



# Our Congregation



News and views from Belsize Square Synagogue

## THE HIGH HOLYDAYS – A TIME TO REMEMBER

### L'shana Tova to all of you,

We are approaching the New Year 5781 and my last year with you, my dear Belsize Square family. I look forward to sharing with you all the theme of my High Holyday sermons this year, 'What Matters': God, Israel, being Jewish, Judaism, family, community, synagogue and our own lives. Despite the limitations on public gatherings, we will be with you via our livestream—a High Holydays for us all to remember.

That word 'remember' is a special one and particularly important for the *Yamim Noraim* (Days of Awe). After all, Rosh Hashanah is also called *Yom Zichron Teruah*—A Day to Remember and to Hear the Sound of the Shofar. So, what shall we remember as we prepare for the coming of the new year and what does the sound of the shofar have to do with our remembrance?

There are quite a few indications in the Torah as to what we should be remembering, but let's share a few:

**1) Remember the Shabbat Day** – Shabbat is the day for us to remember the blessing of creation and the miracle of life. It also embraces our highest ideals, of social equality and peace. So what shall we remember? The Fourth Commandment teaches us 'Remember you were slaves in the land of Egypt'—remember who you are, what you believe in, what your ideals and values are, and those values and teaching that are eternal. And in case you think this is just a cerebral exercise, we have the reiteration of the Ten Commandments in



the book of Deuteronomy, reminding us to 'Keep the Shabbat Day' – you need to do it, you need to hear the sound of the shofar to heal the world, to pursue peace in every path of our existence.

**2) Remember what the terrorist Amalekites did to our people in the Sinai desert on their way to Eretz Yisrael.** What do we remember? That there is much that is wrong in the world, that there is violence and evil. So embrace good causes, do not be blinded by forces that endanger innocent lives or by organisations that promote terror, violence and antisemitism. Sound the shofar! Be aware, get involved in Jewish responses to hatred, do not sit on the sidelines of our people's righteous cause for our dignity and safety. As the Torah says, 'Blot out the memory of Amalek.'

**3) Remember what Miriam did to her brother Moses** – her transgression of slander. So we remember the price paid by the innocent for gossip and smearing of reputations, so that we might become more sensitive to others. Sound the shofar! Let us improve our relationships and be careful not to hurt others, especially those closest to us.

**4) Yizkor/Mazkir** – finally, we will be remembering our loved ones who are no longer with us in the land of the living. In the traditional meditations we recite for our parents, spouses,

siblings, children and loved ones, we pledge to give *tzedakah* in their memory. We remember our loved ones in order to sanctify their values and through us, to make this world a better place. That is the way we Jews remember.

So, the sound of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah will remind us to 'Remember'. This year we will be blowing the Shofar only on the second day as the first day is Shabbat. Whether we come to synagogue or remain at home we should try to remember what is crucial in our lives. Individually, the shofar call on us to do serious *heshbon hanefesh*, scrutinising our souls, to remember what we have done, in order to do better in the coming year.

Remember, remember who you are – remember the Jewish people, our relationship with God, the Covenant that was made with Abraham, how our people survived throughout history despite enormous pain and suffering and with obstacles that no other people on earth had to overcome.

In conclusion – hear the sound of the Shofar in order to do *teshuvah*, to return or repent, a proper return to where one should be before God. To ask ourselves how we can be better, but also to cherish the good that we did during the past year. We must all remember the preciousness of life and think of the pain that has been endured by millions across the world because of the coronavirus. We will hear the sound of the Shofar and remember, but also look forward to a better world, a new beginning and new life for the world, our own country, Israel, the Jewish people all over the world, our congregation, our families and our friends.

L'shana tova tikatevu – may you all be inscribed in the Book of Life, thankful for health, life and the blessings surrounding us each day of our lives.

**Rabbi Altshuler**

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## Synagogue Snapshots

*In the first of what we hope will become a regular series of Q&As with members of Belsize Square, we kick-off with two important people who will be familiar to most of our readers. Here you get to know them a little better.*

**NAME:** Adam Rynhold  
**JOB TITLE:** Belsize Square Synagogue Office Administrator

**What does your job at Belsize involve?** In the office, anything and everything from membership enquiries to printing *Our Congregation* to tidying up. But I'm also the Shamash at Shabbat morning services, ensuring they run as smoothly as possible, and then doing the same for Cheder on a Sunday. I am the sole member of the Belsize Square Synagogue '7 day a week club'.

**What's your favourite thing about your work?**  
Interaction with members

**What is the hardest part of your job?**  
Computers not working when needed!

**If you could do any other job for one day, what would you choose?**  
Manager of Tottenham Hotspur

**How did you come to be a member of Belsize Square?**  
I liked the Rabbi and the combination of tradition with modernity.

**What's your favourite festival?**  
Chanukah – as I don't have to worry about anything!

**Where do you like to sit in Shul and why?**  
You have obviously spoken to my mother as Shul, sitting down and me do not go into the same sentence!



**NAME:** Caroline Loison  
**JOB TITLE:** Belsize Square Synagogue Head of Cheder and Youth

**What does your job at Belsize involve?**  
I am in charge of the smooth running of BSS Cheder every Sunday morning and I also plan and run B<sup>2</sup> (BSS Youth) events. I also lead the Kikar kids over-5s services and organise various other activities for the Shul whenever I am asked to help out.

**What's your favourite thing about your work?**  
I love working with the next generation and inspiring a love of Judaism, a love of Jewish education and a love of our amazing Belsize community and Shul.

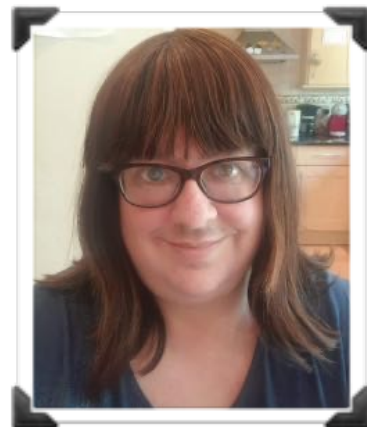
**What is the hardest part of your job?**  
Saying 'No!' – it very rarely happens as I can't help agreeing to do something!

**If you could do any other job for one day, what would you choose?**  
I couldn't do any other job – everyone I know agrees that I was born to be a teacher/educator and to work with children so if I couldn't do this job, I don't think I would be able to do anything else!

**How did you come to be a member of Belsize Square?**  
I have been part of the synagogue since birth. My parents, Melanie and Stephen Wiener, are members, as were my paternal grandparents and great-grandparents, so Belsize is definitely in my blood!

**What's your favourite festival?**  
This is a really tricky question as I love quite a few of our festivals but I think, now I have children, my absolute favourite festival has to be Chanukah as it's so lovely to light the candles and sing Maoz Tsur together and then watch the children and see their faces light up as they open all their presents.

**Where do you like to sit in Shul and why?**  
My family always sit in the same place (unless someone else gets there before us, which does happen occasionally!) – looking at the Bimah, right-middle section, fourth or fifth row back. And there are usually enough of us to fill the entire row!



# OUR CENTENARIANS: ALICE FRANK

Alice Frank celebrated her 100th birthday in August. She grew up in Elberfeld, Germany, which was a centre for Jewish textiles and where her father, Max Ferber, had established a successful business. Her mother Hedwig also owned a textile business. In 1934 along with other German Jewish children, Alice was sent to school in Gardona, Northern Italy, to get away from Nazi Germany. Her parents considered retiring there as Max had lived in Milan for several years before World War One. However, the anti-semitism of the Mussolini Government was evident by the mid-1930s so this was no longer a safe option.

In 1936 Alice came to London, aided by the Jewish Refugee Committee set up by Otto Schiff at Woburn House. For the first year she worked for Schiff, while also attending secretarial college. After that she found paid employment as a secretary, living in a boarding house with other Jewish refugee girls. Alice greatly enjoyed her relatively independent teenage years in both Italy and England.

In 1939 her parents and the younger of her two brothers came to London, en

route for New York where they had family. However, while waiting for their visas which had been approved but not yet issued, war broke out, making travel impossible. So Alice moved back in with her family, initially in a West Hampstead flat until it was destroyed by a bomb, and then in Finchley.

In 1942 Alice married Herman Frank, a dentist who had come to London from Cologne in 1936. They had a civil wedding in Hampstead Town Hall and a Jewish wedding at Alyth Gardens Synagogue. They moved to West Hampstead to be near Herman's Maida Vale dental practice. The Ferbers left for New York in 1947 and Alice and Herman with their baby son tried to join them in 1948. But as no state in America would allow Herman to practise dentistry without a US qualification, which would take years to obtain, they settled in London and bought a house in Maida Vale, where the dental practice thrived, particularly with the advent of the NHS. Alice ran the practice administration and their household.

They joined Belsize Square Synagogue, as did many people they knew from Germany, where their two sons later had



*Alice Frank on her 100th birthday at the Jewish Care Otto Schiff Home*

their bar mitzvahs and where their younger son was married.

Herman died in 1998. Alice kept herself happily busy as a member of the Leo Baeck Women's Lodge, where she was President for a time, as secretary of the Otto Schiff Housing Association and as a volunteer archivist at the Wiener Library. She eventually sold the family home and moved to a flat in Golders Green. In 2019 her health and memory deteriorated to the point where she needed to move to a care home, the Jewish Care Otto Schiff home in Golders Green. On her first exploratory visit to the home she looked at the oil painting of Schiff in the entrance hall and said, 'Of course, I remember him. We sat in the same office for a year!'

## News from Abernein Mansions

Dear Fellow Members

With so many sings changing from won minute to the other, it is difficult to be completely up to date with this kolumn. I am riding it in the beginning off August just as the synagogue is opening up for business on a limited bookings only base. It is hardening to note that this will be on a first come first service. No kew jumpers und pulling strinks from above. It is und should be a level praying field.

Most of the menschens hear in the Mansion are very confused. Unfortunately that is their normal state off mind, but it is made much verse from the always changing messages coming out from number ten Drowning Street. If I did knot no better I wood sink that, just like his hair, the Prime Mister's het is sorrowly gemisched. It also seems to me that the members from his cabinut share won personality between them und that is a very blend won.

Sank goodness Mrs Klopstick und I still have our witz about us. As you must no bye now, my lady wive is a fitness fantastic. She is very much beleaver that a hellsea body means a hellsea mind. I can't und dare not argue with her. She at the moment is bicycling her way to the Leg District with the intention of walking round the won leg, Braithwaite, und then all the other mears und wassers. Hopefully she will be bag in time for the Days of Or, witch are coming so fast they will be hear und gone before we know it.

Necks time I ride my kolumn in Our Congregation it will be for the last too months of this year. As Queen Elsbet remarked a decayed or sew ago, it has been a horribly anus year und won from witch we

would like to see behind us. We olden goldies kneed to show the jung generation that we have face in the future. Many from us won't be there, but that should not stop us from sitting a good eggs sample. 'On warts und up warts' is our slow-gun!

With my button collection on special display cabinuts und Mrs K's sporting equipment, we are busting our themes in this small flat. So vile my wive is away I have taken the opportunity to have a bit of an out clearing. A sort of apartment enigma, but without pumping water into from the baeck. I am offering at almost no prize at all, a kanoo, a serf bored, boxing gloves und a pole volt pole und, from my site, 12 wolumes of the Button Makers Annual 1958 to 1969. In edition, I have sickes copies of the Singer prayer book in prestige condition, a slightly warn tallis baeck, plus won hundert green hanging flies only partly used. Any offer will be immediately excepted.

We are very lucky to have hear living a top excerpt on high-jean, Frau Doctor Ursula Taschentuch. She is, free from charge, giving all the inmates adwise on safety measurements against the constant thread of the coronna wires. I wood briefly like to pass on her most important points. First washing hans. This should be done sorrowly, in between the figures und on the baeck. When waring a masque make sure it fitz tite over the nose und mouse. No air should get in. Und finally, a void put your figures in the mouse, especially if it is knot your mouse oder knot your figures.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick





## BACK TO BASICS

### Ruth Rothenberg reflects on the return of live synagogue services

Returning to shul for Shabbat morning service on 1 August after over four months of lockdown was an odd experience. We were emailed the previous Tuesday to tell us that we had been assigned seats for this service, when to arrive, to wear masks but to remove them at the gate so that security could see who you are, to expect a temperature check and use of hand sanitiser on arrival, to bring your own books since nothing would be provided, and with a caution against socialising with Rabbi and Cantor – heaven forbid!

Arriving at the gate was reassuringly normal with the usual greetings from familiar faces and enquiries about health and family, then a quick click of a thermometer from no less a personage than our CEO Lee Taylor, and into the building, stopping for the sanitiser, then into the shul itself.

Pause and blink for a moment at the seating layout or, rather, the lack of it. No rows of seats, just 20 chairs, some single, some linked, placed with generous social distancing, like palms dotted around a desert island. At least, it allowed for a minyan. In fact, we were 13 congregants facing the bimah. And the service itself? Well, it was clear, it was concise, it was a pleasure to listen

to and be part of. Rabbi Altshuler's sermon focused on the name of that Shabbat, *Nachamu*, consolation, the first word of the Hafatarah: returning to a positive state of mind, an aspiration supported by the strength and warmth of Cantor Heller's voice.

But where had the congregational atmosphere gone? No singing or joining in on our part, let alone any choir presence. What on earth had happened to the choir? Furloughed, I am told, though you can hear them on BelsizeLive. However, Ben Wolf was at the organ, which really lifted my spirits. But no communal Kaddish, for instance, though nothing to stop you saying it under your breath, as my husband did. We duly stood up and sat down as required, but the Ark doors remained closed, untouched. No one was called up, no scrolls were taken out, no processions, no unrolling and rolling. You don't realise how intrinsic these traditions are until they suddenly disappear.

So the whole service was half an hour shorter than usual. But those are 30 minutes that give the service its character. It is one thing to whizz through a weekday *shacharit* service on one's own, as my son does, having become Orthodox in his mid-teens. But

the whole point of the Shabbat service is its social character, bringing people together, especially with Kiddush after the service. As the joke goes, some people turn up 'JFK' – Just For Kiddush, not JFK the President or JFK the New York airport. Funny, that also tends to include me, though I do my best to arrive a tad earlier. My husband is, of course, *always* on time!

Our last real-life, full-blooded festival was Purim on 10 March, if you can remember that far back. Pesach was for most of us our first Zoom experience. Yes, it was a delight to see my grandson recite *Mah Nishtanah*. But how can cousins at three different addresses possibly search for the *afikoman* online? Now, there's an idea for someone to work on... I really missed the negotiation over its ransom. Shavuot worked because in essence it became an evening of lectures, a mini-Limmud. Like Cheder, not to mention schools, education works online, despite missing out on the all important personal and social side.

But how much longer do we have to go on like this? With the High Holydays and Succot approaching we are fighting what seems to be a long drawn out battle. Bring on VC Day – Victory over Covid – and Kiddush!

## NEARER TO REALITY

### Helen Grunberg and Sue Arnold report on their own experience of the 'new normal' services

*BelsizeLIVE* has been a life saver for us during the lockdown. Watching an archived service with full choir and being able to join in singing from the comfort of our own home kept us going. The technology of cutting and splicing in the Rabbi's Torah reading and sermon was outstanding. But an online service will never be like being in our spiritual home and we know it has been very hard on our Ministers not to be able to do what they do best.

So, after a long lockdown watching the Belsize Square live-streamed services, we returned to the Synagogue on Saturday 1 August and again on 8 August for the new in-shul experience.

Because of the significantly reduced

shul capacity we had to book a place, but that was very easy – you just contact Adam at the Synagogue Office and he books you in and sends you an email to confirm.

Passes shown to security on arrival, masks on and temperature taken, we were then assigned our seating. There were clear floor markings and numbers for the seats. Perspex screens on the bimah protected the Rabbi and Cantor from the congregation and each other, and the congregation from them, to prevent the spread of infection.

The service on Saturday mornings is now only 90 minutes long due to there being no Ark openings and no aliyot. Sitting among the select few (only 12 or

13 at these early resumed services), wearing a face mask, and not being allowed to sing or respond to the service, is uniquely weird, but the Ministers and organist did their utmost to make us feel welcome and be part of the service. We found the 'new normal' quite hard, but being back in Synagogue, meeting real people and not on Zoom, was a joy and one could see that our Rabbi and Cantor also gained pleasure from seeing their congregants in front of them.

Come back to shul and see for yourself what amazing efforts have been made by so many people to comply with the Covid-19 guidelines, but still to allow us to have services in safety. Well done to all.



# JEW TALKIN' TO ME?

## Philip Simon on a new comedy show to cheer us up

Some of you will know Philip Simon as the person who has been in charge of the layout and design of *Our Congregation* for the past few years. But did you know that he's also an actor and comedian who has had stand up shows at the Edinburgh Festival and played Daddy Pig, a favourite of your children or grandchildren, on stage?

Here he introduces his new online show, 'Jew Talkin' To Me?', conceived, incubated and delivered during the lockdown and a great example of the way our 'strange times' have led to innovation in the Jewish performing arts.

Did you hear the one about the orthodox Jew, the reform Jew and the liberal Jew who walk into a bar? Well, alright, due to social distancing it was a Zoom chat, but either way, at least you know the conversation would be anything but dull.

It started, like most projects do, with a casual chat. Picture the scene, two Jewish comedians (Rachel Creeger and myself) commiserating online from our respective kitchens about how lockdown had seen our careers come to a screeching halt. The world of comedy needed to adapt. It would be survival of the fittest. Or – for the less sporty Jewish comics (all of us?) – survival of the fastest...broadband connection.

So, *Jew Talkin' To Me?* was born. Like your grandmother's fluffiest kneidlach, the idea grew, taking advantage of my experience as host of the Edinburgh Festival cult hit *Jew-O-Rama* and Rachel's as the only practising orthodox Jewish woman on the UK's professional

comedy circuit. We both have theatre backgrounds, I've also worked on screen and Rachel has produced literary and arts festivals. Rachel was a Bnei Akiva stalwart, me an RSY *macher*, so we know how to create engaging content.

The project escalated after Rachel met producer Russell Balkind (*The Mash Report*, *8 Out Of 10 Cats*) at a socially distanced morale-boosting event in her street. The idea of *Jew Talkin' To Me?* piqued his interest and he joined the team. Between us we have a huge network of fascinating and entertaining contacts from across the Jewish spectrum, who rarely talk about their ethnicity in this way, in the context of foods, feuds and 21st century moods. There's something for everyone, Jews and non-Jews alike.

We'll bring you household names and backstage stars, writers, comedians, journalists and actors, sharing aspects of life that make them laugh or leave

them infuriated, and in all of it, exploring how much Jewishness plays a part.

Recorded under lockdown conditions, it's delightfully imperfect. Some guests are using super-high-spec equipment and others are balancing phones on top of their last three loo rolls, praying that their kids don't walk in. This is the charm of the show, it's a celebration of what can be achieved with little equipment during challenging circumstances. And what could be more Jewish than that?

New episodes of *Jew Talkin' To Me?* come out on Friday mornings. You can find more information on our website [www.jewtalkintome.com](http://www.jewtalkintome.com) and you can catch previous episodes and all the latest releases in the following places:

**Watch on Facebook:**

[www.facebook.com/JewTalkin](http://www.facebook.com/JewTalkin)

**Watch on YouTube:**

[www.bit.ly/JewTalkin](http://www.bit.ly/JewTalkin)

**Listen** by subscribing and downloading the audio on all good podcast platforms.

As well as co-hosting *Jew Talkin' To Me?*, Philip has stayed productive throughout lockdown, producing a children's comedy show to provide a brief respite during homeschooling. You can watch all episodes here ([www.bit.ly/SchoolsOutComedy](http://www.bit.ly/SchoolsOutComedy)) and catch his other stand up comedy here ([www.youtube.com/PhilipsComedy](http://www.youtube.com/PhilipsComedy)). You can follow his Facebook, Twitter & Instagram channels here: @PhilipsComedy.



Rachel Creeger and Philip Simon

### Kever Avot Service

On Sunday 13 September at 11.00am we will come together at Edgwarebury Cemetery for a Kever Avot Service to remember our family and friends who are buried there.

### Online meeting with Leader of Camden Council

Date: Wednesday 9 September, 8.00pm  
Belsize Square Synagogue is very pleased to host a Zoom meeting with Councillor Georgia Gould, Leader of Camden Council, who will be in conversation with Belsize Square member Councillor Neil Nerva. Councillor Gould will share information on the impact of Covid-19 on local communities in Camden and beyond.

**Zoom meeting ID:** 812 9725 5589

**Passcode:** 406625

### Exam Results

Mazal Tov to all of you who have taken GCSEs, A-levels, Finals and all other exams this summer. News of superb results has been reaching us daily, despite the challenges of this year. We are always delighted to hear news of our younger congregants, so thank you for letting us know.

Whether you are still at school, starting a course at college or university, taking a gap year, or beginning a new job, we wish you good luck for a sparkling future and please keep in touch!





## Community News

The copy deadline for the next issue of *Our Congregation* is 16 October 2020

### NEW MEMBERS

*We extend a cordial welcome to:*

Hannah Mortimer  
Charlotte McLeish

### BAR MITZVAH

*Mazal Tov to:*

Jack, son of Mickael & Caroline Loison who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on Saturday 5 September  
Noah, son of Lara & Laurence Jacobson who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on Saturday 12 September  
Max, son of Victoria & Tim Slotover who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on Saturday 17 October  
Rio, son of Michelle Beckwith & Allon Leever who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on Saturday 24 October  
Archie, son of Anne-Marie & Anthony Gee who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on Saturday 31 October

### DEATHS

*We regret to announce the passing of:*

Evelyne Frank who died on 20 May  
Anne Bruh who died on 20 June  
Anne Goodwin who died on 25 June  
Roger Hacker who died on 13 July

### SERVICE TIMES

**Friday evenings at 6.45pm**

**Saturday mornings at 10.00am**

Contact Adam Rynhold in the synagogue office to book tickets to attend, in compliance with current restrictions, or watch online via the Belsize Live button on [www.synagogue.org.uk](http://www.synagogue.org.uk)

### Kikar Kids

**Every Saturday morning at 11am**

At the Synagogue on Saturday 5 September & 3 October  
Booking essential via [adam@synagogue.org.uk](mailto:adam@synagogue.org.uk)

### High Holydays Office Times

The Synagogue Office will be closed on the following dates:

**Rosh Hashanah** – Saturday 19 & Sunday 20 September re-opening on Monday 21 September

**Kol Nidre/Yom Kippur** – Sunday 27 & Monday 28 September re-opening on Tuesday 29 October

**Succot** – Saturday 3 & Sunday 4 October re-opening on Monday 5 October

**Shemini Atzeret** – Saturday 10 & Sunday 11 October re-opening on Monday 12 October

## HIGH HOLYDAY ARRANGEMENTS AT BELSIZE SQUARE

Lee Taylor, Chief Executive

As you will have seen in our recent correspondence, this year's High Holyday Services will be different to any other year. Sadly, we will not be able to host everyone in the Synagogue at the same time in what will be Rabbi Altschuler's final High Holydays with us, but we hope that everyone who wants to attend will be able to join us for at least one service, or will watch on BelsizeLIVE.

Due to the exceptional work of our committed Planning Group, we have already opened up for Shabbat services and we will hold two Bar Mitzvahs in September. These services have been excellent preparation for us in knowing our limitations and what we are able to offer for the High Holydays. Government guidelines are still being updated regularly, so everything planned is still subject to changes. But we are preparing for every scenario and we have contingencies in place in the event of a full lockdown.

An information booklet will be sent to all members in early September, with full details of what's on offer.

### SELICHOT

Our Selichot programme will take place VIRTUALLY this year. On Saturday 12 September **at 9.00pm**, Rabbi Altschuler will lead a Zoom Shiur on 'The Revolution of Deuteronomy'. **And from 10.00pm**, Cantor Heller, Ben Wolf and the Belsize Square professional choir will be live at the synagogue for our beautiful choral Selichot Service. The Shiur and service will be both available to view on BelsizeLIVE.

### ROSH HASHANAH – Evening and Morning Services

We will hold synagogue services on both eves and both mornings of Rosh Hashanah. There will be a limited number of attendees at each service and the services will be available on BelsizeLIVE.

### KOL NIDREI

Our traditional Kol Nidrei Service will follow the same pattern as Rosh Hashanah with a limited number of guests in attendance. It will be streamed on BelsizeLIVE for those who can't attend.

### YOM KIPPUR

Because of the limitations imposed by social distancing, this year's Yom Kippur arrangements will have to be different to those for any previous Yom Kippur. In order to allow the greatest possible number of people to attend services at the synagogue we are splitting the day into three distinct parts. But *all* the services will be streamed on BelsizeLIVE.

### YOUTH SERVICES & KIKAR KIDS

Sadly, we have had to make the difficult decision to not hold any Youth and Kikar Kids Services on site at the synagogue this year. But, with the help of Zoom, we'll be bringing these Services directly to you at home.

If you have any questions regarding any of the arrangements for the High Holydays, please contact the Synagogue Office.

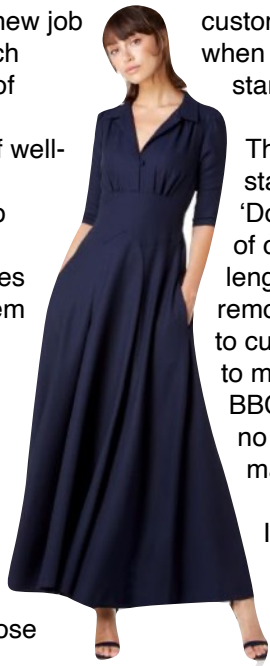
# LIFE IN FASHION'S SLOW LANE

**Alex Antscherl talks to Belsize member and fashion designer Elaine Bernstein**

Belsize Square member Elaine Bernstein grew up immersed in the 'rag trade'. Her grandfather Harry Bernstein came to England from Russia at the turn of the twentieth century and, like so many immigrants of his generation, he worked in the garment industry. By the 1930s Harry was running a successful fashion company, Hershelle, and in the 1950s Elaine's father joined the business. Elaine enthusiastically recalls being in her father's West End showroom as a child, when buyers for boutiques and department stores would come to see the latest designs being modelled.

However, Elaine's father didn't want any of his three daughters to follow him into the business. He wanted to save them the stress that came with owning a company. 'But that's what excites me,' Elaine says now. Instead, after graduating with a degree in modern languages in the early 1980s, Elaine got a job selling advertising space in magazines. When the company she worked for moved out to Sutton, Elaine found that the only thing of interest to do there in her lunch hour was to nose around the charity shops. A passion for 'retro' fashion was ignited and it grew when Elaine took a new job in Notting Hill, with its much more upmarket selection of charity shops. With an appreciation for the sort of well-made and properly fitted dresses she had grown up wearing, Elaine started buying second-hand clothes for friends and altering them to fit.

Inspired by a personal development course run by the Landmark Forum, Elaine decided to turn her hobby into something more. She took out a small ad in the Hampstead magazine whose advertising space she sold.



*'Dorothy' dress by Elaine Bernstein*

*Declutter your wardrobe – I'll do the work, you get the cash* ran her copy line. Much of what was consigned to her for sale was serviceable rather than special and photographing and describing every item in those early days of eBay was a laborious task. But when an elderly lady asked her to clear out the enormous dressing room of the Hampstead house where she'd lived for over 30 years, Elaine discovered a treasure trove of 70s designer fashion. With hundreds of items, including dresses from Janice Wainwright, Jean Muir and Chanel, it would have taken for ever to list everything on eBay and Elaine wanted customers to be able to see the beauty of these clothes in real life. She took a stand at a vintage fair – and never looked back.

The gift of the gab that had served Elaine so well when selling advertising space and even given her the confidence to be a stand-up comedian was a very useful asset. After 10 years of trading in vintage dresses, Elaine ventured into designing her own, based on the 1940s silhouette she loved. When she took a sample to a fair and it was admired by a customer, Elaine got the same thrill as when the audience laughed at her stand-up set.

This dress went on to become the staple of Elaine's business. Her 'Dorothy' dress is made in a variety of colours, fabrics, sleeve- and hem-lengths and has even been remodelled as a jumpsuit in response to customer requests. It's been worn to meet royalty, for presenting on BBC TV, for getting married and has no doubt made an appearance at many simchas.

It's not just the dress's shape that harks back to the 1940s. Elaine's business embraces the ethics of a bygone era too. Dresses are only produced in short runs, all made by a



*A 1948 Vogue advertisement by Hershelle, featuring their London interpretation of 'The Look'*

small local manufacturer, with staff fairly paid. She has deliberately resisted the temptation to scale up production or to move it abroad. It's the polar opposite of today's fast fashion, be that at the super-cheap throwaway end of the market or the designers with six or seven collections a year promoting a constant churn of trends. Elaine's dresses may be a little more expensive than the average high-street purchase but they are made with attention to detail, to last and be loved for the long-term. 'I love "slow fashion" and the make do and mend mentality. Life was tough in the 1940s but women took pride in what they wore,' explains Elaine. 'Slow fashion requires more thought and that makes it more satisfying.'

*Elaine is pleased to offer an introductory 10% discount to all Belsize Square members. Contact Elaine at [elaine@elainebernstein.com](mailto:elaine@elainebernstein.com) or 07771 814681 or via [www.elainebernstein.com](http://www.elainebernstein.com)*

## L'SHANA TOVA

The Rabbi, Cantor, Emeritus Rabbi and their families, Honorary Officers, Members of the Board and Staff extend their best wishes to all our Members for a healthy and peaceful New Year.





Pat, Helpline caller

Our Helpline can help you find the answers to the most challenging problems. We're here for the whole Jewish community in London and the South East, so if you have a question, please ask Jewish Care.

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## 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](mailto:office@synagogue.org.uk)

Website: [www.synagogue.org.uk](http://www.synagogue.org.uk)

### SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

9.00am - 5.30pm

Fridays: 9.00am-2.00pm

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Lee Taylor - 020 7794 3949

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### RABBI EMERITUS

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### CHEDER PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Frank Joseph

020 7482 2555

### COMMUNITY CARE CO-ORDINATOR & BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE

Eve Hersov

[eve@synagogue.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:alexantscherl@me.com)

### LAYOUT AND DESIGN

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