

January /
February 2008

Number 29

NLPJC Newsletter

North London Progressive Jewish Community



NLPJC events....

- **Tu B'Shvat Seder**

We will be celebrating Tu B'Shvat, the New Year for Trees, with a pot luck seder after the Shabbat service on **Saturday 19th January** at 1pm - Please bring a vegetarian dish to share. *Venue: The Community Rooms*

- **Pot Luck Supper & Songs**

Elizabeth Carola, a teacher in world music and harmony singing, will join us after the Service & supper on **Friday 22nd February** to lead some fun easy songs from different cultures. Service 7.15pm, Supper 8pm, Singing 8.30pm. Please bring a vegetarian dish to share. *Venue: The Community Rooms*
Donations welcome.
Elizabeth will be teaching a harmony singing class from 11 January at Oxford House, off the Bethnal Green Road. For more information please contact her on 020 8809 1352 / ecarolauk@yahoo.co.uk

Dates for your diary....

- **NLPJC Fund-raising evening**

Event to be announced – keep **Thursday 6th March** free - watch this space...

- **Purim Party**

Join us for our Purim celebrations **Friday 21st March from 3.30pm** (children's party) through to the evening for adults. Everyone welcome to both – more details in the March Newsletter

See our website at www.nlpjc.org.uk

Development Day - Come and have your say

Last year we ventured to Brighton and had a very productive day deciding about the future and what to concentrate our energies on during the year, and taking stock on what had been achieved so far. We never did see the sea, nor ate any rock as we were so busy discussing what we wanted.

This year we are not so adventurous in our travels but it will be just as productive. We have a rolling development plan which has ensured that we progress and have a vision which is rolling out. Each year we reflect on what we want to do in the future and where we are going as a community. The development plan then gets revised so our ideas become a reality.

All members and friends are invited to join in and to have their say. Please come and join us – it really is enjoyable !

Jackie Richards

Sunday 17th February

11am – 4pm at the Montagu Centre,
21 Maple Street, London W1T 4BE
(nearest tube: Warren Street)

Thinking of joining us ?

Our membership year runs from January to December – if you've been thinking of joining us for a while, now is the time to do so!

Contact our administrator, Julia Chalfen, at nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org for a membership pack or phone Rabbi Shulamit on 020 7403 3779 to discuss membership options.



Visitors bring their chanukiah to light together at our annual Chanukkah party



Israeli dancers perform at the children's Chanukkah party on 9th December

Photos taken by Michael Lomotey


liberal judaism

NLPJC is a constituent congregation of Liberal Judaism

You won't find me on Facebook

This summer marked the third year of my becoming a rabbi. I could never have guessed, during my five years of study, how technology would have such an impact on my work.

On the downside, I never thought I would spend hours each day trawling through emails (like most of you, I am sure). I never imagined that the first place I would go for answers to my questions would be the internet, and not a book! I did not expect to communicate so often with people through our website, or to be making resources for uploading instead of cutting and pasting, photocopying and mailing.

Songs and blessings can be recorded onto my computer and emailed to members. My Hebrew software programme allows me to make a copy of each week's Torah portion, small enough to carry folded in my pocket. I can talk to my colleagues, and even see them on the webcam. And this is all the stuff I have time for. I have never visited the synagogue in Secondlife, or the many specialist internet discussion groups, that perhaps some of the people reading this have

done. And you won't find me on Facebook.

These tools can make us feel powerful, and even sometimes, efficient. Yet doing things we could never do before can never replace the simple practical tasks that must still be done.

A face to face discussion over a webcam can never replace the honesty of real physical contact. You can find Chanukkah songs in several languages, but must still light the candles yourself, and scrape the wax away when Chanukkah is over. And if we lose ourselves in the social networks of the internet we risk neglecting the physical reality of creating real human communities.

This real work is somewhat different. Unlike an online game, real communities take time. Some of the work might be boring. It often involves going out in the cold at night. It sometimes means staying late to do the washing up. It means the discipline of coming to meetings, and putting up with each other; developing tolerance. There is very little in the way of instant gratification. And yet, sometimes, there is.

The surprising feeling of being touched by a prayer. The solid sense of being around people you respect, or feel you can learn from. The satisfaction that comes from the most unlikely of places, like understanding a budget!

I say all this because I think that getting involved can be a real antidote to how many of us find ourselves living our lives. Running this synagogue is not boring. We are not in decline. We are working together to manage our growth. Every single person who is making a contribution has some kind of gift. There is plenty to learn. Nothing is instant, although there are some wonderful moments.

As you think about the year ahead, think about joining us, as part of the Steering group, now or in May. Or take on a task. We need people for Kiddush. Volunteers for Cheder. Help washing up. Come out into the dark January evenings, away from the sterile glow of your computer and flatscreen TV. Human beings are waiting!

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

***Bnei Mitzvah* heading for a big impact in the year ahead.**

You might have thought that NLPJC has a very small cheder, and that our celebrations of *bar* and *bat mitzvah* are few and far between. So far, you would be right. Well, prepare for a change. Following a successful community meeting, and the development of an exciting year long programme for **bnei mitzvah** students to follow together with their families, we are thrilled to have four young people enrolled on our programme. There are two other potential students of the right age in our community, so if you are interested, don't miss out! The programme includes attendance at Cheder, study with a private tutor, one to one work with a *bnei mitzvah* mentor, and with me, as the date approaches. Each of the *bar* and *bat mitzvah* services will be utterly unique.

And this is not only for kids! If you missed out on a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*, why not do it as an adult? You can't come to cheder, but you can devise a programme of learning to take you up to that big moment when you step up to the Torah! And it's a great reason to have a party.

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

An Interview with Marc Turner

What was your background?

My family background was nominally Church of England with distant relatives who were Quakers and related to Elizabeth Fry the prison reformer. It was a normal, standard, supportive working class family who always took an interest in my opinions and never shied from debate. Because issues of religion and politics were not taboo and because some relatives had views that were quite extreme left/right a lively time was had at family gatherings. I made sure by way of the primary school library that I had answers to opinions of the more politically extremist relatives.

My parents brought me up to learn and understand about others faiths on the grounds that my generation would have to have the skills and knowledge to mix much more freely than their generation.

Educationally I went to a good comprehensive school which didn't teach me much in terms of exam results but taught me to appreciate learning. I met many more Jewish children and was

very impressed by their ability to be a part of the school, but not get caught up in the mindless racism and thuggery that the school had a reputation for, as well as academic achievement (my school had pupils sent to both Oxbridge and Borstal) . The Jewish children seemed to have a strength of character that the non- Jewish children didn't yet have. It was, for example, the Jewish children who took the lead in speaking out against the infiltration of the school by the National Front, not the teachers.

What attracted you to NLPJC ?

I felt at home from the moment I first walked through the door. I felt that here was what I was looking for in a community. The fact that the Community has a structure that has continuity with the history of Judaism over millennia but without being overly dogmatic.

NLPJC is open minded enough to accept dissenting opinions and points of view which is something I value immensely. I believe that we were created

to have free will and NLPJC exemplifies this in the fact that the community accepts that there are differences in how people view the concept of God and religious practice, and how these relate to the everyday world, and these differences are accepted and valued.

What interests you about NLPJC and what would you like to see happen?

The fact that I'm welcomed and supported in my Jewish learning and surrounded by lovely people. Well, apart from a nice building of our own which is a bit of a pipe dream, I'd like to see NLPJC building friendly, mutually beneficial links with other parts of the Jewish community both religious and secular, and more social activities and music.

Alison Behr interviewed new member (and her fiancé...) Marc Turner

Jewish Skills: Liberal Insights

Adult Education Programme Term 2 ~ Spring 2008

Our Adult Education Programme continues on Tuesday evenings at the Community Rooms from 15th January 2008 – see enclosed flyer

Teacher: Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu
Contact for more details: 020 7403 3779 /
nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org

Complete the enclosed application form ~
or just come along!

NLPJC Members News

A warm welcome to our new members & friends:

- ❖ Kitty Stewart & her children Matteo, Francesca & Antonio
- ❖ Jason & May Friedler & their children Tal, Adam and Galya

In the event of the death of an NLPJC member, please contact the Funeral Directors Martin Broad & Son 020 8441 6047 and Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu 020 7403 3779.

'The Iron Wall' – A Review

After a brief service and Kiddush (as Rabbi Shulamit was ill), and an exceptionally ample pot luck supper, a crowd of nearly 20 gathered to watch this film presented by Abe Hayeem of Architects for Justice in Palestine.

The film was very shocking to many in the audience, showing as it did some of the worst aspects of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, with destruction of Palestinian houses, uprooting of olive trees, and attacks by settlers on Palestinians, including women and children, as well as shots of Palestinians throwing stones and even grenades at Israeli troops.

This film, directed by Mohammad Alattar, a Palestinian American from Jerusalem, was a purely factual documentary, with interviews of Palestinians and Israelis from the right (settlers etc.) as well as the left - though some felt it concentrated too much on the negative aspects of the situation. Most shocking of all for a Jewish audience was the situation in Hebron, with armed settlers attacking the local population, breaking into their houses and seizing their property.

Shots of the Wall (or fence as the Israeli Government calls it) encroaching onto Palestinian

lands, and preventing children going to school etc. were also disturbing, and provoked a lively (if at times antagonistic) discussion afterwards

The film of course, while strictly factual, and showing interviews of people on both sides of the divide, set out to shock people, and it certainly did. There is no doubt that some people were upset - even to the point that one of them refused to complete the assessment sheets passed round at the end.

These are points that we as Liberal Jews have to face (though some might argue against showing it on Shabbat) - but we all parted on good terms for "Shabbat shalom"

A collection was also taken for the victims of the cyclone in Bangladesh, which was forwarded to Jewish World Relief for this purpose, as well as one for the Community for the expenses of the evening.

Michael Ellman

NLPJC has never taken a collective position on Israel, and members have a wide range of views

The Liberal Judaism Biennial Weekend 2008

“Creation and Creativity” **Exploring Arts and Sciences as Liberal Jews**

At the Tortworth Court Hotel, Wotton-under-Edge, near Bristol 4th – 6th April 2008

Renowned after-dinner speakers ~ Exciting and inspiring sessions ~ Creative services ~
Interactive arts and music workshops ~ crèche and children's activities ~ Some sponsored places

For more information and a booking form, visit the Liberal Judaism website
www.liberaljudaism.org/biennial or telephone 020 7631-9831

Donations

We see it as our duty to raise our income so that we are more fully able to fulfil our obligations towards each other and create a vibrant and inclusive community.

Some examples of the community's expenses:

Shabbat morning service = £120	Hosting a festival = £ 150
1 Adult Education evening = £200	1 Cheder session = £ 75
Creche materials = £30	Pot luck supper with speaker = £ 80
Special Kiddush £30 - £80	1 Newsletter print run = £150
Chollah £2; Kiddush wine £6	Insuring the Torah scrolls £700 p.a.
Showcase community event = £1, 400	
Buying & equipping a building = £2 million!	

Donations can be made at any time by cheque to NLPJC and sent to PO Box 42702, London N19 5WR. If you wish, you can earmark a donation for a particular purpose. Many thanks for your continuing support.

Accommodation

We occasionally receive applications from Jewish people abroad (mainly Israel) wanting to come to the UK for shorter or longer periods, or looking for exchanges. If anyone might be interested in helping, please let Julia know at nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org

CHEDER CORNER

The end of the third New Year of each year is nigh. (First: Beginning of the school year. Second: Jewish New Year. Third: New Year.) This year in the Cheder has been a lively one. We are following the curriculum that Rabbi Shulamit and I put together last year, and apart from interruptions for performing plays for Chanukah and suchlike, we are having some very interesting discussions.

We started by discussing what “belief” meant to each individual student, and each one had a different interpretation. Then we decided to put together a survey, and many of the adults in our community were the very kind people who answered the youngster’s survey questions. We will put the answers together into a chart and discuss what we think it means, after which we will show it to the community. We think the results might be interesting.

Each Cheder lesson we also look at one piece of the reading from the Torah for that week, so that we can keep in touch with what the adults are doing “downstairs.” We had discussions on hostage taking (Sodom and Gomorrah), keeping your word (Jacob and Leah/Rachel) and family dynamics (Joseph and his brothers). And, of course, Chanukah, for which the students practiced the play they performed at the Chanukah party. They also put together pictures – each student taking one episode from the Chanukah story. The pictures and other work will be put into the scrapbooks that the students are making throughout this year. Scrapbook is not exactly the right word,

since these books will contain some of the work they have done this year, so they are more like working document books, but scrapbook is easier to say. So far each student has decorated the front of the scrapbook as he/she wished, and then as we finish different pieces of work – art work or writing or maybe even the play reading? – it will be placed in the scrapbook. We hope that by the end of the year each student will have a record of his/her work, done exclusively by him/her.

At the same time, the Bnei Mitzvah students are meeting with Rabbi Shulamit and myself and several will begin working on their programmes in January. They will begin to join the services for a short time every week, to learn how the services are conducted, and also because some of the questions in their programme call upon them to reflect on the services they see.

We have also instituted a Birthday Circle for the Children’s Service. Each month the children whose birthdays are in that month will have a short Kiddush in their honour, as close to their birthday as we can get. So it is very important that we have all birthdays- including those in the crèche, so that everyone is included.

Once we have put together the survey results, we will go on to issues around Jewish history – why is it important? And we will begin to put together time lines of ourselves and our families. You have been warned. (Smile)

Laura Miller Head Teacher

Are you reading this?

This space could be working for you....

If you would like to advertise in our bi-monthly newsletter, please contact Julia by email at nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org or by post to PO Box 42702 London N19 5WR

Introductory Costs

Number of editions	Cost per month		
	1	3	6
Size of advert			
¼ page	£15.00	£13.50	£12.00
⅓ page	£20.00	£18.00	£16.00
½ page	£30.00	£27.00	£24.00
Full page	£50.00	£45.00	£40.00

NLPJC ‘Who’s Who’

All officers and chair can be contacted at nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org or by post to PO Box 42702 London N19 5WR

Rabbi : Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu
Co-ordinator : Jackie Richards
Hon. Secretary : Claire Helman
Treasurer : Hannah Forbes
Prayers & Spirituality Chair : Joanna Ryam
Education Chair : Sue Lukes
Head & Cheder Teacher : Laura Miller
Children’s & Adult’s Hebrew Teacher : Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu
Volunteer Creche Worker : Anna Sklair
Membership Secretary : Daniel Casson
Administrator : Julia Chalfen
Social Action Co-ordinator : Daniel Casson
Marketing & Promotion : Claire Helman
Befriending Group : Kerry McCarthy & Prince Balwah
Fundraising : Joanna Ryam

Vacant Posts:

Befriending Co-ordinator
Family Representative
Youth
Senior Warden
Intergenerational
Social Events Co-ordinator

If you are a member of NLPJC and are interested in joining one of the groups, or would like to fill one of the vacant roles, we would be delighted to hear from you.

NLPJC Newsletter is edited by Julia Chalfen. The deadline for the March/April issue is 18th February. Please send articles for publication to: nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org

NLPJC events calendar

January - March 2008

Most events are held at *the Community Rooms adjacent to St. Mary's Church, Spensley Walk, Stoke Newington Church Street, London N16*, unless otherwise stated

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Venue</u>
Saturday 5 th Jan	10am/ 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & crèche Shabbat Service	
Tuesdays 15 th , 22 nd , 29 th Jan	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme (<i>see enclosed flyer</i>)	
Saturday 19 th Jan	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am 1pm	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (no crèche Shabbat Service Tu B'Shvat Seder	but toys available)
Friday 25 th Jan	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Speaker (to be announced)	
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Saturday 2 nd Feb	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & creche Shabbat Service	
Tuesdays 5 th , 12 th , 26 th Feb	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme (<i>see enclosed flyer</i>)	
Saturday 16 th Feb	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (no creche Shabbat Service	but toys available)
Sunday 17 th Feb	11am - 4pm	Development Day	at the Montagu Centre, 21 Maple St, W1 (see front page)
Friday 22 nd Feb	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Singing (see front page)	
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Saturday 1 st March	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & creche Shabbat Service	
Tuesdays 4 th , 11 th , 18 th March	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme (<i>see enclosed flyer</i>)	
Thursday 6 th March	7.30pm	Fund-Raising Evening – details to be announced	
Saturday 15 th March	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (no creche Shabbat Service	but toys available)
Friday 21 st March	3.30pm	Purim Party	at the Community Rooms in DEFOE ROAD, N16
Friday 28 th March	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Speaker (to be announced)	

**Contact us at: North London Progressive Jewish Community, PO Box 42702, London N19 5WR.
Call Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu on 020 7403 3779
email nlpj@liberaljudaism.org or see our discussion group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nlpjc>**