

March /
April 2009
Number 35

NLPJC Newsletter

North London Progressive Jewish Community



NLPJC events....

- **PURIM Party**



Come and celebrate on Sunday 8th March at 3.30pm: Intergenerational Purim spiel, Creative activities, fancy dress and much more.....

Please bring food / snacks / drink to share.

Everyone of all ages welcome!

Entrance: We are asking for a donation of £3 per person / family to cover our costs

Venue: **Defoe Road Community Centre, N16**

We will be reading the Megillah on Tuesday 10th March at 6.30pm at the Community Rooms (Spensley Walk) before the adult education programme - everyone welcome.

- **Pesach – SEDER night**
See page 3 for details

- **Yom Hashoah**

We will be holding a Yom Hashoah service with poems and readings on **Tuesday 21st April at 6pm**. Everyone is welcome.

Venue: The Community rooms

- **AGM & Supper**

See page 4 for details

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY....

- **Shavuot**

Study session on Thursday 28th May, 7pm – 10pm at The Community Rooms.

Speakers to be announced....

See our website at www.nlpjc.org.uk

Making Connections

Well, I am back! Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me back to the community after my absence. It is really good to be here again, and it feels like a very great privilege. Having such a significant amount of time away (six months) has given me the opportunity to really think about what we, and I, am doing, probably for the first time since I became a rabbi nearly five years ago. It has been a bit of a rollercoaster in the past four weeks, with some big community celebrations and more to come.

I find myself puzzling over the difficult question of how we balance our creativity in favour of the two directions of community growth. The first is to do with how we grow ourselves outwards, in favour of those people who might not be our members.

I think back over the times in the past year when our events have been packed with people of all ages, and especially the large numbers of people with very young children who come along at festivals such as Chanukkah, Purim, and Pesach. These are the times when our doors

seem most open. I have often thought that what our community creates is moments of connection- but I would love to know what these momentary connections feel like.

There have been adult education sessions which have attracted a large group of people. These were the special sessions on the war in Gaza and *brit milah*. The discussions we had were extraordinarily moving. But I also ask myself, must we only tackle subjects that reflect some current crisis? Do we only come to learn about what disturbs us most?

And then there is the second direction of community growth- the direction of growing inwards. I find one of the most acute places to engage with a struggle for meaning takes place during our Tuesday evening adult education programme. These sessions attract a smaller group, of quite committed members. This term we have been studying critical topics such as stem cell research, gamete donation and abortion through a Jewish lens. We will go on to

consider care of the dying patient and assisted suicide. Yet we too have been struggling with the question of connection. When we trace the Jewish responses to these major questions back through the history of teachers and their texts, we find ourselves trying to understand their present day relevance. What might their teachings mean to us? What are we looking for as Liberal Jews? In a world where we are free to govern our own lives, where are the boundaries?

Perhaps these questions seem very insular in a time when many of us are seriously worried about our future and present economic security. But I seriously think that developing connections, both outwards, in the direction of momentary connections, and inwards, in the pursuit of difficult questions of meaning, is ultimately about building a more resilient community. I would like to hope that our strong mutual connections might help us build a safety net, with moral or spiritual dimensions and practical action, that any of us may draw on.

Rabbi Shulamit
Ambalu



NLPJC children met in front of the Kinder transport statue at Liverpool Street Station in January, for a cheder trip to visit Bevis Marks synagogue and their textile exhibition and a walk and lunch in the East End.


liberal judaism

NLPJC is a constituent congregation of Liberal Judaism

Remembering Lily Montagu – Jewish Heroine and Visionary



Last month at NLPJC we said kaddish for the *yahrzeit* of Lily Montagu, the founding mother of Liberal Judaism. She was a truly extraordinary woman, to whom Liberal Judaism owes an immense debt. She has become my great “Jewish Heroine” – to adopt the title of the current NLPJC Cheder project (of which much more in the summer), and I would like to introduce her in more detail.

Lily Montagu is often glossed over as a fairly subsidiary member of the founding trio of Liberal Judaism. However, it was she who set the ball rolling not only bringing together,

leading members of Anglo Jewry but persuading them to work together to create a new institution. In 1899, as an earnest young woman of just 25, Lily Montagu, published a farsighted article entitled “*The Spiritual Possibilities of Judaism Today*” in the Jewish press calling on all religiously inclined Jews to help her revitalize Anglo Jewry. This was at a time when most Jews were unaffiliated and apparently disinterested in following Judaism.

This led to the establishment in 1902 of the Jewish Religious Union – the forerunner of Liberal Judaism and the World Union of Progressive Judaism. She had to confront her father, the formidable Lord Swaythling, to follow her deep belief that she had received a call from God to do this work. Although a shy and self-conscious young woman she brought considerable determination and tenacity to her efforts to transform the religious practices and beliefs of Anglo-Jewry’s religious life. As her cousin, Eric Conrad, recorded: ‘She was beginning to understand what the Jews were on their way to forgetting – that Judaism cannot be lived by a formula.’

As Liberal Judaism emerged in the early 20th century, the founding trio consisted of Claude Montefiore, as the

visionary and philosopher, Israel Mattuck as the rabbi, and Miss Montagu as the pragmatic activist and community worker. Yet, Lily Montagu also encapsulated all of these qualities. She was the spiritual activist who transformed her vision of Judaism as ‘real religion ... an internal, personal experience of the Divine’ into the reality that is today Liberal Judaism. She was, essentially, the first woman “rabbi” in England – preaching and leading services from 1915 at the then-revolutionary Shabbat afternoon services she instigated at the West Central synagogue. She was also the social activist who established the West Central Club providing community and educational services for Jewish girls and women workers – and later became a founder of the youth and girls clubs’ movements, as well as one of Britain’s first women magistrates.

And, Lily Montagu was instrumental in establishing Liberal Judaism in North London, where the first service was held nearly 90 years ago at the library in Stoke Newington Church Street!

Lily Montagu died on 22nd January 1963

Joanna Ryam

On Becoming a Doctor

Of course, I could not keep it to myself. I had to tell all of my 505 dearest friends that after 10 – yes, count ‘em, 10 – long years, I had finally finished my dissertation and been awarded my doctorate. I am, to the world at large, Dr. Laura Miller, although I still giggle when I hear it.

Several people have asked me about my dissertation, and having worked on it for so long, I find myself almost tongue tied when I have to talk about it. But as it is an American degree, I also have to explain that apart from the dissertation, each student has to take specified courses and has to have a residential period. My University is an international one, and so the residential was held in St. Kitts, West Indies. (The formal graduation, next July, is in Italy.) The other students were from all over the world – Ghana, Japan, Nigeria, Hong Kong, all over Latin America and various states in the US. I was invited to a couple of goat roasts – goats courtesy of the islanders and killed and cooked by the students!

Two other students and I worked on a project with the government of St. Kitts on tourism. During the project I discovered (not part of my studies but of interest to me) and the sister island of St. Kitts, Nevis, which is so small it has a Parliament of 12, at one time had a Jewish community. There is a synagogue the government was excavating, and a small Jewish cemetery which had 16 graves, all in Portuguese. Apparently, when Portugal exported the Inquisition to Brasil, many in the Jewish community fled to the islands.

After two years of coursework, I began work on the dissertation: Do young people who have studied their country’s history see themselves in this history? I managed to find students in five countries to fill in a survey for me, and in most cases the answer was “No.” Not a surprise to me, I’m afraid. But I was able to use the final chapter to make some comments on the teaching of history and how I thought it could be changed for the better.

My defense (or “viva”) was held on Skype. My tutor was in the Czech Republic, the Head of Department in Pennsylvania, the external Reader in Pittsburgh and me in London. A fascinating experience, and (if I do say so myself) all of them very interested in my conclusions and making suggestions for follow-up work. I was polished to a high glow I must say.

This idea of feeling part of one’s history, or wider group or family, is one that I am very conscious of. Although the dissertation was on a young person’s country and his/her identification, it is also important to the Jewish community. I think each Cheder and each Jewish community is important in the lives of young people, to help them identify themselves as part of a community. I hope that if Jewish children who have been through Cheder were to take my survey their answers would be different. I might just ask my students to do that - but I’m definitely NOT doing another doctorate...

Dr. Laura Miller



Pesach

2009 / 5769

Dear Members, Supporting Friends & Visitors,

We are delighted to welcome you to our communal Pesach Seder, which is taking place on **Thursday 9th April at 7pm, 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:	£15 (Unwaged: £ 5)	Children: free
Visitors	£20 (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 Monday 24th March 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 (please tick box)

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 Monday 24th March at the latest
so that we can ensure that we have a place for you. Thank you**



"Thank you to everyone for coming to my Bat Mitzvah and making it into such a lovely day. And thank you for the presents. I wasn't as nervous as I expected but it was hard work learning to read my portion. Thank you to Shulamit and Micha for helping me prepare and to Natasha for all the help with my exhibition. I hope everyone enjoyed the party afterwards – I did, and thanks to everyone who helped with the food!"

Hannah

Hannah Collins was Bat Mitzvah on 7th February at the Community Rooms

AGM 2009 ~ Sunday 26th April

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

6.30pm: AGM at the Community Rooms

Annual Reports, voting for officers; questions & comments

8pm: Meal at the Rasa South Indian Vegetarian Restaurant

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 - £15 (Concs available)

Please let us know by **Sunday 19th 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 / 020 7430 3779

We look forward to seeing many of you there!

AGM: The Community Rooms adjacent to St. Mary's Church

Spensley Walk, off Stoke Newington Church St, N16

Meal: Rasa Indian Vegetarian Restaurant

55 Stoke Newington Church St, N16 , Tel: 020 7249 0344

Celebrating Chanukah 2008 - 5769 at NLPJC



NLPJC Members News

A warm welcome to our new members & friends:

- ❖ Jyll Bradley and Dr S Cedar
- ❖ Ruth Whippman

Mazel Tov to Kerry McCarthy-Balwah and Prince Balwah who were married at Hackney Register Office on 28th November 2008.

And a thank you:

"We wanted to thank all those at NLPJC who were able to attend, and also those unable to attend Joshua's Bar Mitzvah on 15th November 2008 at Southgate Progressive Synagogue. Thank you for your kind gift, lovely card, good wishes and for making it a special weekend. The kindness shown is much appreciated and more than our thank you could possibly show."

Allen, Joan and Joshua Joseph

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 on 020 7403 3779.

Thinking of joining us ?

If you've been thinking of joining us for a while...why not do it now? The membership year begins in January but we offer a pro-rata system for anyone joining throughout the year.

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

CHEDER CORNER

In some ways this has been a strange year. We actually have fewer classes, but our work towards our Heroes project is quite intense. By now we have heard from most of the students about one person they consider a Jewish hero. Of course, we had to decide if we meant that only Jewish people could be on the list, or if people who helped Jewish people but were not themselves Jewish, could also be on the list. We came up with a good old-fashioned Liberal compromise – we let each child decide for him/herself. We heard several interesting stories, including one from Yeshaya Lomotey about his very brave grandfather, who suffered much discrimination for his decision to be Jewish in Hull.

The students will pick one person by next time, and will work on one way (out of several possibilities) of describing to us about the person and why he/she is a hero. We will also put together a booklet of these heroes, written by the children.

I've been looking over books written about heroes that our Cheder students can read. We went through one together called "Passage to Freedom" written in the voice of a child, which told the story of a Japanese diplomat in Lithuania, Chiune Sugihara, who saved an estimated 10,000 Jewish people by giving them illegal visas, in direct contravention of his country's orders, and at great personal risk.

The major question we always have to discuss is what the difference is between a hero and a celebrity. This seems to me to be one distinction that eludes many people – not just children.

Dr. Laura Miller

A Fund-raising recipe.....

Some of those who came to the fund-raising dinner in February asked for recipes, so here is one. It is a bit imprecise (like most recipes it has evolved a bit over time) but it seemed to go down well enough. If there is a demand for it we can include some more recipes in later newsletters.

Salmon and asparagus lasagne

1 packet smoked salmon trimmings
Two cartons half fat crème fraiche
1 packet fresh dill
1 bunch spring onions
1 tin asparagus pieces
Butter or equivalent spread
Milk
Flour
Grated cheese
Packet spinach lasagne
Grated parmesan

This lasagne is made with two sauces (either of which makes a perfectly good pasta sauce on its own) and is very rich (even with the half fat crème fraiche). It is best made with the two sauces in separate layers otherwise you don't appreciate the flavours.

The smoked salmon sauce:

Chop the spring onions and sweat gently in the butter. Chop the dill and add and cook until the onions are soft. Chop the smoked salmon pieces (not too small) and add to the mixture and then stir in the crème fraiche and season (lots of black pepper).

The asparagus and cheese sauce:

Make a cheese sauce (melt a couple of ounces of butter in a good saucepan, stir in same weight of flour, cook for a while until the mixture forms a ball, then add about a pint of semi skimmed milk, turning up the flame and whisking vigorously so it forms a good white sauce, let it bubble for a moment then add the grated cheese and stir it in 'til it melts. Drain the liquid from the tin of asparagus and stir in the asparagus pieces.

Making the lasagne

Grease a shallow dish well (square or rectangular is easiest). Put a layer of lasagne on the bottom, then ladle half the smoked salmon sauce on to it, then another layer of lasagne and the rest of the smoked salmon sauce, and another layer of lasagne. Then half the cheese and asparagus sauce, another layer of lasagne, half the rest of the cheese and asparagus sauce, another layer of lasagne, then a final spread of cheese and asparagus sauce over the top and parmesan sprinkled over it. Put in a medium oven (180° for a fan oven, can be a little lower or higher if you are cooking something else that needs more precision). It is ready when a knife goes easily through the lasagne, no more than 40 mins. You can stop at any point and keep in the fridge for a couple of days and heat through/cook later.

Sue Lukes

The Big Issues Through a Jewish Lens

Adult Education Term 2 ~ Spring 2009
Tuesday evenings

The term continues with *Introduction to the Jewish Lifecycle, The Big Issues Through a Jewish Lens* and *Hebrew Classes*.

We will struggle with some of the biggest questions today, from conception to death, through the perspective of Jewish teaching.

10th March

9pm – Just how many genders are there? Genders in the Talmud

17th March

7pm – Marriage and Divorce / 9pm session topic – tba

24th March

9pm session topic – tba

31st March

7pm - Death and Mourning / 9pm session topic – tba

For more details and costs, visit our website page http://www.nlpjc.org.uk/adult_education/index.htm, email us at nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org or phone 020 7403 3779

Teacher: Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu
Venue: The Community Rooms (see back page)

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 : Claire Helman
Hon. Secretary : Liz Reiner
Treasurer : Hannah Forbes
Prayers & Spirituality Chair : Alison Behr
Senior Warden: Joanna Ryam
Education Chair : Sue Lukes
Head & Cheder Teacher : Dr Laura Miller
Children's Hebrew Teacher : Peter Bergamin
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 June/July/August issue is Sunday 17th May. Please send articles for publication to: 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.

NLPJC events calendar

March – May 2009

Most events are held at *the Community Rooms adjacent to St. Mary's Church, Spensley Walk, Stoke Newington Church Street, London N16 9ES*, unless otherwise stated

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Venue</u>
Sunday 1 st March	3.30pm	The Wedding of Alison Behr and Marc Turner Service and celebrations at Northwood & Pinner	
Tuesdays 3 rd , 10 th , 17 th , 24 th , 31 st	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme (see pg 5)	
Saturday 7 th March	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & creche Shabbat Service	
Sunday 8 th March	3.30pm	PURIM Children & Adult Party at <u>DEFOE ROAD</u> Community Centre, N16 (see Pg 1)	
Tuesday 10 th March	6.30pm - 7pm	Purim: Megillah Reading (before adult ed session)	
Saturday 21 st March	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (no crèche but toys available)	
Friday 27 th March	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & speaker tba	
Saturday 4 th April	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & creche Shabbat Service	
Thursday 9 th April	7pm	PESACH – 2 nd night SEDER at <u>DEFOE ROAD</u> Community Centre, N16 (see Pg 3)	
Saturday 18 th April	10am 10.40am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (no crèche but toys available)	
Tuesday 21 st April	6pm	YOM HASHOAH service: poems and readings (See pg 1)	
Tuesdays 21 st , 28 th April	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme (NEW TERM)	
Friday 24 th April	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Speaker tba	
Sunday 26 th April	6.30pm / 8pm	AGM at Community Rooms / supper at RASA (see pg 4)	
Tuesdays 5 th , 12 th , 19 th May	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme	
Saturday 2 nd May	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & creche Shabbat Service	
Saturday 16 th May	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (no crèche but toys available)	
Friday 23 rd May	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Speaker tba	
Thursday 28 th May	7pm – 10pm	SHAVUOT Study session – speakers tba	

Contact us at: North London Progressive Jewish Community, PO Box 42702, London N19 5WR.
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email nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org or visit our website www.nlpjc.org.uk