

June / July / August
2012

Number 48

NLPJC Newsletter

North London Progressive Jewish Community



NLPJC events....

- **Adult Summer Learning Programme** see pg 3
- **10th Birthday Celebrations** On 17th June see pg 1
- **Early Friday Night Supper** On 29th June see pg 4
- **Additional Meditative Shabbat** On 30th June see pg 4

- **“Talking with our Children about Israel”**

We will be holding a discussion for our whole community on **7th July at 10-11am**, for anyone who wants to take part, on “Talking with our children about Israel”. We will be joined by Sam Grant, LJJ Netzer youth movement worker, and next year’s leader of the youth movement. Sam has a background in philosophy, has lived in Israel, and enjoys working with young people around ethical issues.

Sam will also **lead the senior cheder** for the morning, focusing on Jewish responses to ethical dilemmas.

Join us after the service and kiddush for a **pot luck lunch** at 1pm ~ everyone welcome. Please bring vegetarian food & drinks to share.

- **Family and community Service ~ July 17th at 10.50am**
For the whole community. Come and celebrate the end of a year of learning. This short lively service includes live drama, and leadership from the young people of the community.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **High Holy Days 2012 / 5773**
Ticket application forms will be on the website and emailed to the group thread in August. See back page calendar for dates

See our website at www.nlpjc.org.uk



We are looking forward to welcoming one of our founder members Dave Schneider (above) to our 10th birthday celebrations on the 17th June. “The thing I’ve always loved about the community,” wrote Dave, “ever since I was first involved in setting it up 10 years ago, is its inclusivity. Everyone is welcome and welcomed, there’s a sense of the community being comfortable with itself and open to others, a willingness to change and grow together which I think is rare.” *Photo by Lee Wallis*

North London Progressive Jewish Community

Kehillah קהילה

Have pleasure in inviting you to

Our 10th Birthday Celebrations



Sunday 17th June 2012

27 Sivan 5772

3pm to 5pm



A special celebratory service, live music and dancing,
Comedy with Dave Schneider, food & wine and raffle

RSVP is not essential, but it is useful to know how many we may be welcoming

**At: The Community Rooms & Rectory Garden adjacent to St. Mary’s Church,
Spensley Walk, off Stoke Newington Church St, London N16 9ES**

nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org / www.nlpjc.org.uk

liberal judaism

NLPJC is a constituent congregation of Liberal Judaism

Not just a place for fancy hats

I loved going to synagogue when I was a kid. Don't ask me why. Children were more or less invisible in the giant shul we went to, and I don't even think there was a cheder. But I've always loved the sense of ritual, and I was drawn by the warmth of a rabbi who served another smaller congregation close by to where we lived. But I hated the hats, the competitive dressing up, and the sense that people (or, more accurately, women) were more interested in what each other wore than who they were.

Those hats and fancy clothes came to stand, for me, for a kind of hypocrisy. By the time I was a teenager I couldn't get far enough away from the place. So off I went. In my mid-twenties I discovered progressive Judaism, and once my eyes were opened to all the possibilities, I never looked back.

After a number of years as an active member of Beit Klal Yisrael, a strongly feminist congregation that inspired more people to join the rabbinate than any other, I made the leap to becoming a student at Leo Baeck College. Five wonderful years in the seas of texts, sometimes paddling, often

drowning and finally even swimming. Study at such a level of intensity seemed to reinforce my drive for certainty. That, and wanting to see myself as an 'expert' had always driven my personality.

Then, in 2004, after ordination, I began this extraordinary journey in the rabbinate. Already a rabbinic student at NLPJC, I was lucky enough to be offered a job. A few days in and I had the mind boggling experience that everything I had learned did not prepare me for the real complexity of Jewish lives. Here I was, a mistress of the black and white, getting to grips with the in-between. It was no longer a question of people being Jewish or not, but of difficult, and sometimes painful struggles, of being in-between, of Jewish and non-Jewish partners working out relationships, decisions about children, people discovering their Jewish roots, reconnecting to their history. Some would call this liminality. And I, who had always thought she had her thinking sorted out, I loved it.

Around this time I approached an eminent sociologist who had spent his life in a study of the various world diaspora communities; I asked him if he had any advice for me. He told me

that Anglo Jews were not very interested in any kind of study, and that they looked on their communities as a kind of social club, so it would be best if I accepted the reality, and left it at that. Luckily I decided to ignore his advice.

Ten years on, and we go from strength to strength. The complex real life contemporary Jewish experiences and even dilemmas we embrace have become a source of energy, creativity and life. This dynamism is real because the issues are real; the kehillah (community) is a space to come to be who we are, rather than what we think others might expect of us. There is no need for pretence. There is not even much dressing up! And here is my one complaint. Perhaps in a sense, our kehillah is the kind of experience I longed for as a child, overawed as I was by those ladies in their impressive coats and hats. But now I'm creeping towards my own middle age, I'm occasionally drawn to a beautiful hat or an impressive fascinator! Maybe, in this next phase of life, our second decade, there will be handbags, hats, and more dressing up!

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

Our New Name

Most UK synagogue communities are not called by their proper names, but by a version of their address. The old North London Progressive was often called 'Amhurst Park'. Locally we have Woodford Liberal, West Central, Finsbury Park United, Crouch End Chavurah.

Why these names? Probably because they let you know instantly who the members are. Where they live, where they are on the religious spectrum, and even the kind of people they are likely to be.

Other shuls have long and difficult acronyms. South West Essex and the Settlement Reform Synagogue is actually called by the near un-pronounceable SWESRS! And for a long time we have been known as NLPJC. Drawn from NLPS, but adding on the idea of a Community, a wider and more flexible grouping than a 'synagogue'. Coming up to the tenth year of our life, we began to consider a Hebrew name. It had to be short, mean something real, and to express who we are.

We chose **Kehillah**, which means 'community' and is one of the words used to name synagogues since the synagogue began.

Yet a kehillah need not be a religious community, since from the Middle Ages and on it was simply the community of Jews who lived in a place.

Kehillah, then, is neither totally religious nor exclusively secular, but what it does express is our community. This new name puts relationships at the centre, and making space for

different kinds of action- religious as well as secular, a commitment to our own internal bonds and to engaging with social justice. It is a Hebrew name, for the everyday, not just on the heading of our letters.

It can be pronounced in different ways. **Kehillah** suggests European roots, and Ashkenazi pronunciation, while **kehillah** is in keeping with Modern Hebrew. What this word does not do is tell other people where we are, or who might be our members. I think that might be a good thing, in stressing our values before we define our social group. But to keep in touch with our name as it is, we will call ourselves in full **Kehillah North London**.

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

Thinking of joining us?

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.



NLPJC Adult Learning Programme
Summer 2012

Tuesday evenings

12th, 19th, 26th June, 3rd, 10th, 17th July

Teacher: Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu

7 - 8pm Beginners Hebrew Course

8 - 9.30pm A Real Belonging: Kehillah in philosophies and texts

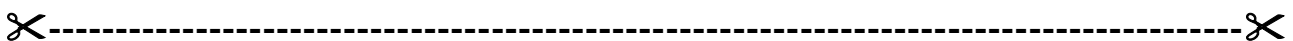
12 th June	Texts and philosophy: Is it possible to be Jewish mystics without a God? From the Sfat Emet to Arthur Green
19 th June	How do we belong together? Finding commitment without law. The philosophies of Martin Buber, Frank Rosenszweig and Emil Fackenheim
26 th June	Creating our own covenant: rabbinic texts on judgement and compassion
3 rd July	Rethinking communities, radical alternatives in Jewish community life
10 th July	Power sharing and power balance in rabbinic texts. Plus: Looking ahead to our programme next year
17 th July	Covenant of the heart: medieval and contemporary Hebrew poetry and song

Costs for 6 week course

(NB: There is no charge for 10th July 8pm session, as this includes a community discussion)

Sessions attended per week	Members of NLPJC	Members Concessions	Non-Members	Non-members Concessions
Beginner's Hebrew	£60 per term	£30 per term	£120 per term	£60 per term
Philosophy & text	£50 per term	£25 per term	£100 per term	£50 per term

Venue: The Community Rooms, Spensley Walk, Stoke Newington Church St, London N16 9ES



Adult Learning Courses ~ June & July 2012

Name.....
 Address.....
 Telephone.....
 E-mail.....

Please circle as appropriate:

I would like to attend 'Beginner's Hebrew' / 'Kehillah in philosophies & text'

I am a member/non-member

I am waged/concession

I enclose a cheque made out to NLPJC for £

Please return with payment to NLPJC, PO Box 42702, London N19 5WR Thank you

Cook-athon at the Hackney Night Shelter



On a cold night back in February NLPJC oversaw a cook-athon at the Hackney winter homeless night shelter.

Steve Mendel had organised the event (and a huge amount of shopping), Shulamit had prepared a menu that would have had Master Chef contestants sweating, and it was down to Robin, Sue and Rachel to get the knives out and chop against the clock.

After several hours of hard toil, Robin emerged as the man to beat. He got his way with a beguiling charm - and against the odds - as the homeless shelter opened for the night the food looked (almost) ready.

The mood in the kitchen was of high excitement and tension as roughly thirty homeless visitors came into the church hall. Would the complicated menu and high ambitions of the cooking team win their approval? Tea was served with an air of mounting tension. Then the soup starter. It seemed to go down well. Then the main course of lamb stew that was a huge success. And finally the apple and pear tarte that was a smash hit. Across the hall, at the dining tables and in the kitchen, people relaxed with full bellies. The day ended well for us all.

Ben Steele

We received thanks from the night shelter, and the news that the visitors said it was the best night shelter meal ever! Ed.

A reflective, meditative and peaceful Shabbat experience

Our additional Shabbats where we aim to create a reflective, peaceful and restorative experience for everyone, continue:

30th June & 10th November

Claire and Joanna, and others from our Ba'al Tefillah group will be leading services, followed of course by a loud, noisy/noshy kiddush! We look forward to welcoming you.

- 10.00 Tea and coffee
- 10.20 Space for Reflection - reading a meditation together
- 11.00 A meditative approach to the Shabbat Morning Service

At the community rooms.

Please note: no cheder or crèche is held on these dates.

Early Friday Nights

Friday nights with friends at NLPJC

Gathering from 5.30pm and eating 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.

29th June at the Community Rooms

Cheder Corner

The last Cheder brought us a wonderful lesson from LJY-Netzer. Adam Francis worked with both Cheders in a lesson that was instructive for all of us. He started with what looked like a pie on a piece of paper. Each child received one, and was asked to divide up the pie into the sections that represented their Judaism. "What do you consider to be part of your Judaism?" he asked. "Food!" one student said. "Bagels," said another. "That's food," someone said. "Oh, ok." So we came up with holidays, services, community, matza (Well, it's not really food, one can argue. It's an obligation. So we allowed it.) Also, Rabbi, kiddush, cheder, Hebrew etc etc.

The students were then asked to divide their pie into different sized "slices" and put in each slice the word that represented what they considered the most down to the least of what was in their Judaism.

The older students helped the younger, and everyone got involved in colour coding their Judaism pies.

But it made me think. If each of the youngsters could do this, I wondered what the adults would do? For me, I guess history would be first, followed by community, food, literature, holidays. I think it's a very useful exercise, as it allows us to look into what we think of as our Judaism. I wondered what most adults would put down as parts of their Judaism. Maybe we should do Anonymous Adult Pie Charts to show the community what are the most important aspects of Judaism to us as a community.

LJY Netzer is coming back again to work with the older Cheder in July. I don't know about the kids but I am looking forward to it.

Laura Miller

Mazel Tov!



Mazel Tov to Miriam Ashon (L) on the occasion of her bat mitzvah on May 5th. Miriam raised awareness about sweatshops as her Bat Mitzvah tzedakah project. There was information and materials available on the day, including the chance to send a postcard to support the 'Love fashion, hate sweatshops' campaign.

The crèche children surprised Miriam with special celebratory biscuits (below) they had made for her.



NLPJC Members News

A warm welcome to new members:

- ❖ Joanna Hart & Carla Pinto & Jared
- ❖ Carry Gorney
- ❖ Sarah Lerner, Summai & Miriam

Our 100 club winners

- ❖ Davina Good (March)
- ❖ Gill Levy (April)
- ❖ Michael & Sue Ellman (May)
- ❖ Claire Helman (June)

It's never 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.

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
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 Epton
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

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 Sep/Oct/Nov issue is 15th August. Please send articles for publication to Julia at: nlpjc@liberaljudaism.org

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 events calendar

June – August 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 June 12 th , 19 th , 26 th	7pm / 8pm	Beginner's Hebrew / Philosophy & text study (see page 3)	
Saturday 2 nd June	10am / 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / Cheder & crèche Shabbat Service	
Saturday 16 th June	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	
Sunday 17 th June	3pm – 5pm	10 TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS (see page 1)	
Friday 22 nd June	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service & Pot Luck Supper	
Friday 29 th June	5.30pm	Early Friday Night Supper (see page 4)	
Saturday 30 th June	11am	Additional meditative Shabbat service (see page 4)	
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Tuesdays in July 3 rd , 10 th , 17 th	7pm / 8pm	Beginner's Hebrew / Philosophy & text study (see page 3)	
Saturday 7 th July	10am 10am 10.40am / 10.50am 11am 1pm	Community discussion "Talking to our children about Israel" (pg 1) Children's Hebrew Kol b'yachad service for children / Cheder & crèche Shabbat Service Pot Luck Lunch	
Saturday 21 st July	10am / 10am 10.50am	Torah Breakfast / Children's Hebrew Family & Community Service (see page 1) NB: NO Cheder or crèche	
Friday 27 th July	7.15pm / 8pm	Erev Shabbat Service & Pot Luck Supper	
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Saturday 4 th August	10am 10.40am 11am	Torah Breakfast Kol b'yachad service for children Shabbat Service	
Saturday 18 th August	10am 10.40am 11am	Torah Breakfast Kol b'yachad service for children Shabbat Service	

High Holy Day Dates for your diary.....

EREV ROSH HASHANAH Sunday 16th September ROSH HASHANAH Monday 17th September
 KOL NIDRE Tuesday 25th September YOM KIPPUR Wednesday 26th September
 SUKKOT SERVICE & SUPPER Sunday 30th September
 SIMCHAT TORAH SERVICE & SUPPER Sunday 7th October

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