

ESSEX JEWISH NEWS

PASSOVER ISSUE 5781/2021

THE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ESSEX, EAST LONDON & EAST ANGLIA

Inside your 28-page Community Newspaper

Essex Jews
honoured



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interviewed



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pictured



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Eruv for Southend

BY GEOFFREY
PEPPER

ESSEX can boast being the first seaside in the UK to have an eruv, after one was created in Westcliff.

Under Orthodox Jewish law, an eruv is a continuous boundary or enclosure within which carrying or transporting is permitted during Shabbat, as is the use of pushchairs or wheelchairs.

There are hundreds of eruvim worldwide with 12 currently surrounding the North-West London area – meaning it is possible to walk from Camden to Stanmore within the eruv – but this is a first for Southend.

The process started in 2016 when more observant young Jewish families began moving to Southend and Westcliff.

A team of experts, including a specialist architect and various rabbis, were engaged to draw up plans for an application to Southend Borough Council. Plans were subsequently submitted in 2017. The eruv was unanimously approved by the Development Control Committee in late 2018.

It then took more than two further years of waiting for the eruv to be created. An eruv utilises existing local boundary

features such as those formed alongside roads, railways or walls. However, where continuity is breached, this must be ‘closed’, and in the case of the Westcliff Eruv around 40 poles were erected by contractors approved by the Council.

The poles are of the slenderest dimensions and the wire, where necessary, is of the finest gauge and barely noticeable, and poses no harm to pedestrians or animals. There is no signage.

The eruv – which is approved by the London Bet Din and operates under close supervision – will prove especially helpful for Shabbat observant families with young children who want to use a pram outside their home, as well as for people who use a wheelchair or walking frame. Others will find it useful to be able to carry house keys, reading glasses, medication or books. It will also allow families to gather as a whole for synagogue services, a kiddush or a simcha.

It is hoped that the eruv will make Southend and Westcliff an even more popular destination for Jewish people moving out of London, as well as benefitting Jewish visitors and holidaymakers; also for those using Southend Hospital which is within the designated area.



Purim in a pandemic – Jewish Care style

BY SIMON
ROTHSTEIN

THE small matter of lockdown didn't stop virtual and socially-distanced Purim festivities taking place across Jewish Care homes and in the community.

In care homes, residents enjoyed celebrations with fancy dress, Purim-themed activities, Zoom parties and plenty of hamantaschen. There were Megillah readings for residents on Zooms, recordings and live readings of extracts from the Purim story.

More than 200 people in Essex and beyond were united online at Purim parties run by Jewish Care Presents ... with live entertainment and fancy dress Megillah-readings. Schoolchildren have sent care home residents cards and

bunting to decorate the homes from Cards for Care.

Meanwhile, dedicated Jewish Care volunteers delivered 660 Mishloach Manot to members in the community across Jewish Care to brighten their day this Purim, with the support of Cliford Chance and the Canary Wharf Group. Recipients across Essex from Redbridge to Southend were overjoyed to share in the celebrations.

Adam Overlander-Kaye, Jewish Care's director of fundraising and community engagement, told the *Essex Jewish News*: "It's important this year more than ever, for us to make the most of having fun on Purim. We are delighted to have so many members of the community joining us to dress up, dance and have a good time.

"We are very grateful to Clif-



Mishloach Manot recipient Edna Rose and Jewish Care vice chair Gayle Klein who delivered gifts

ford Chance and the Canary Wharf Group for enabling us to send individually packaged Mishloach Manot to our community centre members at home this year.

"These were delivered by our fantastic volunteers to bring



cheer to older people at home on Purim this year and to enjoy when they joined our Purim Zoom parties and Megillah reading, so we could celebrate together in our communities and in our care homes."

Read us online all year round

AFTER 41 years publishing the *Essex Jewish News* in newspaper print, we are delighted to announce the launch of our first ever website – www.essexjewishnews.co.uk

The website – which was designed and built by The Social Shop and overseen by *EJN* Trustee Marc Shelkin – will support stories from this newspaper, as well as covering more frequent local news outside of our publication dates.

In addition, we are now fully engaged on social media and you can follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Editor Simon Rothstein said: "With our newspaper only coming out three times a year – at Passover, Rosh Hashanah and Chanukah – we've long wanted to create a website and social media channels to keep our 25,000 plus readers engaged throughout the year.

"Due to having a tiny team and limited budget that has never been possible before, but Marc coming on board and bringing The Social Shop with him gave us the tools and expertise to finally get fully online."

The website has many fantastic features so that readers can stay up-to-date with local news and events. The events page allows members of the community to add their own events to a central calendar and photo galleries and video content are also coming soon.

You'll also be able to donate and support the *Essex Jewish*



News through the website. The *Essex Jewish News* makes no profit and the small income we make from advertising is ploughed back into producing and improving the paper and website.

Donations help us continue a vital role in keeping the community informed, as well as helping towards our longer-term goal of giving young people in our region valuable work experience in the fields of journalism, social media and communications.

By affording real opportunities to our youth, and by helping them to find reasons for remaining within their local communities, it is hoped that we can assist in retaining and bolstering the Jewish communities of East London, Essex and East Anglia.

The *EJN* has been the clarion of local Jewry for more than 40 years. We hope this move online will serve to engage more young people in our production and journalism, and will see us thrive for the next 40 years and beyond,

Give your Essex Jewish views

EVERY household in Essex has until the end of April 2021 to complete the census.

The census – which officially took place on 21 March but runs for more than a month afterwards – is a survey that happens every 10 years and gives the Office of the National Statistics a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales.

A spokesperson told the *Essex Jewish News*: "By taking part, and encouraging others to do the same, you'll help make sure your community gets the services it needs. The census helps plan and fund public services, like transport, education and healthcare.

"You will have received a letter in the post with a unique code to complete the census on-

line. Field officers, equipped with identity card, may also randomly knock to encourage completion or partaking in follow-up surveys; however under no circumstance should a field officer ask to enter the property or ask for personal information."

If you require language support or help completing the census, you can call the free ONS helpline on 0800 587 2021. You can also request paper census form, if you prefer.

There are census support centres across Essex, East London and East Anglia for those that require further assistance.

To find yours, please visit www.census.gov.uk/en/find-a-support-centre or call 0800 141 2021.

ESSEX JEWISH NEWS

The Essex Jewish News is the newspaper of the Jewish community in Essex and is published by Essex Jewish News Ltd.

CIRCULATION AREA

Barking, Barkingside, Brentwood, Cambridge, Chigwell, Chingford, Chelmsford, Colchester Epping, Gants Hill, Gidea Park, Harold Hill, Harlow, Hainault, Highams Park, Ilford, Leyton, Leytonstone, Loughton, Newbury Park, Ongar, Redbridge, Romford, Southend and Westcliff, Wanstead and Woodford.

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Full Page	£550	£750
Half Page	£300	£430
Quarter Page	£170	£270
Eighth Page	£110	£170

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26 Ashley Avenue, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 2JE

Printed by Sharman Printers, Peterborough

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Age Concern Redbridge
020 8220 6000
Ahada Bereavement Counselling
07758 727 328
Alzheimer's Society
020 8970 5770
Beehive Lane JACS
020 8554 0150
Board of Deputies Information Desk
020 7543 5400
Chabad Gants Hill addiction support
020 8554 1624
Chai Cancer Care
0808 808 4567
Chigwell and Hainault League of Jewish Women
0790 560 5781
Chigwell and Hainault JACS
020 8551 2355
Citizens Advice Bureau
0870 126 4140
Empathy
07765 191 067
Gants Hill JACS
0208 550 9450
Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade
020 8989 8990
Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service
020 8457 9710
Jewish Blind and Disabled
020 8371 6611

Jewish Care
020 8922 2222
Jewish Marriage Council
020 8203 6311
Jewish Women's Aid
0800 591 203
Moving on (Formerly Bereaved Partners Group)
020 8554 5227
Newbury Park League of Jewish Women
020 8530 5411 or 020 8500 7832
Redbridge Jewish Community Centre
020 8551 0017
Redbridge WIZO
020 8551 1301
Resource
020 8346 4000
Samaritans
020 8553 9900/020 8520 9191
Southend and Westcliff JACS
01268 771978
Wanstead Jewish Literary Society
020 8505 0063
 Phone numbers are correct at the time of going to press. If your contact number or the contact number of your organisation has changed, or if you would like a contact number to be included, please advise us.

A further 'stunning' development

IN THE *EJN*'s Pesach 2019 issue, your 'Comment' writer focused on a particular and, for Jewish people, concerning development in continental Europe affecting 'Shechita', Judaism's ancient and requisite ritual slaughter of animals for food.

In 2017, Belgium – a nation (akin to several others in Europe) that seems to have sublimated the memory of its brutal wartime occupation by the fanatically antisemitic Nazis – had enacted a statute enabling the prohibition of slaughter without pre-stunning. Subsequently, two of that country's three constitutional regions – Flanders (which is home to, in the main, a strictly orthodox Jewish community) and Wallonia – passed laws to that effect.

The Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter and the European Union (EU) Council Regulation 1099/2009 had already provided for animals to be pre-stunned. However, both Convention and Regulation permitted EU member states to derogate from this requirement, and thus to allow for religious slaughter. Nevertheless, and despite the clear permission for such derogation, several EU countries have enacted laws banning Shechita (and Muslim 'Halal' slaughter); and a number of non-EU member, European nations have also passed similar legislation.

In his Passover 2019 Comment, your writer had referred not only to evidence of increasing antisemitism on the continent, but also to "recent political developments across Europe suggesting that real problems could well arise for the practice of Judaism". And he concluded that "we just don't know what's coming next ... though we need to remain vigilant in order to safeguard our faith". It was, therefore, good to learn that a legal case – instituted by the Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organisations in Belgium against that country's new 'pre-stunning' law – had

COMMENT

been submitted by that EU state's Constitutional Court to the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

However, last December, it wasn't so good to hear – and despite 'Brexit' UK finally severing its EU membership at the end of 2020 – that the ECJ had ruled that authorities can lawfully order that animals must be stunned before slaughter. Rabbi Menachim Margolin, chairman of the European Jewish Association, was reported as commenting on the ECJ's decision: "It completely ignores the fact that kosher slaughter puts the welfare of the animal and minimising its suffering as of paramount importance."

We know that many animal protection protagonists – and for whatever motivation – refuse to accept and, indeed, often ignore manifest scientific evidence supporting Shechita as the most painless method of animal slaughter; and they contend that the procedure is inhumane and cruel. As noted in the earlier 'Comment' piece, Hitler's Third Reich – in banning animal slaughter without pre-stunning – was implicitly but actually declaring that Jews were neither welcome nor wanted in Nazi Germany, rather than purportedly safeguarding animals. And we know, sorrowfully, what happened later.

But even 'pre-stunning' isn't necessarily the so-called best of all possible worlds for animals awaiting slaughter in the abattoirs. Attention and consideration could better be given to some of the questionable, technical methods by which an animal can be killed under general (that is, of course, non-Shechita) slaughter arrangements. Significant examples would include these possibilities: penetrative bolt gun, breaking of the neck, a heavy blow to

the head or a strong electric shock.

According to reports, Rabbi Margolin also warned that soon "there will be no kosher meat available in Europe" and that legitimate campaigning regarding the ECJ's confirming allowance of any such imposed ban (on animal slaughter without pre-stunning) would need to continue. It was reported also that Shimon Cohen, Shechita UK's Campaign Director, had presented the thought that the court's ruling would be "very significant to the UK Jewish community, even post-Brexit".

But it's not only moves against Shechita that we should be concerned about, important though this matter is. There are other aspects of Jewish life fundamental to the preservation of our Judaism; and which are brought into question, from time to time, by those asserting that they aren't antisemitic. Often, they raise the subject and nature of 'Brit Milah'. Indeed, there have been public 'religious circumcision ban' campaigns in some European countries. Both Iceland and Denmark came close to passing a banning law in 2018. They would've been the first to do so. But, nowadays, what guarantee is there that they would've been the last?

EJN readers are doubtless aware, via one means or another, of antisemitic activity within our own national borders. And will, by way of illustration, know of the "Action Plan" – "Driving out antisemitism from the Labour Party" – by that Party, published towards the end of last year and in response to the 2020 report of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

So let's hope, and have faith, that lessons will be learned; and that, generally, not only will the mutating coronavirus pandemic be overcome, but also the often mutating global virus of antisemitism.

This is Mark Harris' 40th 'Comment'.

Pikuach Nefesh

FLAGRANT violations of the government's Covid-19 'lock-down' and 'social distancing' rules – imposed necessarily to prevent transmission and spread of the deadly global virus – have resulted in the police being alerted to and fining the organisers of, and attendees at, some incredibly large gatherings (for whatever reason) of, it would seem, perilously indifferent and self-centred individuals in cities across the UK.

The media have reported a number of appalling instances of such remarkably selfish and dangerous behaviour including, notably, some

huge and rule-breaking assemblies by members of certain Jewish communities. One Thursday in January, for example, the police needed to disperse – what they subsequently said amounted to – 150 people at a strictly-orthodox Jewish wedding being held within a Jewish school in Stamford Hill, north London.

The school denied knowledge of the event. Its organiser was fined £10,000. Apparently, when the police arrived, many attendees sought to flee the building so as to avoid being fined. The rule-breaking celebration was condemned by Jewish community leaders, such as at the Board of

Deputies, and reported widely in the media. The news may likely have led to a further increase in contemporary antisemitic attitudes.

Hopefully, relevant 'lessons' have been learned; though it's considered that the material 'teachings' should've been inherent. 'Pikuach Nefesh' is the core Jewish principle or value of saving a life, the highest of mitzvahs; and one that can prevail over virtually all halachah or Jewish law ... In Judaism, to save one life is regarded as equal to saving the entire world. And how significant that concept is at the time of a seriously challenging and life-threatening pandemic.

We hope and trust that there will be no further contraventions – of any importantly requisite, anti-coronavirus rules – within any area of this country's Jewish community.

WHERE YOU CAN PICK UP THE ESSEX JEWISH NEWS

SYNAGOGUES

Chabad Buckhurst Hill
 Chabad Epping
 Chabad Gants Hill
 Chelmsford Jewish Community
 Chigwell Synagogue
 Chingford Synagogue
 Cranbrook United
 East London & Essex Liberal Synagogue
 Harlow Synagogue
 Ilford Federation
 Loughton Synagogue
 New Essex Masorti
 Romford Synagogue
 Southend & Westcliff Hebrew Congregation
 Southend Reform
 South West Essex and Settlement Reform

Sukkat Shalom
 Woodford Forest
CAMBRIDGE
 Cambridge Synagogue
 Beth Shalom Synagogue
SCHOOLS
 Kantor King Solomon
 Clore Tikva
 Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary
COMMUNAL
 Aish Essex
 Redbridge Jewish Community Centre,
 Sinclair House
 Jewish Care's Vi and John
 Rubens House
 Jewish Blind & Disabled
 Aztec House
 Jewish Blind & Disabled
 Hilary Dennis Court

Jewish Blind & Disabled
 Milne Court
 Spire London East Hospital
 Holly House
 The Shop, Southend
 Day Centre, Cobham Road,
 Southend
 Holiday Inn, Southend
RETAIL
 V&V, Barkingside
 Sandra Davidson,
 Redbridge
 Gary Green, Clayhall
 Shalom Bakery, Gants Hill
 Deliphone, Barkingside
 Delicacy, Chigwell
 La Boucherie, Barkingside
 Just Kosher, Clayhall
 Derby Stores, Cambridge
 Kosher on Sea, Southend

SUPERMARKETS

Morrison's Loughton
 Sainsbury's Barkingside
 Sainsbury's Loughton
 Sainsbury's Ongar
 Sainsbury's Newbury Park
 Sainsbury's South Woodford
 Sainsbury's Westcliff
 Tesco Barkingside
 Tesco Epping
 Tesco Westcliff
 Tesco Woodford Avenue

LIBRARIES

Barkingside, Gants Hill,
 Clayhall and South
 Woodford

Due to the pandemic, distribution to all the above venues cannot be guaranteed

The community Zooms together with Jewish Care

KEEPING the Jewish community engaged, stimulated and connected throughout the Covid-19 pandemic has been a tough challenge, but one that Jewish Care has successfully adapted its services to conquer.

The audiences for its 'JC Presents' events have rocketed since they began last year; and the number and popularity of Supportive Communities groups has grown enormously, too, ranging from those who Knit, Stitch and Natter to the Chaps That Chat.

Guests on 'JC Presents' include experts in areas such as art, history, politics, entertainment and religion, with 600 people now registered to attend the regular Zoom sessions. Highlights have included an audience with Judge Rinder, chair-based exercise groups and a cookery masterclass led by volunteer Stacey. There's a new Pilates group starting soon, too.

Sharon Imber, Jewish Care's senior virtual programming coordinator, told the *Essex Jewish News*: "It's absolutely amazing how many people have joined the JC Presents Zooms and are getting so much pleasure from them."

"For some people, who are joining our community centre groups, it's the first time they've been online. When they join the group and recognise the friends that they've missed seeing at the community centre – they are so happy. Other community members are on Zooms all the time, and it has become part of their everyday life."

"The community groups are facilitated by the volunteers who were at the

community centre, so the members know them well, which is really nice. The online programme, above all else, is about keeping everyone stimulated and together."

Thelma Katz, 81, who has been a volunteer at Jewish Care's Redbridge Jewish Community Centre for more than 23 years, is now a regular on JC Presents and the community Zooms.

She said: "The Zooms are wonderful, and Jewish Care is wonderful for organising them all. We all agree we don't know what we'd do without it. It's wonderful to see people and to participate in them."

"When I was a volunteer, I did everything by hand. Now I have an iPad and it's my lifeline, so I can get on to the Zooms. Sharon helps everyone to get on, and I know I can call if I need any help. I can't thank Jewish Care enough for what they are doing."

"I've really enjoyed seeing

and listening to the Zooms on JC Presents ... as there's such a great variety of talks, and the members and volunteers go on together."

"We're all in the same boat and the Zooms have kept us all together. We all care for each other, and ask after each other and wish each other happy birthday. It's absolutely wonderful. I can't praise it enough."

As well as a full programme on JC Presents, there are now more than 15 online Supportive Communities groups run by dedicated volunteers, with 220 members signed up. A number of these are specifically local groups in Essex, including the Pop In, Ukulele, Holocaust Survivors Tea Parties and Men's Talk.

Alison Smardina, Jewish Care's supportive communities and befriending officer, told us: "It's great to see more and more older people in the community joining us. There's a range of groups that are enabling older people to socialise with one another online and matches their interests, so they have a lot in common and plenty to chat about."

"We always have a good time with our online groups – like Chaps That Chat, Woman's Hour and Knit, Stitch and Natter, and now our new Men's Talk – with really interesting speakers coming up soon. People can join them either by telephone or online."

It really does help everyone in our community feel more connected and less alone."

The Knit, Stitch and Natter group has been going strong online

TAKE PART

To find out more about Jewish Care's Supportive Communities groups, please contact Alison on 020 8922 2273 or email asmardina@jcare.org

You can find monthly listings for all the live Zoom sessions on the Jewish Care website, and register by emailing Sharon on jcpresents@jcare.org or calling 020 8418 2114.

If you need help getting set up on Zoom, please contact Jewish Care Explore by calling 0208922 2400 or emailing explore@jcare.org



Judge Rinder entertained hundreds during JC Presents



Who will be there to free the most vulnerable members of our community from loneliness this Pesach?

JEWISH CARE WILL, BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP

Loneliness doesn't go away, the forced isolation that Covid-19 has caused has made it so much worse.

Myrtle is just one of over 1,200 people our Social Work and Community Support Team care for every week, a service which is completely reliant on the generosity of our community.

So please make a gift to ensure we can free more people from loneliness this Pesach and beyond.

To make your gift, please call 020 8922 2600, or visit jewishcare.org/donate

"I'm so grateful to the Social Work Team for connecting mum with the tea parties over Zoom. It's the highlight of her month, her face lights up when she sees her friends online".

Laurence, Myrtle's son and her full-time carer



JEWISH CARE

Honours for JLGB's Linda and CST's David

BY MICHAELA BLITZ

LINDA DIAMOND

THE Queen's New Year's Honours List for 2021 saw nominations for two outstanding members of the Essex Jewish community.

Linda Diamond, leader of JLGB Redbridge brass band, and David Delew, the newly retired CEO of CST, both received recognition for their significant contributions.

Linda is the first to admit that she is not someone who likes being the centre of attention, and the work she has done over the past 35 years was never done for any kind of recognition, particularly on this scale.

She said: "I get so much out of being involved on a personal level, and that is why I continue to do it. I am delighted and very humbled to receive the nomination and it is nice to know that this work is appreciated."

JLGB has been close to Linda's heart for more than 35 years. She first joined aged 12 and, in her own words, has "never really left". Not only is she the group leader for JLGB Redbridge Brass Band, but her day job as senior membership administrator for the JLGB professional team means that she is very much involved in supporting JLGB groups across the country, as well as helping to coordinate international programmes.

JLGB encourages young people to actively contribute to their community and society, through offering essential life skills and experiences so that they become empowered young adults. Linda's passion and dedication throughout her time with JLGB has impacted on thousands of young people over the years. Helping them to grow and develop as young adults is 'truly magical', and a big part of why she has been involved for so long.

"There is nothing more rewarding than seeing them having fun, building friendships, developing their skills and confidence, and growing into



the next generation of leaders. Everyone involved has such a special connection – it feels like a family."

In Linda's case, that family feeling is particularly real as it was through her involvement with JLGB that she met her husband, Russell. They also seem to have passed on the volunteering bug to their three children, who have also grown up being involved in the organisation and went on to be adult volunteers at JLGB groups around the country.

Although she does not know who initially suggested her for the award, many parents, volunteers and JLGB staff and leaders from across the community supported her nomination, including Ilford North MP Wes Streeting.

Since receiving the award, she has been overwhelmed by the many kind wishes and messages from friends and colleagues as well as Lord Levy, the president of JLGB, and CEO Neil Martin, who she has known since he first joined the organisation at 13.

The details regarding hon-

ours were not posted to recipients by letter this year due to Covid-19 so, instead, people were sent an email to inform them of nominations; and Linda only discovered the news late one night as she went through her junk mail folder. When she first read it, she was not sure if it was real.

She revealed: "I had to wake up my husband to tell him and make sure that it wasn't some sort of hoax. We then woke up our children to tell them. We were all really excited, but were sworn to secrecy until the list was published in early December – it was a very long four weeks!"

Having been with the organisation for so many years, she has lots of happy and special memories; but one of her proudest moments is being part of a group attending the Youth United Network at Buckingham Palace with Redbridge band.

As she recalls: "It was a truly incredible experience performing in the throne room and being surrounded by so much history!"



Linda (centre left) at a JLGB event at Buckingham Palace BOTH PHOTOS JLGB



DAVID DELEW

David was awarded an OBE for services to the Jewish community, in relation to his involvement in CST. He found out about his honour whilst out for a walk with a friend.

As he explains: "We stopped for a minute, as my friend had to take a phone call so, whilst I was waiting, I decided to check my emails, and that's when I came across this message. At first, I thought it was a joke, but when I realised that it was true, I was shocked."

"I was sworn to secrecy so I couldn't even tell my friend at the time. It took me around a week and a half to even tell my wife. It was probably one of the hardest secrets I have ever had to keep, and I am so glad that people know now!"

David, grew up in Gants Hill and started off his working life as an estate agent under the mentorship of Phillip Leigh. The Community Security Trust (CST) is a charity that protects British Jews from antisemitism and related threats, providing security, advice and training to Jewish schools, synagogues and communal organisations.

David joined as a CST volunteer on his 18th birthday, and quickly rose to become a team leader before joining the organisation full time as the Head of Security. He became CEO in 2013 and held the position for seven years, retiring in August 2020. He feels that, since starting out within the organisation, the view of CST and the work that they do has changed immensely to reflect society.

He told us: "Back in the day, CST used to be seen as men in dark glasses and raincoats doing security outside synagogues and schools, but the rise in terrorism and online abuse means that the work of CST has become far more professional and is extremely far reaching, helping not only the Jewish community, but the wider community as well."

Today, CST is the leading expert in its field, regarding antisemitism and terrorism, and is recognised by the police and government as a model of best practice, using this expertise to advise other faith communities on how to protect themselves

from future threats.

The SAFE programme was set up when he was in office at a time and when other faith communities were suffering terrorist attacks. It works to help raise awareness and offer advice to enable them to strengthen security at key buildings and events, so that they are able to protect their communities from future threats.

In his role as CEO, David was involved in various programmes and initiatives introduced to help better serve and protect the Jewish community. One he is particularly proud of was the setting up of the 24/7 National Security Control Centre in 2018, which allowed direct CCTV access to hundreds of Jewish communal buildings across the UK, so that they were able to be monitored from a central point. As part of this, David also oversaw the spending of over £11million through the Security Enhancement Project to improve security measures at many Jewish buildings throughout the UK.

For David, being given this honour is not only recognition for his own 30 years of service, but also the dedication and passion of the professional team and incredible volunteers involved with CST.

He said: "It was a true honour and a privilege to lead CST for nearly seven years and to be involved in developing its capabilities and help shape the organisation, so that it is able to better protect the Jewish community from the current threats we face: antisemitism and terrorism."

"I believe that everyone has a part to play in security, whether as a volunteer or through helping with funding. It is an organisation that does so much for the community, often more than people would imagine, and it needs the support of all of us to continue its vital work."

Another recipient of an honour and well-known to Essex Jewry was Yusuf Patel, a community engagement co-ordinator at Redbridge Council, who received an MBE for his services to community cohesion and interfaith. At just 25, he is one of the youngest recipients of the honour, and he has worked tirelessly throughout his career to bring communities together.

The *Essex Jewish News* would like to congratulate all recipients for their nominations and the dedication they have shown in helping the Essex Jewish community.



David with Mayor of London Sadiq Khan during his time as CEO of CST

Caring for carers the Kantor King Solomon way



PAT LIDIKER TALKS TO LAURA MARKS ABOUT HER SCHOOL'S UNIQUE PROJECT TO GIVE HEALTH WORKERS A SWEET TREAT

WITH Covid at its peak, hardly any spare beds for patients at our local hospitals and emotionally and physically shattered medical staff struggling to save lives, it has been a dire start to 2021. Turning out once a week to clap for our over-worked NHS has felt somewhat inadequate during this second wave.

But in January, says Laura Marks, marketing officer at Kantor King Solomon High School (KKS), staff and students at the Jewish secondary school hit on a more proactive approach – delivering car-loads of mouth-watering cakes, cookies and other yummy treats.

The school ethos is community, charity and love of learning so this ticked the first two boxes perfectly. What better way for students to show their gratitude than by caring and sharing with the wider community.

"We called the scheme 'Bake for Carers' and initially intended to deliver once a fortnight," remembers Laura. "Students, their parents, teachers and other members of staff all teamed up to cook, wrap each item with a list of ingredients and add a personal thank you message."

The original plan had to be updated to weekly deliveries after details were posted on the KKS Facebook page. Laura said: "Offers of help from the whole Redbridge community poured in from others wanting to join us and help in any way they could," Laura says. "It has been astonishing, with more and more outside contributions

being dropped off at the school's security hut on Forest Road. And the icing on the cake has been the response from recipients."

These include staff at King George's, Queens, Goodmayes, Homerton, KG Pharmacy, Haven House Children's Hospice, Chigwell Ambulance Station and Barkingside Police Station. The list just keeps on growing.

Dr Farrel Igielman, whose own children are former students at KKS, offered to personally deliver goodies to his colleagues in the ICU staff rooms at King George's and Queens Hospitals.

He told the *Essex Jewish News*: "Everybody is very appreciative, in fact one nurse's eyes filled with tears when she saw them. It was the message saying the cakes were from a year 8 pupil that did it for her."

"During the first Covid wave there was applause for the NHS and lots of food was being delivered to our hospitals by well-wishers. The second wave has seen neither, but has been much harder on staff with more patients this time. The doctors, nurses, physios and all health care professionals are exhausted, so receiving these treats really helps lift their spirits."

Twins Meghan and Lois Keizner have baked weekly. Alongside their Mum



KKS pupil Rosie Preston prepares a delicious treat



A recipient at Chigwell Ambulance Station



**Pictured above: Dr Farrel Igielman and his team enjoying their goodies
Left: Twins Meghan and Lois Keizner bake weekly**

Francesca, not only do they take their time to come up with new ideas every week, they love spending time on the presentation, too. Meanwhile, sisters Jessica and Rosie Preston take it in turns. Rosie, who is in year 8, told us: "I'm cooking for the NHS because they are helping everyone else and we should give back."

Laura lives in Chigwell, where she and her husband have four children – three of them at KKS and the youngest at Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School.

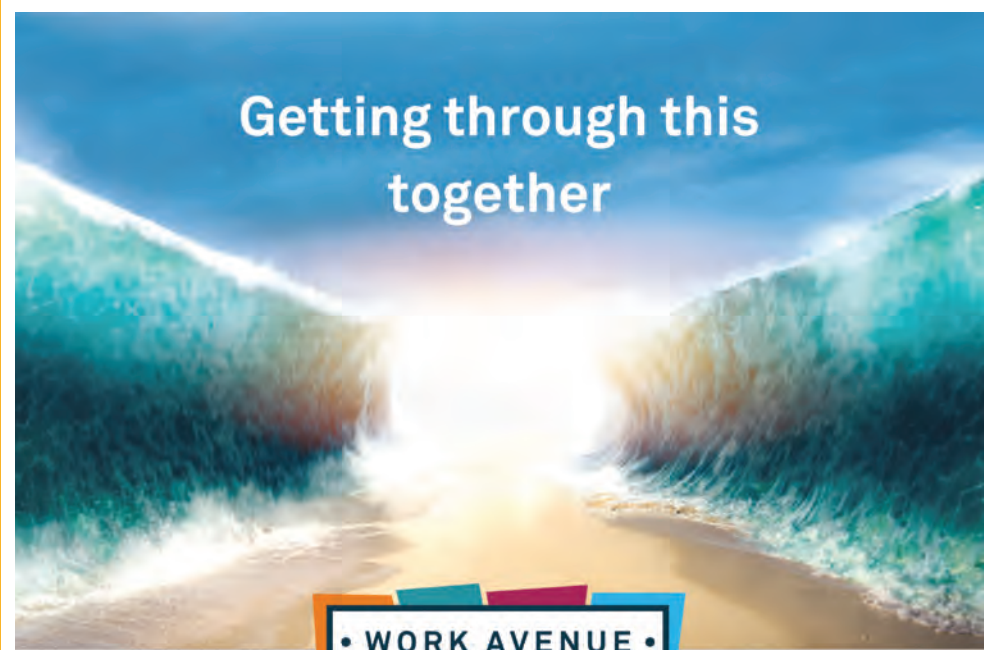
Like all other families, their life has been disrupted by lockdown, school closures and

home schooling. Her husband – a City underwriter working from home – has given her the support to really pursue projects like this one, but Laura

stresses it's the entire KKS team who are doing this for the wider community.

"The whole area, like the rest of the country and in fact

the world, is in this together. At KKS we feel it so important that Jewish people can show their solidarity in such a positive way."



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Teddies help keep Clore spirits high

BY **SIMON ROTHSTEIN**

THE Fundraisers At Clore Tikva (FACT) team had a great idea to keep the youngest pupils at the primary school happy during lockdown – teddy bears!

FACT sent Reception and Year 1 pupils a new little friend with a note saying: “Whilst we can’t be together, please keep your new teddy safe, warm and to let your teachers and friends know what adventures you and your new friend get up to.”

The cuddly toys were distributed in a Covid-safe way with children given ideas to use them, including an indoor teddy bear’s picnic complete with designing a menu and invitations.

Lots of fun was had when the pupils were asked to think of the bear’s name, age, favourite food, favourite colour and favourite lesson.

Some very inventive, and not so inventive names were given, including Beary, BearBear, Teddy,

Monty Jr, Lovely Bear and Teetee, which is short for teacher (of course).

The children uploaded their pictures on

Google Classroom to show their teachers and classmates what they had been up to with their new little friends, and to share their

stories.

It has provided much chatter and laughter during ‘show and tell’ sessions, as well as enabling creative writing and artistic practice to take place, and the *Essex Jewish News* is delighted to show off some of the best of them here.

Mel Phillips, head of FACT, told us: “Whilst the children were missing their friends and couldn’t be together in class, it was fantastic to be able to send a new little friend their way. To hear that the children were so excited to get their bear, and to see their gorgeous pictures, really put a smile on our faces.”



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Hermi and Shirley go platinum WAGE launch



Hermi and Shirley on their wedding day and celebrating their anniversary 70 years later

BY **SIMON ROTHSTEIN**

TWO founders of Clayhall United Synagogue have celebrated 70 years of marriage.

Hermi and Shirley Rothman met on New Year's Eve in 1948 at a dance and quickly fell in love. They married two years later and celebrated their platinum anniversary this February.

Hermi, who is now 96, arrived in England as a refugee

on the Kindertransport from Germany in August 1939. He went to live in Gwyrch Castle and joined the intelligence service in 1944/45, where he was part of a team of four people translating Hitler's will in secret, after it was discovered by interrogators, hidden by a captive German soldier in the prisoner-of-war camp where Hermi had been sent.

When Hermi and Shirley met, he had no family in the UK so Shirley's mum took

Hermi under her wing. The couple took a trip to Israel together, not long after the wedding, to meet Hermi's parents and younger brother who he hadn't seen 1939. They had escaped Berlin and arrived in Israel, having survived concentration camps, shipwrecks and more on their journey.

The couple were very active in the Essex Jewish community, not only at Clayhall (now Cranbrook) Synagogue, but also giving their time de-

livering Jewish Care's Meals on Wheels to older people in Essex for many years.

Hermi and Shirley have two children, Jonathan and Janice, six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Jewish Care Chief Executive Daniel Carmel-Brown says: "I'm delighted to wish Hermi and Shirley a Mazel Tov on their 70th wedding anniversary. They are inspirational members of our community."

WORK Avenue, the Jewish community's leading employment and business support organisation, has launched WAGE – its first ever social enterprise.

WAGE (Work Avenue Generating Employment) aims to both generate employment and grow business, by training those seeking work in key disciplines to match the areas that small businesses require help in.

By signing up as a WAGE Member, job seekers and career changers will receive subsidised training courses in a series of disciplines, followed by paid work in that field. They will also be paired with an experienced mentor to guide and support them.

Businesses will be able to utilise this bank of fully trained WAGE Members to work on individual projects in an affordable and timely way, with the knowledge that the mentor is there to support the work they produce.

The initiative is headed up by WAGE Director Jeremy Bohn. Jeremy – who has more than 20 years of experience in recruitment and employment – said: "WAGE is a progression for Work Avenue and takes the advice and support we already give to the next level. By creating this micro-economy for both our business and employment clients, WAGE is creating symbiotic relationships where everyone wins."

"I am especially proud of

the mentor system, which is something unique to WAGE and helps retain both the charity and community feel for the work that we do."

The areas that WAGE will be offering subsidised training and work placements in are: graphic design, IT/admin, digital marketing, web design, sales, customer service and bookkeeping.

WAGE Members will also have access to all of Work Avenue's one-to-one advice, and events and courses to lay the foundations of a successful transition to a permanent role once they are ready to exit WAGE.

Members can exit WAGE at any time, whether to take on a permanent role or set up their own portfolio businesses offering freelance services. Once WAGE businesses grow to the point that they can recruit full-time members of staff, they too will exit the WAGE process. All of these exit strategies will be seen as enormous markers of success for WAGE.

WAGE is backed by seed funding from five trusts and foundations, including The Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation, The Max Barney Foundation and Investstream Charitable Trust.

To find out more about how WAGE can help you or your business, please visit www.theworkavenue.org.uk/wage/ or email Jeremy on jeremy@theworkavenue.org.uk

We go to Chai for the big

***Care** is at the heart of everything we do.

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For more information please call **0208 202 2211** or our Freephone Helpline on **0808 808 4567** or visit **www.chaicancercare.org**.

**Together we can cope.
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WIJPS Virtual Shabbat has all the right ingredients



Summer and Cassidy Conway join in the baking fun

FAMILIES at Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School (WIJPS) took part in a Virtual Shabbat programme during February.

All pupils worked on a 'Bake, Make and Create' project, whereby they selected a different task to complete each day.

There were over 30 activities to choose from, including baking challah, moulding Havdalah candles, creating a 'Shabbat in a Box' for a friend and designing paper flowers.

One evening after school, 60 families joined together virtually for a 'Chocolate Cake Bake'. After decorating their cakes with a Shabbat or Parasha theme, pupils had the opportunity to enter them into the WIJPS cake decorating competition.

There was also a Kabbalat

Shabbat led by Tribe's Rabbi Cobi Ebrahimoff, as well as the school teaming up with Chigwell and Hainault Synagogue to host the United Synagogue's 'Kabbalat Shabbat Live'.

Deborah Harris, the school's Jewish Studies lead, said: "We unfortunately had to cancel all our informal Shabbat-related events this year due to Covid – our Friday night dinner for Years 3 and 4, our Shabbaton for Years 1 and 2 and our Year 5 residential Shabbaton."

"We didn't want the children to miss out completely, so decided to organise a Virtual Shabbat programme to bring our WIJPS community together; and we have been completely overwhelmed by its success, with every family engaged in the activities."

Looking for a new job?



BY **DEBBIE SHELDON** CEO OF WORK AVENUE

THE last 12 months have been hard for many in our community. It was just before last Pesach that a lockdown was first introduced, and since then we've lived with varying restrictions in so many areas of our lives.

In the world of work, we have seen furlough, redundancy and businesses collapsing – causing financial difficulties for individuals and families, along with the stresses and mental health problems to which these can often lead.

If you have been caught up in the devastation wrought by this pandemic – or are just at a stage where you are looking to change career or start a business – then please be assured that help is at hand.

At Work Avenue, the Jewish community's leading employment and support organisation, we have helped more than 2,000 people in their job search and with their business in the last year alone.

We pride ourselves on providing many options for our clients to earn a living, even in these trying times, and all our support and services are completely free.

Our bespoke one-to-one employment advice and guidance can help you with everything from creating the perfect CV, to preparing for the interview process, to helping define what your skills are and exactly which career path you wish to follow.

We support clients to find work and with their job search. It might not seem like it right now, but many businesses are still hiring. This means our jobs board is constantly changing with new roles being added every day, both part- and full-time.

Additionally, we have lots of free courses and conferences running throughout the

year covering all aspects of employment and business, run by experts with many years of experience.

These include in-depth looks at networking, transferable skills, building confidence and using LinkedIn – as well as sessions offering tips on how to refocus and rebalance amidst the stresses and uncertainties of our times.

We are also delighted to be running The Richard Mintz Bursary Fund, set up in honour of our late trustee, which is allocating substantive grants to any member of the Jewish community who wishes to undertake a vocational training course but cannot afford the cost.

Many are looking to train or retrain right now in order to change careers, obtain a professional qualification or gain the skills needed in today's greatly changed, work environment.

However, the cost of courses range from £500 to £5,000, a price tag that can be unaffordable at the best of times, let alone in the midst of a huge financial squeeze.

That's why the fund – which is open to anyone in the Jewish community of any age and background – was set up. It will help those wishing to improve their earning potential but who are prevented from doing so due to this expense.

To find out more, and apply in confidence, please visit www.theworkavenue.org.uk/rmbf/.

On the business side, our expert advisors are again there to offer one-to-one support – whether you are looking to start a new business or expand a current one. Areas of advice include planning, strategy, finances, bookkeeping/payroll, marketing, PR and legal support.

So please do get in touch by emailing reception@theworkavenue.org.uk where you can arrange a bespoke and confidential advice appointment.

'Passionart' about kippart



LAURA Gamliel (néé Wajc-hendler) was born and grew up in Ilford and attended King Solomon High School, where she developed a passion for art. She went on to take art 'A' level, very much encouraged by her art teacher there – Mr Jepson – who she describes as 'amazing'.

After her marriage, she moved to north west London and qualified as a teacher. Following the death of her mother five years ago, Laura decided she should try taking up art again, as she needed a release from the stress of losing her mother.

So after a 15-year break, Laura decided to attend art classes, unsure that she could remember how to paint. But as soon as she put brush to the canvas, it was as if time had not passed at all since she had stopped painting, and she hasn't stopped since.

Laura has since used this passion to create a business that provides hand-painted bespoke kippot, tzitzit, bags, pencil cases, paintings on canvas and clocks. She started the company a couple of years ago, when she began making kippot for her two sons. It was when people started seeing her work on social media that the orders started to flow in.

Following on from designs for children, adults too have

shown 'kippart envy', which led Laura to design a binary themed kippah as well as a ten-pin bowling ball themed one for her bowling-mad dad.

She takes great pride in her work, and with much attention to detail, always striving to give her customers a personal service, offering tailor-made solutions to each individual customer depending on their need. "I am very excited at being able to follow my passion and get so much joy from it,"

Freedom from loneliness this Pesach

Jewish Care's Pesach campaign this year has highlighted how its social work and community support team and helpline have been there for the thousands of people suffering from isolation and loneliness during this pandemic.

As well as providing highly trained, professional support, warmth and guidance, this vital service is also helping to keep a Jewish connection alive for many older people in our community. For some people, this will be through receiving a hot, kosher meal from the organisation's Meals on Wheels service.

David Rein, 91, who lives

says Laura. "I love what I am able to do and to see other people happy with my work."

Laura has undertaken some big projects, too, one of which was a commission to hand-paint 150 kippot for Norwood, which were given out to participants on their charity bike rides.

For more details on kippArt see Laura's Instagram page kippArt by Laura or on Facebook at kippart by Laura.

in Redbridge, rarely sees anyone face to face as Covid-19 has forced him to isolate, so he relies on his daily Meals on Wheels visit from a Jewish Care volunteer. He told the *Essex Jewish News* that the volunteers who deliver the meals are "life-savers" and how, as well as regularly talking to his family, he also looks forward to a weekly chat with Dennis, his telephone befriender, who makes sure he is never lonely.

To donate to Jewish Care's Pesach Appeal, please visit www.jewishcare.org/donate or call 020 8922 2600.

Cambridge honours Holocaust Memorial Day

CAMBRIDGE City Council, through and in collaboration with HistoryWorks, organised a number of commemorative events and activities online – at this challenging Covid-19 time – to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2021.

On HMD itself, Wednesday 27 January, the Mayor of Cambridge, Cllr Russ McPherson, switched on the specially chosen purple lights to illuminate the city's Guildhall, as an indicator of this year's HMD theme, 'Be the Light in the Darkness'. Michael Rosen, HistoryWorks' 'Poet in Residence', launched that theme's eponymous online video which he had produced. And he also gave a talk: "The Missing – My family's experience of the Holocaust and my journey to find out what happened".

On the following Sunday, further dedicatory, online events included songs, poetry, instrumental music and exhibited art; and which were arranged by HistoryWorks on behalf of the mayor and city council. These were narrated by Mr Rosen and Shoah survivor Eva Clarke, a long-time 'Educator' for the Holocaust Educational Trust, who also gave a talk about her birth in the Nazis' Mauthausen concentration camp. Choirs from several Cambridge schools participated; and older school students were invited to write poems on the subject, 'Voices of Hope'.

Professor Helen Weinstein, Director of HistoryWorks, was the artistic director for Cambridge HMD's 'Civic Programme'.

The Kosher takeaway

BY **PAT LIDIKER**

WHEN it was first put to north London caterers Maud Attiach, and her father David, that there could be room for expansion of their kosher takeaway business into Essex, Maud says she had her doubts.

But she is happy to admit how very wrong she was – and the pair are even planning to open a fully kosher restaurant and deli once the current pandemic is over.

In an exclusive interview, Maud raved to the *Essex Jewish News* about the demand they have found here for their range of kosher Indian, Chinese and Israeli street food, as well as Friday night dinners.

She told us: “I used to manage a restaurant in Chigwell, but had no idea just how many Jewish people lived in Essex and how much demand there would be for kosher meals and wines.

“I was so excited and grateful when Rabbi Yanky Abrams of Loughton Synagogue, one of our regular customers, suggested we give it a try through his shul on Borders Lane to assess how many people would be interested – and it just took off from there.

“People can collect their Shabbat orders from the synagogue on Friday mornings, and he also introduced us to the Willows Banqueting Suite in Ilford, as an extra distribution outlet during the week.”

Maud is delighted with the



Maud Attiach ... demand for Kosher takeaway has been great

enthusiastic response from the Essex community to this new and exciting expansion of choice on the kosher market.

Once the year-long Covid

restrictions become more manageable, and we can happily eat out with friends and family again, Maud and David plan to open the deli and

restaurant, which will give them an even higher profile on the Essex scene.

The family-run business has a team of specialist chefs

producing their wide variety of high-quality meat, fish and vegetarian meals, as well as bakery and patisserie products.

Maud's company, Taim, is definitely offering something

delicious and different when we most deserve it.

To find out more and to place an order, go to www.taimdeli.co.uk



FOCUS ON: RAPHAEL JEWISH COUNSELLING SERVICE

BY **MICAELA BLITZ**

RAPHAEL Jewish Counselling Service has been around for more than 40 years, offering confidential help and emotional support to individuals and couples; but many within the Jewish community could be forgiven for not even knowing that it exists.

This is something that its chairman of trustees, Roberta Coffey, is keen to change. She has been involved with the service for over 20 years and, in that time, has seen the organisation grow. But she recognises that the nature of the work they do means it can be hard to raise the charity's profile.

She told the *Essex Jewish News*: “We offer a confidential and very personal service, and this can be more difficult to promote. People do not tend to talk about mental health and wellbeing in the same way as they do about the work that other organisations do.

“In recent years, there has been a shift in attitude around this subject from high-profile celebrities and even royalty, and I hope that this will encourage more of a discussion around it, which may help to raise our profile.”

Roberta recognises that the current lockdown situation has led to a significant rise in feelings of depression, anxiety and isolation. Issues surrounding illness, family breakdowns and

even bereavement, which may be even more significant in the current times, mean organisations like Raphael have seen an increase in people seeking their help.

For anyone that may be struggling or in distress and in need of some support, she would encourage them to contact Raphael directly via their website or by phone or email, or through obtaining a referral from their GP or social worker.

The service offered by Raphael is completely confidential and non-judgemental, and is open to those from across the Jewish spectrum. Raphael can also offer counselling to members of the community who are not Jewish.

After reaching out by phone, email or via the Raphael website, the first point of contact an individual or couple will have is with the intake counsellor, who will assess them and help find the most suitable counsellor. Details will then be passed to a counsellor who will then arrange sessions with the client directly.

The number of sessions that a client will have is open-ended, meaning that it is not limited and is decided between the client and counsellor during the course of the counselling.

Before lockdown, sessions would usually take place at therapy rooms in Edgware or in the counsellors' consulting rooms; but the current situation

has meant that consultation sessions have been virtual via Zoom, Skype or by phone. This means that clients are able to access help from anywhere in the UK, as well as north London.

Working in this virtual way has also meant that counsellors like Myriam can be more flexible in terms of timings of sessions; and they can fit around a client's schedule a bit more, as many may be working from home, home schooling or have other issues as a result of the current situation.

Myriam recognises that, for some clients, virtual sessions may be more challenging. Issues with internet connections can make it difficult, or the dynamics of their household may mean that finding a quiet space to talk is not always possible. She understands also that being in a domestic setting can sometimes inhibit progress, as if the client is talking about something going on at home or a relationship, they may not feel able to speak as freely whilst in that environment.

Counselling sessions are chargeable. For anyone struggling financially, Raphael can make provisions for those unable to afford the full cost and would never turn anyone away based on financial situation or lack of funds.

The counsellors that work with Raphael give their time and expertise free of charge.

The team, which currently consists of around 30 volunteer counsellors, is managed by clinical director Sara Cooper. She works closely with them, offering fortnightly one-to-one supervision in groups facilitated by experienced professional supervisors.

As she explains: “If a counsellor needs guidance in dealing with a specific issue or client, then they can discuss this and we can resolve it quickly. This ensures that all counsellors feel fully supported, and that we are able to offer a high standard of service to all our clients.”

Sara is always happy to speak to any trainee or qualified counsellors who would like to volunteer their time for Raphael. Myriam has worked with Raphael for around five years and has found her involvement beneficial not only for her clients, but also for herself on a professional basis.

She added: “The way that Raphael is structured means that there is a chance to receive additional training and guidance, which is quite unique within a voluntary role.”

As well as counsellors, Raphael also has an honorary psychiatrist on their team for assessment and, where necessary, also works with rabbinic representatives from across the Jewish community.

Although Raphael may be a relatively unknown charity

in some respects, those that have been helped over the past 40 years consider it to be a vital lifeline. Roberta hopes that it will be able to continue offering emotional support at times of great distress, so that many more people from across the Jewish community can access the service and receive the help that they need.

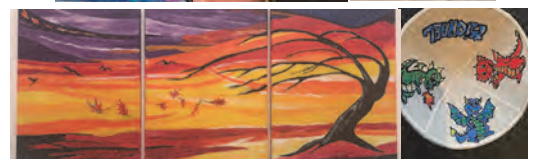
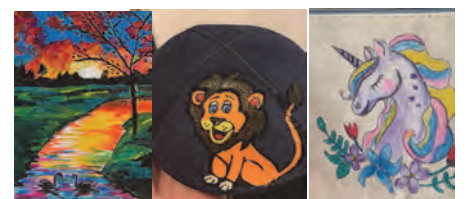
To find out more about the work that Raphael Jewish Counselling Service does, please visit their website – www.raphaeljewishcounselling.org

To get in contact, email info@raphaeljewishcounselling.org or follow them on Facebook (@raphaeljcs) or Twitter (@JcsRaphael).

KIPPART
BY LAURA

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Kippart by laura



‘Clore has risen to the technology challenge’

BY MARGOT BULLER HEAD OF CLORE TIKVA PRIMARY SCHOOL

ALL schools have been plunged into new ways of working since the first lockdown in March 2020. Clore Tikva was no exception. We had to adapt quickly to a virtual teaching environment with an outdated IT infrastructure. We had a steep hill to climb. Nevertheless, we have risen to the challenge.

Thanks to intensive staff training together with an injection of 60 new Chromebooks, courtesy of numerous community grants, our staff and children have been able to adapt quickly to a world in which Google Classroom is pivotal, using technology for blended and collaborative learning.

As a result of this upshift in use of technology, Clore Tikva was able to celebrate Chanukah with our partner school – the Kerner school in Israel. UJIA kindly funded an exciting collaborative project with children in both schools, designing and making chanukiahs using recycled and found materials. A joint Chanukah celebration across the many miles between Barkingside and Israel was a moving and emotional experience. Children from both schools shared their creativity and faith. Staff and children prayed, sang and celebrated together, dedicating their chanukiahs to family, friends and key workers.

When the short notice came that schools would close to all but the children of key workers, after the winter break, Clore Tikva was ready to fully embrace technology in order to create virtual classrooms for all our children. The children in school have Chromebooks and headphones and learn alongside their classmates at home.

Live registration, the core curriculum and Ivrit and Jewish studies are accessed live by almost all children. Parents are reportedly learning Ivrit; and, in the EYFS, making playdough alongside their children, making houses for the three little pigs and exploring 2D shapes in sandwiches.

Staff have felt challenged and are buzzing with a sense of achievement, parents are engaged in their children's learning; and children are continuing to feel part of their class. As head, I am very proud of what the staff and Clore Tikva as a whole have achieved, not only in getting to grips with technology but also in creating fun and engaging learning environments for all our children, whether they are at home or at school.

Thanks to the Joint Jewish Burial Society, the Jewish Memorial Council, the Bradmans Trust, the Gerald and Gail Ronson Family Foundation, the Jewish Community Day School Advisory Board and the Asda Foundation, we have been able to buy a significant amount of new IT equipment, as well as stationery and PPE for those in school, for use in this new approach to learning.

As a result of the technological advances at Clore Tikva, new opportunities for a closer partnership with the Kerner School have come about. A computer club has been set up to push the boundaries of blended learning, and a collaboration to take part in a short film-making project competition has been created.

Our ambitious governors, foundation and school staff are keen to make sure all children have access to a laptop, so that the children are able to fully embrace and develop their use of technology in learning; but to do so collaboratively in partnership with others, whether in Clore Tikva, the Kerner school or



elsewhere in the community.

We understand that a number of children within the community are missing out on religious studies. To help keep those in the community connected to their Jewishness, we have been sharing our Havdalah and Kabbalat Shabbat

Assemblies, both of which are undertaken by our Head of Jewish Studies, Samantha Bendon. We understand the importance of coming together as a community to support one another; a message that sits at the very heart of our ethos.

Walking for charity whatever the weather

A JEWISH family from Southend are walking 250 miles to raise vital funds for charity.

Barry and Karen Jacobs, along with their sons Louis and Sidney, have battled through rain, wind and snow during their fundraiser for Parkinson's UK – which began when Louis was inspired by watching actor Michael J Fox talk about his experience of the disease.

Barry said: "It has been a

great way of getting the family to spend more time with each other outdoors and good for our mental health as well. It has been a bit of a challenge to get motivated through the weather, but knowing we are doing it for a great cause has spurred us on."

The family, who are members of Southend and Westcliff Hebrew congregation, have set up a fundraising page at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jacobswalk-forparkinsons

Twinning project goes from strength to strength

BY HARVEY FRANKEL



I HAVE been involved with Yad Vashem and their twinning project for a few years now, yet it still brings me joy every time one of today's simchas is twinned with a child of the Holocaust, who was murdered by the Nazis before he or she lived long enough to embrace this milestone in Jewish life.

At Chigwell & Hainault Synagogue, which has a thriving community, we are blessed with many bar and batmitzvahs, most of which are now twinned.

The children take meticulous care to do in-depth research into their allocated twin to deliver an interesting and heartfelt story. Each one is unique and extremely moving.

More than 1.5 million children perished in the Holocaust, many younger than 12 years old. Approximately 800 children have now been twinned. There is a long way to go, but it would be amazing if, at some point in time, every child is remembered in this way.

Two years ago, my wife Lynne and I were fortunate to be invited by Yad Vashem UK to attend their Gala Dinner in London, an amazing event with interesting speakers including the Israeli ambassador, the Chief Rabbi and former MP Luciana Berger.

Because of the current pandemic, this dinner and other fundraising events had to be cancelled. Yad Vashem, like many important charities, relies

solely on voluntary contributions. They receive no government help whatsoever, which means these fundraisers are the only means of support.

In January, they launched a 36-hour, online fundraiser. The aim was to raise £180,000, a huge task but necessary to carry on the vital work they do. I was asked to be a team leader and to help with the fundraising. This is not something I'm familiar with but said I would have a go.

A page was set up for me and on which I added my own personal story, my connection to Yad Vashem and its twinning programme, and set a modest target of £500.

The morning that the event went live, I sent my page out to various individuals and the numerous groups I'm on, and waited for the response.

I didn't have to wait long. The donations started to roll in, and within a few hours I had reached my target. It was decided that I should raise my target ... I did so twice further. I'm happy to say that, by the end of the event, I'd raised a staggering £1,908!

For this I thank the amazing generosity of the Chigwell & Hainault community. I am happy to say Yad Vashem UK as a whole exceeded their target, allowing them to continue the vital work of education and twinning.

This coming June, my granddaughter Ellie will be celebrating her batmitzvah. I'm in the process of arranging her twin. It will be very interesting to see who she will be twinned with and then to do the research into the family. Who knows what we will discover and what family still exists.

If you would like to know more about the twinning programme – which is open to all Jewish communities – or wish to make a donation to support it, please email me on harveyfrankel@hotmail.com.

If you wish to donate to Yad Vashem UK, please go to the website www.yad vashem.org.uk or call 020 8187 9881.

Sheila celebrates her 97th



SHEILA Fishman marked her 97th birthday with a special party at Jewish Care's Vi & John Rubens House.

Sheila celebrated with staff and residents while her daughters, Rosalind Langham and Barbara Reef, were able to join in from the home's visiting pod. Other family members, including Sheila's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, took part in the party via Zoom.

Rosalind said: "I'd like to thank the staff at Jewish Care for everything they've done. We appreciate their work and being able to celebrate mum's 97th birthday together, made both mum and all our family very happy. We are now looking forward to her 100th."

Sheila has lived at Vi & John Rubens House for eight years.



Pupils at Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School made cards for tenants at Jewish Blind & Disabled's Aztec House. The cards were delivered by WIJPS head boy Harry and his sister Isabella (pictured). Each card contained a short paragraph written by the pupils about themselves and an invite for tenants to write back.

The history of the Essex Jewish News

TO CELEBRATE THE LAUNCH OF THE **ESSEX JEWISH NEWS** WEBSITE, WE LOOK BACK AT THE WONDERFUL HISTORY OF OUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

THERE are not many places in Britain, if any, that can boast a community newspaper devoted entirely to one particular area and to one particular community; so the *Essex Jewish News*, formerly known as *The Bridge*, could be in a class of its own.

This Pesach, we mark the 41st anniversary of the first publication, a 12-page glossy magazine. It was nothing like the full-blown newspaper seen and read today by nearly 20,000 people in print and, now, lots more online too.

It all started in April 1980 and was the brainchild of Israeli Itz Aviram, a journalist and former shaliach (emissary) in Redbridge. He contacted a publisher, the late Frank Cass, who then set the whole thing in motion by contacting two well-known local journalists, Bernard Joseph and Manny Robinson, and sounding them out on the idea for a community newspaper.

At its launch, a company was formed called RDJCC News Ltd with Frank Cass as chairman, the late Philip Finlay in charge of accounts and the late Geoffrey Phillips in charge of advertising.

The paper – which was

printed for many years under the cut-and-paste method by Speedprint's Martin and Vincent Goodman – was to be called '*The Bridge*' after the borough it served, Redbridge.

Because both Bernard and Manny were working for newspapers themselves, and were under contract not to write for any other publication, the first editor appointed was Jackie Berg.

Soon Bernard, who had been news editor of the now defunct *London Evening News*, was able to take over as editor and use his professional skills to further enhance the content and style of the paper.

Bernard went on aliyah to Israel and handed the role to Manny, then a journalist on the *London Evening Standard* who had been instrumental in launching the paper in the first place.

He had to step back for a while, remaining as an editorial consultant; and two women, Wendy Levy and Anne Krisman, took over, before Manny came back with another former journalist as his deputy, the late Freddie Gold, who had been editor of the *Hackney Gazette*.

So popular was the paper that the *Jewish Chronicle* agreed to distribute it, inserted inside the *JC*, a partnership that lasted for several years.

Manny also changed the name of the paper to the *Essex Jewish News* – because of the demand from areas outside Redbridge for their own news items to be included – and was instrumental in switching it from a magazine style publication to a



The thirteenth issue of The Bridge, the former incarnation of the Essex Jewish News

tabloid newspaper. He also paved the way for the introduction of colour into the paper.

In many ways, this switch from magazine to tabloid was made possible through the sheer determination of the late and much missed Barbara Newman, who had taken over as advertising representative. She built up an impressive advertising base by sheer hard work and determination that was the envy of many big circulation professional papers.

A new company, Essex Jewish News Ltd, had been formed to replace RDJCC Ltd and the paper went on to twice win the Community Newspaper of the Year at the Board of Deputies magazine awards, and was runner-up once.

Manny, who is now a director and editorial consultant, stayed as editor for a further 35 years before retiring and handing over to the present editor, Simon Rothstein, in 2017.

Melvyn Weinberg, a former executive director on the *Jewish*

Chronicle, became managing director of the new company; and he gave way last year to Clive Bayard, another former *Jewish Chronicle* employee. Clive also designs the paper and has enlarged the circulation by getting the paper to other outlets, like Tesco, Sainsbury's and Waitrose. The company also appointed its first chairman, Phillip Leigh.

Under Simon's leadership, the *Essex Jewish News* has placed a greater emphasis on attracting younger readers and more writers, which has also inspired the move online. The writing team includes Manny, long-time contributor, leader writer, Travel, Watcher in the Rye and Cambridge correspondent Mark Harris and new writers Micaela Blitz and Pat Lidiker.

The paper is published three times a year, at Passover, Rosh Hashanah and Chanukah.

Check out the new website at www.essexjewishnews.co.uk

Andrew puts his best foot forward in Loughton

BY **MICAELA BLITZ**

WHEN London went into lockdown last year, the usually bustling capital became a ghost town overnight. For podiatrist Andrew Gladstone, a member of the Essex Jewish community, this meant that all five of his City Chiropody & Podiatry practices based in Barbican, Canary Wharf, Bank, Fenchurch Street and South Kensington had to effectively shut down.

Even when restrictions lifted slightly in June, Andrew was still only able to treat emergency cases. What's more, with most people working from home meant his 'footfall' also decreased greatly.

After 30 years in the profession, he was concerned how he would be able to continue his business and began thinking about moving his practice out of the city to a more suburban area closer to home.

In July, Andrew opened a new branch of his practice in Loughton and with restrictions easing has managed to build up a new client base, as well as treat many of his regular clients who travel across London to see him.

Being in a more suburban area with more families, he has found that as well as adults, he has also started seeing more children. He is



happy to treat children of all ages for problems including verrucas and ingrowing toenails and every child is rewarded with a sticker.

As well as his new Loughton practice, where he is based three days a week, Andrew has retained one of his practices in the Barbican and is slowly starting to see patients as things begin to open up again.

Andrew realises that making such a significant change to his business during such uncertain times was a bit of a gamble, but he credits his wife, Natalie, with giving him the push he needed to make the move and "getting it right as always".

To contact Andrew, please visit his website www.citychiropody.co.uk.



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The Jewish MP shaping our children's futures

PAT LIDIKER TALKS TO ROBERT HALFON
MP, CHAIR OF THE COMMONS EDUCATION
SELECT COMMITTEE, ABOUT HIS WORK,
BATTLES AGAINST ANTISEMITISM AND THE
JOYS OF BEING AN ESSEX MAN

DURING the pandemic, Harlow MP Robert Halfon has been a regular fixture on news channels with up-to-date information on the ever-changing disruption within our education system.

As chair of the Commons Education Select Committee, he and colleagues work relentlessly on behalf of parents, teachers, children and all educational establishments.

When I asked whether he or Secretary of State for Education Gavin Williamson took ultimate responsibility, the answer was simple: "I'm the poacher and he's the game-keeper! What's happening now and in the future is a non-stop issue and we form an all-party, 11-strong committee elected to maintain stability and hold the Government to account."

The Jewish MP's interviews are Zoomed mainly from his home in Harlow, where he and his Brazilian-born wife have lived since he first stood for Parliament and where he has been shielding since last March.

"I am classed as clinically vulnerable with respiratory problems and osteoarthritis, having been born with a form of cerebral palsy," he explained. Indeed, it could well be the all too frequent operations and health problems interrupting his education at Highgate Public School which nurtured the dogged determination he retains today at 51. He

just refuses to give up!

He revealed: "I always had a passion for politics, decided I wanted to be an MP at the age of 10 and here I am!" En route to his goal he studied at Exeter University, worked as a writer and was a professional political researcher.

Since winning his Conservative seat, on his third attempt in 2010, he has rapidly risen through the ranks, serving in David Cameron's Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio and as Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party. He became George Osborne's Parliamentary Private Secretary and Theresa May's Minister of State for Skills at the Department for Education. After returning to the back benches, he became chair of the Education Select Committee in 2017.

His Jewish identity and support for Israel have always been a source of great pride, including a spell as political director of the Conservative Friends of Israel. Never afraid to speak his mind, he made an impassioned speech in Parliament in 2018 slamming the escalating surge of antisemitism. He stressed that we must ensure we have an educational system which teaches racial harmony and the positive history of the Jewish people to discourage all forms of antisemitism.

Like many high profile people from all walks of life, he gets his share of vilification

on social media, which he calls a "cesspit you can't do anything about". Some antisemites express hate for him for being Jewish and attending a private school. "But it's sometimes funny – one troll included a photo of the chapel at Highgate, so I took great pleasure in posting that's the only part I never went into!"

Although he grew up in north London, where he was barmitzvah, the MP says that Essex "has become our natural home". He adds: "We've never been happier. The people are the salt of the earth with no messing about and with their own values and quality of life."

Harlow's Reform Synagogue was consecrated in 1987 and with Chabad now active locally too, it's an indication of how the Jewish population continues to grow.

The town has a tranquil Holocaust Garden providing a special place to go, and another memorial is in the planning stages. That more Jewish families are moving out of London to this new but historic Essex town seems a trend likely to continue.

Covid has been a strain on Harlow, as well as the MP personally – including that he can't visit his Orthodox father in Israel.

He concluded our Zoom call by remarking: "The pandemic is terrible and so hard to believe."

"However terrible this is, I do see a light at the end of it because of the vaccine. It shows what can be done and may take a while but life will go on, even if not in the same way."



Robert Halfon with Prime Minister Boris Johnson before the pandemic

Loughton Shul comes Together for CST fundraiser

BY **SIMON ROTHSTEIN**

LOUGHTON & Chigwell District Synagogue raised almost £20,000 as part of the CST (Community Security Trust) 'Together we Protect' 48-hour fundraising campaign.

This is the first time that CST had held such a wide-reaching online fundraising event – which in total raised more than £4.1million.

The campaign took the place of the CST annual dinner, which usually has 1,000 people in attendance but had to be cancelled in both 2020 and 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The campaign – which was spread via the power of

personal networking and social media to spread the word – used 'Team Captains' to reach out to their contacts and ask them to donate, with a pledge that all donations up to £1million would be matched by generous donors.

Of the 390 teams, just over 50 were synagogues with Loughton & Chigwell District Synagogue finishing as the fifth highest donating shul.

Synagogue president Philip Leigh said: "I am extremely proud of our community. Although we may be small in numbers compared to many other synagogues, our members have very big hearts. When we asked them to donate to this incredibly worthwhile cause – that every Jew in the country benefits from in

some way – they really did us proud! My thanks to Deborah and Trevor Shulton for all of their work as our Team Captains."

The total raised by CST more than doubled the charity's initial target of £2million.

CST chair Gerald Ronson said: "The Together campaign is more than just a slogan. It is what we do, along with Jewish communities, the police and government. I have spent over 50 years leading and building this effort, so I am very proud to see that 7,000 people stepped forward in this way."

Chief executive Mark Gardner added: "CST reached out to our whole community for its help and the response was brilliant. We've raised

over £4.1 million and this will go a long way to help meet our annual expenditure.

"A lot of our volunteers, staff and trustees have commented on feeling very moved by what they have seen, both with the donations, but also especially with the messages of support that we received from so many people across the country. It has left us feeling highly motivated and with an even greater sense of partnership with all of our community."

Those taking part included TV's David Baddiel, Eamon Holmes, Rachel Riley and Tracy-Ann Oberman, as well as politicians Luciana Berger, Ruth Smeeth, Dame Louise Ellman and Dame Margaret Hodge MP.

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“We pride ourselves on offering a little bit extra”

THE **ESSEX JEWISH NEWS** TAKES A LOOK AT THE HOME CARE SERVICE PROVIDED BY **JEWISH CARE**

PEARL, aged 94, loves living in her family home in Redbridge.

As her family live in north west London, they wanted to make sure she was safe and looked after, so they brought in support from the Jewish Care Home Care Service in Redbridge.

Her son, Stan, explained: “Mum is 94 years old and, as she has got older, she has found things more physically challenging. Carers pop in four times a day to see mum. We are lucky to have Jewish Care and the secret is in the name – Care – as they really do.

“A while ago, mum was admitted to hospital and tested positive for Covid-19. We were so impressed that, without being asked, Jewish Care made sure everything was ready for her on her return.

“They put the heating on and food in the fridge. I have nothing but admiration for the carers, who do a really good job in very difficult circumstances.”

Carol Rowcliffe is the registered manager of the Home Care Services which runs across Essex, from Redbridge to Southend.



Pearl, 94, with carer Virgine Bosale from Jewish Care's Home Care service

Speaking to the *Essex Jewish News*, Carol said: “We pride ourselves on offering that little bit extra. We have a really happy team of carers, who feel like they are part of the Jewish Care family and will go out of their way to make sure everyone is cared for in the best possible way.

“One of the biggest fears people have is ‘who will look after me if I get Covid-19?’. I always reassure them that, whatever happens and whatever the weather, our team will be there

to support them.

“The carers are protected with full PPE, which they change each visit and take all necessary precautions to provide safe care. They are also tested once a week.”

The team of carers can help with everything from medication to meal preparation, and from shopping to light housework. They are highly trained and fully understand the Jewish way of life; plus they also bring fun social

activities into clients’ homes and enjoy a chat and getting to know the person they care for better.

Carol added: “Our primary concern is that we do our best to make life easier and better for all those we care for. If there is something someone needs, we will do our best to help; whether it is preparing for return home from hospital stays, doing the laundry or even popping down to Tesco to replace a broken air fryer.

“We will always help if we can. Our carers always fulfil their allotted time, and they will find little jobs to be helpful if they have spare time during a visit.”

Gloria Saville, who is 90 and receives regular home care, said: “I feel safe because they wear their full PPE and masks and I know they’ve been tested. It’s great that I have a rota every week, so I know who is coming in advance. I really feel like they are friends, and we have got to know each other so well over the years.”

Home Care runs 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, and is available to people who are paying for care themselves and to those who receive care funding.

For more information on Jewish Care's Home Care service across Essex, please call our Helpline on 020 8922 2222 or email helpline@jcare.org

Fiona leads Women’s Day appeal



Fiona Hulbert (left) and neighbour Stacey Gould with their collection

FIONA Hulbert of East London and Essex Liberal Synagogue (ELELS) led an International Women's Day appeal for local charity Bags of Kindness.

The group supports a number of women's refuges, which have seen a greater demand than ever during lockdown.

Fiona, who is married to

ELELS Rabbi Emeritus David Hulbert, said: “We were overwhelmed with very generous gifts of toiletries, cosmetics, bars of chocolate, treats and felt-tip pens for kids.”

Donations came from synagogue members, as well as the couple’s neighbours in Woodford Green.

Chabad aid for the needy

CHABAD has worked tirelessly over lockdown to meet the needs of all those who reached out to them – including providing food packages and Shabbat necessities, going shopping and arranging carers or phone calls from its rota of dedicated volunteers and professionals.

Rabbi Aryeh Sufrin MBE, executive director of Chabad North East London & Essex, said: “Over the Yamim Tovim and winter holidays, I am so

proud that our team and volunteers stepped up again to provide hot meals for many in the wider Essex area, even delivering as far as Clacton-on-Sea.

“Graham Nygate has been the linchpin behind the arrangements to source, pickup and distribute the incoming foods – working on this all week – and he certainly deserved the runner up award that he received this year for Redbridge Volunteer of the Year.”

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ESSEX JEWISH NEWS

Passover Greetings to the Community 5781/2021



22 Beehive Lane, Ilford, Essex, IG1 3RT

Rabbi Steven & Rebbetzen Siobhan Dansky,
Reverend Gary & Gillian Newman, the Executive Board
and Synagogue Advisory Council wish all their
members and the community
A Happy, Healthy and Kosher Pesach.

Please keep safe and be well.



**SUKKAT SHALOM
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1 Victory Road, Hermon Hill, Wanstead, E11 1UL

Rabbi Larry Becker and all of our
members wish you a happy and
healthy Passover (Pesach)

If you would like more information about
the synagogue please contact us on
Telephone: 020 8530 3345

(Answer phone, please leave a message)

Email: admin@sukkatshalom.me.uk

Website: www.sukkatshalom.org.uk

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Rabbi & Rebbetzen Singer,
The Honorary Officers,
Board of Management and
our Community send
greetings to all EIJN readers
for a Healthy and
Peaceful Pesach.

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**East London
and Essex
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Synagogue**

Rabbi Richard Jacobi and
Emeritus Rabbi David Hulbert,
the Honorary Officers and Council send
warm wishes to the community and all
readers of The Essex Jewish News for a
healthy and happy Pesach 5781

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administrator@elels.org.uk
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**WOODFORD FOREST
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**Rabbi & Rebbetzen Wollenberg,
the Honorary Officers &
Synagogue Council
wish all readers a
Happy & Kosher Pesach**

All welcome - for current information
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Southend and District Reform Synagogue
851 London Road
Westcliff-on-Sea
Essex SS0 9SZ
Telephone 01702 711663
www.southendreform.org.uk

The Executive and Council of Southend
and District Reform Synagogue,
together with Rabbi Warren Elf MBE,
warmly wish the community and all
readers a happy and healthy Pesach

Shabbat services are currently held online on
Friday nights at 6.30pm and
Saturday morning at 10.30am.
Details of how to join our services
(and our Communal Seder) can be obtained
from admin@southendreform.org.uk

New Essex Masorti Synagogue
wishes the community
a happy & healthy
Pesach 5781

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Board of Management
wish all readers a Happy Pesach.

Greetings from
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Rabbi Lee Sunderland,
the Honorary Officers and Congregation
wish everyone a
Healthy Kosher Pesach



Headteacher:
Mrs Margot Buller

Chairman of Governors:
Mrs Louise Dorling

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email: admin@cloretikva.redbridge.sch.uk
The governors, staff and pupils wish the
community a happy, peaceful
and safe Pesach



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Headteacher: Mrs L West
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office@ijpsonline.co.uk
www.ijpsonline.co.uk

The Governors, Staff and Students at both schools
wish the whole community a very happy Pesach

chabad
lubavitch centres
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wish all of our friends and supporters a
very happy and healthy Pesach

On behalf of Executive Directors:
Rabbi & Mrs Sufrin MBE
of **Chabad Gants Hill**

Rabbi & Mrs Brandman
of **Chabad Buckhurst Hill**

Rabbi & Mrs Posen
of **Chabad Epping**

Chabad also has an office in Westcliff-on-Sea

Gants Hill: www.chabadilford.co.uk

Buckhurst Hill: www.chabadonthehill.co.uk

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Rabbi Geoffrey & Rebbetzin Michelle Hyman along with the community of
Southend & Westcliff Hebrew Congregation
warmly wish the Community and all EJN Readers

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For more details, please see our website or call the Shul Office.

DEAR ZELDA

EJN's Agony
Aunt Zelda
answers another
reader's question

Dear Zelda,

My wife and I are in our late sixties and we have both had the first of our Covid vaccinations. Friends of ours own a villa in Portugal and have asked us to join them for two weeks in September.

The problem is that although the husband has been vaccinated, the wife resolutely refuses to have the jab.

Should we take up the offer of a holiday in their villa?

Jonathan



Rabbi Davis, Rabbi Goodwin, the Honorary Officers and Synagogue Council, together with its Pre-School Nursery, wish all readers of the Essex Jewish News a Happy and Healthy Pesach

Dear Jonathan,

There are lots of maybes here. Firstly, will the wife of your friend be allowed to travel abroad without having the vaccination? Unlikely. Secondly, if she were to be allowed to travel unvaccinated would you be happy sharing a villa with her? Probably not. Even if she does have the vaccination, will the Portuguese have had their vaccinations by September? Maybe. But if they haven't and the vaccine doesn't reduce transmissions enough, they might not let you in even if you have been jabbed.

That's a lot of maybes. Too many. We should know more in a month or two, but why not consider a holiday in the UK on your own when things become clearer.

Zelda



CHELMSFORD JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Council of Chelmsford Jewish Community wishes its members and Jewish people everywhere
a Happy Pesach

You are welcome to join our vibrant and friendly community at our weekly Friday evening services with a difference during Covid-19 restrictions

For details, Email: info@jewishcommunitychelmsford.co.uk
or phone 01245 475444



Chag Pesach Sameach!

As we continue in these unprecedented times, Rabbi Lisa Barrett, Council and staff of SWESRS wish the entire Jewish community a safe, healthy and happy Pesach.

Staying connected is more important than ever, and the spiritual support of community continues to play a significance role, especially for those living in physical isolation. But there's no need to feel alone! Join us online for our First Day Pesach Morning Service, Second Night Family Friendly Seder, and our Communal Seder. Join us too for our online Shabbat services, Musical services, learning, meditation and more.

You can find joining details and information about all our online activities on our website www.swesrs.org.uk. You can also contact us by email: admin@swesrs.org.uk or telephone: 020 8599 0936

PASSOVER THOUGHTS FROM OUR COMMUNAL LEADERS

BY **CHIEF RABBI EPHRAIM MIRVIS**
CHIEF RABBI OF THE
UNITED HEBREW
CONGREGATIONS OF
THE COMMONWEALTH

WHY, at every Seder, do we enthusiastically sing, “Ishana haba’ah biyrushalayim” – next year in Jerusalem?

Although we have made the same declaration every year, it has never come true – at least not in the messianic sense in which it is intended – so why not simply say “in the future, we will be in Jerusalem”?

Any study of Jewish history is a study of hope, often

despite apparently impossible odds. It is therefore fitting that the epic story of the inception of the Israelites as a nation, the Exodus from Egypt, stands among the greatest illustrations of optimism and forbearance of all time.

It was a truly extraordinary miracle. The chasm in status between the Egyptian overlords and the Hebrew slaves could hardly have been greater. The most sophisticated and powerful civilisation on the planet controlled and persecuted a tiny nation of slaves, who were denied every basic human dignity and any capacity for resistance.

What hope was there for salvation? On what basis could the people summon the strength to go on despite everything?

The answer is that they knew of the promise that Hashem had made to their ancestor, Abraham, that they would be strangers in a land where they would be oppressed and enslaved, but He would ultimately redeem them and they would return home to the Promised Land.

Despite everything, they chose hope over despair. They chose to believe that salvation would eventually come.

This places Pesach 5781 into valuable context for us.

This time last year, we were coming to terms with the fact that we could not celebrate Pesach with extended friends and family as we usually do. It was agonising for so many, particularly those who were vulnerable or lonely.

We took comfort in our belief that this was a ‘one-off’ and next year would be different. How then should we respond in the face of yet another Pesach when so many are separated from their loved ones, having not yet banished Coronavirus from our midst?

Let us approach this Pesach with the same degree of hope and optimism as ever. Real progress is being made and we are blessed by the extraordinary miracle that is the vaccine. Britain and Israel have led the world in administering its roll out and,

Be’ezrat Hashem, we will soon return to a more regular rhythm of life.

I am inspired by the beautiful words of Ehud Manor, the Israeli songwriter, who wrote his famous song ‘Bashana Haba’a’, at a time when the State of Israel seemed to be surviving from one war to the next: ‘Od tireh, od tireh, kama tov yihye, bashana haba’a’ – ‘You will see, you will see, how good it will be next year!’



BY **RABBI ARYEH SUFRIN MBE**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF CHABAD
LUBAVITCH NORTH
EAST LONDON AND
ESSEX

HERE we are facing our second Passover under lockdown conditions as we seek our pathway out of this pandemic.

I’m sure, like me, last year as the prospects of having a very different Passover, either alone or with one’s immediate family bubble, we expressed “this year we are slaves – next year we will be free”.

But alas, as the months progressed, we came to realise that all is not as we had hoped.

What were your plans for Passover? Were you going to visit family? Were you going to host



friends? Who would have thought that an invisible enemy, the coronavirus, would turn all of our plans upside down? With our very lives at stake, perhaps the last thing we are worried about is our Passover plans.

However, it’s still Passover. The clock does not stop ticking for the coronavirus and we have made amazing headway here in the UK, but we are not out of the woods yet!

However, we can create a meaningful Seder night. After all, if this is G-d’s Master plan, there is an opportunity here. If I let go of the disappointment and the loneliness, I’ll be open to the unique experiences and possibilities of this Passover.

Every holiday has a body and a soul. The body is the external dimension, our expectations of what the holiday should look like. The soul is the core of the holiday, the connection to G-d that we achieve through the unique practices of the holiday. So yes, the body of my Passover is

certainly less exciting or glamorous than usual. However, I’m almost forced to focus on the soul of the holiday, the part that doesn’t change under any circumstances.

So, my friends, there is no such thing as a ‘fake’ Passover Seder. The connection to G-d that we seek to reach is happening whether we’re at a large or a solo Seder.

Maybe on our own, we become even more focused on the fact that making the Seder and eating the matzah brings G-d tremendous pleasure and impacts our lives in a very positive way.

We will be at home for the Seder again this year. And even if we were planning to do the Seder at home anyway, this year the Seder may be more focused on our immediate family or just sitting alone with the memories of our loved ones. Don’t let the food be the focus, but rather the home and my own personal growth.

So this Passover, we can have a real Seder, a happy Seder, one that will bring healing to those who really need it, whilst helping us to reinvent ourselves.

May we merit to celebrate Passover this year in Jerusalem!

BY **RABBI CELIA SURGET** CHAIR OF
THE ASSEMBLY OF
REFORM RABBIS AND
CANTORS

THE story of Pesach is all about the delivery of the Children of Israel from slavery to freedom – the first step towards the promised land. As many participants at the Seder will experience, though, the story takes longer than they might have hoped for.

If anyone thought the deliverance would be simple, they were quickly proven wrong. Pharaoh is not keen to give up his useful workforce of Jewish slaves, ordering them to continue making their bricks without giving them the straw to do so.

Whilst eventually they would get their freedom, the path would be hard.

The path to our own freedom today has many echoes of our exodus story. Our scientists told us we too could be delivered – showing us the miraculous way in which the vaccines had been shown to give protection from COVID-

19. We rejoiced - the light at the end of the tunnel could be seen again.

We quickly realised there would be some more tough times to get through to reach that. Things would lockdown before they could open up. We would have to persevere once more.

At every stage, our communities have bought into the collective mission of our society – to look after one another and to minimise the damage this virus would cause to people around us by all making sacrifices. Every community in our Jewish



family has inspirational stories from the past year about how people have gone the extra mile to offer support. We have been physically distant, but in spirit closer than ever before. The synagogue doors have shut, but our hearts have opened.

At last year’s Seder, we will have hoped that next year even if we were not in Jerusalem, we may once again be living our lives as normal. That has not quite happened, but whilst we remain patient, we have gained hope.

Achieving freedom was a long road for the Israelites, as it is for us. When they got that freedom, their experience shaped their future – God commands them “you shall not wrong the stranger, for you too were strangers in the land of Egypt”.

Whilst we yearn for life to return for normal, let’s together commit now to remember the light this pandemic has shone on the flaws with normal – the inequalities, injustices and imperfections. Let’s use our freedoms, when we finally get them, to build a true promised land for our time.

BY **RABBI CHARLEY BAGINSKY** CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER
OF LIBERAL JUDAISM

WHENEVER one comes to writing a piece like this you look back at last year’s, checking that you say something different. Although the themes of Pesach may be universal, you want to at least make sure you take a different angle from one year to the next.

However, as I look back to last year’s article, it is impossible not to be struck by what a different place we are in now. As we completed our Seders with the words ‘Next Year in Jerusalem’, so many of us would not have begun to imagine that this would still be an impossibility a year on.



With the vaccines being rolled out quickly and effectively to many in our community it should be easy to find messages of hope this Pesach, that long awaited freedom may be just around the corner.

But I want us this Pesach to delve a little deeper into the meaning of freedom in this festive season. Although, this year I will not be alone in missing the company of my family at the Seder more deeply than ever, while too many people we know will be looking at the empty chairs of those who should be with them, we can also hope that things for many of us will be different soon.

So, I want us to remember

those for whom life will not be different, for whom Covid has emphasised the great themes of alienation, separateness, poverty and loneliness and that as we say “because we were slaves in Egypt” we remember our commitment to them is deeply ingrained in our own story.

I am always inspired by our East London and Essex Liberal Synagogue, and by many other Liberal communities around the UK, in the way that they are creative and dynamic in their continual aspiration to include and innovate.

As a Jewish community we have worked collaboratively and in partnership more than ever before.

As we come out of lockdown let us use the Pesach to remember that the story of the Exodus from Egypt was each one of our stories, just as each of us has a Covid story to tell and let us write the new chapter together – telling how the Jewish community came together to welcome the poor and the stranger in our cities and we didn’t let the new normal become the old normal.

BY **RABBI RONI TABICK** RABBI OF NEW
STOKE NEWINGTON
MASORTI SYNAGOGUE

WHEN I was singing “Next year in Jerusalem” at the end of last year’s Seder, I’m sure I wasn’t the only one who was really thinking: ‘Next year with my family’.

Sadly, it seems that another Pesach has arrived in which many of us will be physically on our own for seder, even if you have found a way to connect to others virtually.

While doing Seder with just your own household, or even by yourself, has been far from the norm across Jewish history, nevertheless Jewish tradition has something to teach us about how to make the most from this strange situation.

Maimonides writes, in his code of Jewish law the Mishneh Torah, that the primary purpose of Seder is to have conversations with the children who are present, inspiring them to ask questions. But, imagining a heterosexual patriarchal family unit, he says: “If he has no son, his

wife should ask the questions; if he has no wife, they should ask one another ‘why is this night different?’ ... if one is alone, he should ask himself ‘why is this night different?’”

Even if Seder this year is just you and your partner, even if it is just you by yourself, Maimonides tells us you are required to ask questions, to discuss the strangeness of Seder night with its odd customs, unique melodies and special foods.

Beyond that, this year will have its own strangeness, as we mark a year of living with Covid and feel all the many losses we’ve experienced in those long months.

What does it mean to do Seder when there is a

plague literally outside our doors? What does it mean to do Seder in families who have lost friends and loved ones? How can we feel free when life is so constricted?

The night of Seder is about facing up to the strangeness of our times, experiencing the discomfort of our lives, and wondering how we move on from it. Ask yourself - what would you like to come out of this era? How will you try to be a better person, and increase the goodness in the world?

Hopefully this year’s seder will look very different from the seders of our future, yet there is an opportunity here to tap into the experience of difference and strangeness that lies at the core of seder, and can inspire us to bring more freedom into the world.

Please God, next year we will be with our families and friends once again!



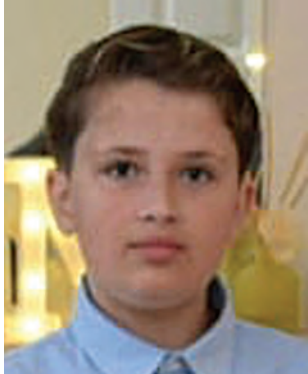
CELEBRATIONS

Barmitzvah boys celebrate despite lockdown

COMMUNITIES across Essex were able to celebrate simchas throughout the recent lockdown

with the shul swapped for the Zoom screen. The *Essex Jewish News* is pleased to include these

pictures from the families of the following barmitzvah boys. Mazel tov one and all.



Ben Stanley of Chigwell & Hainault Synagogue



Nathan Harvey of Chigwell & Hainault Synagogue
PHOTO: PAUL FOX PHOTOGRAPHY



Nathan Geist of Chigwell & Hainault Synagogue
PHOTO: LEVI SALTMAN PHOTOGRAPHY



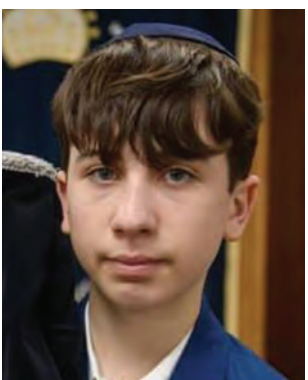
Jarred Jay of Chigwell & Hainault Synagogue
PHOTO: LEVI SALTMAN PHOTOGRAPHY



Harrison Nathan of Chigwell & Hainault Synagogue
PHOTO: KAREN ZETTER PHOTOGRAPHY



Daniel Gillary of Chigwell & Hainault Synagogue
PHOTO: PAUL FOX PHOTOGRAPHY



Rocco Green of Chabad Buckhurst Hill



Rafi Hambling from Ilford married Keryn Miller
PHOTO: PAUL LANG PHOTOGRAPHY

Vicki talks TV at ELELS

EAST London and Essex Liberal Synagogue (ELELS) member Vicki Delow gave a fascinating insight into her career in TV for an appreciative ELELS audience on Zoom.

From script editing for EastEnders, where she brought back Dirty Den, to producing Humans for Channel Four and Netflix hit The Last Kingdom, Vicki shared the ups and downs of life in TV.

She also revealed what it's like working with the stars and what's behind the persistence and doggedness that, alongside her talent, helped "an ordinary Jewish mum of two from



Essex" become a success in a notoriously tough industry.

Vicki is currently working on series two of World on

Fire for the BBC; and often gives talks for young people aspiring to break into TV production.

The Jewish entrepreneur who named Zoom

BY **MARK HARRIS**

SINCE the inception of government-imposed lockdowns worldwide – to counter the spread of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic – Zooming has been booming!

Millions of Zoom adherents around the globe, including its many thousands of aficionados within the circulation areas of the *Essex Jewish News*, have been making very significant usage of this perhaps most well-known of communications technologies.

The video-telephony and on-line services supplied, via its software programme, by Zoom Video Communications Incorporated – a company registered in the USA, with its headquarters in San Jose, California – have provided undoubted commercial, educational and social benefits in prevailing, isolationist 'stay at home' circumstances.

And it does seem somewhat serendipitous that the onset of this now variably mutating virus – with its sadly vast number of fatalities – currently sweeping the planet has coincided with the comparatively recent development of these epic technological advances.

Such post-modern, societal advantages have enabled people to remain connected; and whether for vital, necessary or helpful business meetings, conferences and seminars, instructional purposes, social interaction, webinars, talks and events, entertainment, exhibitions and otherwise.

Within our own Jewish communities – and when physical gatherings exceeding relatively small numbers are as impermissible as elsewhere – Zooming has been a virtual godsend. And, for sure, in those instances where, as examples, families have been able to come together, on screen, for joyous simchas or heart-breaking levoyas.

The CEO of Zoom, originally called SaaSbee, is Chinese-American Eric Yuan, who founded the organisation with hopeful aspirations in 2011.

By April 2020, and after the start of the pandemic, its daily users had risen, it's reported, to around 300 million! And Zoom – now a company – which joined the NASDAQ-100 stock index at the end of that month is worth very many billions of dollars.

How the name change from SaaSbee to Zoom came about is rather intriguing.

One of the first investors in SaaSbee – and then a board member – was the Jewish investor Dan Scheinman. He introduced his cousin Jim Scheinman, entrepreneur and founding managing-partner of Maven Ventures (a venture capital fund), to Eric Yuan. Jim soon became not only an investor in, but also an adviser to the innovative conception.

It was Jim Scheinman who suggested that the name be changed to Zoom. Remarkably, the tag was derived from a book that he'd been reading to his young children. It was titled Zoom City, written by author

and illustrator Thatcher Hurd and published by HarperCollins-Canada in 1998. Its promotional material stated that it was "for active toddlers exploring the world".

Jim – who is described as growing up in a "Reform-Conservative home" in Cedarhurst, Long Island – was reported as remarking that the book "conveyed the concepts of creativity, exploration, happiness and trust".

In the American Jewish publication Forward, it was reported that he'd observed: "Zoom has been a powerful way for the Jewish community to stay connected. Ask any rabbi in the US and around the world and they'll tell you how Zoom has been the lifesaver for their community."

Apart from his other Jewish projects, Jim Scheinman was stated to be doing work for the Anti-Defamation League, fundraising for HOPE (Hate Online Prevention and Elimination).

Eric Yuan is noted as having said of him: "Jim has been great to work with from the launch of Zoom; he gets along with everyone and is there to help on anything we need. His contacts in the business and venture community have been invaluable. And not only did he come up with the name Zoom, but he also helped us create our marketing strategy and language, go to market launch and PR strategy, and has introduced us to key consultants and employees..."

So – and as far as concerns Zoom – do we need to ask now: "What's in a name?"



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CAMBRIDGE DIET

MARK HARRIS



DURING the coronavirus 'lockdowns' I would take some of my regular exercise walks along and around a virtually deserted Cambridge's River Cam and its charming streets, lanes, crescents and other thoroughfares. And I would almost always discover something new to observe when, say, strolling past the architecturally handsome, if not magnificent and historic colleges which span the centuries of a world-renowned (and over 800-year-old) university.



which now afforded a particular attraction when fully closed. Such doors being aside from those many majestically ornate, principal entrances to the university's colleges and other edifices from way back in time.

However, I did wonder briefly how frequently visitors to the city would concentrate their attention on the other antique doors, possessing distinctive though rather more modest designs ... in con-



Generally, though sadly, in a picturesque riverside, partly hill-ringed and ancient town that's treasured – and never just by locals – not only for its beauty, buzz and ambience, I could readily perceive the pandemic's impact had resulted in very many doors (and even apart from those of the lovely old college buildings and their grounds) being securely closed.

But, of course, the doors of vast numbers of 'public' buildings across the UK had been shut for



trast to spotlighting the undeniably grander (and maybe more iconic) portals, such as those of the perhaps more widely known King's, Trinity and St John's Colleges.

A speedy, mid-trek spot of internet research on my smart phone confirmed a memory-thought emerging from the dark recesses of my mind. Apparently, some of the earliest 'doors' in world history were to be found in King Solomon's Temple. The Book of Kings, the ninth book of the Tanakh, informs us



the 'lockdown' periods in order to reduce possibly contagious, human interaction; and thus the spread of the potentially fatal, viral infection. As well the nation's Jewish communities appreciated with synagogues, community centres and care-homes inaccessible to those who, in 'normal' times, might've desired ingress for a variety of compelling reasons.

Somewhat, as I perambulated about Cambridge, my eyes then mind seemed to focus especially on numerous, often hundreds-of-years-old wooden doors,



that these doors were made of olive wood; and that they were embellished with a design of flowers in bloom, beaten-gold overlaid cherubim and palm trees.

A number of the primary 'doors' of Cambridge colleges are truly amazing – or, if I can so put it, 'Way Out!' – in their outstandingly glorious structures. Those other doors of, possibly regarded, lesser visual appeal – and which I felt bound, for the first time in over a decade in the city, to photograph en route – could be labelled with these post modern, and semantically apt words ... 'Way In'!



It can be said that 'doors' have a kind of symbolic meaning in Judaism. Mezuzahs on the door posts of our homes are reminders of such significance in our Jewish lives, and deriving from among the Israelites' final experiences in ancient Egypt ... darkness and light, perhaps, these days.

The letters of the mezuzah parchment's word "Shaddai" (Almighty) are considered to represent "Shomer d'latot Yisrael" ... 'Guardians of the



doors of Israel'. And on, say, Shabbat, one might reach out to the mezuzah posted on a public entrance door in this city ... that of the several decades-old Cambridge Synagogue; and when it wasn't required to be closed for services during Covid-19 'lockdowns'.

In this Jewish context, the earliest reference to a 'door' appears to be in Genesis, chapter 4, verse 7. The Almighty tells Cain: "... if thou doest not right, sin coucheth at the door." And the Old Testament states, in Exodus and Deuteronomy, that a "door"

can be a symbol of slavery or freedom. We're now approaching Pesach, and the 'door' figures notably within traditional Seder service ritual.



So, in the lead up to Passover and with the hope that the full light of erstwhile 'normality' will arrive in the not too far distant future – so as to give us the spiritual joy of "Next Year in Jerusalem." – I thought *EJN* readers might like to reflect on the images of centuries-old, Cambridge doors ... doors – like those of our faith – that have survived and will continue to endure, opening up to allow ingress to their internal illumination.



Let's adore a door!



Winter scene of King's Parade, with King's College on the right of the picture



This door is at one of the newest of public edifices in Cambridge. It's a side portal of the Storeys Way Field Centre, a cultural hub in the University's recent, attractively designed and proximate development (for academic staff, post-grads and local professionals), situated in a picturesque – former

Romano-British – landscape (with a gorgeous lake and other features). But it's intriguing to observe – set into that architecturally prize-winning, post modern building – a 'door' that harks back nostalgically to the numerous antique portals of Cambridge colleges etc, and just some of which grace this page.

CJRA marks 80 years

THIS year is the 80th anniversary of The Cambridge Jewish Residents' Association, which was founded in 1940/41 and welcomed also the then increasing number of Jewish wartime evacuees and refugees arriving in the city.

The CJRA – which in its earlier days arranged religious facilities, too (long now afforded by an Orthodox and also a Reform community) – provides social, cultural and educational activities, as well as a welfare aspect and a Chevrah Kadishah (Burial Society) for its members in the Cambridge area; whatever their Jewish religious affiliation. It also produces a thrice-yearly magazine for its members.

The CJRA's long-standing chairperson, Lady Marilyn Fersht, has said that the Association "has been successful in finding a niche for itself as an umbrella group for all Jews in Cambridge" and that "this is something we should be proud to celebrate".

Unfortunately, in the prevailing pandemic circumstances, it may well not be possible for the Association to celebrate its 80th year in quite the same way as previous landmark anniversaries. But undoubtedly – and maybe somewhat in the context of this page's main feature – the CJRA will continue actively to keep an open 'door' for current and prospective members.

POSTCARDS FROM SOUTHEND

A ROUND-UP OF STORIES AND NEWS FROM OUR SEASIDE COMMUNITY.

Shining a light on the Holocaust

BY **GEOFFREY PEPPER**

HUNDREDS of people from all around the world viewed the Southend Holocaust Memorial Day Online Service of Commemoration.

Taking a different format to the regular annual ceremony, due to the pandemic, Southend Borough Council still organised a very fitting event, to remember the Holocaust and other genocides that have caused so much suffering. The theme for 2021 was: "Be the light in the darkness".

Rabbi Geoffrey Hyman of Southend and Westcliff Hebrew Congregation spoke at the event. He reflected on how we remember, with great sadness, those darkest days on Earth when human hearts turned to stone because of hatred and when the victims cried for help, no-one listened. However, he also spoke about those who, in the midst of that horrific darkness, displayed real humanity, fought against hatred and saved many lives.

Rabbi Hyman recounted that in Yad Vashem, in Israel, there is a database containing names of these heroes who saved Jewish lives. They are called 'The Righteous Among the Nations'. Nearly 28,000 names are recorded of these extraordinary individuals.

Rabbi Hyman remembered a special moment that came when he attended a rabbinic conference nine years ago in Warsaw. On the last day of the conference, ten Polish people assembled on the stage to be

presented with the Yad Vashem Award.

Rabbi Warren Elf of the Southend and District Reform Synagogue also spoke, and introduced Susan Bermange, a second generation Holocaust speaker. Rabbi Elf said Susan spoke at schools and other institutions nationwide and that both her parents were Holocaust survivors.

Addressing the viewers, Susan spoke about the life of her father Bob Obuchowski. He was born in Ozorkow, Poland. He spent three years in the Lodz Ghetto, was transported to the camps at Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Rhemsdorf and finally survived a death march to Theresienstadt, where he was liberated.

Bob was one of 'The Boys' who were brought over to the UK in 1945. He started his new life in Windermere. In his words, he went "from hell to paradise". Susan recounted in detail Bob's suffering in the camps, including surviving meningitis, despite going without medication and no doctor being available. His tattoo number was B.7650 and Susan told how miraculously, 60 years later, Bob's bank card came through the post with the same pin number.

Bob's first breakfast at Windermere was toast and marmalade. Later in life, he had toast and marmalade every day for breakfast, and again every evening while watching TV. Bob is survived by his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Concluding the event,



The Mayor of Southend Cllr John Lamb spoke movingly on HMD

Mayor of Southend Councillor John Lamb said: "One of the things this pandemic should bring home to a lot of people is the numbers that can die from a virus around the world.

"The Holocaust caused the death of a great many millions more than the pandemic and yet people still deny it happened. We must never forget and should forcefully rebuff the denial of these events occurring."

The Mayor thanked all members of the Holocaust Remembrance Working Day party and specifically thanked, by name, all the speakers and their contributions.

In line with Government Guidance, there was no public event this year for the annual tree-planting for Holocaust Memorial Day, but a tree was planted on Marine Parade in Leigh-on-Sea.

era, he had to decline as it involved working on Shabbat.

In 1971, he met his wife Toni and proposed after just 10 days of courting. He needed to make a living and he was advised to try wedding and portrait photography. In 1972, he put an advert in a shop window in Stamford Hill, as a result of which work snowballed. During the ensuing 20 years he received many awards and accolades and gained a reputation which preceded him.

Out of the blue, he got a phone call from the press secretary for the Queen and was asked if he would like to attend Buckingham Palace for an interview, as there was a vacant position for the Official Investiture Photographer.

Following the interview with a panel of five, he was proud and overwhelmed to be offered the position, especially after having explained to them that he did not work on the Sabbath. Apparently, the Royal policy is that no Investiture takes place on any Holy Day of any religion.

Charles assembled a team to work with him and, over a

period of 20 years, he photographed 43,000 recipients and their families. He photographed the Queen and other well-known dignitaries, including those who were members of the Order of the Garter. Charles's photographic portrait of the Queen is imprinted on Canada's twenty-dollar bill. It is the most reprinted bill in Canadian history.

As Prince Philip told him: "It was a delight to be photographed by you. I usually get fed up but, with you, that was not the case."

Working together to say thank you

SOUTHEND and Westcliff Hebrew Congregation and Southend and District Reform Synagogue have been working together during lockdown to collect and give treats to the doctors, nurses and staff of Southend University Hospital's ICU and Covid wards. A lovely way to say thank you to those who are the lifeblood of our NHS.

It's all in the genes

BY **MARILYN SALT**



SEVENTY people from across the Southend Jewish community listened to Anne Marcus (pictured) tell her absorbing story of how she got involved in Jewish genealogy.

Anne became interested when she asked where her grandparents came from, and found out three were from Lithuania with only her mother's mother born in Israel.

It was an absorbing talk with many riveting stories shared, as well as advice for people who wanted to trace their own family roots.

Anne is the organiser of the Southend Branch of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, and she serves on the committee of the London branch who have an extensive library. Anne helps in the archives with hundreds of family trees and lists synagogues from all over the world.

She told how most European countries have genealogical departments where ancestors can be traced, with the Yad Vashem database, parent's marriage certificates, early 20th Century shipping lines and the Jewish Military Museum also mentioned as good sources of ancestry information.

A holiday Mitzvah



Stephen Salt with some of the SWHC donations

SERIAL fundraiser Stephen Salt initiated a festive Mitzvah Day food drive for One Love Soup Kitchen, which provided food to the homeless and vul-

nerable during the holidays. The Southend and Westcliff Hebrew Congregation responded with gusto and more than 12 crates were donated.

Blessed are the pets

BY **MARK ROYSTON**

SOUTHEND and District Reform Synagogue has continued to be very active in recent months – linking online with Liverpool Reform Synagogue for Shabbat and other religious services.

The two communities have also teamed up to offer a wide range of support, study and social activities, including fun quizzes and weekly coffee chats. Celebrations via Zoom are planned for Pesach.

One highlight was a spe-

cial pets' service, led by Rabbi Warren Elf, with members of both synagogues taking part, with their various pets by their sides.

It was heart warming to hear everyone's pets receiving blessings. Shul members introduced their cats, dogs, birds and even an elusive hamster on screen, with anecdotes, funny stories and tips shared.

It was acknowledged that pets can enrich our lives greatly, and have provided invaluable companionship and emotional comfort during lockdown.

Zoom chat puts members in the picture

BY **GEOFFREY PEPPER**

CONTINUING the live streaming success at Southend & Westcliff Hebrew Congregation, more than 60 Zoomers from the UK and Israel were entertained by Charles Green, who is acknowledged as being one of the leading portrait photographers in the world.

Charles spoke about being the official Investiture Photographer to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and his journey to Buckingham Palace.

Coming from an Orthodox family, Charles told how from the age of five he had always wanted to be a filmmaker, it was his passion and he excelled in it. This arose when his mother, who was an expert in repairing silk stockings, left him at the cinema every Sunday watching cartoons whilst she made the deliveries.

He was accepted by the London Film School in Covent Garden. He later had the opportunity for a position at the BBC and although, following the interview, he was offered a job behind the cam-



When dad could no longer live alone Jewish Care was there

Joseph, care home resident with his daughter, Daniella

As someone who was so dedicated to his community, dad wanted to be cared for by people who understood and respected him and everything he believed in. He has now happily lived at one of Jewish Care's care homes for over three years.

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JEWISH CARE

A salute to our community volunteers



Sid Green



June Bradbury



Ivor Perl

LOCAL PERSONALITIES LISTED IN TRIBUTES

BY **MANNY ROBINSON**

LOCAL Essex community workers have been singled out in a tribute to the over 80s who have helped shape the Jewish community. One hundred and twenty people were recognised in the tribute run by the *Jewish News* in conjunction with Jewish Care.

The list includes husband and wife Leon and Rita Newmark, who are volunteers at Jewish Care's Redbridge Jewish Community Centre. For more than a decade, the pair have delivered Meals on Wheels to some of the most vulnerable people within the community.

Rita, 86, formerly volunteered in the Meals on Wheels office and won Jewish Care's Unsung Hero award in 2012. Both are also heavily involved in Ilford Federation Synagogue, with Leon, 81, formerly serving as chairman for 11 years, and is now financial representative.

Nettie Keen, 86, has been a volunteer and fund-raiser for the Redbridge Jewish Community Centre for nearly half a century. She has volunteered there since 1972, and where she is a day centre co-ordinator and hairdresser. Nettie, who lost her husband and then her son Saul when he was just 40,

has raised more than £50,000 for RJCC and St Francis Hospice.

Sid Green, 89, founded the Chaps That Chat group at RJCC and has seen it grow to more than 80 members, with regular meetings still taking place over Zoom during the pandemic. Sid also arranges trips for group members, including a visit to the House of Commons. He also calls every member each month to check on their health.

June Bradbury of East London and Essex Liberal Synagogue (ELELS) has done incredible work around inclusion. She co-founded the ELELS Shabbat Shelanu services – designed to be accessible and sensitive to a variety of needs – and helped to organise the first ever women-led service at ELELS to mark the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage.

She was also praised by the paper for her incredible work during the pandemic, including helping to create a 'Covid-19 Phone Tree' to assist vulnerable members of the community.

The list also included Holocaust survivor Ivor Perl, a former Redbridge resident, who has dedicated his life to educating the next generation about the horrors of the Holocaust and the experiences he went through.

Born in Hungary, Ivor was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau at the age of 12, before being forcibly moved to Allach and Dachau concentration camps, where he was finally liberated by the Americans.

Last year, he returned to Auschwitz for the first time with his daughter to join the March Of The Living. He returned to Auschwitz in 2015 to



Leon and Rita Newmark



Leslie Kleinman

be a witness in the trial of Oskar Grönig, the 'bookkeeper of Auschwitz'. Ivor was awarded the British Empire Medal in the same year for services to Holocaust education.

Leslie Kleinman, 91, a member of the Holocaust Survivors' Centre, has also been named in the list. Five years ago he led a tour of Auschwitz for a group from Redbridge Jewish Community Centre and in 2018 took a group of grandchildren of Holocaust survivors to Poland sharing his testimony with them over a two day stay.



Nettie Keen

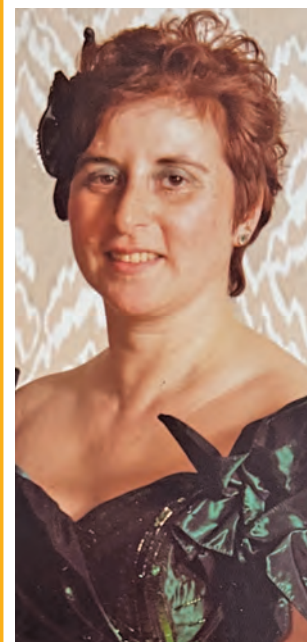
Leslie, who was born in Romania, survived, among others, Auschwitz and Flossenbürg concentration camps, as well as two death marches, before being liberated by American troops.

Working with JRoots and the Holocaust Educational Trust he now dedicates his time to educating students and enabling them to see history first-hand by displaying the tattoo on his arm from Auschwitz. He was awarded the British Empire Medal in 2017 for services to Holocaust education.

Education stalwart at two synagogues

MILLICENT NEWMAN

Born: 4 December 1947
Died: 24 February 2021



MILLICENT NEWMAN – who died following a tragic accident from which she never regained consciousness – was one of the outstanding members of both the Loughton and Chigwell synagogues.

After her marriage to Michael in 1972, the couple moved from Manchester to London setting up home first in Snaresbrook and then Loughton where they worked with the Loughton Synagogue's fund-raising group.

A qualified teacher, she focused her teaching into pre-school education and initially set up summer schemes at Loughton Synagogue, subsequently helping the Chigwell & Hainault Synagogue nursery to grow, eventually becoming its head teacher.

In 1989, Loughton Synagogue asked her to open a nursery and again it developed into a thriving group. Millicent was a key member of the Loughton Synagogue Ladies Guild and provided great support to her husband as he carried out extensive shul activities. She loved entertaining and was known for holding large family gatherings with a particular focus on the second day of Rosh Hashanah and Seder nights.

Millicent is survived by her husband Michael, sons Alex and Simeon and four grandchildren, Abe, Zach, Coby and Lola.

Three Faiths evening

RABBI Ayreh Sufrin, MBE, of Chabad Gants Hill and Dr Mohammed Fahim of South Woodford Mosque spoke on 'How Our Faith & Communities – Jewish and Muslim- Have Kept Us Going' at a Zoom meeting of the Three Faiths Forum. The other speaker was the Rt Revd. Peter Hill, Bishop of Barking on 'How The Church of England Kept Going Through The Pandemic'.

Timothy is a real marathon man

BY **ALFRED LEVY**

IN December, a remarkable young man called Timothy Knott, who lives in Clayhall and who was a very active member of the Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade for many years, completed 12 months of extreme physical challenges to raise funds and awareness for mental health organisations.

His aims were to provide money for a local counselling service to enable them to offer pro bono assistance and therapy; and to raise funds for the mental health support organisations, MIND and ELECT, vital services which raise awareness and provoke thought about the

overall stigma of mental health.

To achieve his goal, this immensely charity-minded and dedicated 26-year-old undertook and overcame 12 monthly, arduous 'challenges'.

In January last year he ran the Gloucester Marathon of 42km (26 miles) and in February the 68km (55 miles) St Peters Way Marathon in Essex. Then, in March, and as the world changed and the challenges needed to be adapted to comply with Covid-19 safety protocols, he cycled a 1km looped circuit for a measured 120km (75 miles).

April saw him mimicking the Offas Dyke 'Sea to Summit' challenge by running 51km (31 miles) in laps around his garden, climbing a ladder repeatedly to simulate the required elevation; and then in May he took to the water, attempting a 10km (6 miles) swim but having to retire with a groin injury after completing 9km.

The next three months saw him demonstrating his trail-running and mountaineering skills; in June, a 40km (25 miles) run

involving a 2,153 metre climb in the Yorkshire Three Peaks challenge; in July, a similar trail run of 29km (18 miles) in sweltering conditions in Wales to 2,864 metres; and then, in August, the National Three Peaks Challenge of 37km (23 miles) up to 3,400 metres.

He returned to Wales in September for the Offa's Dyke 'Sea to Summit' ultramarathon, this time in reality, to achieve a 51km (31 miles) trek to the 2,388 metre peak.

In the last three months of 2020, he ran the Fortitude Ultramarathon 68km (42 miles) in October. He took a trip to Greece in November to tackle the original Athens to Marathon run of 42km (26 miles); and finally, in December, he ran perhaps the most demanding course of the year, which saw him almost collapse, from Hampton Court Palace to the Thames Barrier, a distance of 61km (38 miles)!

All of this – nearly 400 miles of effort and determination – was accomplished, sometimes accompanied, sometimes

not, in the face of Covid-19 restrictions and at no little cost to his own health and well-being.

He may not have raised the same kind of money as the late Captain Tom, or achieved the same status, but Timothy Knott deserves an enormous vote of thanks from the organisations which have benefitted from his tireless energy and mind-blowing dedication.

So far, thanks to the money raised, the services mentioned will be able to offer a year's worth of pro-bono counselling to those who need it most.

Speaking to the *Essex Jewish News*, Tim said: "The year is about so much more than tackling obscure challenges. It is to show that no matter what comes your way, you can find a path to navigate life and the battles with which you may be confronted. Anyone can take on something and achieve incredible things, and I hope I have shown that almost anything is possible."

"My three main aims for the year were to raise awareness and funds for mental health issues, to encourage people to



Timothy Knott

spend time outside and for us all to exercise in whatever way we can. Those three things will help us all to lead happier, healthier lives."

OBITUARIES

A man who lived life to the full

PETER BENSCHER

Born: 16 October 1927
Died: 23 January 2021

THE passing of East London and Essex Liberal Synagogue (ELELS) life president Peter Benschler was met by a unanimous sadness at the death of a good and kind gentleman, writes *Rabbi Richard Jacobi*.

Peter and his wife Betty, who died in July 2016, were stalwarts of Woodford Liberal Synagogue, which later became ELELS. They were among the people who preceded the purchase and development of our building in Marlborough Road and who stayed with the community through thick and thin. Their marriage and their relationship with our synagogue were both 'til death do us part'.

A few weeks before Betty's death, they were honoured by Liberal Judaism at the flagship Biennial Weekend event. They received the Chair's Award for their commitment to our synagogue and the wider movement, with their award fittingly presented by son Simon, who was Liberal Judaism chair at the time.

As publicans and as the owners of City Hardware, Peter

and Betty were among that rare breed of couples who could successfully live and work together. I only knew them in their last decade and a half and they were still progressive, still loving, still complementary to each other in their approach to life – definitely more Abraham and Sarah or Yin and Yang than Bonnie and Clyde.

Peter's passing, after that of his co-president Joe Swinburne in August 2017, signals to all of



Peter Benschler ... synagogue stalwart

us that while life continues, each person's life must end.

When a life has exceeded 90 years, we can be grateful that it was a long and good one, and I know Peter's family were relieved that he passed away peacefully.

It is now up to all of us to pick up the baton from our predecessors and to do as we know they would wish us to. We will keep progressively building our Liberal Jewish community so that it is welcoming of all, and adds to the quality of life of everyone who joins us.

We carry the memories of our elders forward with us, and especially at this time of Peter Benschler, whose memory is indeed a blessing to all who knew him.

We wish Paul, Simon and all the family a long life, filled with happy memories of a loving and good man.

One of the most influential people at Sinclair House

DEREK BERG

Born: 22 January 1943
Died: 7 January 2021

DEREK BERG, who passed away following a fall at his home, was one of the most influential people in the development of the Redbridge Jewish Community Centre, writes *Manny Robinson*.

Derek led the Centre in a lay capacity from 1973 until 1985, chairing the Board of Management when the Centre was known as the Redbridge Jewish Youth and Community Centre, and at a time when the Jewish community in Redbridge was arguably at its most vibrant.

Along with the professional staff, Derek oversaw the establishment of the partnership with the Redbridge Jewish Day Centre and the ongoing development of the youth programmes; and he was instrumental in bringing the first community shaliach (emissary), Shaul Amir, to Redbridge more than 40 years ago.

The work of the shaliach became an integral part of Jewish life in Redbridge, and brought the community – particularly youngsters – closer to Israel.

Derek also chaired the Outlook Committee, continually raising funds for the Centre that operated independently at that time; with their best known event



Derek Berg ... brought the first community shaliach to Redbridge

being the community-wide annual Donkey Derby in Valentines Park, where special guests included the likes of Bruce Forsyth and Des O'Connor.

He ran a well-known photographic business in the 1970s, Crescent Cameras, which was prominently situated on the Gants Hill roundabout; before eventually becoming a financial advisor and car salesman.

Derek and his wife Jackie

were married on 12 April 1964, living first in Clayhall, then in Redbridge, before moving elsewhere within the community neighbourhood. Jackie, who was also involved in community life, was the first editor of *The Bridge*, the forerunner of the *Essex Jewish News*.

He is survived by Jackie and children Simon, Antony, Rob and Vicky, and 10 grandchildren.

Love affair with his synagogue

RONNIE MOSS

Born: 28 March 1929
Died: 21 April 2020

RONNIE MOSS, who passed away last year, was known to members of the old Ilford United Synagogue as the long-serving financial representative who fought hard to keep the membership fees as low as he could, writes *Kenneth Black*.

Together with his wife Joan, to whom he was married for 55 years, he took great delight in shul affairs and life, but there was a lot more to Ronnie's life than many realise.

From February 1947 until October 1949, he served in the RAF in Singapore and regularly attended reunions in the UK, Singapore and Burma.

He worked with Joan on the local JNF committees, first at Forest Gate and then Ilford, and his children remember going door to door in Forest Gate to collect the famous Blue Boxes; but he also worked with the National JNF Committee.

For many years, he and Joan were active members of the committee producing the synagogue's annual Dinner and Ball and the brochure, and also organised boxing events among other things. As well as FR for Beehive Lane, he was also JNF

National Treasurer for many years.

Ronnie worked on the Mountbatten Forest in Israel for the JNF; and on a trip there, Joan became friendly with Lady Edwina Mountbatten. In later years, Ronnie would go to Israel with his close friend, the late Leon Schaller OBE.

Ronnie's actual employment was as an accountant, at one time with Rediffusion, with its interests in television. In fact, when Sunday Night at the London Palladium had American

stars, he would have to take cash to the theatre to pay them. He also found time to be a primary school governor in Wanstead.

Ronnie was involved with one of the London wards, and one year helped to organise the Lord Mayor's Show. He was made a Freeman of the City of London in 2011; although not having any sheep, he never exercised his right to drive his flock over London Bridge.

Ronnie and Joan leave a son Antony, daughter Melanie, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

This obituary has been printed in the current magazine of Cranbrook United Synagogue and is published in the EJN with their permission.



Ronnie Moss ... a tireless worker for many organisations



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TRAVEL

MARK
HARRIS

THE HEADLINE is intended (partially) as a kind of contemporary and indicative description of your 'Travel' columnist's feelings, or possibly withdrawal symptoms, regarding his melancholy inability to journey overseas (as he'd specifically projected) because of rules imposed (justifiably) by the UK and other countries after the dreadful Covid-19 pandemic began, a year ago, to force 'lock-downs' with safeguarding quarantines and other restrictions.

Unfortunately – as we approach Pesach with the sadly continuing, and maybe increasing perils of a mutating virus (and despite availability, largely since last January, of hopefully effective and non-harming vaccination) – we can't expect our forthcoming Seder nights, attendance-wise, to be materially different to those experienced last Passover. Let's hope that, in the

venues; but also to happily join in celebratory, communal gatherings whilst munching traditional hamantaschen (and much else besides), going more than a tipple over-the-top with our alcohol intake and perhaps while enjoying some musical or other entertainment ... all neither entirely nor satisfyingly achievable (at the least, atmospherically speaking) on 'Zoom'!



So for this Pesach *EJN's* 'Travel' page, I resolved to write about Purim festivals that I've spent with Jewish communities abroad, concentrating for now on two of five wonderful experiences across the last decade. They fell deliberately, but not entirely, within various extended sojourns in Eastern Europe, occurring in the city of Lodz, Poland; Bratislava, the capital of

ating' the town in 1945.

Around a decade back, after seeing a photo (in the 'Yad Vashem' archives) of Jewish children in customary fancy dress during a Lodz Ghetto Purim, I decided that year to devote time for the festival with many of the 500 or so (some 300 'affiliated') Jews in this intriguing city. I explored its content in depth, and especially from a Jewish viewpoint (including, of course, the vast old Jewish cemetery).

Just a stone's throw from what had been the southern boundary of the wartime ghetto stood the Jewish Community Centre. The building housed a large synagogue room – where I davened on Shabbat beside 16 men, and with a handful of women, congregants – and also offices, a guesthouse (I stayed in a character-full, city hotel) and kosher (dairy) Cafe Tuwim. I can still taste (well, almost) the restaurant's yummy 'carp in jelly' with built-in rozinkes and carrots!



Ultra-orthodox Rabbi Simcha Keller had revitalised the community during his then 15 years as its spiritual leader. On Purim night – garbed in a long, shiny black coat and a classic streimel – he read the Megillah for 50 attendees including, rather poignantly for me, some children



■ Purim gathering in Bratislava

in fancy dress. Following this first recitation, the men danced joyfully around the bimah. And afterwards, everyone repaired to the professionally-run cafe for a delicious supper (plus hamantaschen, of course).

Rabbi Keller sat at the head of a long table, and led some hearty Purim zemirot. The vodka and slivovitz shots flowed quite generously! Late evening – when no more than 10 of us remained in the dining room – Rabbi Keller produced a musical instrument and displayed his remarkable talent as a flautist. Accompanied by two men (of the now closely gathered company) on small drums, the minister played and sang soulful, klezmer-style tunes (as his smallish, surrounding audience hummed in accompaniment) until the wee small hours.

A couple of years later, during a wider stay in Slovakia, I spent a week or so in Bratislava.



■ Bratislava's Synagogue

The city, with its charmingly quaint old town, straddles the River Danube; and it was once home (when German 'Pressburg') to a great halachic authority: Frankfurt-born Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Shrieber), the famed 'Chatam Sofer'. I visited his gravesite and memorial stone, then sited in a kind of subterranean burial chamber near the river.

My almost 10 days in the

capital's (relatively few) shul-goers, the Hebrew School and Kindergarten, the Ohel David Nursing Home, as well as community members at a grand Purim 'affair' on the Sunday.



Shabbat lunch had followed the regular morning 'minyan' in the beis hamedrash at the sizeable, downtown, 1926-built and gorgeously neo-art-deco-styled Heydukova Street Synagogue (a 15-minute walk from or to Chabad House). The superbly constructed house of worship is the sole survivor – after WW2, and the subsequent, lengthy period of communist rule – of Bratislava's former magnificent shuls (though it's now used pri-

marily for the much better attended High Holydays services). There were 15 men in the prayer room; but only one woman sat behind its mechitzah.

Twelve men attended the first Megillah reading there that evening; and eight males arrived for the second recital the following morning. Yet no less than 160 or so members of the community (plus yours truly) turned up for the lovely Purim event at a hired 'Hall of Culture' venue on the Sunday afternoon. Its festive theme was "Purim in the Shtetl"; and numerous adults (including Rebbetzen Chanie) with their



■ Rabbi Baruch Myers (right) Rebbetzen Chana Myers (left)

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a Yamaha keyboard. There were also fancy dress competitions with prizes, and a tombola.

Really scrumptious, and extensive, buffet refreshments were then laid out for everyone on long tables in an adjacent, expansive hall. To whet your appetites, I'll now list (in Slovak) the tempting menu spread. And I'm sure that you'll have little or no trouble in identifying the variety of 'Yiddishe' food on offer ... bulkelach, gefilte fish, cimes, cholepces (plene kapustne listy), loksen kugel, zemiakove knises, kompot, hamantasen.



■ Rabbi Simcha Keller

near future and like our Israelite brethren escaping slavery in ancient Egypt, we'll achieve our own freedom (from a deadly predicament) to be safe and secure voyagers in foreign parts again.

In ruminating about this situation, at the start of 2021, I was aware that the festival of Purim – when we read Megillah Esther and commemorate another survival, of our Jewish ancestors from the then virus of anti-semitism in ancient Persia – would also fall quite early this year (late February). But I was downhearted to reflect that ongoing, adverse circumstances likely, would prevent our 'normal' Jewish community get-togethers ...

And not only to jeer Haman's name in shuls or other

Slovakia; Italy's Trieste on the Adriatic's northern shore; and Baltic Latvia's and Lithuania's capital cities, Riga and Vilnius.



If my maternal great-grandparents hadn't presciently departed Lodz (to migrate to England) in the 1870s, probably I wouldn't have been around to write this feature! Within days of Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939, the city was overrun and occupied. Many beautiful synagogues were destroyed, and its nearly 250,000 Jews then herded into the Lodz Ghetto. Most inmates perished in Chelmno and Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps. Broken ghetto-survivors vaguely witnessed the Soviet army 'liber-

In a 'manna' of speaking ...

As we approach Pesach this year, our annual thoughts will begin to focus again on the unique narrative and rituals of the iconic Haggadah; and on reading about the Children of Israel's Exodus from ancient Egypt after their hundreds of years of slavery under the ruling Pharaohs, building – amongst other labours – the treasure cities of Pithom and Ramses, and suffering the persistent and onerous burden thrust upon them by harsh taskmasters.

And as the hundreds of thousands of fleeing slaves – terrified men, women and children – stood, miraculously, with their leader Moses on the far bank of the Red Sea watching, incredulously, as Pharaoh's pursuing chariot army drowned in the now deep and enveloping waters, they may've realised that their lives had changed suddenly, and even dramatically ... but in a way that, undoubtedly, they had yet to absorb and take fully on board.



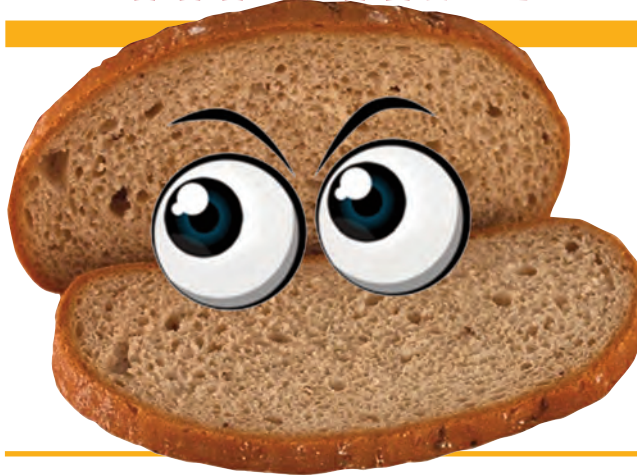
Pondering this mass physical upheaval and cerebral perplexity – if not riveting confusion – at that relatively early stage in the Exodus, Watcher believes there are some arguable though, naturally, not totally identical parallels with the current coronavirus pandemic which descended, out of the blue last year, on planet Earth. But our Rye-based 'observer' does appre-

and enduring sense of 'normality' had now been transformed fundamentally, as the Israelites and their leaders entered the 'wilderness' and needed vitally to create a novel 'normality' and to defend themselves against the then largely unknown elements that could afflict, or maybe even terminate, their lives. And with a fresh set of rules, regulations and guidance governing their challenging 'new' world. Just as we today have been somewhat compelled, thinks Watcher, to adjust our lives and routines to an unprecedented, worryingly unfamiliar and potentially fatal and ubiquitously mutating Covid-19 situation; one strikingly different to our erstwhile 'reality'.



But little did the Moses-led, escapee Israelites know that they would be wandering in the wilderness – subject to many vicious peaks of attack to be borne en route – for some 40 years, before reaching the 'Promised Land'. Hopefully, the Covid-19 'wilderness' will not endure – with Mankind seeking earnestly to rid itself of its disastrous effects – for such an overly extensive period. Though Watcher is aware also that, say, the aggravating 'flu' virus has persisted (and in a variety of formats) for very many decades; and that being the case, despite the availability of vaccination ... in the UK alone, more than 11,000 sufferers sadly pass

WATCHER IN THE RYE



Watcher feels, the not too well fed and possibly largely unemployed, former slave-labourer Israelites soon began to 'murmur' against their leaders – and that certainly rings a current, socio-political bell – in the wilderness. And very many even pined for their albeit dreadful existence as former slaves in Egypt, when and where they could've (more or less) eaten regularly in (what might've been for them) a roughly and habitually bearable kind of 'comfort zone'.

And so the Almighty caused 'Manna' ("like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey") to fall from heaven, building up banks of food – or, today perhaps, 'food banks' – in

which seem to be hell-bent on contravening necessary regulations – imposed by governments, around the world, to prevent the spread of a killer virus – by, for example, closely associating in large numbers (and, sadly, not excluding such instances within particular Jewish communities). And especially in cities or regions that had been placed in the highest level of infection danger.



The ancient Israelites, too, became so uncaringly wayward in their oft considered intolerable wilderness conditions that – whilst Moses stood on the summit of Mount Sinai receiving the 'Tablets of the Law' from the Almighty – they caused to be erected, then worshipped, a 'golden calf'! It took time for them to be injected acceptingly, and effectively, against adversely encroaching developments; and a potentially hazardous expansion, of their wilfully 'contra' attitudes to dealing with the wilderness state of affairs.

As we sit down shortly to the – again necessarily, but unhappily, depleted attendance – Seders in our homes (and traditionally thinking as if we ourselves were experiencing the Exodus from an-

cient Egypt), Watcher would hope and pray that, in the not too distant future, our leaders' frequently promoted 'light at the end of the tunnel' – or, maybe aptly interpreted as the 'promised land' of our own former societal 'normality' – will be effectively attained ...

Next year in Jerusalem!

WATCHER IN THE RYE



ANY READERS HAVING COMMENTS ON THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THIS ARTICLE SHOULD EMAIL THEM TO THE ESSEX JEWISH NEWS (SEE PAGE 2)



Next year in Jerusalem



ciate the distinct possibility of readers' bafflement in that suggested connection.

Although the Israelites had long sustained, and suffered miserably, from the ruthless and severe effects of their centuries of slavery in Egypt, the lives they lived in the land of the Nile had been, nonetheless, their continuous 'normality'. Generation had followed generation; and, across numerous decades, the Israelites had learned – and had, indeed, needed compellingly to learn – how to cope with, and manage their own less than idyllic lives and circumstances ... including in terms of shelter, food, clothing, care and welfare, as well as social interaction.

But that albeit prolonged

away each year.

Watcher has a few specific examples in mind where there may be, let's say, 'theoretical similarities' between the Israelites in their post 'Egyptian normality' wilderness and us in our present day, post 'societal normality' wilderness. The coronavirus has caused so many hundreds of thousands of job losses that, unfortunately, huge numbers of resultantly impoverished families need now to rely on 'food banks' to feed themselves adequately, whilst they hunger still for a return to pre-Covid 'normality' and full employment ... and, perhaps, despite their lives not having been so perfect even then.

Maybe comparably,

the wilderness so as to sate the Israelite wanderers' consumption requirements.



But the Israelites – as, indeed, a sort of nomadic society now; though having a clear objective ahead of their sojourn in the wilderness, and on their journey across it – became (possibly unsurprisingly as a referenced 'stiff-necked' people) fairly restless, perchance to say the least. And so it happened that they failed to abide by the 'rules'. Just like, Watcher considers, the resistant and inconsiderate, recalcitrant and anti-'lockdown' protesting elements in today's unsettling environment. And

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A solitary seder – home alone again!

AS I write this column, it looks very much as if we are going to have another lockdown Passover again this year. The frenzy of preparation for Pesach is still the same, but the lack of family and friends to share it with is difficult for us all.

If the rules have changed by the time you are reading this – well so much the better! If not, then I have tried to find recipes that are suitable for 2-4 people having a much more personal Seder at home alone. Any leftovers can be frozen or used again for another meal during the week.

We still want our Seder to be special despite the lack of guests and, therefore preparing a celebratory meal is still something we can aim for this year.

Wishing you all a Chag Pesach Sameach – be well and stay safe, and pray for better times next year.

CHICKEN WITH A BALSAMIC HERB CRUST

This dish is best marinated overnight – but you could do it in the morning then cook it later in the day. There is usually some sort of Kosher for Pesach mustard available at this time of year,

but if you can't find it don't worry. Just leave it out. It's easier to measure fresh herbs into cups rather than try to juggle tablespoons of leaves!

*1 chicken cut into 8 pieces
¼ cup each of fresh basil leaves, fresh parsley, fresh rosemary, fresh thyme
2 fl oz balsamic vinegar
2 fl oz olive oil – or vegetable will do
2 tbsp tomato puree
2 tbsp mustard – see above
Salt and pepper
Lemon slices to decorate*

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mk 4.

Fix the metal blade to the food processor then into the bowl place all the fresh herbs, along with the oil and vinegar, the tomato puree and the mustard if using. Whizz it all together until it forms a coarse green paste. Dry the chicken pieces well on some kitchen paper then use a pastry brush or the back of a spoon to coat all the chicken pieces completely on all sides.

Place the pieces in an oven-proof dish so they fit in one layer. Cover with foil or cling film and refrigerate for at least four hours or overnight. Allow the dish to

COOKING FOR YOMTOV

SHELLEY POSNER



come to room temperature before removing the cover and baking in the oven for around 1 – 1½ hours until the chicken is cooked through and piping hot.

Serve straight from the dish with a squeeze of lemon juice over the top and extra lemon to decorate.

LEEK AND POTATO KUGEL

This is a small deviation away from the basic potato kugel. The addition of leeks makes it lighter and it has crispy edges with a soft centre. You can make it for a milk meal with the addition of a grated cheese topping – this is a parev version which goes with any meat dish.

*2-3 large baking potatoes
1 onion
2 medium leeks – well washed
2 tbsp olive oil*

*1 tsp dried thyme – or use fresh if you can
1 egg
2 tbsp medium matza meal
Salt and pepper*

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas Mk 4.

Use a lightly oiled oblong 'oven to table' dish.

Peel the potatoes and then grate them coarsely – you can use the processor, which is easier than doing it by hand with a box grater. Tip the mixture into a sieve over the sink and press down hard to remove the moisture. Leave to drain and then blot with some kitchen paper.

Peel and slice the onion into thin rings. Trim the leeks and make sure there's no grit between the leaves. Cut them into 5mm slices. Heat the oil in a large pan over a medium heat and sauté the onions and leeks for around 10 minutes until they begin to soften.

Season well with salt and pepper and sprinkle over the thyme.

Transfer the grated potato to a large mixing bowl. Tip in the leek and onion mixture then add the well beaten egg and the matza meal. Give everything a good stir to combine.

Pour the mixture into the prepared dish and smooth level. Bake for 60-70 minutes until golden and crispy on the top. Cut into squares and serve hot. Any leftovers can be frozen and reheated when required.

PEACH AND ALMOND CAKE

This is a moist, delicious cake that melts in your mouth. It's fresh and fruity and best served warm with some double cream.

*175gr unsalted butter softened – or good quality margarine
175gr caster sugar
175gr ground almonds
3 eggs separated
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 large ripe peaches – halved and the stone removed
Icing sugar to decorate*

Preheat the oven to 150°C (130°C if using a fan oven) 300°F/Gas Mk 2.

Use a 9inch round tin or a 2lb loaf tin well greased or lined with baking parchment.

Make sure the butter is at room temperature and well softened. With an electric mixer or hand beater, cream together the butter and sugar until it's light and fluffy. Add the ground almonds and beat until they are well incorporated. Then drop in the egg yolks and the vanilla extract, mixing in well. In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites until stiff peaks are formed.

Then, with a large metal spoon, carefully fold them into the almond mixture, taking care to retain as much air as possible. Spoon the mixture gently into the prepared tin. Arrange the peach halves on top, rounded side up.

Bake for 30 minutes, then turn the heat up to 180°C / 160°C fan/350°F/Gas Mk 4 and bake for another 25-35 minutes or until the top is golden and the peach is soft. Insert a skewer in the centre to see if it's ready – it should come out clean.

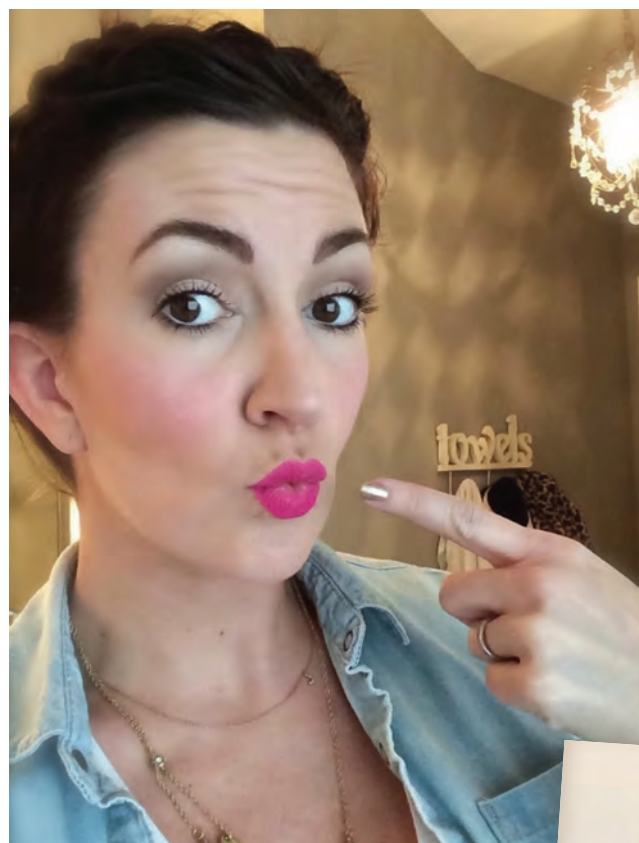
If the top is browning before the cake is cooked, cover with a piece of tin foil. Remove from the oven and cool on a rack. Wrap well in tin foil when completely cold. Dust with icing sugar before serving.

BEAUTY

PAT LIDIKER



A TSUNAMI OF PINK!



THERE is a new buzz word to welcome the tsunami of pink swamping the beauty counters and websites this spring – SCHIAP!

Do you, like me, remember your very first shocking pink lipstick? Forget the countless shades of pink before and since – nothing was as hot as this.

But don't worry if you missed it first time round, it's back again in time for us to emerge like butterflies from behind our masks!

Fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli first came up with the colour in 1937, dubbing it "bright, impossible, impudent,

becoming, life-giving, like all the light, birds and fish in the world put together." A bit OTT maybe but, hey, who would argue?

Her original lipstick and nail lacquer have long since vanished but the colour has been revived by other brands for spring 2021, not just for lips and nails but even hair highlights, too. Leader of the pack is Nars, whose Schiap lipstick (around £22) is a fuchsia pink that's semi-matte but creamy, too.

Let's face it, we've all had a hideous year scarred by so much illness, loss, sadness, deprivation and the pain of en-

forced isolation from loved ones. So anything re-introducing a splash of brightness, glamour and fun when we need it most is to be celebrated.

After the war years it was all about Max Factor's ruby, cherry, scarlet and magenta, but pink has always been a much kinder colour for all age groups and skin tones.

It's little wonder that lipstick sales are soaring but of course, we'll still have to wear masks for some time. So look for long-lasting ones like M.A.C powder kiss liquid or Revlon crayons; or instead, simply dust your favourite gloss with powder to help it

stay put.

It has been so easy to neglect basic skincare when we never go anywhere or see friends or family, so now's the time to banish winter damage in readiness for more relaxed rules allowing us to be together again.

In the old days we were all urged to cleanse, tone and moisturise or risk dire consequences.

But now it's a whole new ball game with clever products combining oils, serum, exfoliator, retinol, vitamins, minerals, sunscreen and more.

Our skin is in dire need of some TLC after too much time indoors, the endless grey, cold, damp days when we did venture out, plus constant irritation caused by mask wearing.

Boots now have a brilliant dual-action cleansing water in their No 7 Protect and Perfect range, which removes make-up and impurities while exfoliating at the same time. They've also added an advanced retinol concentrate to actively kick-start surface skin renewal and target visible signs of ageing while you sleep. Before you start the day, their Vitamin C serum, with its lightweight gel and citrus aroma, works on reducing unevenness and illuminates the skin.

Now for your new spring look when, as al-

ways, less is more; but creating the illusion takes time, care and patience till you get it just right. Finding your ideal foundation depends on whether you prefer a full or light coverage, a matte, velvet or dewy effect, cool or warmer tones or simply the easiest to apply that will stay put all day.

The choice can be overwhelming, but the aim is to create a flawless finish to act as a canvas for your new spring colours; make sure to have a good set of brushes on hand for even application.

Now you have your shocking pink lipstick, go for a blusher – sheer powder, stick or cream – in similar tones but more subtle for a healthy, natural glow.

For eyes, though, the more dramatic the better, with brows more shaped and slimmer than last winter's Joan Crawford look, and using a grey or brown pencil rather than black.

Shape and emphasise eyes with black mascara, then outline upper and lower rims with glide-on, moody khol before sweeping on navy, smoke, violet, or charcoal shadows for stunning effect.

The entire spectrum available is stunning but perhaps to save the orange, buttercup, lime, sky blue or shimmering gold or silver sparkles for those long-awaited summer hols.

Sadly, as last Pesach, we won't be allowed to sit round a crowded Seder table with all our nearest and dearest – but, hopefully, this colourful new spring look will help raise our spirits as we look forward to better times ahead.



TRANSITIONING TO “NORMAL” FASHION

JAN SHURE

CO-FOUNDER OF
www.SoSensational.co.uk
THE FASHION SITE FOR WOMEN OF 50 PLUS



THE arrival of Passover is not just a time to think about a surgical-standard house clean, but time to think about a new spring wardrobe.

But by spring '21, after over a year mainly spent wearing some combo of jeans/track-pants-plus jumper/sweatshirt, what to buy is more of a challenge.

The key spring trends include spots; prints; pink; decorative blouses; denim; shackets; wide-leg trousers; twinsets; monochrome; oversized boyfriend shirts (indeed oversized anything); and leisure (sweatshirts, sweatpants and hoodies).

But when deciding what to buy, being offered a list of trends is not enough. We don't need a list of trends but a list of transitional trends.

Normally, in fashion parlance, 'transitional' relates to the seasons. But at this point in the pandemic 'transitional' can relate to pieces that will work for the end (fingers crossed) of lockdown in early spring and still work for, ahem, 'normal' life in late-spring and summer.

Shackets

The shacket is a perfect transitional trend. After hover-

ing on the fringes for several seasons, this shirt-jacket cross seems set for a real moment, possibly due to an ability to look pulled together yet not too formal. Among the best are Isabel Marant's herringbone tweed (£395) and structural linen by Raey (£395), both at Matches. Zara has them in checks and plains priced from £19.99, while River Island has them in checks, plains, denim and textural Chanel-inspired tweed from £30.

Twinsets

The twinset – that is, the 2021 twinset – is another perfect transitional trend. Comprising a cardigan plus matching top (most often in 2021, a cami/vest), a twinset is perfect right now (cardi on) for a Zoom business meeting or to attend synagogue virtually. And it'll be useful later, for an

actual business meeting/to attend synagogue in person. And given the UK's unpredictable climate (and the possibility of not being able to fly to the sun), it could also be a great holiday piece.

Rick Owens has paired a longline, sleeveless cowl-neck sweater (£335) with a matching ribbed cardi with waterfall hem (£535) for an uber stylish twinset (from Matches), while Zara and River Island have lots of cardi-cami combos, including at Zara, a jacquard knit in a hot-pink mix (cami, £17.99; cardi, £29.99), and a cream cable-knit (cami, £19.99, matching cardi, £29.99). At River Island there are lots, including a blue-white houndstooth (cardi, £45; cami, £26); a cropped version in pink checks (cardi, £40; cami, £24) and a grey cami and cardi set (£44).

Puff-sleeves

The trend for decorative embellishment is another excellent 'transitional' trend as it not only injects a super feminine vibe, but also because the decorative focus is above the waist (it's mainly puff-sleeves and oversized decorative collars), it is perfect for now and later.

The puffy-sleeve aesthetic is exquisitely executed by

Zimmermann, Shrimps, Rixo and Diane von Furstenberg. They all offer covetable dresses and blouses featuring puffy sleeves (AKA balloon sleeves) that graze the elbow or finish at the wrist. M&S has balloon-sleeve blouses from £25, River Island has a mid-length silky-knit cardi with balloon-sleeve (£55), while Zara offers balloon-sleeve sweatshirts (£17.99).

As well as looking perfectly directional when real events get going, the 1980s reboot of blouses with oversized collars and pussy-bows will work for virtual ones in the meantime. Among the prettiest are a white broderie by Rejina Pyo (£335 at Harvey Nichols); floral print with frill-trimmed collar by Rixo, £140 (Rixo.co.uk); striped cotton with puffy long sleeves, £36, River Island; and lots at Shrimps (shrimps.com), including a green floral (£295), red half-sleeve (£250) and leopard print (£250).

Some of the best pussy-bow neck blouses include a cream silk-satin by Roksanda (£895, at Matches); 'Moss' in various florals by Rixo (£185); tartan print silk chiffon by YSL (£1,140); hot pink satin with half sleeves by Diane Von Furstenberg (£300), and floral print by Boutique Moschino (£220), all at Harvey Nichols.

Prints

Prints, such as florals and placement prints, are 'transitional' by virtue of all-round perfection. The Aussie sisters, who design the Zimmermann label, create exquisite dresses in midi and mini lengths in spectacularly pretty prints, including a midi dress with three-quarter puff-sleeves in a mix of prints (£725, Zimmermannwear.com). Zara has a selection of midi and mini shirt-dresses and wrap dresses in various prints, mostly at £49.99. Erdem, who in the noughties did the most to elevate print, is one of the many brands offering covetable print dresses. His new season offerings include a sublime half-sleeve midi dress in a navy placement-print (£695 at Harvey Nichols). Beautiful new season print pieces at Boden include the 'Kitty' midi shirt dress (£120); 'Delilah', a wrap midi dress in a bold placement print (£98) and 'Livia' (£120), a circular midi skirt crafted in a vintage-inspired pastel print with a sweet 1950s vibe.

While not especially 'transitional,' monochrome spots will offer an instant wardrobe update as well as looking good on Zoom. Some of the best include a puff-sleeve polka-dot monochrome midi dress by

Zimmermann (£575, Matches); the 'Rowan' midi shirt dress in bold monochrome spots (£110, Boden) and a monochrome spot linen shift, £27.50 at M&S.

Sweatshirts & Hoodies

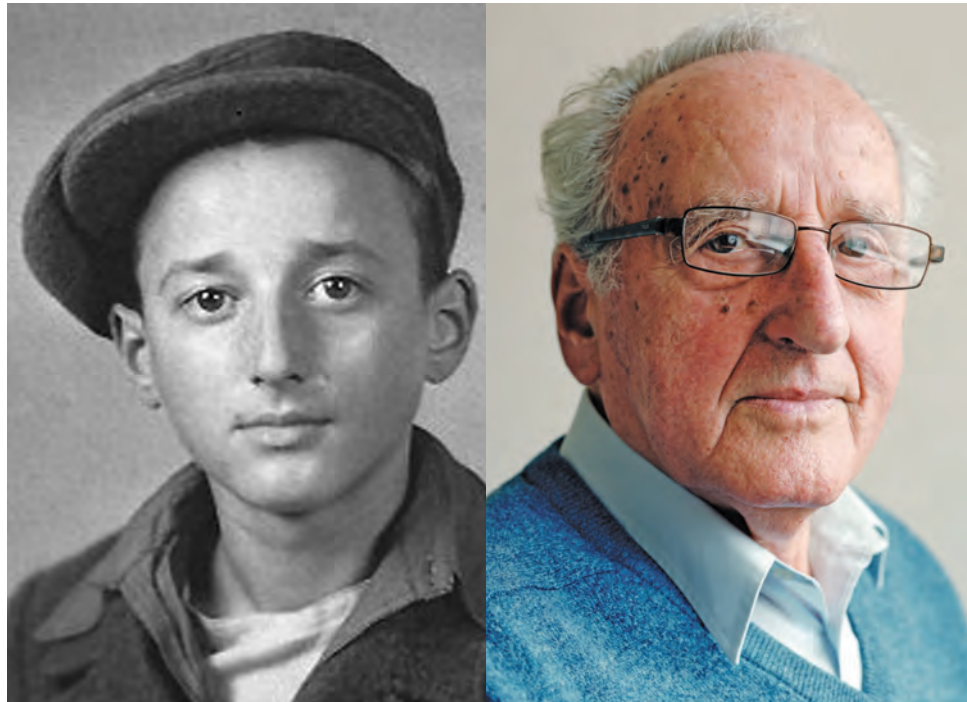
Sweatshirts and hoodies are perhaps the definitive 'transitional' trend. A sweatshirt or hoodie in a gorgeous spring shade will not only give your wardrobe an instant boost but possibly your mood, too. Some of the best include a lipstick-pink cropped sweatshirt from Rotate Sunday (£120); a coral sweatshirt from Kenzo (£185); and a purple hoodie by 7 Days Active (£145) all at Harvey Nichols.

M&S has them in an entire paint box of pastels, brights and neutrals; cropped, long and overlong, and both with and without slogans/logos, mostly at £20 to £29.50. Zara has lots, too, of course, including a sweatshirt that plays into the decorative trend (light blue with oversize cutwork collar, £19.99); and a cropped design with elbow-length puff sleeves (£11.99). The 'Ellen' hoodie (£60, Boden) has a leaner, more drapey silhouette and a V-neckline.

1. Gingham blouse with puffy sleeves, £28, from a selection at Next, Next.co.uk
2. Print skirt, £120 and collared jumper, £80, both Boden.
3. Floral-print blouse with versize collar, £140, Rixo (Rixo.co.uk).
4. Cream twinset, cardi £29.99, and matching cami, £19.99, both Zara.
5. Spot blouse with pussybow tie neckline, £60 Boden.



60 second shmooze with ... Ivor Perl BEM



Left: Ivor Perl as a child (courtesy of the Holocaust Memorial Trust). Right: Ivor as he is now

IVOR PERL is a Holocaust survivor who has dedicated much of his life to sharing his experiences in order to educate others. He was born in Mako, Hungary, in 1932; and after the war he came to the UK, settling in Essex in the 1950s and remaining here until very recently.

Ivor has just celebrated his 89th birthday, and **Micaela Blitz** caught up with him to chat about his life after the Holocaust and why he feels it is so important to continue to tell his story.

You were only 12 years old when you were taken to Auschwitz with your family, and sadly only you and your brother survived. What was the bond like between the two of you after that?

We came from a very close religious family, there were 11 of us, including my parents. My brother, Alec, was two and a half years older than me and I think that without him I would not have survived. The rest of my family did not make it, and I often used to think about why we managed to. Throughout our lives, we remained close and used to do a lot together.

He sadly died around 15 years ago, and at his funeral it felt like I was burying not just him, but my whole family, as I had never had a chance to say goodbye to them.

What was it like for you when you came to the UK in 1945?

After our liberation, we decided that we were going to walk back to our village in Hungary to see if any of our family had survived. We didn't know where we were going, but just started walking. We met some other survivors, who told us that the Red Cross at the camp were helping people to find their family. We stayed at the displaced person's camp awaiting information, only to

be told that, unfortunately, none of our family had survived, so we realised that there was no reason to go home.

When a rabbi at the camp said that we should just leave as soon as possible, we took the first train out and which was heading to England. We were sent to Southampton along with around 300 others, and 430 ended up in Windermere.

In total, 732 children were brought to the UK by the Central British Fund, a forerunner of Jewish Care. We thought we had arrived in heaven as it was so different to what we had been used to. It was quite overwhelming at first, but gradually we got used to it and realised that we were safe.

I always remember being taught two things when I first came to England, to always say sorry and to always accept a cup of tea – I have used both of these lessons throughout my life!

When did you first move to Essex, and how long did you live there?

After Southampton, we ended up moving to Manchester as there was more of a Jewish community there. I moved around many different areas of England before ending up in Essex, with my wife Rhoda.

We came to the area because her brother had moved to Wanstead, and it seemed like a nice area. We ended up in Redbridge, and later Buckhurst Hill. I lived in the area for many decades and was involved with Jewish Care and the Redbridge Jewish Community Centre.

Many survivors have found it difficult to speak about their experiences, even to family and friends. What made you first start telling people about your story?

For more than 50 years, I

tried to forget about my past. I was on the board of management for Redbridge Jewish Community Centre and we were organising a VE Day commemoration event. A friend of mine, who was a survivor, was due to speak about his experiences but, unfortunately, he had to cancel at short notice and there was no time to find anyone else, so I agreed to step in.

I spent many disturbed nights beforehand, thinking about all my memories and what I would say. When the day came, I said a few words about my experiences. After the service, many of my friends said that they did not realise what I had gone through and hearing my personal experiences meant so much to them.

It made me realise that I couldn't keep this to myself any more, and that it was an important part of our heritage and history that needed to be shared.

As a result of your work in Holocaust education, you were awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) in 2015. What did it feel like to be recognised in this way?

I remember receiving the letter, informing me that I had been nominated for this honour, at a very difficult time in my life. My darling wife had developed dementia and it was hard for both of us, and I felt very low.

Receiving the news at that time was a very overwhelming experience and gave me hope at a very sad time. I have never found out who it was that nominated me but it was a great honour to be given this kind of recognition for what I do, and I am very grateful.

You were a witness at Oskar Gröning's trial (The Book-keeper of Auschwitz). How was that experience for you?

Oskar Gröning was the last person to be tried for war crimes, and I was invited to attend the trial to give evidence. When I saw him in front of me, he was an old man with a walker being looked after by two nurses, rather than the young man in his SS uniform I remembered, and it was difficult to believe this was the same man.

I was given the opportunity to address him directly. It was an emotional feeling being face-to-face with such a man, but I wanted to tell him that I had lost too much sleep because of Nazis like him.

In 2018, you took part in the March of the Living and visited Auschwitz. What was it like being back there?

I had not been back to Auschwitz at all since the war ended, as I did not feel I wanted to visit, but when I was asked to take part in the 70th anniversary of deportation of Hungarian Jews, I thought that it could be an interesting experience.

Surprisingly, I found it a very cathartic trip and it helped me to confront my fears and what had happened. I didn't feel hate, I just felt camaraderie with the many other people that I was with, which I think is much stronger. Being part of 10,000 to 12,000 people marching through the camps is a very powerful experience.

Sculptor Frances Spelman has sculpted your face. How did that come about, and what was it like when you saw the final piece? Where is it now?

When Frances Spelman created the sculpture, she did it in front of a live audience, which was an interesting experience. The sculpture is now at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Nottingham, but I have a small reproduction at home.

For me, it was not about having a sculpture of me, but it is something that will be there for future generations even after I am gone, and if it makes them ask questions about me, my life and my story, then that is a great thing.

Why do you think it is so important to continue to share the stories of the Holocaust?

I believe that it is important to keep sharing my experiences so that it will hopefully bring about change and educate people. Even if just one person learns from it, then to me that makes it worth doing.

I always say that the Holocaust didn't start in World War II, it had been going on for a thousand years before and, throughout that time, anti-semitism in one form or another had always been there. It is important never to forget, to ensure that it can never ever happen again.

ASK THE RABBI

Should we be proud or ashamed of the ten plagues?

RABBI STEVEN DANSKY OF CRANBROOK UNITED SYNAGOGUE GIVE AN ORTHODOX RESPONSE TO A COMMON PESACH QUESTION

ONE cannot go through the Seder without talking about the ten plagues. Ten different and very creative ways in which the Egyptians in general and Pharaoh especially were punished for not letting the Israelites go from being slaves.

The Egyptians were smitten by their river, the Nile, which turned into blood so that they could not drink. Myriads of frogs jumped into their houses. Lice crawled in their hair. Pestilence killed their animals. Wild animals terrorised them. Boils caused them much pain. Their crops were decimated by torrents of hail, followed by countless locusts who ate anything that was left. Darkness alienated them from their friends, and finally all the firstborn were killed.

Should we be proud or ashamed of these plagues?

The main purpose of the plagues was to ensure that Pharaoh set the Israelites free. Pharaoh was given ample time and opportunity to change his mind. He was warned many times that if he didn't acknowledge G-d's might, he would be afflicted with these plagues. Pharaoh could have stopped all of these plagues with four simple words: "Let the Israelites go". His refusal to do so caused the devastation and ruination of Egypt.

However, what about the common man and woman on the street? They had no control over the Israelites. Why should they suffer because of the arrogance and stubborn nature of their leader? They didn't enslave the Israelites. Innocent people were hurt, maimed, starved and many died. This doesn't seem to be something to be proud of. The UN would call it a humanitarian crisis, and perhaps it was. It is clear that we need to take a closer look at the story.

Before several of the plagues, G-d instructed Moses to give Pharaoh a warning. This was to be done in the morning when Pharaoh went to bathe in the River Nile. Why should Moses meet him there specifically? The most natural place to meet the king was in his palace.

The sage Nachmanidies (1194-1270) explains as follows: "The king would go out to bathe and enjoy the water of the Nile, and when he did, all of his people would follow him out to the river. Moses warned Pharaoh at the river specifically so that the people would also hear the warning, so that they would cry out to their leader to stop acting in this evil manner".

Nachmanidies is explaining something very fundamental here. The Egyptian people, men and women alike, all

knew what was about to happen. They knew and did nothing. They should have taken a stand against Pharaoh. They should not have been bystanders to Pharaoh's arrogance and evil. They should have stood up against such malevolence as holding an entire nation against their will, making them into slaves and removing their civil rights.

It is irrelevant that the average Egyptian did not hold a position of power or authority. They had a moral duty to stand up against slavery, cruelty and injustice. The Egyptians suffered during the plagues to teach us a lesson for all time - not standing up for the rights of the oppressed is as bad as being the perpetrators of that evil. Edmund Burke (1729-1797) stated: "the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing".

Furthermore, the plagues are there to show just how abhorrent the idea of slavery is. The very idea that one nation or group can believe that their freedom and basic human rights are greater than another race is an abomination to G-d, and runs counter to the basic core of monotheism that all mankind is equal in His eyes. So abhorrent is it that G-d must make a stand, and this is what the Almighty does for the Jewish people, by sending the 10 plagues against the Egyptians. It is the first time in recorded history that a people's right to be free is promoted.

In a barbaric ancient world, which believed that might gave them the right to subjugate others to their will, we see G-d standing up and declaring that this behaviour is unacceptable and must stop.

This act by G-d created the blueprint of equality, and proved a strong model for the future abolishment of slavery and serfdom in Europe and the United States; and then to racial inequality, a fight which continues to this very day in Xinjiang, China. Muslims continue to be arbitrarily detained on the basis of their identity, while others are subjected to forced labour, mass surveillance, and political indoctrination. We need to take a stand against such inequalities, and learn from the ten plagues how despicable such actions are in G-d's eyes, and how we must take a stand against such oppression.

I therefore think that we have so very much to be proud about these ten plagues. They are the archetype of the fight against oppression, and they teach us the importance of standing up against evil that still continues in our world.

It's wicked to call the wicked son ... wicked!

DURING Seder nights, a long time ago, I became a little miffed at always becoming the wicked son as our family read, in turn, portions from the Haggadah. Even if I changed chairs, I still seemed to get the part.

But as I asked the question "what does this worship mean to you?", I often wondered was it really so wicked? Is it that different from the question asked by the youngest at the table: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" I am classed as wicked, yet the youngest gets a pat on the back for saying the Mah Nishtanah so eloquently.

But, in my view, people who ask a question about Jewish custom and religion deserve an answer, not a slap in the face. I am not saying, for one moment, that anyone seeking to enhance their Jewish knowledge is rebuffed: far from it. There are any number of synagogues in this area who offer excellent programmes, including question and answer sessions to enhance the religious knowledge of anyone.

Rabbonim have always gone out of their way to bring that flickering spark of Judaism back into a person's life, no matter how small the flicker. My whine about the narrative of Moses leading the Children of Israel out of Egypt is solely about the title of 'wicked' son. Any mother would say that their child is boisterous, naughty, extrovert, shy, moody, etc., but no mother would ever say that their son was 'wicked'.

After all, the wicked son is there sitting at the Seder because he is searching for meaning. Does that make him wicked? Indeed the wicked child, rather than being rebuffed, deserves praise because

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

MANNY ROBINSON



THE RABBINIC VIEW BY RABBI STEVEN DANSKY

Rabbi Steven Dansky, of Cranbrook United Synagogue, explains here that perhaps the word 'rasha' – which we translate as 'evil son' – might mean something completely different. The root of the word could be "Rash" which translates as something completely different. In Samuel 1 (18: 22), King David describes himself as someone who is unable to marry King Saul's daughter because he is 'Rash' – too poor and, therefore, unworthy. We could thus say that the Rasha feels himself to be impoverished in understanding. It is not that he is wicked. He wants to know how to connect his life and his experiences to the rituals which are placed in front of him. There can be nothing more important. There is nothing wrong in asking questions. We need to ask them. The criticism



which we have against the question is not the question itself, but rather the way that it is stated. Rabbi Riskin* points out that the Torah often prefaces a question with a phrase 'when your son will ask,' in the case of the wicked son, the child 'tells' the question to the parent, which implies a certain superiority. The wicked child who feels above tradition is not really interested in answers – only in stating his or her view. (* *Torah Lights: A biblical commentary*, 2009, Magid Publishers)

it is people like him who keep us thinking about the meaning of what we do. The other side of the coin, of course, is the view that the wicked son does-

n't ask for clarification or meaning; he challenges the basis upon which Passover was established.

In my reading, the au-

thors of the Haggadah intended the wicked son to be wicked. This brands him with that mantle because, by asking it, he separates himself from the group: an affront to the entire notion of holding a Seder and, by extension, practicing Judaism.

But I don't think he is wicked. I would much prefer to call him the challenging or perplexed son. Challenging the reasons behind tradition and logic can only lead to greater understanding and more honest practice.

So while the wise son simply asks for – and receives – the law, the wicked son asks for the reasoning underlying those laws. The questions posed by the challenging child are not, in my opinion, a rejection of practice. They are a way of giving meaning to action. They are not an attempt to stand apart from the Jewish group, rather an attempt to understand exactly what the group stands for.

Years ago, children accepted custom and practice in Judaism without question because "that's the way my father or grandfather did it". No one dared to ask the reasoning behind those customs and practices.

Today, people are asking questions, hard questions. And because they are challenging questions in some quarters, these people are classed as the 'enemy'. Thankfully today, as stated earlier, there are wise rabbis who are more than happy to explain some of those traditions. But there are others who still refuse point blank to explain anything, saying in effect: "That's how it's done. That's how it has always been done."

The wicked child isn't the problem. It's our response that is.

Remembering Hughes Mansions this Pesach

THE first Seder night this year is on 27 March.

And while we look forward to celebrating this most family of occasions, my mind is going back to another first Seder night also on 27 March. That was in 1945, when a V2 rocket – the last to hit London – struck Hughes Mansions in Stepney at 7.20 in the morning. It was just a mere seven weeks before the end of the war but the bomb killed 134 men, women and children, of whom 120 were Jewish. In terms of lives lost, it was the second worst V2 strike on London.

While rescue teams got to the dead and the injured, Miriam Moses OBE, who was

in charge at the Brady Girls' Club in Old Montague Street, ditched the Seder that had been prepared; and with the help of people at the club, helped move some of the injured into the Brady building.

The event was remembered at the 50th anniversary of the bombing with a memorial service held at Brady, where actor Lee Montague read out the names of those killed.

They never had the chance to celebrate a Seder and, with the event this year falling on the same day as that horrific attack, it might be wise to give a thought to those who still bear the scars.

Happy what ... ?



This store in America has stacked up with matzos for Pesach ... a pity they didn't know the name of the festival!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SHAFTESBURY". Someone wrote in to ask: "Didn't the Archbishop mind?"

Pamela Melnikoff

How not to write your own headline

Dear Sir

Manny Robinson's article on inappropriate headlines (EJN Chanukah issue) reminded me of a reporter at the *Jewish Chronicle* who once decided to write his own headline.

His story concerned a communal meeting at which a Mr Boxer lost his seat as chairman while a Mr Fishman was elected chairman of the Board of Shechita. My colleague's headline read: "BOXER IS KNOCKED OUT: FISHMAN IS NEW MEAT MAN". Needless to say, a sub-editor altered it to something much more bland.

The JC once had an editor named Shaftesbury, who decided to write the paper's account of the Queen's coronation himself. His headline read: "THE QUEEN IS CROWNED BY JOHN M

Dear Sir

Manny Robinson's mention of Jewish sayings (EJN Chanukah issue) brought to mind an incident which happened to us a few years ago.

My wife and I, plus another two couples, were dining in a local fish restaurant on New Year's Eve. There was a congenial meal followed by entertainment in the form of music and a singer.

At midnight, we all wished each other a Happy New Year and the singer went to each table doing the same thing. When he came to our table, and cleverly realised we were all Jewish, you could see his mind was racing through whatever Jewish folklore he could remember. After all, he must have concluded, it wasn't our new year. After a short pause, he finally shook each of us by the hand and with a big smile uttered the immortal phrase, "I wish you long life".

Alfred Levy

PERSONAL OPINION

RENEE BRAVO



EVERYTHING in life has plusses and minuses, although it is sometimes difficult to find them.

I have tried to find a plus in our present predicament, and I think it is Zoom. There are unexpected benefits coming from this seemingly strange source.

Small synagogues, which sometimes struggle to get a minyan, are suddenly finding 30 people 'logging on'. You have a lecture on a subject that seems of minimal interest, and then 20 people appear.

The ease of being able to 'go to shul' without having to get dressed up, or even actually go out, has hitherto unseen advantages.

On the other hand, the joy of

getting dressed up is lost. I still treasure a lovely photograph of my two little girls, aged five and seven, going to shul in formal clothes with gloves.

Of course, we have also lost the pleasure of large family groups and special meals – including, it seems, another year without a traditional Passover Seder.

After the giving of the Ten Commandments, God says to Moses: "Tell the Children of Israel that in every place where my name is remembered I will come to you and bless you."

Do reading the prayers on Zoom fulfil that criterion? Perhaps we should send Him an e-mail to remind Him of His promise.

Exodus in the Koran

WHEN is Passover celebrated on Yom Kippur? No, it's not a trick question. I was speaking to a Muslim friend the other day about the most family-orientated Jewish festival – Passover – and she said: "Yes, many of us mark Passover, too, but on Yom Kippur".

Intrigued, I checked and, sure enough, on a website called Islamic City is the fact that in the Koran there is no story recounted as many times, and with as much emphasis, as the story of the bondage of the Children of Israel and their subsequent deliverance from Pharaoh.

According to the website, the Koran states that in the Muslim month of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, the prophet Mohammad migrated from Mecca to Medinah and found the Jews fasting there on the 10th of that month, which co-

incided with the 10th day of the Jewish month Tishri – Yom Kippur.

Mohammad asked why they were fasting and they explained that it was the day that God had saved the Children of Israel from Pharaoh, and that Moses (who is regarded as a prophet in Islam) had fasted on that day, in thanks.

In Islamic tradition, the Exodus occurred on Yom Kippur, but according to our custom, it was at Passover.

The Koran (Sahih Bukhari, Book 31, Hadith 222) states that Mohammad said: "Moses is closer to me than he is to you but I will fast in solidarity with you" and ordered all Muslims to also fast on that day to remember the Exodus. The Muslim fast is known as the Fast of Ashura, and is observed by millions of Muslims today.

So now you know!



A message for Pesach from the President

THIS time last year I wrote in my Pesach message about the pandemic which had suddenly overtaken all of us and which was already taking a heavy toll on the Jewish community. I am very sad that one year later this terrible virus is still claiming lives in our community and affecting the way we live.

Once again, Seder Night will not be the packed, joyous family event we all love. We will, for the second time, be holding intimate events with our closest family and then only if we are lucky enough to live in the same house or bubble. My thoughts are with all of you who are alone at this time or unable to see your nearest and dearest. This past year has taken a toll on all of us but I have seen great acts of generosity and kindness. In some ways, this terrible situation has brought out the best in people – from the small things, like a grandchild baking for her grandparents who are shielding, to those such as Captain Tom, whose fundraising made millions for the NHS, before his sad passing earlier this year.

Now, with millions already vaccinated and infection rates falling, we have a sacred duty to ensure that lives are saved. Every death in our community has been a tragedy for someone's family. We must ensure that we do everything to save lives. This is the most fundamental imperative of Judaism.

Over this year, the way the Board of Deputies operates has changed, with home working for our staff and Zoom for our plenary meetings. Our online BoDcast events have engaged thousands of people from across the country and across the world and our achievements have continued to grow.

We continue to work with all parts of the Jewish community to ensure that they have access to the best available information about the Coronavirus pandemic and make decisions about when to open and when to close facilities. This has included working with the Cabinet Office to get guidance translated into Yiddish for sections of the Charedi community who do not have English as a first language.

We have been working tirelessly to ensure that the Labour Party, under its new leader Sir Keir Starmer, acts firmly and decisively to excise the antisemitism which had flourished under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. On this, good progress has been made but we need to see even more.

We have also worked hard this year on ensuring that Jews do not face hatred online, by coming up with proposals to ensure that new Online Harms legislation protects us all from abuse social media platforms. Online is the new frontline in the fight against antisemitism – and not just antisemitism, but misogyny, anti-Muslim hatred, homophobia and racism and bigotry against other religions, ethnicities and minority groups. We are working hard to ensure we are

better protected. In the meantime, we have acted to stop antisemites selling their poison online by working with Amazon to ensure Holocaust denial works are removed from its platform.

We may be the Board of Deputies of British Jews but some of our most important and successful work has been in support of a group which are neither British nor Jewish. The Chinese Uyghur Muslims are subject to terrible persecution, and I was not the only one to see echoes of the Holocaust in their treatment by the Chinese authorities. I wrote to the Chinese Ambassador following a harrowing interview on the Andrew Marr Show and as an organisation we worked tirelessly to persuade MPs to support the Genocide Amendment to the Trade Bill, which would allow Uyghurs to get around the broken UN system and be able to take their call for justice in a British court.

In a year in which the world mourned the racist murder of George Floyd in the USA, we felt a responsibility to ensure that our community was one in which Black Jews and Jews of Colour do not feel alienated. To this end we set up the Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community with Stephen Bush as Chair. We hope that the recommendations that the Commission makes will make our community a model of inclusivity in the coming years.

Despite the tragedy in the world there have been some beacons of light in the past 12 months. I have seen our community come together like never before. Despite the physical distance, we have been looking after each other and this has been so necessary and heartwarming. We have also seen remarkable progress in Israel's relations with its Middle East neighbours. The Abraham Accords were signed between Israel the UAE and Bahrain. We also saw an agreement with Morocco. One of the highlights of my years was lighting the Chanukah candles in an online event with the ambassadors of the UAE and Bahrain – something I never thought I would see.

We have been enduring difficult times. It is my earnest wish that we all stay safe and look forward, as we always do at this time, to better days ahead.

Pesach Sameach to you and your families from everyone at the Board of Deputies

Marie van der Zyl

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