



The Newsletter of

Liverpool Reform Synagogue

December 2019 / Kislev 5780

The Annual General Meeting of the congregation took place on 11th December 2019.



Council members following the AGM

Your elected Council members are:

Paul Levinson
Alan Rae
Annette Rae

Esther Kearney
Keith Levin
Pet Patrick

John Ablett
Karen Ablett
Ben Globe

Jennifer Verson
Frankie Huskisson
Steven Daniels

The Council would like to thank Neil Caplan and Anna Cohen for their past work on the Council.

The Council would like to wish the congregation "Chag Chanukah Sameach"



Do Religion and Politics mix? Yes, especially at Chanukah!

Rabbi Warren Elf

The story of Chanukah is about freedom from political oppression and the right to be able to worship and practice our religion in the way we choose. It is about freedom from persecution and we celebrate the victory in Jerusalem over Antiochus Epiphanes and his army, enabling us to rededicate the Temple and resume living a Jewish lifestyle again.

I have often heard it said that religion and faith leaders should not meddle in politics. It has also been said that the judiciary should not enter into the political arena and rule on government or parliamentary matters. If we are talking party politics (Politics with a 'capital P') I generally agree, although I do know some faith leaders and legal figures who are members of one political party or another.

What I do believe most strongly is that faith and religious leaders have a duty and responsibility to speak out and encourage protest or action when we feel that there are ethical dilemmas or moral issues. The role models for religious leaders continue to be the prophets and inspirational leaders who stood out from the crowd to protest against injustice and unfairness, warning the people and leaders of their time of the errors of their ways.

If religion has a wider role to play in society it is surely to champion just causes, to fight poverty and exploitation and suffering, to encourage reaching out to those in need. Religion is about acknowledging that we are all made in the image of God, that we are all unique and equally special human beings, that we all deserve equal respect and love.

For me and the vast majority of my colleagues, whether religious or lay leaders, that will occasionally mean that we have to enter into the arena of politics with a 'small p' to highlight situations where we see a need to speak out. This may involve criticising particular actions by governments or it may involve raising concerns about certain policies of political parties if we see danger arising from them.

Occasionally we may stray into very sensitive areas – antisemitism in the Labour party and Islamophobia in the Conservative party may be two examples that many are concerned about. If people feel that actions or policies are threatening them, causing anxiety or fear, or exacerbating prejudice and hatred, then yes we must raise the issues and challenge or protest where necessary to reassure those who feel vulnerable.

We have a general election coming up and, increasingly, for the first time in many years in this country, many Jews are feeling vulnerable and worried about antisemitism in this country, especially from the far right and certain ranks within the Labour Party. It has reached the level that many Labour MPs, especially Jewish ones (as we are very aware here in Liverpool), have resigned from the Labour Party and some have joined other political parties and some from within the ranks of Labour are suggesting that we should not vote for a Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn.

One of my colleagues, Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain MBE, has even written to the members of his synagogue telling them that they should vote strategically to ensure that Corbyn does not win the election and become prime minister, as he believes that could fundamentally change our freedom to live as Jews in Britain.

I am not sure that I would go that far as I also have major concerns about anti-Muslim rhetoric within the Conservative Party led by Boris Johnson and believe that is also a major concern for religious freedom in Britain. Many of our Muslim brothers and sisters also feel strongly that this is an issue and has increased hate crime against them.

The rhetoric being used by too many politicians and their supporters is worrying and divisive and is damaging the social cohesion in the UK today. Traditionally both major parties are against prejudice, racism and hatred but the language has changed, partly due to social media and partly due to more extreme elements voicing their views.

So, my advice is that we should exercise our right to vote, indeed must exercise our right to vote, but think carefully about who we vote for, which party and also which politician. Not every Labour candidate is antisemitic and not every Conservative candidate is anti-Muslim, far from it, but these are considerations.

I believe that we should vote for political candidates or parties that are respectful of everyone in our society and who advocate understanding, compassion and concern for the issues we care about. We should question candidates and their motives and values to ensure that the candidates and parties we vote for will advocate and champion just causes and work for a harmonious and peaceful constituency and world.

In this way we can live up to the prophetic ideals of Judaism and play a small part in working for a Britain that challenges prejudice, intolerance, hatred and hate crimes. We want a happier, fairer and more peaceful world and the way we vote and involve ourselves politically in our country matters and can affect this. So please vote on 12th December.

You may also like to know that the Reform Judaism Roadshow is coming to Liverpool next year, when Rabbis Jonathan Romain and Laura Janner-Klausner are coming to Liverpool Reform Synagogue – watch out for details in the next newsletter. You can ask Jonathan (and Laura) about his letter to his congregants as well as any question on religious, political, ethical and practical Reform Judaism and more. It will be a great afternoon.

Let's make sure our votes count so that we can celebrate our and other people's religious freedom this Chanukah.

Chag Chanukah sameach – wishing all of us a happy and peaceful Chanukah.

A Parting Message from Maya Skaarbrevik

Dear friends and colleagues,

In bittersweet news, I will be moving on from my role as Progressive Jewish Students Fieldworker (previously Generation Fieldworker) at the end of this month. I am excited for my next step, which takes me to Likewise, a social care/welfare charity based near Finchley Road.

I am incredibly proud of the work that myself and my colleagues have done with PJS. I have been in this role since July 2017 and since then we have been bold in the changes we made to the structure of the department, responding to the changing needs of our Jewish students, and giving more opportunities for these students to have meaningful and transformative moments in their Jewish journey. On a personal level, this role has also been incredibly important in developing my own skills, and I myself have had many transformative moments on my own Jewish journey. I would like to thank all of the people who have worked with me, namely Rabbi Daniel Lichman, our PJS rabbi/chaplain, for being a continuous source of inspiration and guidance and my current managers Debbie Doobay and Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner for the constant support.

Some highlights from my time with PJS/Generation:

- Visiting over 20 campuses across the UK, delivering educational sessions, Friday night dinners, and residential weekends.
- Establishing Reconnect Retreat, a Jewish spirituality weekend shabbaton set in the peak district.
- Establishing Chizuk, our Student Leadership programme with our first cohort in 2019 taking 10 student leaders from 9 campuses on a retreat and teaching them how to build and sustain progressive Jewish student communities on campus.
- Rebranding our department from Generation to Progressive Jewish students internally and across all social media platforms, establishing a clearer vision of how we plan to support students in the long term.
- Taking 80 young people across Israel over two consecutive Birthright Progressive trips, in 2018, and 2019, with our buses one of the fastest to fill up both years!
- Working with a collection of synagogues to support their sixth form students prepare for university.
- Delivering gifts to over 200 students throughout the year to help them celebrate Jewish festivals, and the start and end of the academic years.

We hope to soon have a new appointment for the role of Progressive Jewish Students Fieldworker to continue the amazing work, but for any PJS related queries from January please email Daniel (rabbidaniel@rjuk.org), or Director of Informal Education Jonathan Hefetz (JHefetz@rjuk.org)

Best,

Maya Skaarbrevik



Maya Skaarbrevik

Student Fieldworker

Sign up to our e-newsletters to

stay up to date!

www.bit.ly/PJSUK



tel 020 8349 5661

FRANKIE GOOGLES

FASCINATING JEWISH FACTS

By Frankie Huskisson

The Maiden of Ludmir – The Female Hasidic Rebbe

Hannah Rachel Verbermacher was born in 1805 in Ludmir, Volhynia, Russian Empire (now Ukraine). Her father Monesh Verbermacher was a devotee of Rabbi Mordechai Twersky who was known as the Maggid of Chernobyl. An only daughter from a wealthy family, her father gifted her an extensive education which included Torah Study. Her knowledge made her well known. Some said she could even perform miracles. She was even given kvitlach (prayer request notes), Unsurprisingly this upset other Hasidim and her father asked her to consult Rabbi Twersky. She gave up teaching and studying for a while and got married but the marriage didn't last. She eventually emigrated to the Holy Land, living in Jerusalem where she also had a group of followers. On Shabbat afternoon people would come to listen to her recite Torah and on Rosh Chodesh she would lead prayers at Rachel's Tomb.

She died on 22 Tammuz 5648 (1st July 1888) and was buried on the Mount of Olives.

The Fonz's Favourite Hebrew Letter – HeH

Like me, if you're old enough to remember the American TV series Happy Days, four of the main cast members were Jewish.

Henry Winkler was born in Manhattan in 1945 to German Jewish refugees. His mother ran the Judaica Shop.

The late Tom Bosley (Howard Cunningham) was often cast as a Christian minister but was born into a Jewish family in Chicago in 1927. He died in 2010.

Donny Most (Ralph Malph) was born into a Jewish family in Brooklyn in 1953.

Anson Williams was born Anson William Heimlich in Los Angeles in 1949. If his real surname sounds familiar, his uncle was Henry Judah Heimlich (1920 – 2016). A thoracic surgeon who became famous for creating the abdominal thrust, the Heimlich manoeuvre, which has saved many lives.

American Civil War Jewish Chaplains

During the American Civil War, Jews fought on both sides but only Christian Chaplains were allowed at first. A Dutch born Rabbi, Arnold Fischel, from Congregation Shearith Israel in New York was eventually granted a meeting with President Abraham Lincoln. He was successful and Jewish Chaplains were introduced, himself being one.

Before going to America Rabbi Fischel was a lecturer at the Liverpool Old Hebrew Congregation, Seel Street, Liverpool, as well as being appointed to the Board of Management of the Liverpool Hebrew Education Institute.

Seel Street Synagogue was the first purpose built shul in Liverpool. It opened in 1808 and moved to another purpose built synagogue in Princes Road in 1874.

The Portable Synagogue

The famous liner Queen Mary, on which my maternal grandfather worked as a marine fireman, was the first ocean liner to be built with a purpose built synagogue on board. The synagogue, complete with an Aron Hakodesh and Sefer Torah, was consecrated by the then Chief Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz. It was accessible to people of all travelling classes of the Jewish faith and functioned through the ships whole service (1936 – 1968). Sadly the shul was dismantled when the ship became a floating hotel in Long Beach, California, and is now a storeroom.

Liverpool Newest Youth Club!

The Liverpool Reform Synagogues has been running a youth club since February 2019, it is complementary to the JLGB activities and opportunities provided by all the synagogues and Chabad to get involved in Jewish education.

The senior club ran weekly, and with its success we began a juniors club in June.

The senior club is open to young people who are in Years 7 and above (11-18yrs).The club will run fortnightly on a [Sunday 6:30-8:30p.m.](#) membership fee £2.

The junior club is open to young people who are in years 3-6 (7-11yrs), also running fortnightly on a [Sunday from 5-7:15 p.m](#) Membership fee £2, or £3.50 with a meal deal!

The youth club provides activities and a place to chill for young people. The club is staffed by trained education and youth workers, and a support team of volunteers.

The club offers a range of activities as we have been lucky to secure extra funding from the Movement for Reform Judaism. Activities include

Table tennis	Cinema nights	Chill out
Tuck shop	Cookery	Sports
Arts activities	Film & media editing	PSP gaming

Youth Clubs: These groups will now be fortnightly on alternate weeks.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us on [0799 057 3652](tel:07990573652) or email Youth@Lrshul.org



Liverpool Reform Shul
Save the date
Youth Clubs

SENIOR CLUB 11-18YRS	JUNIOR CLUB 7-11YRS
12 January 26 January 9 February 8 March 22 March	19 January 2 February 1 March 15 March 29 March
6:30-8:30p.m	5.00-7.15pm

Cheder – 2nd Sunday every month during KDPS term time.

For children aged 3+ to Bar/Bat Mitzvah

We offer a fun interactive Cheder for children aged over 3, which is made up of three age-based sessions, pre-school, infant and junior groups.

The sessions consist of Hebrew reading, and the exploration of Jewish faith and life through craft, cookery/food based & story based sessions

*Cheder dates 2020 10:30-12:30pm with light snacks

12th January 9th February 8th March

Decorating the Succah

On Sunday 13th October an enthusiastic group of adults and children gathered to build the Succah. Donations of foliage, fruit, vegetables and flowers were gratefully received from the congregation.



Shabbat 21st December 2019 (pre-Chanukah special)

all starting at 10.45 a.m.

All families of all ages are welcome to join us.

Contact Rabbi Warren or Bev or Vivi for more details or just come and join us!

Anna Cohen Shares her Thoughts on Celebrating a Very Special and Memorable Bat Mitzvah at LRS



It is usual for Bar and Bat Mitzvah participants to tell of their hopes and ambitions for the future, how important this day is to them. At 81 I have a different perspective. I can look back and see where this journey of life has brought me and where I might still go.

At birth we all begin a journey, Moses was no different and there is much to be learnt from his journey that could help us on ours, but before we get to all that, I need to tell you a little about my beginning.

My Bat Mitzvah should have taken place on 21st September 1950, so why would I want to do it now? The opportunity was there, and it seemed the right thing to do.

I was a very small child, 3 or 4 when I was evacuated to live with my Grandmother. She was a widow and 50 at the time, a very brave lady. I was a truly dreadful child! The village we lived in is now a town, and the lovely countryside I explored is built on, but I was very loved and protected. The only other Jewish people were two or three families of my Grandmother's age. We celebrated the High days and Holidays and lit the candles every Friday night. My Grandmother taught me to cook and run a Jewish home, but my understanding of my faith and the opportunity to learn Hebrew did not exist and it would be many years before I was able to learn these things.

When I first read the words of my Torah portion and considered what they meant I realised quite a bit of research was needed. Moses' words "Today I am 120 years old and can no longer come and go. God has told me I will not cross the Jordan, God will go before you and Joshua will lead you into the promised land!" The more research I did the more opinions were expressed, it reminded me of the old Jewish joke '2 Jews 3 opinions' but multiplied many more times. It is agreed Moses had sinned but how? Moses did not always listen to God's instruction and would not therefore put his full trust and faith in God's will. We will come back to this further on.

From the very beginning of Moses' life he had been chosen by God to become leader and teacher of the Israelites. He would with God's help take the slaves from Egypt to freedom and the promised land. It would prove to be a hazardous journey, which we recall and tell our children every Passover. Throughout the long journey Moses would teach God's laws and will for the life they would lead. If a problem was beyond Moses, he would consult God for advice. But Moses was a human being with human frailties. He would make mistakes and after so many years being teacher and leader, he did not always listen to God carefully enough and probably put his own interpretation on the instructions and advice he received. His lack of trust would be counted to have been a sin.

Many of us who will experience leadership at some part of our lives, including myself, especially if the position has been of several years standing, will find it difficult to continue to listen to those with up to date views and fresh ideas who want to carry on and expand what we may have started. This also occurs within our own families. We hope to teach our children rules for what we consider a good life, but they grow, develop and have very different ideas to us, which often seem

outrageous, especially those that make themselves very vocal in those dreadful teens, but they deserve for us to listen.

Moses had additional problems, as those who had been slaves had children and grandchildren who were now free men and women. They would want to express themselves and question their way of life and the rules that applied to them, so unrest would be created and more and more questions asked.

We now come to the incident of The Waters of Meribah, which would become the catalyst in forbidding Moses entry into the promised land. This occurs towards the end of their wanderings, unrest became more aggressive. Moses was approached with complaints for the lack of water. How were they going to take care of their animals and how would they all survive without water? Moses turned to God for a solution. God instructed Moses to take his staff and along with Aron his brother approach the rock, speak to it and water would flow! (In an earlier incident Moses was instructed to strike a rock to produce water). In his haste to appease the Israelites, Moses took up the staff, went to the rock, leaving Aron to follow, he struck the rock twice and water flowed. Moses had not listened carefully enough to God and had not kept his faith in him. God told him and Aron that they would not set foot into the promised land as they had sinned.

Does this mean Moses had failed in his life's journey? No, Moses had achieved so much, he was a great leader and teacher, he had brought the slaves out of Egypt to the Promised Land, they, the Israelites would enter with their new leader Joshua. The rabbis and scholars regarded Moses as the greatest leader of his time and many would, and will, regard him as the greatest leader of all time. It is not always given that we achieve all we desire.

Our own journeys will contain joy, sorrow, mistakes and regrets, sometimes tragedy, but we need to stop and recall all we have achieved. I have always believed that the talents we develop are God given. It is up to us to remember, what we so often forget, to say thank you to those who support and encourage us. We forget in our busy lives to stop and listen, to try and open our minds to all God provides. It's learning to listen that's so important.

My own journey has been interesting, never dull, sometimes terrifying. There has been pain and sorrow and moments of unexpected joy. I have watched my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren grow and develop, some of them having difficulties to overcome. I am very proud of the loving, caring adults they have become and hope for the young ones to find their places in the world. It feels very strange to be the head of so large a family, it was something I had never envisaged. Do I have regrets? Yes, made mistakes, more than I care to remember, hurt those I love and carry on regardless. Yes, we are given free will to make decisions, to follow paths we might have been better not to, but we can hope to learn from our mistakes and gain a little wisdom along the way, above all, listen.

My greatest wish, from a very small child, was to become a prima ballerina, but despite many years of hard work it was not to be. It would be many years before a different dance dream would come to fruition. I was fortunate to have developed other talents.

4 years ago I was persuaded to find a dance school and to take a range of medals for ballroom and latin dance. When I stopped laughing, I decided to have a go, I like a challenge. I passed my medals, had wonderful teachers who put up with my moans and constant complaints that I would never do it and the absolute panic on each medal day. It is a lot of fun, a lot of bruises, some falls and lots of friends. Very often the greatest wishes can be achieved but not in the way we imagine.

All of you enjoy your life journeys, from the youngest to the eldest, set your goals, no journey is a failure. The smallest of achievements give joy. Don't forget to listen or to say thank you, those for me are the things about Moses' journey that will always stay with me.

I want to say a huge thank you to Martin Herr who truly has the patience of Job and thanks to Rabbi Elf for answering my questions and his support. These two always believed I would be able to do this even when I didn't. Thank you to all the family and friends and congregants who are here today. Your support has truly made my day!

Viva la Diva By Simone Cohen



This was a hugely successful event, held on 24 November, enjoyed by women of all ages, LRS members and friends, organised by the LRS Social committee.

Our Shul Hall was cleverly decorated, in black and hot pink, to create a spectacular setting for this celebratory evening. All the team (including our two mixologists / cocktail waiters!) wore black and pink outfits to complement the glamorous theme.

As well as a professional make up demonstration and an informative skincare workshop, we shared practical wellbeing hints and tips to help us deal with potential stresses of the winter months.

Mocktails, cocktails and sumptuous foods added to the experience, as well as a range of fabulous raffle prizes (all with a wellbeing theme, of course) for the lucky winners.

Everyone went home with a goodie bag and most importantly a 'glow' from enjoying a fabulous evening.

Look out for details of the next event from the LRS social committee - an 80's themed disco to celebrate Purim.

Liverpool Reform
Synagogue
Dec 22
4-7pm

Chanukah Party



Bring a white T-Shirt
to decorate and be
ready to party!

£2 ticket
or £6
per family



Bring your Menorah
- its gonna get lit!

NEWS

Special Bat Mitzvah Celebration

A special service took place to fulfill a wish held by Anna Cohen to celebrate her birthday with a 'very belated' Bat Mitzvah. This was the first time Anna had been called up to read from the Torah. After the service the congregation joined Anna to share a delicious kiddush which she kindly provided.

Heartfelt Condolences

The stone setting for the late Hershel Levinson took place on 24th November 2019. The congregation wish the family a Long Life.

Aufruf

The pre-wedding Aufruf service of our member Susie Gordon and Maor Yavetz, the son of our member Shelley, took place on 14th December. The service was led by Martin Herr. Following the service the congregation and guests joined Susie and Maor in a celebratory Kiddush. The congregation would like to wish Susie and Maor Mazeltov and a very happy future together.

Erev Shabbat Chavurah Suppers led by Martin Herr

The aim is to hold the Erev Shabbat Chavurah Supper on the first Friday of each month. Unfortunately, this is not always possible, therefore we will always let you know via the Shul email address if one is to be held in a specific month.

To remind you, they consist of sitting round the table, singing some Shabbat songs followed by Kiddush, eating, chatting and benching after the meal.

We start at 6.30pm when everyone helps to prepare the room and put the food out. All that we ask is that if you come along please bring a dish either kosher/non-meat or vegetarian (sweet or savoury) to share on the night.

Thanks for contributions

Special thanks to Rabbi Warren Elf, Frankie Huskisson, Anna Cohen and Simone Cohen for their contributions to this newsletter.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY	
Saturday 21 st December	Shabbat Morning Family Service
Sunday 22 nd December	Chanukah (1 st Candle) Chanukah Party 4pm – 7pm at LRS
2020	
Sunday 9 th February	Tu B'Shevat
Monday 10 th February	
Monday 9 th March	Erev Purim
Tuesday 10 th March	Purim
Wednesday 8 th April	Erev Pesach/1 st Seder Night
Monday 20 th April	Yom Ha'Shoah
Tuesday 21 st April	
Monday 27 th April	Yom Ha'Atzmaut
Tuesday 28 th April	
Thursday 21 st May	Yom Ha'Zikaron
Friday 22 nd May	
Thursday 28 th May	Erev Shavuot
Friday 29 th May	Shavuot

Times of services will be confirmed via e-mail prior to the date.

We would like to welcome you to our services which are held each Shabbat

Erev Shabbat: Approximately once per month we gather for our Shabbat Evening service and Chavurah Supper, starting at 6.30pm. Where possible this takes place on the first Friday of the month, but this may change from time to time. Dates will be published on the web site and members will be notified via e-mail.

Shabbat Morning: 10.30am.

The service ends at 12.30pm with a Kiddush where the congregation come together to share wine, challah and other foods.

Liverpool Reform Synagogue Web Page

The Web page has now been updated and can be accessed at <http://www.lrshul.org>

The Web page will continue to be updated and new items of interest added on a regular basis. If you have any suggestions or wish to contribute to the web page please contact Stuart Becker at Email: webmaster@lrshul.org

Guidance following the death of a member of the Liverpool Reform Synagogue

Liverpool Reform Synagogue appreciates how difficult the death of a loved one can be and in order to assist members at this time a booklet has been developed which provides guidance and relevant important information. The booklet can be found on the LRS web page at <http://www.lrshul.org/death-and-mourning/>. Paper copies are also available in the synagogue.

If you are in need of advice, please telephone Anna Cohen on 07729 562 174

PESACH EDITION – COPY DEADLINE 22ND MARCH 2020

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**In case of emergency when the Synagogue is closed please telephone:
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WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUTURE NEWSLETTERS.
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH THE COMMUNITY OR WOULD LIKE
TO PROVIDE A REGULAR ARTICLE PLEASE E-MAIL US AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS.

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