March / April / May 2012

Number 47

NLPJC Newsletter



North London Progressive Jewish Community

See our website at www.nlpjc.org.uk

NLPJC events....

- Spring Singing Course see pg4
- PURIM party see pg2
- PESACH Seder see pg3
- Additional Shabbats see pg2
- Yom Hashoah Supper
 On Wednesday 18th April we plan to mark Yom Hashaoh with a supper at a member's home – details to be announced on the email thread nearer the time
- Batmitzvah ~ May 5th
 Leila Baker and Will Ashon and family
 warmly invite all NLPJC members,
 friends and visitors to the bat mitzvah
 of Miriam during the Shabbat service
 on Saturday 5th May. There will be a

Lag Ba'Omer Picnic

special kiddush after the service.

A barbeque in the park to celebrate Lag B'Omer on **Friday 11th May** at 5.30pm. Why a barbeque? Some say we commemorate the rebels who resisted Roman rule in Judea in the second century. Others say a terrible plague affecting people just like them stopped on this date. It's a bit of a mystery, but a great reason for a picnic. Please bring barbeque gear, vegetarian food to share and whatever seems right for the weather

- AGM followed by Supper
 All welcome on Sunday 13th May at

 6.30pm at the Community Rooms
 followed at 8pm by a social meal at a local restaurant ~ more details coming soon....
- Children's Welcoming
 Approaching Shavuot, a Children and
 Community Service at 11am on

Community Service at 11am on Saturday 19th May, including a special naming ceremony to welcome any new children who have joined us in the last year, and those newly born and adopted.

• Shavuot ~ a gathering

Tikkun Leyl Shavuot, a gathering of learning to see in the festival of Shavuot on Saturday 26th May at

7.30pm. We will continue our tradition of studying late into the night, with learning, food, and laughter. Teaching from Rabbi Shulamit and members of NLPJC.





NLPJC children celebrating at Chanukah with a giant dreidl (L), and lighting all their own handmade Chanukkiot

* Save the Date * 10th Birthday Celebration

....................

Sunday 17th June 2pm community rooms & gardenWe are very proud to be celebrating our 10th birthday with a short service (the original service used 100 years ago at NLPS) followed by a birthday tea, music, dancing, dignitaries and more! Everyone welcome!
Invitations and more details coming soon....

Cookery Workshop Fund-raising evening led by Sue Lukes Friday 23rd March

You are invited to dinner!

And those of you who want to are also invited to cook

We will be focusing on making delicious food cheaply, using easily available ingredients, including fish, and even leftovers. But the emphasis will be on making delicious meals that we enjoy. Some of the food I have done for community events will be included. Apart from the fish, it will be vegetarian and vegan food, and cover any other dietary requirements if we are asked. And we think it will be fun, especially for those just starting to cook for

themselves, those who want to work out how to manage with less, and how to use different ingredients.

We welcome especially younger (or older!) people learning to cook for themselves for the first time.

Make sure your son or daughter who is off to university this year comes along!
So: do please book now, for the meal and for the cookery session. Those who register are welcome to offer for suggestions about what to include

Cost to cook and / or eat : £10 per person / £5 concs 6pm cooking, 7.30pm candles & supper \sim Please bring a bottle

It is essential to book in advance, by 19th March latest, for catering numbers nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org / 020 7403 3779



Happy Birthday NLPJC!

Ten years. I can't yet work out whether I think it's a long time. On the one hand time feels slow. Then on the other a real chunk of life has just whizzed by.

NLPJC was 'born' in 2002. I'm not even sure that's the right word to use. Describing it in Hebrew can express the different shades of meaning one might bring to thinking about the beginnings of a community. We speak of birth, or leidah, and in a way that is right, as we are literally the daughter congregation of North London Progressive Synagogue, established in 1921. The second Liberal Synagogue in the entire country, they quickly outgrew the meeting room at Stoke Newington Library, and went on to have services in the Defoe Rooms in Defoe Road. Sounds familiar? After a few more moves, the synagogue ended up at Amhurst Park, where it eventually and sadly closed. So perhaps leidah, or, birth, is right, and we should celebrate our yom huledet. We could also speak of our yichus, our connecting origin. Our makor, our source. like the water source that feeds the now much healthier ponds in Clissold Park. Or our reishit, or beginnings, or origins. These words all point to the beginnings of something organic.

Buildings and organisations have another set of words. I might say NLPJC was *yased* or established, or *hakem*, set up, with its related concept, *kayem*. These two words, with their roots in the idea of literally being raised up, also have connections with words for *existence* or *being*. I like *yatzor*, which means created, and points to the hard work of all those people who created, and keep creating this community.

The search to find the right kind of words seems important now, not only to find the right way of inviting you to our 10th Anniversary Party on 17th June, but also to give expression to the journey so far and the direction for the future. This year is also a time for thinking of a new, Hebrew name. One that can speak of what it is that makes us who we are- urban, creative, unfixed to a building, flowing from the diverse and often difficult Jewish journeys that brought us here.

Our entire culture teaches about the power of language to create realities. This is why words, the right kind of words, seem crucial right now. Happy Birthday NLPJC!

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

NLPJC Members News

A warm welcome to new members & friends:

Rachel Crasnow's husband Matthew Dodd

Condolences

Our 100 club winners

❖ Maria Egan (December)
The first draw for this year is on 3rd March ~ but it's not too late to join! Email Julia at nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org for details

In the event of the death of an NLPJC member, please contact the Funeral Directors Martin Broads on 020 8445 2797 and Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu on 020 7403 3779.

Mitzvah Day thanks

Hackney Migrant Centre which, like NLPJC, meets in the Community Rooms at St Mary's, is a charity close to our hearts, so we were keen to do something to help them on Mitzvah Day. We decided to collect toiletries and non-perishable foodstuffs for distribution amongst those who use Hackney Migrant Centre. The generosity of NLPJC members and friends meant that we were able to donate a very large (and heavy!) case of items.

Hackney Migrant Centre asked for their thanks to be passed on to everyone for their contributions.

Fabulous Purim Party

Sunday 11th March 2-5pm at the New Community Rooms

Creative activities, fancy dress parade, Children's Purim spiel, music from our fantastic musicians. Please bring hamantashen, outrageous outfits, some normal



non-sugary food for balance, and for the adults, alcohol.

And a message from our Purim co-ordinator, Laura Miller...

- -Does your internal Esther want to come out?
- -Ever fancied being the villain? (You get to wear a three cornered hat...and eat hamantashen...)
- -Is the extrovert part of your personality in need of some oil?
- -Or are you the sign-holding type?
- -Like to sell books?
- -Want to help the children laugh and shout?

Whatever your talent, even if it's just smiling, please help Laura organise a Purim to be remembered. Although a superwoman, she can't do everything herself. PULLLLEASE let her know you'll help on the day, help needed before (1pm), during, and after (to 6pm)

If you volunteer first, she won't have to come after you... Thank you.

Early Friday Nights

Friday nights with friends at NLPJC Gathering from 5.30pm and eating dinner from 6pm, this is an early

dinner from 6pm, this is an early evening event. We will light candles, recite Kiddush and eat together.



A chance to hang out and relax at the end of the week. For everyone in the community; come on your own, come with children, come with friends. Come after 6 if you can't make it earlier. Please bring vegetarian food to share.

13th April, 11th May (Lag ba'omer picnic in the park – see front page), 29th June at the Community Rooms

A reflective, meditative and peaceful Shabbat experience

It is a real joy to be able to say that we are going to add some more Shabbat morning services to our programme this year. I know that some people would really like more frequent services, so Claire and Joanna, and others from our Ba'al Tefillah group will be leading services on

31st March, 30th June & 10th November.

Our intention is for these 3 services to be a reflective, meditative, peaceful space, Followed of course by a loud, noisy/noshy kiddush! We look forward to welcoming you. 11am at the community rooms

Pesach 2012 / 5772



Saturday 7th April 6.30pm start

Dear Members, Supporting Friends & Visitors,

claim in the tax year (25p for every £1 donated)

New(ish) Haggadah!

The Liberal Judaism *Haggadah* has all the traditional elements of the service, and the opportunity to supplement these with additional study passages, poems, songs and readings. For families with younger children, a shorter, childcentred version of the Seder can be found at the other end of the Haggadah.

We will have copies of the Haggadah for everyone to use at the Communal seder, but you may need to share. If you would like to buy your own copy, for home and to bring along, (£8.50 per copy + £1.65 p&p per copy) please contact Selina at LJ directly on 020 7631 9822 /

books@liberaljudaism.org

We are delighted to welcome you to our communal Pesach Seder, which is taking place on **Saturday 7th April at 6.30pm, at the Community Centre, 3 – 5 Defoe Road, N16 0EP.** 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

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: £20 (Unwaged £9) Children: free

Visitors £28 (Unwaged £ 14) Children: £5 each (unwaged £3)

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 26th 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.

Please return this reply slip to NLPJC, PO Box 42702, London N19 5WR with payment by Monday 26th March at the latest so that we can ensure that we have a place for you. Thank you

Jewish or Jew-ish — An unconventional Jewish Journey



Once upon a time in a land far far away there lived a family. The father was a Rabbi, the mother was – well – a mother, and the children were many. Because the Rabbi didn't work for money the older children had to work. The oldest boy, aged 5, worked for the peasant families nearby. For his parents, he went to cheder, learning reading and writing of Hebrew and the

Outside of Cheder he had different educational classes from his older cousins. Their lessons were on subjects like why the Czar was a bad man and an even worse ruler: why the different classes were always at war and always would be; that there were people who felt the country needed a change in order to be free. What did this have to do with being Jewish? Well, if Jews, who had been so oppressed all of these centuries, didn't help others, what were they? And if not now, when?

At 13 he was bar mitzvah, after which his father the Rabbi gave him an ultimatum give up his political work or be dead to the family forever. He, of course, went his own way. The family sat shiva for him, and at least formally no member of his family spoke to him again.

(Privately he occasionally heard from his sisters, and even sent his mother money. Because of his political work, he eventually wound up in the United States. He settled in New York, began working for the trade union movement and the newly burgeoning Communist Party, and never saw his family again. They were all murdered by the Nazis, along with every other Jew in that little village, so he was the only member of his family who survived World War II.)

His children were also trade union and Communist Party officials. At the end of WWII his first granddaughter was born. Would she be a secular Jewish Marxist also? For him and his children, synagogues meant nothing, the practice of religion meant nothing, but being Jewish that meant everything. Being Jewish was caring about other people and working for the oppressed. And education - imperative. If you didn't do those things, you weren't Jewish. If you were for yourself alone, what were you? And if not now, when?

So the granddaughter - you will, by now, have realised that the granddaughter was me - grew up in a secular, non religious but completely Jewish household and sucked in the family history with her childhood Cheerios. Grandma Nachama (Ann) made Seders, but not Shabbats, Grandpa Gabriel made politics. We three argued all the time - I adored both of them, they loved me unconditionally.

I was sent to a Communist Party -led Yiddische Schule. I studied Yiddish, Jewish history, Jewish ethics (What constitutes Jewish ethics I hear you ask? Well, come to Cheder and find out...). We had Yiddish literature, Seders, debates. We did NOT have Hebrew, Zionism or God. I joined the CP at the earliest possible age.

In college I flirted with other things, but couldn't leave the CP or my Jewishness. When I came to England, at 21, I found being Jewish different in the UK, leading

me to some deep thinking about what it meant for me. I thought about being a secularist, like most of my English friends, but couldn't leave being Jewish alone. And then I became involved in a Communist Party branch in which many people were East End Jews, just like my grandfather. We had Seders, debates, but of course no religion and no God. It was ironic - the Communist Party solidifying my Jewishness. It was the perfect irony my Grandparents would have totally understood.

Teaching was my profession and my way of thanking my Grandparents every working day for their teaching. But in my years of teaching I discovered my Grandmother in me. Like her I listened - I learned the best way to teach is to question and be questioned, to be principled but not dogmatic - fairly Jewish. I would sav.

So what am I doing in the NLPJC? Well, NLPJC is an inclusive, diverse and welcoming community which has accepted an odd bod foreigner like me. As well, my work with the older Cheder children gives me immense satisfaction. I feel I am carrying on and enriching my guiding principles - my Grandfather's teachings in Jewish ethics and history.

My Grandfather used to quote something that I later learned was from Rabbi Tarfon (My grandfather would have been mortified. I have learned compromise.) It went something like "You may not complete the task. But nor are you free to desist from it." I know now that each individual has to decide for him/herself what "the task" is. My decisions were originally grounded on the family path, but also eventually on finding my own. Because after all, if I am for myself alone, who am I? And if not now, when?

Laura Miller

Songs of Springtime and Liberation



A four week singing course with Rebekka Wedell



'Friling – der onzog fun fridn, fun fridn' – springtime, the herald of peace [Mordechai Gebirtig]

Everybody welcome to join 4 weeks of singing Jewish songs - Welcoming Springtime - Peace - Freedom. We will learn a selection of beautiful songs in Hebrew, Yiddish and Ladino;

texts include the Song of Songs, Partisan songs and more..... PLUS Each week will begin with the opportunity for 1-2-1 personal work with Rebekka, for those wishing to build confidence and strengthen their voices. These will be 10-15 min. slots, depending on the numbers interested.

Tuesday evenings ~ 7.30pm to 9pm

6th, 13th, 20th & 27th March Venue: The Community Rooms

Cost for 4 weeks: members of NLPJC £40/£20 concs; non-members £60/£30 concs

Please sign up in advance at nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org or by phone at 020 7403 3779

Thinking of joining

Why not do it now ~ our new membership year started in January, but we offer a pro-rata subscription rate for anyone joining part way through 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.

So little time, so much to learn

I was very interested to hear that the "Flash Mob" questions from Junior Cheder showed that most adults felt they were learning in our community. That's a wonderful result. In so many places (not least in workplaces I have known) "study" is a dirty word. But then of course, we are Jews. Without learning, where are we?

Since all of the information about what the Cheder is doing has been in the Cheder Newsletter, I am going to hijack this Cheder Corner and say a few words about Jewish Book Week.

February is such a dreary month normally. Somehow it seems as though it will never be spring. But then, Jewish Book Week comes along and I feel energised again. Jackie calls it "sweeties for the mind." I find it does wonders for my spirit as well. I look through the booklet and bemoan that I can't submerge myself in study for nine days, as well as read all of the books. Actually I bemoan not only that I don't have the time, I also bemoan that I don't have the money, but that's another story. (Although the sessions are not in themselves expensive, they do mount up.) So I pick out a few on the two Sundays and feel like a student again —

only this time with knowledgeable teachers who speak to me as if I were a real adult. Sunday 19th February I heard David Abulafia and Philip Mansel talk about the role of Jews in the Mediterranean, and viceversa. The Chair was Felipe Fernandez-Arnesto, whose name was belied by his extremely pukka English accent. Not Jewish himself, he introduced himself by saying he had Jewish ancestors on his mother's side. How can you not love a Chair who, after a question asking whether the speakers were optimistic or pessimistic about the role of the Mediterranean countries today, replied "Well, it seems to me that if you are pessimistic you can only be pleasantly surprised." When the audience laughed and applauded, he went on to say "Of course I forgot. I'm in an audience of Jews pessimism is part of the culture." Bigger

The second talk was Neill Lochery's on his book on Lisbon in World War II. Did you know (as I did not) that the Portuguese amassed a great deal of gold during WWII selling tunstan (wolfram) both to the Axis and the Allies? It was crucial to being able to manufacture arms, apparently. When Salazar was dictator of Portugal, apparently

this gold was never used (although some people think he used it, this has never been proven.) So last year, when country after country including Portugal appeared to be in economic crisis, Germany made noises about Portugal "selling the family silver," ie, getting rid of the gold. When I questioned Dr Lochery about it, of course it made sense. If Germany is going to be the one of the main countries donating money in order to rescue Portugal's economy, then Germany wants all of Portugal's assets out in the open. Portugal has met this with stony silence.

While I was there I met Jackie, Liz and Anna, Roberta Harris, Sheila Chiat and a couple of other people I knew. I'm sure there were others, but the new venue, King's Place, is vast and spacious. You can literally see someone across a crowded room, and realise you know them. I felt a bit like a kid again, exchanging excited discussions about what we had learned.

It's the most sublime learning experience – next week I'm going to learn about the Jewish legions which fought in World War I. Again, something I know nothing about.

So little time, so much to learn. If you join the merry throng, I'll show you mine, if you show me yours...

Laura Miller

Junior cheder ~ newsletter

Junior Cheder are currently studying the topic of Community . As part of this, we examined the NLPJC newsletter, considering how it contributed to our community and reviewing it for content and presentation. Criticisms were levelled.

Did we think we could do better? We surely did. We had a good 20 minutes spare, so we wrote our own. Here is one article from the Junior Cheder newsletter. If you want to see the entire edition please do come by.

Rachel (Junior Cheder teacher)

Community

What is community?

This is the question that we never ask. So that is why we are going to tell you the answer.

A community is a group of people that knows each other very well. It is more than a family. Sort of a friendship.

Question for you- do you have a community which you adore? You feel part of?

If you want to respond, or have another question, contact Junior Cheder.

by Ariella and David

Are you worried about redundancy?

Self-employed but struggling in the current climate? Been out of work for a while?

Resource Jewish Employment Advice is a free, confidential, and professional service, providing advice, training, mentoring and other kinds of support to anyone in the Jewish community, including non-Jewish partners. They can be contacted at www.resource-centre.org and 0208 346 4000. Heartily recommended by members of NLPJC!

Note of Thanks

As part of looking at the duty of community to alleviate poverty, Junior Cheder raised £13.65 for Water Aid by selling hand – crafted, community-themed book marks. Junior Cheder were thrilled as it is a *very* impressive amount and they would like to thank the community for their steadfast generosity.

Rachel (Junior Cheder teacher)

LJ BIENNIAL

7pm Friday 20th to 4pm Sunday 22nd April

An opportunity to see old friends and make new ones, to learn, discuss, sing and pray in a relaxed environment. Tortworth Court Hotel in Bristol ~ a 4* hotel in magnificent grounds £295 pp / £99 for 1 day / concs & payment plans available. Creche & children's activities – more details www.liberaljudaism.org/biennial

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

Rabbi : Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu Chair : Claire Helman Hon. Secretary : Liz Reiner Treasurer : Hannah Forbes Education Chair : Sue Lukes

Head & Cheder Teacher : Dr Laura Miller Cheder / Jewish Studies Teacher: Rachel Epson

Hebrew Teacher: Vicky Millan
Volunteer Creche Worker: Anna Sklair
Parent Representative: Leila Baker
Prayers & Spirituality Co-ordinator: Maria Egan

Senior Warden: Joanna Ryam Administrator: Julia Chalfen Fund-raising Coordinator: Joanna Ryam Membership Secretary: Jackie Richards Marketing & Promotion: Claire Helman

Social Action Co-ordinator; Dan Ozarow Befriending Co-ordinator: Sheila Melzak Vacant Posts:

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.

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 Newsletter is edited by Julia Chalfen. The deadline for the June/July/Aug issue is 15th May. Please send articles for publication to Julia at:

nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org

NLPJC events calendar March – May 2012

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>
Tuesdays in March 6 ^{th,} 13 th , 20 th , 27th	7.30pm	Singing Course with Rebekka Wedell (see page 4)	
Saturday 3 rd March	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / Cheder & crèche Shabbat Service (Purim Spiel rehearsal)	
Sunday 11 th March	2pm – 5pm	PURIM Party (see page 2)	
Saturday 17 th March	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / Cheder / no crèche (toys available) Shabbat Service	
Friday 23 rd March	6pm	Cookery Fundraiser (see front page)	
Saturday 31 st March	11am	Additional meditative Shabbat service (see page 2)	
Saturday 7 th April	6.30pm	PESACH 2 nd night seder (see page 3)	
Friday 13 th April	5.30pm	Early Friday Night candles & supper (see page 2)	
Wednesday 18 th April	7pm	Yom Hashoah supper	in member's home- tbc
Saturday 21 st April	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / Cheder/no crèche <i>(toys available)</i> Shabbat Service	
Friday 27 th April	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service & Pot Luck Supper	
Saturday 5 th May	10am 10.40am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children (cheder / crèche tbc) Shabbat Service with MIRIAM ASHON bat mitzvah (see front pg)	
Friday 11 th May	5.30pm	Early Friday Night ~ Lag Ba'omer bbq in Clissold park (see front page)	
Sunday 13 th May	6.30pm / 8pm	AGM followed by supper at local restaurant (see front page)	
Saturday 19 th May	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children (NO Cheder <i>or crèche</i>) Shabbat Service with Children Welcoming Ceremony (see front pg)	
Friday 25 th May	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service & Pot Luck Supper	
Saturday 26 th May	7.30pm til late	Shavuot study gathering (see front page)	

Dates for your diary.....

10 YEARS CELEBRATION PARTY & CIVIC SERVICE ~ Sunday 17th June at 2pm (see front page)

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 or visit our website www.nlpjc.org.uk