June / July / August 2009

Number 36

NLPJC Newsletter



North London Progressive Jewish Community

NLPJC events....

Shabbat Picnics

Come and join us for a picnic lunch in Clissold Park after the Shabbat morning services on Saturday 6th June and Saturday 4th July: Bring food, blankets, and come ready for a game of rounders or ultimate frisbee! Meet in the enclosed rose garden opposite St Mary's at around 1pm.

Friday Night is Film Night!

On the 4th Friday of each month we will now be showing a film after our Erev Shabbat Service and Pot Luck Supper. We are planning to choose films from the Jewish Film Festival

http://www.ukjewishfilmfestival. org.uk/Films/ but are open to other film ideas. So if anyone has any suggestions, please let Rhiannon or Julia know via nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org. Films to be announced....

- **Educating Jewish** Children in a Diverse world.....see pg 4 for details of our exciting event and save the date: Sunday 12th July
- **Adult Education**

Term 3 continues, and includes special parent & grandparent sessions - see pgs 3 and back page

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY....

High Holy Days 5770

SEPTEMBER

Fri 18th - Erev Rosh Hashanah Sat 19th - Rosh Hashanah Sun 27th - Kol Nidre Mon 28th - Yom Kippur

OCTOBER - Sukkot

Sat 10th – Simchat Torah

Ticket application forms, and members tickets, will be posted out mid- August

See our website at www.nlpjc.org.uk

Strangers Into Citizens

Out of degradation into dignity. Out of the shadows into the light. Let's turn strangers into citizens. At our AGM, we agreed to support the march Strangers into Citizens on 4th May. So we did. with a hastily painted banner (thanks to Yasmin and Anat for telling us how to write ahava, the Hebrew for solidarity).

Rabbi Shulamit spoke at one of the rallies at the beginning of the march, and then we walked from Westminster to Trafalgar Square, and met thousands of other communities and organisations.

We were the only Jewish banner we saw on the march (and we met Jews glad to see one at least), for which many other faith communities mobilised in large numbers. We found ourselves in front of the Latin Americans, who marched from Elephant and Castle, with some terrific slogans, a lot of young people and some anger as we passed Downing Street ("There they are, the ones who gain from our exploitation!". they shouted, which sounds a lot better and rhymes in Spanish). As we got to Trafalgar Square, another large contingent of the Chinese community marching from Soho poured into the Square, accompanied by dragons and lions.

We hope to do more with the campaign, which seeks a one-off selective regularization measure: to grant some 450,000 of the estimated 750,000 undocumented migrants in the UK leave to remain. They propose an "earned amnesty" or "pathway into citizenship", open to those with at least six years in the UK, who present employer and character references, a clean criminal

record, and proficiency in English.

As Jews, we know we have a duty towards strangers, and we know from our own family histories that so many of our parents, grandparents and others arrived irregularly, were smuggled in (this would risk a severe prison sentence under today's laws) or crossed borders secretly to escape persecution, to make a better life or simply to be able to live more freely.

Although the campaign enjoys widespread support, so far the two main political parties have set their faces against it, even though the UK has had several successful amnesties in the past, and everyone knows that it is impossible to deport or force out so many irregular migrants: estimates are that deportation would cost a minimum of £8 billion.

So the banner may get a few more airings: volunteers to beautify it please!

Sue Lukes

Visit www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk



NEWS FOR AFFILIATES

We are pleased to announce that we may now include non-Jewish partners of our Jewish members in the Liberal Judaism funeral scheme, providing they are Affiliate members of NLPJC. Letters will be sent out to all members shortly.

Anyone else requiring more information please contact Julia by email at nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org

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.



Discovering How Much We Really Have

As anyone who knows me will know. I am not much of a history person. Like many other people, I think I was taught history as a series of dates, rather than as what history really can be - the gradual discovery of fantastic real life stories. So when we began our recent adult education investigation of tseddakah, I was in for a bit of a shock. I simply did not know about how our Jewish communities used to organise themselves. I learned that in the medieval period, every single Jewish community would organise the collection of charitable funds (tseddakah) from every one of its members, as well as collecting the taxes due to the ruling authorities.

Once a year, two people appointed for the task, the gabbaiey tseddakah would visit each householder, and carry out an assessment of the person's wealth. The person would then pay over their share of the taxes due to the local ruler. They would then have to pay, to the Jewish community, five to ten percent of their annual 'worth' as tseddakah, a contribution for the support of the poor. In addition to this sum, householders would make a contribution for the upkeep of the communal institutions, such as the synagogue. The legal and historical Jewish sources are also clear that even the poor, who were themselves dependant on tseddakah, were obliged to give!

This system continued up to and into the modern period, when European Jews were able to leave the confines of their self enclosed communities and join their fellow citizens in the cities.

But this new knowledge prompted, in me, a bit of a crisis. What does this mean for tseddakah, and the importance of the Jewish community, today? The gabbaiey tseddakah, together with the leaders of those earlier communities, could force people to make a contribution, by applying all sorts of social pressure. Today, membership of the Jewish community is voluntary, and many of us no longer view the giving of tseddakah as an obligation. What, we asked in our adult education class, is our contemporary obligation? Like our Jewish ancestors we also pay taxes. But taxes are also something for which we expect some form of return, such as health and social care, security and education. Taxes are not tseddakah. Instead, the Jewish understanding of tseddakah is that it represents the claim that the poor have upon us. The obligation to work out and to responsibly donate 5-10% of our income has not changed. Perhaps the down-side of our enfranchisement as citizens has been the gradual loss of complete autonomy and responsibility. Growing up, in Britain, after the establishment of the Welfare State, might also make us

believe that looking after the vulnerable is a job for someone else. But imagine this. Every year a household works out its income, after paying taxes. And from the remainder they work out a percentage, between 5-10%, and responsibly donate that to their chosen charities. And the holidays, the cars, the new TV and other luxuries are paid for from what is left.

Perhaps we would come to see the synagogue not as a place for exploring our own private spiritual journeys, but as one of the most important tools for setting right the many inequalities in the world.

We are facing some very difficult economic times. Many of us will say that we cannot afford to hand over such a large percentage of our income to someone who needs it more than us. Yet even the poor had to give! Perhaps, then, if we start, we might start small, with the aim of working our way up to the amount our (no doubt poorer) ancestors were able to manage. There may be some quite unexpected benefits.

Deciding to accept this powerful obligation might lead us to a sense of greater control over what we have, and what we can do with it. Giving it away, we may discover how much we really have.

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

A Community Opera

Some time ago I wrote a piece for the NLPJC newsletter about the importance of creativity and the role it plays in helping to build a vibrant community. As a community, we have many talented people and children and this is reflected in the way we celebrate and enhance our festivals and other activities.

Recently, Rebekka Wedell - who composes and facilitates community music projects - and I have been discussing the idea of a community project using music/singing/storytelling/drama/video/music technology in exciting, contemporary and innovative ways, to create a high quality performance, which at this stage we are calling **a Community Opera.**

It will be open to all age-groups of members within NLPJC, and we are seeking creative partnerships with people from one or two other local community organisations in Hackney. The NLPJC management group is keen to incorporate more creative (performance) activities in NLPJC and has given its support to the project.

There are some interesting possibilities such as taking relevant current issues e.g. social cohesion, migration and identity and exploring these with others e.g. asylum seekers and migrant workers. Another idea for a possible partnership is with members of the Turkish community

who are involved in the Arcola Theatre, which has an annual Opera season.

Whichever way it goes, this promises to be a really interesting venture, with benefits to all involved: First and foremost, there



will be the fun and enjoyment of creating a performance piece involving a range of community members. Secondly, we see great value in building creative, personal and cross-communal links, working in equal partnership with others to find where there are commonalities and differences within our varied experiences and life histories.

All this is still at an early stage and nothing is fixed. We are optimistic about successfully gaining funding to support the project. We would like to form a steering group and invite you to get involved in whatever way you like – whether in the planning, fundraising, 'backstage', artistic or creative / performance groups.

So, if this appeals to you in any way, if you have any ideas to contribute, please let me know asap. This can only proceed if there is sufficient interest. jackie134@btopenworld.com

Jackie Richards

We need your help!

Wanted: Enthusiastic people to help raise funds for the community.

We're determined to build a sustainable community – and that means one which is financially secure. We do everything we can to keep our costs down, and many of our activities are organised by community members on a voluntary basis. This year, we need to raise around £3,000. So, we are looking for people who can

- Write grant applications
- Organise fund raising events
- Come up with innovative ideas to raise money.

Feeling the pinch?

If you are lucky enough not to be worried about the credit crunch and associated problems, we would like to appeal to you for help. Some 43% of our members and affiliates are on concessional rates because they are on benefits, pensions or very low incomes.

We believe that lack of money should not be a barrier to belonging to NLPJC, and so we keep our non - concessionary rates low too. That way, we continue to be a community that everyone can join, regardless of their finances, without embarrassment.

But it is getting very difficult for us to balance the books, especially as we actually want to improve and increase our activities. Most of our members are very busy, too, so although we hope some may come forward to help with fundraising, we are also asking members who can to consider making a donation, as a one off or a regular commitment, to help keep NLPJC afloat and keep it vibrant and inclusive. Every little helps, and will be gratefully received. Thank you, in advance.

The Management Committee

Are you a Jewish Grandparent?

Do you want to get together for an initial meeting to explore grand parenting with other members of NLPJC?

There will be a special one-off session of our Adult Education programme at the Community Rooms on **Tuesday 23rd June, at 7pm,** facilitated by Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu. Please call her on 0207 403 3779 if you would like to arrange a lift.

Raising Children Our Way

Three 1 hour meetings, as part of our Tuesday evening Adult Education programme, at **7pm**, **on 30**th **June**, **7**th **July and 14**th **July**.

This mini- course is for parents and parents to be, in families with Jewish and non-Jewish members. Please call Rabbi Shulamit on 020 7403 3779 to book

Venue: the Community Rooms (see back page)

Our Special Day

North London Progressive Jewish Community's 2nd wedding was held in leafy Northwood on Sunday March 1st at the Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue. I am delighted to report that Marc Turner and I were pleased to welcome many people from NLPJC who joined us on our special day.

Rabbi Shulamit took us through the betrothal ceremony in the library which was serving as a bride's room. They wouldn't let me do anything with the books which was a very wise move. We signed our Ketubah with Judith Fox and Caroline Hagard as witnesses and proceeded to the main sanctuary with Cathy Allworth as my matron of honour.

I'm not the only one who thought Marc spent all his time staring devotedly at me in my big white dress but he assures me he was paying attention to the service. The fervency with which he said "I do" has set a new standard for bridegrooms. The service was brilliantly conducted by Rabbi Aaron Goldstein along with Rabbi Shulamit and the NPLS choir led by Brian Sass who set our adaption of the *Sheva Berachot* wedding blessings to music and sung it as a beautiful solo.

The service itself was enhanced by additions from *Brit Ahavah*, the Covenant of Love so that we could include some

special readings and blessings.

For quite a few of the guests it was their first Jewish wedding and all of them said to me what a fantastic time they had and they seemed to find the Basic Guide to the Jewish Wedding booklet we put together useful.

After the wedding, Rob Terry played the piano for us, while we had canapés in the Osorio Hall art gallery, and the sanctuary was transformed for the evening reception. We had wedding cakes decorated with cats and a short wheelbase Land Rover as well as the traditional bride and groom. It was a joy to see so many family members and friends there to celebrate with us.



Alison Turner



Educating Jewish Children in a Diverse World

Cheder Challenge - History and Future

There is an old American saying that there is no such thing as a free lunch. (If you would like the historical derivation, ask me. As it happens, I know.) But all Liberal Chederim were treated to a challenge a few months ago and none of us can resist a challenge – especially when it comes with money attached.

With the financial backing of the UJIA (United Jewish Israel Appeal) in partnership with Leo Baeck College, all Liberal Chederim were asked to put in bids for money. We could ask for any amount up to £1500, the project had to have some aspect of teacher training (although it could have other aspects, too) and every Cheder that applied would automatically get some money for the project.

The Head teacher had to send in the description of the project, and as usual it had to be done immediately. The Education Committee had a flurry of emails, telephone calls and meetings, and finally the idea was on paper and ready to go. We described a "Shabbaton", only on a Sunday, to allow our Community members to come together for an interesting leisurely conversation about education, perhaps a nice lunch and perhaps, with the help of a little publicity, to interest newcomers in our community. We also wanted to use the opportunity to showcase the talents of our Cheder students, and added in a sum to produce a booklet of writings and

drawings from this year of studies of Heroes/Heroines of the Jewish people.

In the event we did not get all of the money we asked for, but we did get more than the minimum, so we decided to scale down what we had originally proposed but to keep the general idea the same.

So this is why we have asked everyone to keep the afternoon of 12 July 2009 free. We will be having a presentation with a speaker and discussion on the title "Educating Jewish Children in a Diverse World." The actual speaker has yet to be confirmed, but we will be letting the community know as soon as we know.

We will have a general discussion following the talk, in which teachers, parents, members of our community plus others we hope might be interested, can generate ideas about how we see the Jewish education of our children growing and changing in our world. Since the teachers will be present, this covers the teacher's education part also.

During this discussion, the children will be having a fun activity with Yasmin, our new Hebrew teacher and we are hoping that one or two of our students will consent to give their presentations, and we will have The Booklet to give out.

Finally, we will be having a catered proper English Tea, with cakes and sandwiches and lots of tea.

The funding from UJIA and Leo Baeck allows us to hire the rooms for the afternoon, cater the tea, produce the booklet, do some publicity and pay the speaker a stipend.

And of course, when it is over, yet another report has to be written by the

Head teacher.

On the other hand, we may not have been given a free lunch, but we will have a lovely tea. And there is no saying about there being no such thing as a free tea.

Dr Laura Miller

Sunday 12th July 1pm – 4pm at the Community Rooms

NLPJC Members News

A warm welcome to our new members:

 Nadine Holland & Robin Adamski

Mazel Tov

- To Dan Largin who celebrated his Bar Mitzvah with the community on 16th May
- ❖ To Madeline Jacob-Havnen, baby daughter of Megan Royle-Jacob and Torejan Havnen, who was welcomed to the Community with a special ceremony on 4th April

Condolences

- ❖ To Joanna Ryam, on the loss of her father earlier this year.
- ❖ To Jackie Richards who's father passed away in April: "Jackie Richards and family thanks friends for their loving support, cards, calls and kind words on the death of her father. Although sad it was also a celebration of life for a kind man and loving father who had a passion for living life to the full."

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.

Join in with Limmud 2010!

Hackney Limmud 2008 was extremely successful and plans are going ahead for the next in November 2010.

Over 800 attended last year and there were over 60 workshops. Participants' comments showed it was a very educational and enjoyable event. A new team is now getting together and volunteers are needed. The more people offering time, skills and expertise the better.

So would you like to join in? Planners, publicists, promoters, fundraisers, furniture movers, negotiators, meeters and greeters, car drivers, clearer uppers, administrators and more are needed! The intention is to organise some "taster" events during 2009 to raise interest and build a large pool of people to create Hackney Limmud 2010.

Learning from experience gained by the last team, local interested people

need to be identified as volunteers early on so they can be called upon as their particular skills are required. So, you and any one you know who might be interested are invited to stick your heads above the parapet now!

Be assured – you can offer a little or large amount of time, effort or specific skills. What is needed is commitment and a willingness to get involved with this exciting project. Please do not be shy! The more volunteers, the better Hackney Limmud 2010 will be. NLPJC has the opportunity to be an important contributor to this event, so volunteer now! Contact Simon Lukes simonlukes@phonecoop.coop or Jackie Richards jackie134@btopenworld.com. If you leave details we will get back to you.

For more information about Limmud see www.limmud.org

For more information about last year's Hackney Limmud we will email you a copy of last year's programme on request.

CHEDER CORNER

We are coming closer to the end of our Cheder year, and are hoping to go out with - you'll pardon the expression - a bang (See Cheder Challenge article on pg 4).

The students are gearing up for their presentations on their heroes/heroines, and - just a reminder - they must all have a page and a half of writing along with whatever presentation they are doing. We are going to have a booklet printed, with their writings and some of their artwork, and (provided I can get over my technological phobia) some photographs. The booklet will be for our community, but also, we hope, for those interested in our community.

May I also say, in large letters, we need to have everything handed in on the Cheder of 6 June by the very latest.

Peter will be taking over from me on that day, because I will be in Italy marching up to my PhD diploma. Then, Peter and Sue and I will be getting together to decide on the prizes, and will be encouraging students to give their presentations to the Community on the next Cheder day.

One other wonderful piece of news - we have a Hebrew teacher for when Peter leaves us. Her name is Yasmin Max. She has been teaching Hebrew for awhile. She is from Israel, doing her doctorate here. She will be a wonderful teacher (I've seen her in action) although, as we know, Peter is a hard act to follow. Yasmin has been with us in services and many of us know her already.

We have decided that next year's topic for Cheder will be "Jewish journeys." This could be a physical journey, a mental/emotional or religious journey. We would be grateful for any ideas, or suggestions for journeys (of individuals or of families for example) that we can use. We will be discussing the curriculum over the summer and putting lessons together for next year. So please any ideas before then to either Sue or myself.

Dr. Laura Miller

...and do remember to put July 12th in your diary...

Some Personal Reflections on Pesach 5769



This year, the NLPJC Seder celebration took place at the Defoe Road Community Centre on the second day of Pesach, Thursday 9th April. We had a considerable turn out of around 70 to 80 people. Tables were set with Seder plates, wine and An abundance of food was available and enjoyed by all! It was a truly inclusive Seder with children, adults and the elderly participating.

We used the Liberal Jewish Haggadah is written very clearly descriptively and I personally had the feeling that I had been transported back in time to the days when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. I experienced a range of emotions, from joy to despair as I learned about the bondage endured by them for many years. I then moved on to experience euphoria and triumph as the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and made their exodus from slavery. By the end of the evening, I must say I felt exhausted after reading of their arduous journey!

However, I was continually reminded about how Rabbi Shulamit began our Seder with the usual question of: 'Why is this night different from all other nights?' Nishtana Halayla Hazeh Mikal (Ma On reflection, this question Halaylot?) posed a double meaning for me. Not only was it different because we were able to lean as free people, not only because we were eating bitter herbs and matzot but because I also became acutely aware that many other groups in our society and our

World are still awaiting their exodus from their own egypts.

When we retell the story of Pesach, the point to remember is that it is the same God that made possible the Exodus makes it possible, at this very moment, for the world to be transformed and liberated from all forms of persecution. oppression and Although slavery has been officially abolished and is illegal under international law, Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, 'No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.' Sadly in many countries this law is not enforced and slavery is still a reality for millions of people around our world. Some examples include, bonded labour and human trafficking. Although we may be free we cannot be complacent and forget those who continue to remain in bondage. I am reminded of the saying by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel 'to fight for human rights is to save our own souls.'

I should like to thank Rabbi Shulamit and her committed band of volunteers who organised and delivered this delightful, but yet thought provoking Seder. I received many positive comments from visitors who were present. Finally, I am reminded of the closina characteristics of the Seder 'Next Year in Jerusalem.' I should like to add that 'if not Jerusalem, then let us do it the same way next year in Stoke Newington!'

Vicky Millan

(and many thanks to Vicky herself, who was one of those 'committed' band of volunteers'...)

NLPJC 'Who's Who'

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

17th August. Please send articles for publication to: nlpic@liberaljudaism.org

Rabbi : Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu Hon. Secretary: Liz Reiner

Prayers & Spirituality Chair: Alison Behr

Education Chair: Sue Lukes Children's Hebrew Teacher: Peter Bergamin

Administrator : Julia Chalfen

Membership Secretary : Jackie Richards

Befriending Co-ordinator: Sheila Melzak

Social Action Co-ordinator; Youth; Intergenerational

Treasurer: Hannah Forbes Senior Warden: Joanna Ryam Head & Cheder Teacher: Dr Laura Miller Volunteer Creche Worker: Anna Sklair Fund-raising Coordinator: Joanna Ryam Marketing & Promotion: Claire Helman

Chair: Claire Helman

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 Sept/Oct/Nov issue is Monday

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 June – August 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>	Event	<u>Venue</u>
Tuesdays in June 2 nd , 9 th , 16 th , 23 rd ,30 th	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme (see pg 3 and b	ox below)
Saturday 6 th June	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & Shabbat Service	creche
Saturday 20 th June	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (r Shabbat Service	no crèche but toys available)
Friday 26 th June	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Film tba	
Saturday 4 th July	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder & Shabbat Service	creche
Tuesdays in July 7 th , 14 th	7pm/8pm/9pm	Adult Education Programme (see pg 3 and b	ox below)
Sunday 12 th July	1pm – 4pm	"Educating Jewish Children in a Diverse Wo	orld" (See pg 4)
Saturday 18 th July	10am 10.40am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / cheder (r Shabbat Service	no crèche but toys available)
Friday 24 th July	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service / Supper & Film tba	
Thursday 30 th July		Tisha Ba'Av - No NLPJC event but events at o	other communities tba
Saturday 1 st August	10am 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast Kol b'yachad service for children Shabbat Service	
Saturday 15 th August	10am 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast Kol b'yachad service for children Shabbat Service	

The Big Issues Through a Jewish Lens

Adult Education Term 3 ~ Summer 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.

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) **Contact us at:**

North London Progressive Jewish Community, PO Box 42702, London N19 5WR.

Call Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu on 020 7403 3779

email <u>nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org</u> or visit our website www.nlpjc.org.uk