

September /  
October 2008

Number 32

# NLPJC Newsletter

North London Progressive Jewish Community



## Hackney Limmud is Here!

Sunday 14 September

The Petchey Academy,  
Shacklewell Lane,  
Hackney London E8  
2EY

Limmud is a big, beautiful festival of Jewish culture and learning. It is a charitable organization without a denominational or political agenda. Wherever you find yourself, Limmud will take you one step further on your Jewish journey.

Come and spend the day with us at the stunning new Petchey Academy in the heart of this London borough with an illustrious Jewish past - and a vibrant and dynamic Jewish present. This will be a Limmud with a difference, with all the Limmud regulars but a strong local flavour.

Who are the artists who have lived and still live here? The writers, poets and political thinkers? The dreamers and hard-headed activists? We're an eclectic and sometimes argumentative bunch here in Hackney, but most of all, we're big-hearted and welcoming!

You can attend a session, or simply relax over a coffee and chat to other participants, visit the art and photography exhibitions, or the Limmud market stalls for a wide selection of Judaica, music and books.  
[www.limmud.org/day/hackey](http://www.limmud.org/day/hackey)  
/ 020 8880 5607 /  
[hackney@limmud.org](mailto:hackney@limmud.org) for booking and more details.

...and come and find us at the NLPJC stall.

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

## Reflection at Elul



Student Rabbi Elana Sondel

As you may know, Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu is on maternity leave and consequently I am honoured to have been given the opportunity to lead High Holiday services at NLPJC.

As a rabbinic student, I am fascinated by different practices and varying cultural manifestations of Judaism and I am looking forward to learning and experiencing new things with you and your community. From September, I will be working at the Montagu Centre focusing on education, and am hopeful that my relationship with your congregation will continue through next August.

Recently, I have been reflecting on the Song of Songs and its relationship to the High Holidays. Many interpreters have argued that the Song of

Songs is an allegory depicting God's love for Israel; it is a literary work of intimacy and emotion. One of the most poignant lines of this text is the expression of the deep partnership between God and Israel; "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." This line speaks to the interconnectedness of Israel to the divine power, the partnership of faith that goes from one to the other and back again. To me, the Song of Songs presents our relationship with God as a partnership of searching, rather than unwavering, unquestioning faith.

Some commentators believe that the name for this Hebrew month we are in [Elul], the final month before the High Holidays, is an acronym for "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.", as the Hebrew for this: "אני לדודי ודודי לי" [aleph, lamed, vav, lamed], spells Elul.

During the High Holidays we have ten days from Rosh Ha Shana to Yom Kippur to apologize for our transgressions against God, humans, and ourselves. But change does not come

easily, and one must first understand where one is in order to understand where one wants to go. Perhaps this interpretation of the name Elul encourages us to take advantage of this month by honestly assessing our relationship with God. In what ways do we feel that we have shown our care and compassion for God, in what ways could we have been more honest with our faith and our prayer? In what ways have we been thankful for gifts received by God, and when have we raised our voice (or even fist) in anger asking "why"? How do we feel that this relationship of ours has worked and how has it faltered?

I encourage us all in this next month to think about who or what it is that we pray to, and what we expect to give and receive from this beloved of ours, for only then will our apologies have an impact. I am looking forward to meeting all of you and to bringing in the new year together in prayer, song, and reflection. Please feel free to e-mail me at [elana.rose@yahoo.com](mailto:elana.rose@yahoo.com) with any questions or comments. B'Shalom,

Elana Sondel

## Sukkot & Simchat Torah Celebrations

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October ~ Sukkot**

**4pm - Decorate the Sukkah** at the Community Rooms – suitable for all ages.

Please bring decorations & fruit to hang, and vegetarian snacks for tea.

**7pm Service & Supper in the Sukkah.** Please bring vegetarian food to share.

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm ~ Simchat Torah**

One of the biggest celebrations of our year, with reading of the Torah, partying and food.

Please bring alcohol and vegetarian food to share. Children & adults.

This year the NLPJC children will be performing their own musical composition, with the help of new member Peter Bergamin. Come along to the cheder on 6<sup>th</sup> September for rehearsals.

**See Calendar on back page for venue and time details.**

  
liberal judaism

NLPJC is a constituent congregation of Liberal Judaism

## High Holiday Ticket Applications

Not a Member or a Friend and Need Tickets for the High Holidays?  
Already a Member or a Friend and want to buy extra tickets?

Most of us feel that we would like to avoid the crush of people buying tickets at the door during the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Services. **Once again, we will only be selling tickets in advance, either**

- Through ordering them directly by post (to arrive no later than **Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September**) using the application form sent to you in August.
- By buying them in person on **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September between 6 – 8pm** at the Community Rooms, St. Mary's Church, Stoke Newington Church St N16. Please bring your completed application form with you.

Please email Julia at [nlpic@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpic@liberaljudaism.org) to let us know if you intend coming on the 28<sup>th</sup> to buy tickets, or if you need another ticket application form.

**Copies of Machzor Ruach Chadashah will also be available for purchase.**

NB: We can accept cash or cheques only.

## HHD Leaders & Singers

This year our HHD services will be led by student rabbi Elana Sondel (see page 1).

We are fortunate to again have the wonderful voices of both Annette Boeckler and Rebekka Wedell to lead us through the High Holy Day singing.

Annette will lead during Rosh Hashanah morning and Yom Kippur day services, and Rebekka during Rosh Hashanah evening and Kol Nidre services.

## Women and Judaism: Women at Elul

Some members of NLPJC have said that questions around “women and Judaism” interest them. For me, my current MA studies have become a personal quest to understand better the interrelationship between women, religion and spirituality. After much reading of feminist theology and thealogy, my head buzzes with questions about the invisibility of women in the Torah, the continuation of the “Adam’s rib” creation myth of woman, the ritual impurity of the female body and the blanket acceptance of God-as-male/Father, even within progressive Judaism. So, I have volunteered to write about such topics.

We are now approaching Elul, the month of reflection and t’shuva (repentance), of inner preparation for the New Year: the 1st Elul falls on 31st August/1st September this year. The name of this month is especially poetic, with its Hebrew letters said to be an acronym for the verse in Song

of Songs *Ani L'Dodi ve-Dodi Li - I am my beloved's as my beloved is mine* (Song of Songs 6:3). Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish women have been reclaiming the ancient tradition of celebrating Rosh Chodesh as a festival dedicated to women and marked by special women’s celebrations. This is the new moon time when women often started to meet in Rosh Chodesh groups.

Lynn Gottlieb (one of the first American woman rabbis) recalls that her Rosh Chodesh group approached this as a time of preparation for “the new year of the soul”, when they created amulets marked with signs of protection and strength – and learnt to blow the shofar. (1) In biblical times the shofar was blown at every Rosh Chodesh: now it is blown on every day of Elul (except Shabbat), imploring us to “turn around”. At this time, other Rosh Chodesh groups may recall Bruriah, one of the rare female Jewish scholars of Talmudic and Rabbinic

literature, who is celebrated for her extensive and deep knowledge. She is often cited when discussing teshuva and repentance, based on the Talmudic passage where she berated her husband (the ‘sage Rabbi Meir’) for praying to God to do away with some men who were annoying him. Bruriah told him to pray instead for them to change their ways. (2)

Elsewhere, with prayer the focus of the month, as groups of women gather to light candles for Rosh Chodesh, they name one personal thing they will be praying for during Elul. May this month be a rich time of review and deeper understanding for us all.

(1) Lynn Gottlieb, *She Who Dwells Within: a Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism*, HarperCollins, 1995

(2) [www.hillel.org/jewish/rituals](http://www.hillel.org/jewish/rituals), August 2008

Joanna Ryam

## High Holy Day Charity Appeal

This year we have chosen the following 3 charities for our High Holyday Appeal, for whom we will be collecting at the Kol Nidre Service.

**Wahat-al-Salam ~ Neve Shalom** is a village between Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv-Jaffa, jointly established by Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, that is engaged in educational work for peace, equality and understanding between the two peoples.

**Hackney Migrant Centre** is a new charity offering practical help and social support to recent migrants, especially those seeking asylum here. The Centre provides a midday meal, and immigration, health and welfare advice regardless of a person’s country of origin or immigration status.

**The Smile Train** is focused on solving the huge problem of untreated cleft lip and palate in developing countries. Their mission is to provide free cleft surgery for millions of poor children in these countries and to provide free cleft-related training for doctors and medical professionals.

**More details about each charity will be enclosed with your HHD tickets**

## Thinking of joining us?

If you’ve been thinking of joining us for a while...why not do it now? We offer a pro-rata system for anyone joining throughout the year and if you join now, your High Holyday tickets will be included in your half-year subs. You can contact our administrator, Julia Chalfen, [nlpic@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpic@liberaljudaism.org) for a membership pack or phone Rabbi Cliff Cohen on 020 7403 3779 to discuss membership options.

# My Jewish Journey



Liz on the left, age 4, with her brothers and cousins at Chanukah

I grew up in Hartford, Connecticut, USA. My mother's family originated in Romania and my father's family originated in Galicia -- once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then part of Poland, now in western Ukraine.

Like many people, my earliest memories of Jewish life are memories of family life. The Passover Seder was a big event in our house. I loved everyone being together, all my cousins, aunts, uncles and grandmothers.

The first time I went to synagogue I was about 7 or 8 years old. It was Simchat Torah. My father went to services with his friend and, for some reason, decided to bring me along. I did not really understand what was happening, but was fascinated by it all. I remember all the people and the music and the sense of excitement.

My grandmother taught me Yiddish when I was a bit older. My father

had attended an *Arbiter Ring* (Workmen's Circle) Yiddish school when he was a boy. My grandmother had saved his books, the paper was yellowed and crumbling at the edges, and used them to teach me. I don't think I got very far with it, but I still remember one of the little poems I learned.

Eventually, my parents decided to join a synagogue. I attended religion school for a few years, but it did not make a

big impression on me. The thing I remember most was being told off for being somewhere I shouldn't have been.

I do remember going to services and hearing the cantor. He was an old man who walked up to the bima with a stick and held onto the lectern for support. His singing amazed me; he was a very spiritual person and expressed all sorts of feelings in the prayers he sang.

Recently my daughter, Rachel, asked me why I did not have a bat mitzvah. It was a hard question to answer. It was not as if I considered having a bat mitzvah and decided against it; the question never came up. Yes, there were bat mitzvahs in Connecticut in the 1970s, but I had never been to one. I was not encouraged to do it, had no particular desire, so it did not happen.

Like many people, the decision to have a child brought up Jewish issues for me. I was certain that I wanted my child to be Jewish, but had lots of questions about how that would happen and what it would mean. Eventually, I found my way to Rabbi Sheila Shulman's Access to Judaism course at Beit Klal Yisrael. I did not end up with all the answers, but I gained some new insights and learned to look at things Jewishly from different perspectives. I have been especially inspired by Sheila's ideas about Jewish community and inclusivity.

When the old North London Progressive Synagogue was closing down, I attended some meetings called by Liberal Judaism about the possibility of setting up a new Liberal group in the area. I don't know what came over me, but I had a strong feeling I should get involved.

In the beginning it was all very time consuming, and also emotion consuming, but I believed the new community would be a Good Thing and that I could make it happen. I was the treasurer for the first couple of years. Now, after a break, I am back on the management committee as secretary. My great-grandparents were involved in setting up the Emanuel Synagogue in Hartford in the 1920s. I like to think that, in some way, I am carrying on a family tradition.

Liz Reiner  
NLPJC Hon. Secretary

## Opening Doors

At Canterbury Prison, I work as part of a multi-faith Chaplaincy team. There are no Jewish prisoners there, so my time is spent between statutory and pastoral duties to people of various faiths and none, both prisoners and staff. Last week, on a day when the duty chaplains were a Hindu lady and myself, I had to tell an African Catholic that his father had died abroad. He wanted to say prayers, so we went over to the Chaplaincy. I could not find a Catholic prayer book, and I started to apologise.

"It's OK", he said. "Say what you know."

So I picked up a Siddur. Together the three of us thanked God for the long life of his father and for his peaceful release. Together we read Psalms, and together we sang "All Things Bright and Beautiful". The Hindu lady lit a candle and an incense stick, and rang a little bell. Then I read *El Male Rachamim* and *Kaddish*, and together we read the English. Then we hugged, and wished each other long life.

When it was over, I opened the locked door to escort him back to his cell. But in his humble "It's OK", with the permission that triggered a beautiful, intense and sacred moment, I can't help feeling that he has opened a greater door than I ever could.

Rabbi Cliff Cohen

## CHEDER CORNER

A Challenge to you all.

Years seem to go by awfully fast, don't you think? Here we are, at the end of one year and the beginning of another, and I'm wondering where 2006 went. But then, Jewish teachers have three new years – one Jewish, one academic and one secular – so it sometimes feels as though we're celebrating New Year all year round!

I will be writing in more detail about last year (complete with pictures) soon, but for the moment I have a challenge for you:

This year, the younger children will be working on a curriculum which arises from the Liberal Judaism curriculum. It is called "Jewish Heroes."

The LJ curriculum begins with the Bible and looks at various Biblical persons – we would like to start slightly differently, so we would like your suggestions about who YOU would suggest for inclusion in a list of brave people, leaders, people who stayed in the background but who were important nonetheless, people who wrote wonderful literature, artists, actors, men, women, dogs (no, just kidding. Although I'd like to nominate my dog TobyJoe for just putting up with me sometimes.)

A few people mentioned to me so far were:

Yitzhak Rabin

Golda Meir

Sholem Aleichem

YL Peretz

Ben Shawn

Spinoza

Maureen Lipman

Jack Rosenthal (complete with one of his movies)

Etc.

There are lots more out there, I know. So please, email me, phone me, send me a note or send your favourite carrier pigeon with any ideas that you might have for a person whose life is worth looking at. I will be putting together a curricular list in the next few weeks – so that I can get the lesson planning started.

WARNING: I understand from the programme "Who do you think you are?" that Boris Johnson is descended from Turkish Jews – better get those ideas in fast in case I am forced to put him on the list!

Laura Miller  
Head Teacher

You can email Laura at  
[nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org)

## NLPJC Members News

### Mazel Tov to Tal Friedler

on the occasion of her Bat mitzvah which she celebrated with her family on 26th July 2008 at Kehilat Kol Haneshamah in Jerusalem.

### The 100 club winner....

of the July AND August draw was Davina Good – who has won a grand total of £48 !

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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 Cliff Cohen on 020 7403 3779.*

## Liberal Judaism Annual Memorial Services Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September

11.30am at Edgwarebury Lane  
Cemetery  
3.30pm at Pound Lane Cemetery

Contact  
[s.o'dwyer@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:s.o'dwyer@liberaljudaism.org)  
for more details

## CAREER COACHING AND MENTORING

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[www.stephaniesegalconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.stephaniesegalconsultancy.co.uk)

## 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

**Maternity Cover Rabbi**: Rabbi Cliff Cohen

**Co-ordinator** : Claire Helman

**Hon. Secretary** : Liz Reiner

**Treasurer** : Hannah Forbes

**Prayers & Spirituality Chair** : Alison Behr

**Education Chair** : Sue Lukes

**Head & Cheder Teacher** : Laura Miller

**Children's & Adult's Hebrew Teacher** : Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

**Volunteer Creche Worker** : Anna Sklair

**Administrator** : Julia Chalfen

**Fund-raising Coordinator**: Sue Lukes

**Social Action Co-ordinator** : Daniel Casson

**Marketing & Promotion**: Claire Helman

**Befriending Group**: May Friedler & Sheila Melzak

**Vacant Posts:**

Membership Secretary; Youth; Intergenerational

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 November/December issue is Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October. Please send articles for publication to:  
[nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org)

Advertisements contained in the NLPJC Newsletter are the sole responsibility of the persons that post the advertisement. NLPJC does not make any guarantee as to the accuracy, completeness, truthfulness or reliability of such advertisements.



If you know a young adult with  
learning disabilities...

If, as a parent, you need help  
navigating the best option within the  
education system...

If you believe that all young people  
deserve the same chance...

## **So does Langdon**

Langdon College and Langdon Community provide educational and residential services to enable young Jewish adults fulfill their potential.

Call, or write in confidence to see how we give those aged 16+ the opportunity to have an independent life within a secure, nurturing and Jewish environment.



**Website:** [www.langdon.info](http://www.langdon.info)  
**Address:** Langdon Foundation  
PO Box 640  
Edgware HA8 4GL  
**Telephone:** 0208 951 3942

# NLPJC events calendar

## September - November 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 6 <sup>th</sup> Sept	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / special cheder (crèche tbc) Shabbat Service	(see bottom of pg 1)
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> Sept	9am – all day	Hackney Limmud (see pg 1)	<u>The Petchey Academy</u>
Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> Sept	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (no crèche but toys available) Shabbat Service	
Friday 26 <sup>th</sup> Sept	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Speaker (to be announced)	
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> Sept	6pm- 8pm	HHD Ticket Sales (see pg 2)	
Monday 29 <sup>th</sup> Sept Tuesday 30 <sup>th</sup> Sept	7.30pm 10.30am / 1.30pm	Erev Rosh Hashanah Rosh Hashanah (with cheder & crèche) / Lunch	
Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup> Oct	10am 11am	Torah Breakfast Shabbat Service (no cheder or crèche but toys available)	
Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup> Oct Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> Oct	7.30pm 10.30am	Kol Nidre Yom Kippur (with cheder & crèche)	
Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> Oct	4pm – 9.30pm	Sukkot – Decorating the Sukkah, Tea, Service & Supper (see pg 1)	
Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup> Oct	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (no creche but toys available) Shabbat Service	
Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> Oct	7.30pm	Simchat Torah Service, Celebrations & Supper (see pg 1)	
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> Oct	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme Term 1 begins (see enclosed flyer)	
Friday 26 <sup>th</sup> Oct	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Speaker (to be announced)	
Tuesdays 4 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> , 25 <sup>th</sup> Nov	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme (see enclosed flyer)	
Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & creche Shabbat Service	
Saturday 15 <sup>th</sup> Nov	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (no creche but toys available) Shabbat Service	
Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Day	Mitzvah Day – events to be announced	
Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> Nov	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 3799  
email [nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org](mailto:nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org) or visit our website [www.nlpjc.org.uk](http://www.nlpjc.org.uk)