

March /  
April 2008

Number 30

# NLPJC Newsletter

North London Progressive Jewish Community



## NLPJC events....

- **Special Services**

**Sat 1<sup>st</sup> March:** Explanatory Shabbat Service at 11am: focusing on the service's inner meaning

**Sat 15<sup>th</sup> March:** 10am Study Session on the theme of creative kiddushes: the mitzvah of welcoming guests. A special New Members' Kiddush will then follow the 11am Shabbat service.

**Sat 3<sup>rd</sup> May:** Explanatory Shabbat Service at 11am: The hidden choreography of Shabbat. At the Community Rooms - Everyone welcome.

- **Seasonal Food Traditions at NLPJC**

Our April Friday evening service and pot-luck supper is on **Friday 25 April** which is the start of the 7th day of Pesach. So we have decided to have a discussion instead of a speaker this time. Please bring along traditional food from your family for the supper, if it is in keeping with our rules on kosher-for-Passover food (see Pesach page 4 for details). We will talk about these foods and food within our families in general, whether at Easter or Passover or in Spring time or any time of year. Telling a story or sharing a recipe is good even if Pesach restrictions mean we cannot taste all the dishes. Remember beer is forbidden but wine is practically compulsory, so if you have nothing to say about food, bring some wine and talk about that!

Service 7.15pm, Supper 8pm, Discussion 8.30pm. Please bring a vegetarian kosher-for Passover dish to share. *Venue: The Community Rooms*. Donations welcome.

- **AGM at Rasa**

Once again...our AGM with a difference – see page 5

- **Birth Rituals session**

We are hoping to invite a *mohel* to discuss Jewish birth rituals on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May – details in the May newsletter

See our website at [www.nlpjc.org.uk](http://www.nlpjc.org.uk)

## My Jewish Journey



Michael Ellman

My maternal grandfather was one of the founding members of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, so although my father had been brought up in an orthodox family, he was dissatisfied with orthodoxy, so it was natural that I should be brought up at that synagogue.

However as we lived 25 miles out, in Surrey, and I was at boarding school for some years, I only attended occasional services and followed religion school by correspondence. Nobody used the word 'Cheder' at that very English institution which the L.J.S. was, known as "the Cathedral" by many: hymns were mostly

sung in English (barely 20% of the service was in Hebrew), no one except the Rabbi wore a tallit, and even head-covering was an optional extra for men.

So when I went to University and joined the University Jewish Society, it was quite a revelation to me, and I learnt a lot about Jewish tradition of which I had hardly been aware. I was attracted to it, and when I was made Secretary of the Progressive Jewish Group, I made a point of bringing it within the framework of the Jewish Society, from which it had previously stood strictly apart!

I met a very energetic traditionalist within the Liberal Jewish movement, Dr. Abram Spiro, and was influenced by him, and was also very attracted to a young Rabbi, John Rayner who joined the L.J.S. However when I married a Glasgow Jewish woman, we were married in her parents' Orthodox shul in Glasgow, and although she was happy to join the Liberal movement, when our children started at religion school, she was less enthusiastic. We

spent a few weeks "synagogue-crawling", and ended up at North London Progressive Synagogue, which we found warmer and more traditional than the LJS. When that sadly closed, I did not want to go out to a suburban, and perhaps less warm shul, and was excited to hear that a group had decided to set up a new community in the Hackney, Islington, Haringey area.

I joined them and soon found myself appointed secretary of the new Community. I warmed to the enthusiasm of young rabbis like Aaron Goldstein and then Shulamit Ambalu, and became more involved than I had ever been, and enjoyed a new Jewish experience.

I had divorced by then, and re-married to Sue, who is not Jewish, and John Rayner had done a Jewish blessing at our home. Sue was happy to come along with me, first to NLPs and then to NLPJC – and I go to church occasionally with her, and we celebrate the major Jewish festivals together – as well of course as Christmas....

Michael Ellman

## Pesach ~ Community Seder

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April - Everyone welcome.

If you've never been to a Seder before, or haven't been to one for a while, we promise you a very warm welcome, and a great experience.

See details and cut-off reply slip on page 4.

liberal judaism

NLPJC is a constituent congregation of Liberal Judaism

# Purim - *Mishloach Manot* with a difference

*Mishloach manot* are the packages of goodies that Jews send to each other on Purim, in celebration of the survival of the Persian Jewish community in the Book of Esther: 9:19 "That is why village Jews, who live in unwallied towns, observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and make it a day of merrymaking and feasting, and as a holiday and an occasion for sending gifts to each other."

Customarily they are given to other Jews, but it has also been said that 'it is on such customs that the Jewish reputation of world-wide philanthropy has been fed.' (Lehrman, Guide to Purim). They usually contain sweets, cakes, nuts, and for adults, wine and even bottles of whiskey!

This year we are asking every single person coming to the Purim party to bring *mishloach manot* with a difference. We want you to bring packets of new underwear (men's, women's and children's, big sizes for adults), packets of nappies, sanitary towels and tampons. These are not for us! We will collect them and deliver them to JCORE- the Jewish Council on Racial Equality, who are campaigning to collect these basic items for destitute failed asylum seekers. JCORE's Dr. Edie Freedman explained that they are aiming to supply these basics of human dignity, things which cannot be given second-hand. Add the Purim touch by bringing them gift-wrapped. (You could even enclose a couple of sweet goodies!)

JCORE's other inspiring work to promote racial equality and activism within the Jewish community can be seen on its website [www.jcore.org.uk](http://www.jcore.org.uk)

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

## Purim Party

Join us on **Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March** for fantastic and fun Purim celebrations:

**3.30pm** Children's Purim party with Creative Activities, Fancy Dress competition, Megillah reading, Purim Spiel and food

**5.30pm** Children and adult line dancing led by Jess Clohesy

**6pm** Megillah reading, **7pm** Supper

**7:45pm** Line Dancing and Western Style (or any...) fancy dress for the grown-ups!

Please bring vegetarian food to share to both the children and adult events, plus alcohol for the evening event. ...and don't forget the *Mishloach Manot*...

### Cost to non-members:

Suggested donation of £5 - £10 per family

### Venue:

Defoe Road Community Centre, N16: NOT our usual venue

## Creating Sacred Space

Judaism can be described as a religion of deed not creed, and for many of us as Liberal Jews, social action and "tikkun olam", the repair of this fractured world, are at the centre of our lives.

Yet deed and creed can be seen to come together in our synagogue services, when our actions remind us that Judaism also links holiness to time. As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote "Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals." (*The Sabbath: it's meaning for Modern Man*)

At NLPJC twice a month we meet on Shabbat mornings, and once a month on Erev Shabbat (Friday evening), to transform the community rooms beside a Victorian parish church in Stoke Newington into sacred time and space. We do this by following the essence of our ancient tradition and meeting together as a community in prayer, ritual, learning and discussion, threaded through with NLPJC's very 21<sup>st</sup>

century commitment to inclusion. The result offers all who wish the opportunity not only to take part in but to be a part of creating this other dimension.

Much has been written about the distinction between the sacred and the profane, and the rituals that delineate it. We no longer believe that we will be struck down if we fail to follow these, but for many of us ritual retains the power to inspire and transport us. I freely admit to being one of those people. I spend most of the week living, or rather working, at breakneck speed without a moment to breathe – and on Shabbat am delighted, and relieved, to be able to drop into another rhythm, another reality.

That is why I have been a warden at NLPJC for several years now – actively playing my part in creating and protecting this sacred space and place of worship.

The wardens group has been very small up to now – and those involved have carried a range of other responsibilities for Shabbat times. However, we are now managing to delineate here, too,

between all these roles, so that, for example, on Shabbat morning there will be Assistant Wardens setting up the physical space, looking after the Kiddush, etc, with the Warden focussing on the ritual aspects of the service.

And we would like to offer other NLPJC members the chance of sharing this role and becoming wardens. **Are you interested in learning to create sacred space?** If so, please do come and speak with myself, Alison Behr or Claire Helman, our current wardens, when you are next at NLPJC, or email me on: [imryam@gmail.com](mailto:imryam@gmail.com) We would also welcome anyone interested in taking on the Assistant Warden role. To help everyone understand better what is involved, why we do what we do during the service, etc, Rabbi Shulamit will be leading special **explanatory services** on **Shabbat 1<sup>st</sup> March and 3 May**.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Joanna Ryam

# Changes Ahead

When I look back over the events of the past year I can hardly believe so much has changed in our community.

Not so long ago Cheder was a series of unconnected but inspiring workshops attended by about four or five children, with one or two families coming to Hebrew classes on Tuesday nights. Cheder nowadays is still a small group (with ten regular students), but attendance is always good, we have a dedicated Head Teacher in Laura Miller, and all the children are now learning to read Hebrew and making good progress, on Shabbat morning. Some of them even do extra homework for fun! Their parents are all involved and that makes a huge difference to their learning. Six young people are working towards their Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Crèche hasn't changed in that it still is and always was fantastic. Only now there are more and more children enjoying Anna's creative activities together with their parents.

The children's service, which takes place for ten minutes before every Shabbat morning (with the exception of school holiday breaks) is always packed.

Adult education in 2006-2007 was a small, dedicated but very select half dozen people. This year we have welcomed 16 people on Tuesday evenings, and have Hebrew classes at the beginners and advanced levels. We have had a review of Jewish Thought, five sessions of Talmud study and we turn next half term to developing the practical skills for deepening participation in the synagogue. But more change is ahead.

Firstly, we have come to the end of our first real era. Jackie Richards, who has led us as our Chair, will be standing down at the April AGM. Jackie is a real visionary, and backs this up with lots of insight on practical leadership and management skills. It has been this vision that has inspired me in my work with NLPJC. Part of her visionary approach is the wish to hand the task on to someone else.

Jackie was joined as co-chair for

the first three of these years by Roberta Harris-Eckstein. I have appreciated Roberta's learning and her experience, and luckily this is something she still continues to offer our Community through her leadership at the High Holidays, and other times.

Michael Ellman, who has been with the Steering Group as Hon. Secretary since the beginning (he resigned from this role last year, when it was taken over by Claire Helman) will continue to do lots for us, but perhaps a bit less. Michael is an exceptionally busy and engaged leader, involved in lots of projects around the world, but making time to be available for any practical or legal help. We know Michael as a highly principled advocate of Liberal Judaism and human rights.

The Steering Group is ready to tackle the task of developing the next generation of leaders, and I am confident and excited about the new approaches we will be developing together after the AGM. But that's not all.

As many people now know, I am expecting a baby in the middle of June, and will be taking a six month maternity break from the end of May until December of this year. The Steering Group and I have been planning for this change since January. High Holiday services will be taken by our very own, and popular, Roberta Harris Eckstein, with musical leadership by Rebekka Wedell and Dr Annette Boeckler. Rebekka has led our singing in the evening services for the High Holidays for the past three years, and she worked together with Annette last year to create incredibly beautiful musical support for the services. Roberta has led Rosh Hashanah day since the beginning of our community.

Plans are also well advanced to engage an 'experienced, inspiring and flexible Rabbi' (quoting from the advert) to lead regular Shabbat services, and to be available for pastoral work and teaching while I am away. By the time the next newsletter is published we will know who this person is. I am feeling quite excited about our having some new and different

input, and also coming along as a congregant and checking out the 'view from the pew'.

The Steering Group has thought very carefully about the need to create stability through this year of changes, while at the same time really engaging with the task of developing our community by putting our relationships with each other, and our search for meaning, at the heart of what we do.

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

## NLPJC Members News

**A warm welcome to our new members & friends:**

- ❖ Maxine Daniels & Tom Noon & their children Daniel & Esther
- ❖ Alma Regan
- ❖ Rhiannon Beswick

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*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.*

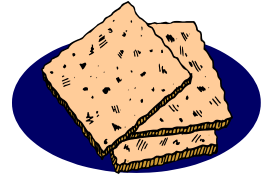
## Thinking of joining us ?

If you've been thinking of joining us for a while, now is the time to do so...Although annual membership runs from January to December, we offer a pro-rata system for anyone joining throughout the year.

Contact our administrator, Julia Chalfen, [nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org) for a membership pack or phone Rabbi Shulamit on 020 7403 3779 to discuss membership options.



# PESACH 2008



Dear Members, Supporting Friends & Visitors,

We are delighted to welcome you to our communal Pesach Seder, which is taking place on **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April at 5.30pm, at the Community Centre, Defoe Road, N16**. This will be a wonderful opportunity to experience a lively, inspiring and very enjoyable Seder, with a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. If you've never been to a Pesach Seder before, or haven't been to one in a while, we promise you a very warm welcome and a great experience.

As well as yourselves, please bring some food for the Seder meal for both you and others. We welcome any food that is vegetarian, vegan, dairy or fish (no seafood), but no meat, please. In our community, we follow Sephardi custom in allowing beans and rice, but would ask you to label any dishes which contain these ingredients, so that those preferring to follow Ashkenazi custom can easily do so. Please don't bring anything which has hametz or leavened foods: that is any derivative of wheat, oats, barley, spelt and rye. This includes both alcohols and vinegars or other grain-derived condiments.

To help sustain the community, we ask you to make a donation as outlined below. This donation goes towards the rent, the wine, and other essentials for the Seder.

Members/Affiliates & Supporting Friends: £10 (Unwaged: £ 5) Children: free  
Visitors £15 (Unwaged: £ 7.50) Children: £3 each

**SEAT APPLICATIONS:** As you might imagine, it makes it much easier for us to organise a lovely Seder if we know how many people will be with us, and if we don't have to deal with payment on the night. So please help us, and let us know that you're coming by completing and detaching the form below, and sending it with payment to **NLPJC, PO Box 42702, London N19 5WR** by **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April at the latest** – **that way we can make sure that we have a place for you, and can send / email your ticket to you in advance**

I very much hope that you will be able to join us.

CLAIRE HELMAN Hon. Secretary

NAME.....I am a Member or Affiliate / Supporting Friend / Visitor (circle)

Address.....

Tel/email.....

Number attending: Adults..... Children.....

I will bring a savoury dish / salad /dessert /other..... (please circle / specify)

I am waged/unwaged (delete as appropriate) and enclose a ticket donation for £.....

(Please make cheques payable to NLPJC)

**I am a UK tax payer and would like to Gift Aid this donation**

*I understand that to qualify for Gift Aid, what I pay in Income Tax/Capital Gains must at least equal the amount the charity will claim in the tax year (28p for every £1 donated)*

**Please return this reply slip to NLPJC, PO Box 42702, London N19 5WR  
with payment by Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April at the latest  
so that we can ensure that we have a place for you.**

**Thank you**

## AGM 2008 – Come And Celebrate

I once worked for a wonderful deputy-head from Guyana who said that back home whenever there was an election or formal meeting there was always a good turnout because the emphasis was on the party afterwards; everyone wanted to attend! I have always remembered that.

So, in the same way, we are having a social at Rasa, the pink fronted Indian vegetarian restaurant in Church Street at 7pm on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April, where you can meet friendly people, share ideas and eat great food. Everyone is welcome (but only members can vote).

First, there will be a short AGM. I promise it will not be more than 30 minutes. Come along and receive and comment on the reports and have your say about the community. If any member wishes anything to be discussed as an agenda item, please let Julia know by 6<sup>th</sup> April. There will be elections and confirmation of officers posts.

Last year Roberta resigned as joint co-ordinator, and this year I will also be standing down as co-ordinator, so we will be confirming the next person who will take on this role. We will also be confirming publicly the arrangements for Rabbi Shulamit's maternity leave.

I have really enjoyed being co-ordinator and feel very confident that NLPJC is going to go from strength to strength. I hope you will be able to join us at the AGM and have your say and enjoy the friendly, social event.

Jackie Richards

*NLPJC Members: please find your formal AGM notice enclosed, with advice on nomination deadlines.*

## AGM 2008

Come and Celebrate!

Find out more about the community and what we've been up to over the past year

**At the Rasa South Indian Vegetarian Restaurant  
On Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April**

**7pm: AGM**

Annual Reports, voting for officers  
Questions & comments with drinks and snacks

**7.30pm: Meal**

Please join us for a delicious meal,  
and a friendly opportunity to get to know  
others in the community

**The estimated cost of the meal will be £10 - £12**  
(Concessions available)

*Please let us know by **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April**  
**at the latest** if you will be joining us for the meal so we  
can let the restaurant know how many people to expect*

[nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org)

PO Box 42702, London N19 5WR  
020 7403 3779

We look forward to seeing many of you there!

**Venue: Rasa Indian Vegetarian Restaurant**  
**55 Stoke Newington Church St, N16**  
**Tel: 020 7249 0344**

## Jewish Skills: Liberal Insights

**Adult Education Term 2 ~ Spring 2008**

### Our Adult Education Programme

continues on Tuesday evenings at the Community Rooms

**Teacher:** Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

**Contact for more details:** 020 7403 3779 / [nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org)

**Download & complete the application form**

at [www.nlpjc.org.uk](http://www.nlpjc.org.uk) ~ or just come along!

7pm- 8pm	<b>Hebrew Level 1</b>	For absolute beginners and rusty readers
8pm -9pm	<b>Hebrew Level 2</b>	Advanced course
9pm- 10pm	<b>Faces of God</b>	This course is suitable for anyone with an interest in Jewish texts and philosophies (see below). Knowledge of Hebrew not necessary.

Date	Faces of God Session Topic
4 <sup>th</sup> March	Preparing a D'var Torah II – creative responses to the text
11 <sup>th</sup> March	Could I really do it? Preparing to read the Torah
18 <sup>th</sup> March	Preparing a D'var Torah III
25 <sup>th</sup> March	To be confirmed

Sessions attended per week	NLPJC Members	Members Concs.	Non-Members	Non-Member Concs.
2 or 3	£80 / term	£40 / term	£120 / term	£60 / term
1	£40 / term	£20 / term	£60 / term	£30 / term

## NLPJC 'Who's Who'

All officers and chair can be contacted at [nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org](mailto: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 May/June issue is 16<sup>th</sup> April. Please send articles for publication to: [nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org)

# NLPJC events calendar

## March - May 2008

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

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Venue</u>
Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> March	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & crèche Special Explanatory Shabbat Service (see page 1)	
Tuesdays 4 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> March	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme (see page 5)	
Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup> March	10am 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am / 12.30pm	Special Study Session: The mitzvah of welcoming guests Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children/cheder (no crèche : toys available) Shabbat Service followed by New Members' Kiddush	
Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> March	3.30pm / 5.30pm	PURIM Children's /Adults' party: <i>at the Community Centre in</i> <i><u>DEFOE ROAD, N16</u></i> (see page 2)	
Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> March	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Speaker (to be announced)	
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Saturday 5 <sup>th</sup> April	10am 11am	Torah Breakfast Shabbat Service	
Tuesdays	Term break	for Adult Education Programme	
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> April	7pm	AGM at Rasa Indian Vegetarian Restaurant, 55 Stoke Newington Church St, N16 (see page 5)	
Saturday 19 <sup>th</sup> April	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & crèche Shabbat Service	
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> April	5.30pm	PESACH – 2 <sup>nd</sup> night Seder at the Community Centre in <i><u>DEFOE RD, N16</u></i> (see page 4)	
Friday 25 <sup>th</sup> April	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Family Pesach dishes (see pg 1)	
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Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> May	TBA	Yom Hashoah	
Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup> May	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)	
Tuesdays 6 <sup>th</sup> , 13 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup> May	7pm/8pm/9pm	Term 3 Adult Education Programme (see page 5)	
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> May	Time & Venue TBA	Birth Rituals Session	
Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> May	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & crèche Shabbat Service	
Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> May	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 [nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org) or see our discussion group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nlpjc>