues online. Classes will be covering more exciting, thought-provoking and creative topics including Hands, Rainbows, Kindness and Shabbat. If you have a child who is in Years 1 to 10 at school and they would like to join us on a Sunday morning at 11am, they will be very welcome. Please contact caroline@synagogue.org.uk for more information.

Photos anti-clockwise:

1. Zoe (Year 2) presents her Lag b'Omer truffles
2. Origami version of The 10 Commandments
3. Cheder pupils taking part on Zoom
4. Shavuot craft



NEW LIFE FOR OUR TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT

by David Horwell and Adam Hurst

Learning on Jewish subjects on the first night of Shavuot is a great tradition, with gatherings in many synagogues, including ours. But the Covid-19 pandemic made this year's BSS Tikkun Leil Shavuot very different from its predecessors. Forty participants enjoyed the five presentations online, in a Zoom Tikkun. But despite the great success of the evening, one feature was missing: Zoom is not yet equipped to provide us with virtual cheesecake. Well-prepared participants did, of course, provide their own.

The topic for the evening was Israel: Past and Present. The first contributor was Tessa Rajak, Professor Emeritus of Ancient History at the University of Reading and a Senior Associate of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (and Belsize Square member). Her presentation was on the origins of the Jewish diaspora in the period of the Second Temple, from about 500 BCE to 70 CE. At that time, Jews moved to live throughout the Greek sphere of influence, often in large communities. The Hebrew bible was translated into Greek and not only spread knowledge of Judaism, but helped to preserve Jewish group identity. Indeed, the term 'diaspora' for a people displaced from its ancestral homeland appeared for the first time in that Greek translation. Professor Rajak's scholarly insights illuminated a period about which most of us know very little, but which was of vital importance in the development of the Jewish people. The incorporation of the Greek version of the Hebrew bible into the developing Christian bible could also be said to have helped lay the very foundations for the development of European civilisation.

Antony Polonsky, Emeritus Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University, and also a Synagogue member, then took the baton. He explained the fundamental division of views in European Jewry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries towards the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, a debate largely cut short by the end of the 1930s. He set the scene by contextualising the situation of Jewish populations across

Europe during the mid-19th century and examined the factors that underpinned the counter-response to Zionism by a number of Jewish groups during the following decades – the 'integrationists', the socialists/Bundists and many orthodox and Hasidic communities.

Antony explained that the UK Jewish establishment was profoundly equivocal about the Balfour Declaration, illustrating this with extraordinary quotes from Lord Montagu's representations to the British Cabinet during 1917. These described Zionism as a 'mischievous political creed' untenable by any patriotic British citizen; claimed 'the civil rights of Jewish Britons like himself would be endangered by a declaration stating that Palestine was the "national home" of the Jewish people'; asserting that 'there is not a Jewish nation'. He concluded by considering the desired destinations of displaced persons at the end of the First World War and the struggle of many to reach Palestine.

Jonathan Paris, political and defence analyst and expert on the Middle East, gave an insightful and crystal clear presentation on the challenges and opportunities facing Israel today. He placed current developments in Israel, particularly in relation to the recent settlement of the prime ministerial role, in the context of the politics of Israel's neighbours, and came to remarkably upbeat conclusions. He believes it unlikely that Israel will face serious threats in the near future because it is not in the interests of its Arab neighbours to upset the current status, and that Israel's pre-eminence in technology and defence placed it in the forefront of developed-world nations as well as helping to ensure its safety. His talk gave plentiful food for thought as

well as grounds for optimism for Israel's future.

Rabbi Altshuler then led us through a fascinating chronology of the theological debate on our religious ties to the Land of Israel, starting with the promise of the Land of Israel to the Jewish people in Genesis Chapter 12. He illustrated the debate through the centuries with various Talmudic and Midrashic examples of a love for and encouragement to settle in Eretz Yisrael, although some sources were more cautious than others. The subtleties of different views were seen by contrasting Maimonides, who (despite ending his days in Eretz Yisrael) ruled that making aliyah was not one of the 613 commandments, with Nachmanides who saw it as a positive commandment to make aliyah and left Spain for Jerusalem in 1267. Sources from the 13th and 15th centuries implied that a person should only make aliyah if they were able to support themselves economically so that they would be able to keep the mitzvot and observe the laws.

The Rabbi also referenced the German Union of Rabbis who, in 1897, considered the work of the Zionists to be 'antagonistic to the messianic promises of Judaism'.

The evening was rounded off by Cantor Heller, who had prepared an amazing video smorgasbord of cantoral singing for us. Having explained the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's introduction of the biblical Hallel and the Al Hanisim prayer into Israel's independence celebrations, he left us to enjoy cantors and friends from all over the world who each recorded a message and a melody especially for our Tikkun. We were

particularly thrilled to hear from both Yohel Heller and our former cantor Norman Cohen Falah from his home in Florida. The video is available on the Belsize Square YouTube channel.

On behalf of all the attendees we thank all the presenters for a wonderful evening and look forward to being able to resume this annual tradition next year, face to face and with cheesecake.



Cantor Abramowicz of the Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue in Berlin contributes to our Tikkun Leil Shavuot





OUR CENTENARIANS: WALTER GODDARD

Walter Goddard celebrated his 100th birthday in June. He was born Wolfgang Goetz in Danzig (then part of Germany/ Prussia) but was of Danish nationality as his father had been born in Copenhagen.

Walter and his parents went to live in Berlin when he was four years old as his father was studying for the Rabbinate there. Walter was the final Jewish pupil to leave the Friedrichs Realgymnasium in April 1938 after the Nazis came to power, of the 83 Jewish children who had studied there over the years. The school now has a display commemorating its Jewish pupils of the 1930s that includes a fine photo of the young Walter.

From Berlin, he and his family escaped to Copenhagen, where Walter was working as a trainee hotel receptionist when the Nazis occupied Denmark. On

Erev Rosh Hashanah 1943, the rabbi of the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen told his congregation that they must leave their homes that very night. Advance notice of the occupying Germans' intention to round up Denmark's Jewish population had been received by community leaders, thanks to Georg Duckwitz, a German naval attaché at the embassy, who opposed the plan. This allowed 95% of Danish Jews to escape and Duckwitz was later honoured by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile.

A couple of days after Rosh Hashanah, Walter answered the night-bell of the hotel where he worked only to be confronted by a Gestapo officer and a policeman, demanding to know if there were any Jewish guests in the hotel. Having successfully persuaded them that there were not, Walter went into hiding the next morning, with the



support of one of his neighbours.

Within a few days, Walter and his father made their escape in a fishing boat, across the narrow stretch of sea separating Denmark from neutral Sweden, where they were warmly welcomed.

News from Abernein Mansions

Dear Fellow Members

Having taken early retirement in the year of my 96 burseday, I find that I am now riding more than I did ever before. Not only hear in this buy-monthly perioddicle, but also in the weakly News from the Square. All this is coming about from this wile coronova wireless. The good sing is that you can't ketch it from the ridden wort, but I still ware a mask just in case. It is my ernst hope that by the time you come to reed this kolumn this horrible plaque will be under control und on the way outside.

For those who are not known to me, or happen to have come on to me for the first time, I have taken this opportunity to give a brief personnel introduction.

Until I took up journalism, I hat endured a very happy courier in the fascinating world of trimmings where I was considered one of the West End's top button consultants. There is not much anyone could teach me about closed fastenings.

This all started through my farther's brother Martin Klopstick. He was a top class mental manufacturer, supplying his vinter coats all over the place. He took me under his arm und introduced me to trimmings. After his bankruptsy, I was taken over by two brothers Kurt und Lutz Putz who ran a Soho trimmings company where I became there number won traveller in buttons. From that day I never looked backwards und the rest is histology.

I first met the future Mrs Klopstick at a jung adult dance in Swiss Cottage run by the Cloud Montefiore club. When I asked her for a dance, she told me she was too tyred. When I asked why she was so fattiged, she said she hat just come bag from going on top of Ben Nevis. I was quite shocked. I

didn't no what to say, but I asked if this Ben was her currant boyfriend. She shuckled und replied that she liked my scents of humour und because of this she conscented to dance with me. From this moment we became a too some. I never did find out about this Nevis boy und I sort it best not to ask.

The Cloud Montefiore club was the use movement of the New Liberale Jewish Congregation witch later converted into Belsize Square Synagogue. In this way, I und Mrs K have been long live members of this community since before we can even remember. Our son Melvyn, the big shot New York Lawyer who never phones his parents, hat his bar mitzvah in the little synagogue at number 51. Fifteen years ago Mrs Klopstick und I sold our semi-attached house in Golders Green und have been respiring hear in Abernein Mansions on Finchley Road ever since.

It is true that eventually age does ketch won up. At the moment I find I am not as reflective as I youth to be. The wurst is both my niece. They creep whenever I get out of a share und I am finding stares a problem. Until not so recently Mrs K und I took great pleasure in walking from here to Belsize Square. Mrs K claims she could still jock all the way und properly arrive before I am even downstairs hear. I am sad about this, but more sad that our lovely sanitorium lies empty und unyouthed. If there is not a second schpite of this dicease then I sink we could really return to synagogue. There is umple space for socialist distancing, especially with the upper stairs. If no won else is available I am much more then willing to act as usherette showing members where their seat is.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick

CHARITY NEWS

Many Belsize members have been working during the coronavirus pandemic to support causes that are in particular need at this time.

Caring for our Carers – Philip Keller

It has become clear to me that we need to provide specific support for our Intensive Care professionals. While many of us have had challenges over the course of the pandemic and some have suffered tragic bereavements, those working in Intensive Care, who are represented by the ICS, are truly our front line. They have provided expert, compassionate and dedicated care to us, our families and our friends at an intensity that they have never experienced before, and while learning about a new illness. The ICS is the only organisation that can get targeted mental health support to IC units around the country but it is in need of urgent financial assistance. There is a campaign video on their website at ics.ac.uk that gives some idea of the challenges facing our ICU professionals. There is a second video, featuring the Heads of the Intensive Care Units at UCL and Northwick Park, who give a bit more detail about the ICS and how the funds will be used. You can view that at vimeo.com/416459674 using the password ICS.

Walking for Macmillan – Tony Markson

My 83rd birthday was at the end of April. We had lots planned – dinner with the family and a night out at the theatre with supper in town. But the lockdown meant postponing everything. Nevertheless, we celebrated virtually and our daughter came and chatted from a distance of several metres. That conversation led to a challenge to do something worthwhile and a little demanding.

We settled on a sponsored walk for charity. Obviously, Captain (now Colonel Sir) Tom was an inspiration, but I did not want to try to compete directly with what he achieved for the NHS. As well as Covid-19, the NHS has to deal with all the other ills that beset an ageing population and it seemed better to look instead at supporting these other areas.

At our age we all know people who have had cancer and have experienced care from Macmillan nurses. Macmillan trains and supports specialised cancer nurses, most of whom work in the NHS but whose salaries are initially paid by Macmillan. The range of services they provide extends beyond medical needs to cover all sorts of personal and family support. As well as being compassionate and caring, the charity seems well run and properly governed, both important factors when people are being invited to donate.

Having settled on Macmillan, we had to work out a plan that was feasible in the strange circumstances of today's world. The target we agreed was for me to walk 250,000 steps in 25 days with the aim of raising £2,500. It sounded demanding, especially the financial target, but a challenge is a challenge, so I agreed and we all started contacting friends to lobby for support via my JustGiving page.

I started on my birthday and managed over 13,000 steps (almost six miles) that day; by the end of the first week the total was over 91,000 steps. The weather has been so good that long daily walks, looking at other people's gardens, have been a pleasure not a chore. Living in Pinner on the far north-western edge of London, we are close to the countryside, and I was able to repeat known walks and also find new ones that encompassed fields, cycle paths, a golf course and woods as well as suburban gardens.

By day 19, I had reached the 250,000-step target and donations were at £2,200. Because people had been so generous, I decided to complete the full 25 days walking. By day 25 donations totalled £2,521 and the walk total was 308,059 steps – 140 miles! Even I am impressed by that, but it was only possible through the generosity of many donors. Thank you all.

Feeding our Carers – Benji Nathan

Despite his college being shut and the cancellation of all simchas and other large events, trainee chef Benji Nathan has been making excellent use of his time and skills during lockdown. He has been helping his cousin Adam Nathan (well known to all at Belsize of course!) in his business: 'A friend of Adam's works at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in Central London. She told us that many of the staff weren't eating properly because they are really busy and the canteen is closed due to the virus. We thought we could help, so whenever we get an order for our meals from a paying customer, we offer them the chance to spend an extra £10 to "donate a meal" to the hospital.'

Benji also bakes for a north London community organisation called You Donate We Deliver, which provides free meals for NHS workers. Since it was started at the end of March, You Donate We Deliver has gone from helping a handful people to feeding thousands of staff in hospitals every day with the help of a small army of delivery drivers and chefs like Benji, coordinated through six hubs across the area. 'I am very busy doing college work, plus all the meals I'm doing with Adam, and baking for You Donate We Deliver. I love it and it's very rewarding!' says Benji.



Benji, Adam and colleague with boxed meals ready for delivery to hospital staff.



Community News

The copy deadline for the next issue of *Our Congregation* is 12 August 2020

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to:

Itay and Eliana Singer with children Jonathan, Nicholas and Tom

BIRTHS

Mazal Tov to:

Emma and David Pollins on the birth of their son Leo on 20 May 2020

BAR MITZVAH

Mazal Tov to:

Yosh, son of Annette Bielesch & Ira Gaberman, whose Bar Mitzvah is on 4 July

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of:

John Epstein on 14 May 2020

Evelyn Frank on 20 May 2020

Myrtle Raffles on 24 May 2020

SERVICE TIMES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm

Currently a live stream service led by Cantor Heller
Click on the Belsize Live button on synagogue.org.uk to view

Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Currently a recorded version of a live streamed service.

With the Torah reading and a new sermon
from Rabbi Altshuler every week

Kikar Kids

Every Saturday morning at 11am

Currently meeting via Zoom video call.

Contact Richard (rgpollins@gmail.com) for more information

HIGH HOLYDAYS 5781

We hope to be able to hold our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services at BSS. We are simultaneously making plans both for socially distanced services in the sanctuary and for livestreaming in the event of a continued lockdown. Youth services will be held online only this year. Please look out for further information from our Chairman and the shul office.

ADULT DISCUSSION GROUP

by Claire Walford

On the eve of Purim, the coronavirus pandemic dominated the news and the prospect of lockdown loomed large. The Adult Discussion Group, true to form, were very divided. I, along with others, felt that for our own sanity and to combat loneliness and depression, those who could should continue to meet on Sunday mornings, even though we would miss the many regular attenders who needed to be shielded. Others vehemently opposed this view.

The matter was taken out of our hands as lockdown was imposed on 23 March and the shul closed. We then embarked on the very steep learning curve to master Zoom meetings. It was harder for some than others, but we finally got there and on 29 March Digital ADG was launched. We have been meeting ever since, without the break normally imposed on us by cheder holidays.

During the lockdown period we have covered topics ranging from who funded World War 1; Jewish bioethics – 2 patients one ventilator; is Keir Starmer's Labour Leadership good for Jews; Israel and antisemitism, Iran and the Middle East; the impact of the coronavirus on the global economy,

and Israel advocacy and fighting online hatred. All our speakers have been terrific and have included experts such as Jonathan Paris, political and defence analyst, and Jonathan Charles, Managing Director of the Communications Department at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Some speakers have even joined us from abroad, notably our Rabbi's cousin Mor Altshuler, a scholar of Hasidism, Kabbalism and Jewish Messianism, who is in Israel, and Annette Boeckler, rabbinical student, who is in Zurich, Switzerland: one of the real bonuses of how we've been able to stay connected using Zoom!

All the sessions were very interesting and it's hard to choose one to highlight but a good example was Dr Alan Mendoza, Executive Director of the Henry Jackson Society in conversation with Rabbi Altshuler on the topic of China. This covered China's role in Covid-19 (it certainly held back information about the extent of the coronavirus), its desire for global domination, Huawei and national security for the Five Eyes Alliance, China investment in Israel and Africa – all that in 90 minutes!

Rabbi Altshuler's classes, particularly his sessions on Prayer – the history and structure of our prayers, the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi variations and then the Belsize Square variations – have been most illuminating. For me, they have added more meaning, more understanding and more *kavanah* (intention) into my prayer when I am alone (along with BelsizeLive of course!). Thank you, Rabbi.

Understandably, what the future brings is uncertain. It's not clear if and when we will be able to return to our Sunday mornings in the shul library, but one thing is for sure, ADG will continue to bring learning, wisdom from the Rabbi, lots of food for thought and discussion and above all companionship in whatever format is possible. Check out the ADG details in the weekly News From the Square.

Next meeting: Sunday 5 July

10.00 - 11.15

Rabbi Altshuler: Going Forward – a discussion about what matters most for the High Holydays 5781

11.30 - 12.45

Janet Daby, Shadow Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government

A CANTOR IN CORONA TIMES

by Paul Heller

I've been asked to share my experiences during the lockdown. Like many other cantors, I have been quickly adapting to a life based online, using Zoom and livestream platforms to continue our congregational life. Thanks to my previous endeavours in IT I didn't have to start from scratch.

A while ago, I wrote in the introduction on my website (cantorheller.com): 'In the last 25 years I have used the Internet as a tool of information. I have evolved from my first webpage offering services in translation to a blog where I have published posts on my thoughts on Tikkun Olam, Bioethics and Music Therapy as well as information on Jewish experience and dynamics of attitude and behaviour regarding Israel and Judaism.' I have also used my cantorial, language and IT skills to create a cantorial webpage and many videos to share on YouTube. My traditional Kol Nidrei video alone has attracted over 9,000 views. It would seem that 'Cantor' now has to mean 'social media expert' too!

It's good to know I am not alone out there. I am part of the Cantors Assembly, the European Cantors' Association and of a large group of Latin American Cantors and we all share our experiences. There are some members who use professional programs to produce high quality videos, which I am far from mastering. As my colleague Cantor Rayna Green

from Illinois said in a recent article published in *The Forward*: 'I miss the sound of our congregational voice, growing in strength and grandeur as our sacred melodies transport us to new spiritual heights.'

I also miss the sanctuary filled with the music of our choir and organ, and hearing the voices of our members accompany us in the familiar tunes for which Belsize is so well known. But I have been very busy these last three months, thank God, putting together the seven years of archived livestream services, as suggested by the executive of BSS. This means we can continue our common work, while keeping our services as close as possible to usual.

I had the joy of creating a virtual seder, with many families and children singing and bringing the explanations of the Rabbi directly to our own tables. For Yom Ha'atzmaut, I recorded the blessing for the State of Israel with 13 members of our junior Youth Choir and for Yizkor Shavuot I created a video with the recordings from our CDs. For the Tikkun Leil Shavuot, I invited 12 colleagues from all over the world to sing Hallel parts. It brought me real pleasure to put this online for our congregation and some of it is now also on our YouTube channel to share with the wider community.

But there has been a very distressing



part of the last three months: having to officiate at all the funerals for the Synagogue. Not many of the deaths have been Covid-related, thank God, but at all funerals only a limited number of family members may attend. Giving respect to the deceased is an important mitzvah and it's very saddening for those who would have wanted to do so and could not. I look forward to having a memorial event to be held with families and friends of all those departed.

I really am counting the days until I don't have to stand on my own at the bimah anymore, leading our livestream Kabbalat Shabbat services. I am so looking forward to having you all back in the sanctuary and hearing all your voices joining the congregational singing with our choir and organ that I miss so much. If it wasn't for the amazing support from our lay leadership and from all of you who have approached me, giving me the strength to continue, I would not have been able to. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I wish you all good health. *Lehitraot* – see you soon.

Continued from page 1

force to protect lives, the security of the Jewish people and all its citizens. We should reject all organisations that are built upon violence as a means to address social problems.

3) We should also be very concerned about randomly knocking down statues, banning books, removing films of a different era because of racism. In the process we will be destroying much of our past, and if Christopher Columbus is an outrage to Native Americans, then there are all kinds of statues that will be offensive to a vast array of people.

If Winston Churchill's statues are removed, because Churchill did make some demeaning racial remarks during

his career, what do we do with statues of people who did good for a certain part of the world, but who were inherently anti-semitic? In my view, there will be no end to our rage and I am worried about where this will lead. We are living in history-changing times. What I would like to see happen is a complete transformation in how our leaders and society deal with these attacks against civil stability.

We need to hear language of comfort, hope, uplift, of a renewed sense of idealism, compassion for each other. We need to hear once again the language of the prophets – to work for justice, for the day when there will be no violence or war any longer, when the world will fulfil the moral mandates of the Torah, to exercise love for our neighbour and not

hate.

That will be my goal when we usher in the new year 5781, my last with Belsize Square Synagogue. Hatikvah is taken seriously – hope should replace malaise and darkness.

My wishes to each of you and your loved ones for better days ahead – health, safety, shalom. May we all be ever sensitive each day of the year to those different from ourselves, to strive for a better world than the one we live in today, to learn together, and grow together.

Shalom for us, the Jewish people, Israel and all humankind.

Rabbi Altshuler

Invitation to Nominate Candidates for Membership of the Board of The Belsize Square Synagogue (The Synagogue)

The fifth Annual General Meeting of The Synagogue (the AGM) will be held on **Monday 2 November**. Formal notice will be given in due course.

The Board hereby invites the members of The Synagogue to nominate candidates for election to the Board for a period of three years commencing from the AGM. There are 15 vacancies.

Nominations must be in writing, addressed to the Hon. Secretary and submitted to the Synagogue Office by twelve noon on Friday 11 September 2020. Each Nomination must be signed by at least five members of The Synagogue who are themselves entitled to vote at the AGM. Only valid nominations that are received by that date can be considered. No member may sign more nominations for the Board than the number of vacancies (namely 15).

In accordance with the Articles of Association of The Synagogue, the following 10 members will be retiring from the Board by rotation but are eligible for re-election if duly nominated:

Adam Davis, Pat Hirschovits, Frank Joseph, Freddy Lehmann, Adam Nathan, Rob Nothman, Sarah Percival, David Pollins, Anthony Stadlen, Claire Walford

From 14 September, a list of the candidates duly nominated will be available for inspection at the Synagogue Office and the formal notice of the AGM will also include a list of those candidates.

PillarCare



Providing outstanding care for 20 years
Helping people to live independently at home



 Live-in Care

 365 Days a Year

 Hourly Day Care

 Hourly Night Care

020 7482 2188

www.pillarcare.co.uk | enquiries@pillarcare.co.uk

SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

Please note that although the synagogue office is currently closed, the phones are redirected and our staff are still available

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square, London, NW3 4HX

Tel: 020 7794 3949

Email: office@synagogue.org.uk

Website: www.synagogue.org.uk

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

9.00am - 5.30pm

Fridays: 9.00am-2.00pm

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Lee Taylor - 020 7794 3949

RABBI

Rabbi Dr Stuart Altshuler

rabbi@synagogue.org.uk

CANTOR

Cantor Dr Paul Heller

cantor@synagogue.org.uk

RABBI EMERITUS

Rabbi Rodney Mariner

rodmariner@aol.com / 020 8347 5306

CHAIRMAN

Jackie Alexander

chairman@synagogue.org.uk

CHEDER AND YOUTH

Caroline Loison

caroline@synagogue.org.uk / 020 7794 3949

CHEDER PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Frank Joseph

020 7482 2555

COMMUNITY CARE CO-ORDINATOR & BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE

Eve Hersov

eve@synagogue.org.uk / 020 7435 7129

CHEVRAH KADISHA

Chairman: Rabbi Stuart Altshuler

Joint Vice Chairs: Helen Grunberg - 020 8450 8533

Cantor Dr Paul Heller

FUNERALS

During Synagogue Office hours phone 020 7794 3949.

Evenings/weekends phone Calo's (Undertakers)

020 8958 2112

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO *OUR CONGREGATION*

To the synagogue office or to alexantscherl@me.com

LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Philip Simon: www.philipsimon.co.uk

THE BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

Charity Number 1144866

Company Number 7831243