

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LIBERAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

LJS NEWS



Celebrating Tim Farrell's 50th Anniversary

At the Shabbat morning service on 7 June we celebrate Timothy Farrell's 50th anniversary as organist at the LJS.

The son of professional musicians, Tim grew up in Cape Town and was playing the piano by the age of three. He won scholarships to the Royal College of Music in London and to the Worshipful Company of Musicians. After a brief period as Assistant Organist at St Paul's Cathedral, he was appointed Sub-Organist at Westminster Abbey. In 1974, he became Organist, Choirmaster and Composer to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at the Chapels Royal. In the following year, Kenneth Tudor, a lay vicar at Westminster Abbey who also sang bass in the LJS's choir, let Tim know that there was a vacancy for the position of organist at the LJS. And the rest is history!

Director of Music at the LJS, Cathy Heller Jones, who has worked with Tim for over forty years, says: *'I have never ceased to be grateful for our luck in having this world-class organist playing at our services every week. Beloved and treasured by his colleagues and the congregation, Tim's consummate skill, sensitivity and musicality have delighted and moved LJS worshippers through times of celebration and sorrow.'*

Do join us for the special service on 7 June at 11.00am.

Left: Tim Farrell playing on the 1926 Compton organ in the old LJS building c. 1980; Right: Tim at home

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## Shabbat and festival services: May and June (in person and online)

Unless otherwise stated. Friday evening services are at 6.45pm and Shabbat morning services are at 11.00am, and led either by Rabbi Alexandra Wright or Rabbi Igor Zinkov. At the end of each service on Friday evening and Shabbat morning, congregants are invited to join together for Kiddush in person or via Zoom. The link is shown on screen with clear instructions.

<b>Friday 2 May</b>	Special blessing for Jacob Lovick and Emma Halstead
<b>Shabbat 3 May</b> <i>Tazria-M'tzora</i>	Sermon: Professor Emerita Geraldine Van Bueren Naming and Blessing of Ralph Mills, son of Sabrina and Bertie
<b>Friday 9 May</b> ♦	Service co-led by Sebastian Wasserberg, Bar Mitzvah, and Student Rabbi Andrea Kulikovsky
<b>Shabbat 10 May</b> <i>Acharey-Mot/Kedoshim</i>	Sebastian Wasserberg, Bar Mitzvah
<b>Friday 16 May</b>	Astrid Salaun, Admission Service
<b>Shabbat 17 May</b> <i>Emor</i>	Service led by Student Rabbi Andrea Kulikovsky Olga Polischuk, Admission Service
<b>Friday 23 May</b>	
<b>Shabbat 24 May</b> <i>B'Har/B'Chukkotai</i>	
<b>Shabbat 24 May</b> <b>(Afternoon Service)</b>	Fanya Randolph-Minchah, Bat Mitzvah
<b>Friday 30 May</b>	
<b>Shabbat 31 May</b> <i>B'Midbar</i>	Naming and Blessing of Isaac Kirk, son of Josh and Tamar Kirk
<b>Sunday 1 June</b> <b>6.45pm</b> <i>Erev Shavuot</i>	Service followed by dinner and Tikkun Leyl Shavuot (study sessions) with Rabbis for Human Rights (see page 3)
<b>Monday 2 June</b> <b>11.00am</b>	Shavuot Festival Service
<b>Friday 6 June</b>	Service led by Student Rabbi Andrea Kulikovsky
<b>Shabbat 7 June</b> <i>Naso</i>	Celebration of Timothy Farrell's 50th anniversary as organist at the LJS (see pages 1 and 7)
<b>Friday 13 June</b> ♦	
<b>Shabbat 14 June</b> ♦ <i>B'ha'a' lot'cha</i>	Guest speaker: Mohammad Fahili from the Clore Jewish-Arab Community Centre, Akko Service followed by Nosh 'n' Drosh with Dr Emma Wall on her research into Long COVID (see page 4)
<b>Friday 20 June</b>	
<b>Shabbat 21 June</b> <i>Sh'lach L'cha</i>	L'Dor va'Dor Service in the Sanctuary with Rimon Religion School Koleinu Service in the Rabbi John Rayner Prayer Room
<b>Friday 27 June</b>	Pride Shabbat; Service interpreted for the Deaf community (see page 4)
<b>Shabbat 28 June</b> <i>Korach</i>	Blessing for Karen Newman and Susan Crane to celebrate their 40th anniversary and Susan's special birthday

♦ **Parking alert: cricket at Lord's on this date; parking restrictions and/or charges may apply**

## Congratulations!

Mazel tov to **Hollie Fox** and **Asher Fingerhut** on the birth of their firstborn, **Sophia Marie**, born on 6 January 2025, and to the **Goldblatt** family on the birth of **Henry Boaz** who was born on 18 January 2025 and pictured here at two months.



Congratulations, too, to **Siena** and **Jonathan Golan** on the birth of **Elizabeth Cornelia Penelope**, sister to **Aaron**, who was born on 14 March 2025 and is pictured here at four days old.



## Shavuot celebrations

**Sunday 1 June 6.45pm – 1.00am on Monday 2 June; 11.00am on Monday 2 June**

This year's theme is '*L'Or Goyyim*' – 'A Light to the Nations' and we will be welcoming a speaker from Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR). This organisation was founded in Israel in 1988 and is dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. It comprises rabbis and rabbinic students from diverse Jewish traditions, including Liberal, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist. RHR is driven by the profound Jewish values of justice, dignity and equality.

The Erev Shavuot service begins at 6.45pm, followed by a Chavurah supper, our traditional cheesecake competition and Tikkun Leyl Shavuot (study sessions) until 1.00am. The Shavuot morning service begins at 11.00am on Monday 2 June.

## The LJS 2025 AGM and Council Elections

**7.30pm – 9.30pm Thursday 19 June**  
(doors open 7.00pm for refreshments)



We are delighted to announce that our guest speaker for this year's in-person and online AGM is Dr Ed Kessler MBE. Ed is Chair of the Advisory Committee overseeing the new Movement for

Progressive Judaism, and will be talking about latest developments.

At the AGM we will confirm the Council members standing for a second term and appoint new members to Council.

If you are interested in becoming a Council member, please contact Jonathan Bruck, Executive Director ([execdirector@ljs.org](mailto:execdirector@ljs.org)), for more information.

**Council nominations must be submitted by 7.00pm on Thursday 29 May.**

Details will also be available in our weekly e-newsletter Shalom LJS and on the LJS website.

## Drop-In for Asylum Seeker Families

The next Drop-In dates for our asylum seeker family guests are **Sunday 11 May** and **Sunday 15 June** from 2.00–4.00pm.

If you are interested in becoming a Drop-In volunteer, please email Anna Becker: [asylumproject@ljs.org](mailto:asylumproject@ljs.org)

## Bereavements

We offer our sympathy to those who mourn:

**Claire Callender**, partner of Annette, sister of Colin and Neeman

**Bryan Diamond**, husband of Judith, and father of Lynette, Naomi and Susannah

**Jason Josefs**, husband of Maren, father of Michael and Max, son of Leslie and Philip, Jacob and Linda, and brother of Robert and Matthew

**Lee Montague**, father of Sophie and Dan

**Anita Simon**, mother of Paul and Michael, and mother-in-law of Liba and Carolyn

**Karin Singer**, mother of Hillary

**Sam Wainwright**, father of Sally, David, Colin and Mark

We also extend our sympathy to LJS member Alex Cowan and her sisters Juliet and Annie on the death of their father, **Rex Braham Cowan**.

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר האבלים  
*May God comfort you and all who mourn*

Please see page 12 for words of appreciation for Bryan Diamond, who played a significant role in synagogue life.

# Community Events and Activities

## The LJS Fundraising Gala Evening

**Saturday 17 May 6.45–10.00pm at the LJS**

This special event is to support the future of the LJS, and will be an evening of great food, drinks, entertainment and imaginative fundraising.

Following a Pimm's reception with pianist Maurice Horhut, there will be a three-course dinner catered by Adam Nathan.

Our special guests are Felicity Kendal CBE and Tracy-Ann Oberman, who will be introduced by the film and television producer David Thompson.

Don't miss out on what promises to be a fabulous evening in support of our community. Tickets are £120, and can be booked here:

<https://www.ljs.org/event/gala>



## The LJS Film Club

*Odessa... Odessa!*

**Wednesday 21 May at 7.00pm**

Everyone is welcome to attend our screening of *Odessa... Odessa!*, a 2005 French/Israeli production directed by Michale Boganim.

At a time when Ukraine is a central topic of concern for all Europeans, it is worth reminding ourselves of the major importance the city has played in the history of Jewish culture – in 1897, for instance, Jews comprised some 37% of this multi-ethnic city's population.

This fascinating 2005 documentary is a snapshot of Odessa-related Jewish experience from two decades ago. And although filmed in the recent past, it makes clear how the 20th century informed the lives of its participants, as the film tracks their individual stories from Odessa to Israel to New York.

To register: <https://www.ljs.org/event/odessa>

## Nosh 'n' Drosh

Nosh 'n' Drosh is our occasional series of talks and discussion over a bagel lunch following the Shabbat morning service. All are welcome. (No charge.)

**Saturday 14 June**

*Everything you wanted to know about Long COVID but were too afraid to ask* – talk by Dr Emma Wall



We are delighted that LJS member Dr Emma Wall is going to speak to us on her specialist subject which is of great importance and of interest to so many.

Emma is an academic consultant in Infectious Diseases at UCLH. She holds a Senior Clinical Research Fellowship, leading a partnership on COVID-19 between the Francis Crick Institute and UCLH Biomedical Research Centre.

She is a co-investigator and drug trial lead in the STIMULATE-ICP trial [www.stimulate-icp.org](http://www.stimulate-icp.org) evaluating management and drug treatment of Long COVID. She has been working in the UCLH Post-COVID clinic since 2020.

Do join us for this opportunity to hear from an expert in this field. To register: <https://www.ljs.org/event/EmmaWall>

## Pride Shabbat

**Friday 27 June at 6.45pm**

The LJS celebrates and honours LGBTQ+ Pride and D/deaf Pride in collaboration with the recently launched DeafShul project led by BSL interpreter Vicki Ashmore and Liberal Judaism trustee officer Owen Power who is D/deaf. DeafShul's aim is to give D/deaf Jews access to all aspects of Jewish life. Everyone is welcome to this special inclusive Erev Shabbat service in person or online.

## Chagall Windows in Tudeley, Kent

**Sunday 6 July**

There will be a repeat visit to Tudeley Church in Kent, following the three previous highly successful outings there. Tudeley is the only

church in the world to have all its twelve stained glass windows designed by Marc Chagall.

Participants have the option of a pleasant country walk to Tudeley from Tonbridge Station and back. We have a packed lunch together in the churchyard before visiting the church, with a talk organised about the history of these remarkable windows and their installation.

The cost is £8.00. For more information, please contact Michael Romain on 0781 800 0849 or [romain@netgates.co.uk](mailto:romain@netgates.co.uk)

## Restaurant Tuesday

Everyone in our community is welcome to attend our informal lunch club at 12.45pm on the third Tuesday of the month for a chance to meet and chat and have a delicious meal, hosted by our delightful team of volunteers. We suggest a donation of £7.50.

Our next lunches are on **20 May** and **17 June**. Please call the office on 020 7286 5181 to let us know if you are coming.

## The LJS Book Group

All LJS Members and Friends are invited to join our friendly and informal book group. The sessions are on Zoom, start at 7.00pm and last between an hour and an hour and a half.

The next sessions are:

**Thursday 1 May: *Shy Creatures* by Clare Chambers**

**Thursday 5 June: *The Burgess Boys* by Elizabeth Strout**

If you have any questions or would like to be sent a zoom link for the next Book Group, please email [ljsreaders@hotmail.com](mailto:ljsreaders@hotmail.com)

## Bridge Club

The Bridge Club meets at 2.00–5.00pm, with a break for refreshments, every Monday (except Jewish and Bank Holidays). Cost is £2.00 per members and £3.00 for non-members. For more details, please contact the LJS on 020 7286 5181.

## Video and Tea

You are warmly invited to this event which takes place on the fourth Wednesday of the month 1.30–4.30pm. There is no need to book – just

come along for some soup on arrival, after which we hold the film screening. This is followed by a delicious tea including ice-cream. The cost is just £2.00 per session.

**Our next screenings:**

**28 May: *Carmen Jones***

**25 June: *Splash***

## The Out & About Club

The Out & About Club is a non-denominational club for elderly disabled people which meets at the LJS every first and third Tuesday of the month in the evening. It is a social club, and we organise regular talks, musical evenings and outings. Contact Sonia Leanse or Meg Hepher via the LJS office on 020 7286 5181.

## Singing for the Mind

Singing for the Mind is open to anyone with memory problems or in the early stages of dementia. Tea and biscuits are served on arrival to allow participants and their companions the chance to chat before we start singing. The hour-long singing session is led by a trained music leader, supported by volunteers. A dementia specialist is available for help and advice. For further details and advice on joining the group, please email [sfm@ljs.org](mailto:sfm@ljs.org) or phone the LJS on 020 7286 5181.

## The Bereavement Coffee Group

The Bereavement Coffee Group (BCG) meets regularly at the LJS. Members of the synagogue come together to sit and chat. The topics range from practical problems to coping with grief and loneliness. Our wonderful LJS volunteers offer us gentle guidance with tea and sympathy. Our next meetings take place on **Tuesday 20 May** and **Wednesday 18 June** from 11.00am – 12.30pm. Please just come along or contact Aviva for more information: [a.shafritz@ljs.org](mailto:a.shafritz@ljs.org)/020 7286 5181.

## Community Care

Aviva Shafritz, our Community Care Co-ordinator, is ready to help with difficulties experienced not only by our older members, such as with illness and provision of care, but also across the spectrum of life. You can contact Aviva by email: [a.shafritz@ljs.org](mailto:a.shafritz@ljs.org) or by phone: 020 7286 5181.

# Shavuot – A Marriage Anniversary between People and God

*Rabbi Igor Zinkov shares his reflections on the festival of Shavuot.*



Shavuot is the Festival of the Giving of the Torah. Jewish tradition views this day as celebrating the establishment of the ancient covenant between God and the Jewish people. Early rabbis approached

Shavuot metaphorically, comparing it to a wedding anniversary between God and Israel, where the Ten Commandments serve as the marriage agreement. Therefore, like any meaningful anniversary, Shavuot has both celebratory and solemn dimensions, reminding us to recall our original intentions, emotions, and commitments.

While it may be straightforward to understand a marriage agreement between two individuals, what does it mean to enter a contract between humans and God? Jewish tradition has a special term for such a divine agreement: covenant, or *b'rit* in Hebrew.

The American scholar George Mendenhall studied ancient Near Eastern societies to better understand the biblical concept of covenant. He observed that ancient Akkadian rulers made agreements known as *biritu*, which sounds very similar to the Hebrew *b'rit*.

The ancient Akkadian rulers had three types of contracts. The first is an unequal agreement where a ruler unilaterally promised benefits to their subjects and did not ask for anything in return. The second is an agreement in which a powerful ruler imposed specific obligations on their subjects. Often, these agreements did not have explicit benefits for subjects, but implicitly, they offered protection in return for keeping the pact. The third type is an agreement between two parties of equal standing, for example, two kings. This type involved mutual obligations and rights.

The Akkadian language is older than Hebrew. Most likely, the word *biritu* is the linguistic origin of the Hebrew word *b'rit*. In his essay *Covenant*, Biblical scholar Arnold Eisen used Mendenhall's findings to show that the covenant described in the Torah also had three types, and demonstrated how they appear in the Biblical description of God's covenants:

- The covenant with Noah resembles the first type: God makes a promise to humanity and expects nothing in return.
- The covenant at Sinai, given in the Book of Exodus, involves clear obligations, with laws given to the Israelites who, in return, receive God's protection.
- The Book of Deuteronomy represents the third variation, describing a covenant where God and Israel are mutually dependent.

Imagine a couple celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Over the decades, they have experienced joy and hardship, laughter and sorrow, celebrations and sacrifices. Their relationship has never remained static. At times, their marriage may have felt unequal, with one partner giving more than the other. Often, it required fulfilling mundane responsibilities and duties. Yet, through decades together, they have grown mutually dependent, unable to imagine life without each other. Human relationships mirror these three covenantal forms.

However, the crucial difference between a human marriage and the covenant between humanity and God is that God is not visibly present in daily life. Unlike interpersonal connections, God's presence or intentions are not easily confirmed. Therefore, the covenant we celebrate at Shavuot fundamentally revolves around trust. We must trust that our actions matter, that our lives carry significance, and that striving to make the world more just, compassionate, and kind fulfils our side of the covenant. Equally, we must trust that God fulfils God's part, even though we will never fully know if this is true. We must live our lives *as if* God is our mutual partner. Rabbi Leo Baeck expressed this idea beautifully in his influential work *The Essence of Judaism*:

'The Jew is asked to take upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of God, to live in the world as if God were always present, to act as if God were always watching.'

In this uncertain space, our task is to fully embrace our responsibility, not focusing on what God might owe or provide, but rather on what we ourselves can do to heal, sustain, and enrich the world.

# Congratulations to Tim Farrell!



LJS News has received delightful messages congratulating Tim Farrell on his 50 years as LJS organist. Amongst them, past and present singers from the LJS Professional Choir have written in, and

the words from Judy Rees are echoed by many. Judy writes:

‘Tim Farrell is not only a consummate organist and musician but also a wonderful accompanist. He would always find the perfect colour on the organ to match a song, and had the most telepathic understanding of playing with the soloist so that you never had to think or indicate with a discreet nod when you would breathe or take a slight change of tempo; he was there, he was listening, he was always with you. He can also transpose anything into any key, it would seem, so that if at the occasional service when the high notes might have felt a little awkward, he would simply play the whole piece down a tone or so – a rare and very valuable talent. Tim is also a delightful person, understated but warm and very twinkly.’ Judy continues, ‘I loved singing with Tim. May he continue to musically soothe and support singers and amaze the congregation with his virtuosity as an organist for many more years to come.’

Caroline Stormer, Juanita Wise and Simon Haynes express similar sentiments. Caroline comments on Tim’s consummate musicianship and remarks how she is in awe of his ability to transpose accompaniments on the spot to suit individual voices. She adds, ‘Favourite memories include Tim’s wonderful playing for the High Holy Days, particularly Kol Nidre, and also the musical detail he puts into the prelude when setting the mood for the Kabbalat Shabbat services. What a wonderful colleague and a true gentleman!’ Juanita auditioned for the position of alto sixty years ago when Israel Hoffman was the conductor and Paul Lichtenstern the organist. She remembers when Tim joined in 1975, a time when the then choir of ten sang unseen from the choir loft upstairs where the organ was also sited. She

describes Tim as ‘an unassuming, gentle person and a very fine organist, who has much to boast about, but doesn’t’. Simon Haynes attests to Tim’s sensitivity as an accompanist and doesn’t recall him ever playing a wrong note! He describes Tim as a great organist with an illustrious career, including his time at Westminster Abbey.

Tami Tal says how she loves singing at the LJS with its loving, supportive environment. She describes how Tim’s playing brings the music to another level of musicianship, making the experience extra special: ‘Every time I feel how lucky we are to have Tim with us, and I wish for many more years of music-making together!’

As a relative newcomer to the Professional Choir, Melanie Sanders comments how wonderfully Tim plays for the Friday night solo services. She says how Tim was ‘always friendly, calm and unflappable as I was learning the ropes, pointing a helpful finger to stand just before the next piece, and following me when I occasionally got caught out by the geography of various pieces’. Mel also comments on Tim’s incredible musical heritage, and how she feels truly fortunate in singing alongside him.

LJS member Lisa Gershon expresses her profound gratitude to Tim for the most moving and life-affirming music at four generations of her family’s life-cycle services. Tim’s music, she writes, ‘brings both great joy and comfort’. LJS member Neil Levitt – a one-time golfing companion of Tim’s! – appreciates how Tim always accompanies the choir with great sensitivity and professionalism, giving singers the opportunity to excel themselves. He remarks, ‘While he never took centre stage’, one was always aware that without the accompaniment of Tim, the music would not be the same.’

Fellow LJS organist Martin Sanders-Hewett writes: ‘The man: charming, discreet and affable; a wonderful colleague over many years. The musician: the most subtle, yet supportive, accompanist anyone could wish for.’

The LJS community congratulates Tim on his special anniversary, and we offer him our heartfelt thanks for his musicianship and friendship.

# Mah Tovv and the Tale of the Donkey

*Martin Sanders-Hewett shares the organ- and piano-playing at our LJS services with Tim Farrell. Here, Martin outlines the intriguing story of the ‘Mah Tovv’ prayer sung at the start of every morning service, and describes the musical settings of the text.*



The morning liturgy opens with the familiar prayer, *Mah tov vohalecha Ya'akov, mish'kenotecha Yisrael* – ‘How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling-places, O Israel!’

This opening verse quotes Numbers 24:5. The Talmud interprets ‘tents’ and ‘dwelling-places of Israel’ as synagogues and places of study. The remaining verses are taken from Psalms 5:8, 26:8, 95:6 and 69:14:

‘Through Your great love, O God, I enter Your house; with awe I worship in Your sanctuary. Eternal God, I love the house where Your glory dwells; humbly I worship before my God and Maker. May my prayer be acceptable to You, Eternal God. In Your great kindness, answer me with Your saving truth.’

The background to the *Mah tov v* text involves a prophet, a king, an angel and a talking donkey. A non-Jewish prophet, Balaam, was appointed by Balak, king of the Moabites, to curse the Jews, his enemies. The donkey, on which Balaam rode, saw an angel holding a sword, and repeatedly blocking the donkey’s path. Assuming that the donkey was misbehaving, Balaam hit the donkey three times with his staff, as he could not see the

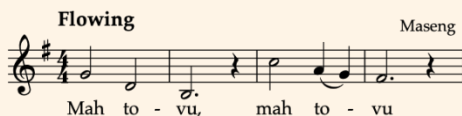


‘Balaam and his Ass’ c. 1620 by Pieter Lastman, ©The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel/Bridgeman Images

angel. After the third strike, the donkey asked Balaam why she was being hit, and remonstrated with him that she had been loyal to him. When God revealed the angel to Balaam, the angel told him that he could carry on his way, but, instead of cursing the Jewish people, he could only utter the good words that God had commanded, namely the opening words of the *Mah tov v* prayer.

Of the four varied musical settings of *Mah tov v* sung at the LJS, two are by Louis Lewandowski (1821–94) and one by Danny Maseng (b. 1950); the last is a traditional melody arranged by Israel Hoffman, former LJS Director of Music. Except for the latter version, all are written in major keys.

Maseng’s popular setting, for unison voices, forms part of a larger work entitled *Soul on Fire* (1999), and is arranged by J. Mark Dunn. A brief organ introduction sets the scene, and the distinctive opening melody descends through a major chord.



An intricate, pulsating accompaniment is woven around the vocal line, and a note of optimism is struck by the upward key-shift for the final iteration of the opening text. Maseng’s melodies are tuneful, have a comfortable vocal range, and invite congregational participation. The structure falls into a chorus-verse format, with contrasting melodies for each segment; an emphasis is placed on the opening line of text, which acts as a refrain. Maseng’s original composition sets the entire *Mah tov v* prayer to music; its musical style lends itself to a variety of possible accompaniments, including piano, organ and guitar.

On a grander scale, Lewandowski’s settings of *Mah tov v* appear in Volume I of his major collection of service music, *Todah V'Simrah*, published in Berlin in 1876. Both of these four-

part choral pieces (listed in the collection as Nos. 1 and 2) have written-out organ introductions; at the LJS, only the latter setting is performed with the organ prelude. Composed in triple time, and popularly known to the LJS choirs as ‘Lewandowski in E flat’, this version was originally written a tone higher in the key of F; the transposition to the lower key is perhaps more appealing to choirs and congregation alike.

**Andante maestoso** Lewandowski, ‘No. 1’

Mah to - vu, mah to - vu

A yet more congregation-friendly version is sometimes heard – a curtailed, unison arrangement in the key of C. In Lewandowski’s original setting, a three-section form is used, in which the first section reappears as the last, but the latter is shorn of its distinctive opening phrase that carries the three, consecutive iterations of the words *Mah tovu*. The contrasting central section – *Adonai ahavti me’on beytecha* – marks a change to quadruple time and employs a single vocal line, originally designated for a cantor. Compared with the outer sections, which are harmonically and rhythmically restless at times, and veer towards the minor key, emphasised by unison and lower-pitched vocal writing, the harmony of the central episode is more conservative and the text-setting more syllabic.

Lewandowski’s second setting, in the key of B flat, is a through-composed piece in quadruple time, with a triumphant eight-bar organ introduction that presages the opening choir melody.

**Andantino** Lewandowski, ‘No. 2’

Mah to - vu o - ha - le - cha... Ya' - a - kov

The initial verse is repeated in two eight-bar sections, making much use of chordal writing, and, occasionally, more independent voice parts. Contrast is achieved through multiple changes of dynamic level and a brief change, near the close, to a three-voice texture on the repeated, almost whispered, text *esh’tachaveh*. Compared with the composer’s previous setting, this version gives

an overall impression of greater smoothness, resulting from a more continuous texture and less agitated rhythms. Quieter dynamic levels are more extensively exploited, and there is greater text-repetition for emphasis. The minor key plays a larger role in the closing section, but both versions end at a peaceful dynamic level. Unlike Lewandowski’s first setting, in which the complete text is employed, this version is based solely on the first two verses of the *Mah tovu* prayer, ending with Psalm 8:5: ‘with awe I worship in Your sanctuary.’ The remainder of the prayer is sometimes spoken.

The divisions between secular and sacred music are often less than clear-cut, and cross-fertilisation occurs frequently. Indeed, certain musical genres are differentiated solely by text and intended performance venue. The term ‘folk tune’ implies a melody handed down through an oral tradition. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that the origins of the ‘folk-tune’ version of *Mah tovu* lie in a secular round, which appears in a 1609 collection of pieces by Thomas Ravenscroft, entitled *Pammelia, Musicks Miscellanie*; a similar tune also exists with French text: *Vent frais, vent du matin*.

**Allegretto** Trad., arr. Hoffman

Mah to - vu o - ha - le - cha Ya' - a - kov

Ravenscroft, *Hey ho* (transposed)

Hey ho, no-bo-dy at home, meate nor drinke nor mo-ney have I none

The ‘traditional’ *Mah tovu* melody treats the first line of the prayer only, and Hoffman’s arrangement can be performed in a variety of ways. The score consists of three lines: a) *Mah tovu* as single-line, 8-bar melody, b) a four-part choral setting using a block-chord accompaniment, and c) a repeat of b), but with a descant that soars over the choir parts, adding a sense of grandeur. The congregation may hear any or all of these permutations, with a further option of the opening line sung as a round. With this appealing, concise and uncomplicated setting, a short burst of music energises the start of the morning service.

**Martin Sanders-Hewett**

## Singers in the LJS Members' Choir

*The LJS Members' Choir, directed by Cathy Heller Jones, and accompanied by Martin Sanders-Hewett, sings at Shabbat morning services the first Shabbat of each month, on Rosh Hashanah, as well as at other services and occasions during the year – including in Paris! (See page 16.) The number of singers has increased in the last few years. We love making music together and enjoy each other's company. Do get in touch with Cathy if you're interested in singing with us: [c.hellerjones@ljs.org](mailto:c.hellerjones@ljs.org)*

*Here we introduce you to seven of our singers:*

### Matilda Crawley



I joined the Members' Choir in honour of my grandparents, Rosemary and Norman Lazarus. Grandpa conducted the choir for many years and instilled a love of singing in me. Growing up, I sang in the children's choir with Cathy,

which was my favourite part of coming to classes on a Saturday. Having sung with my college choir at university, I missed singing when I graduated, and rejoining the LJS choir has been a wonderful way to both keep up my singing and a family tradition. (My mother Janet was in the children's choir when she was young, conducted by Edward Cross.)

I work in sustainability communications, helping companies and charities talk about why climate action is so important. I enjoy it but always look forward to choir because I can stop looking at emails and be entirely absorbed in the music. I'm grateful to Cathy for encouraging me to continue to sing throughout my life and to the Members' Choir for their joyful voices!

### Ezra Yanovskiy



My name is Ezra Yanovskiy. I was born in Ufa, Russia, and my Jewish ancestors were from Ukraine and Poland. I moved to the UK in 2017 to study Digital Experience Design in Manchester, and now live in London, working

at Flo Health, the world's most popular female health app.

I got involved with the Members' Choir thanks to an invitation from Cathy Heller Jones, right after I first

stepped into the LJS. It took me over a year to take her up on this offer because I was busy with Hebrew and Exploring Judaism classes, but once I had a bit of time, I started taking vocal lessons and finally joined.

Singing in the choir helps me fulfil a childhood dream of making music. I taught myself a bit of guitar and piano, and had a Britpop garage band at 14. Today, singing in the choir gives me a sense of belonging and a way to contribute meaningfully to services. Even when I miss the occasional note, I'm getting there, one Shabbat at a time!

### Noni Csögör



Having joined the LJS in 2022 and with a background in choral singing from my time at university, it took me a surprisingly long time to get around to joining the Members' Choir last year. I think I was worried

about committing myself to yet another regular schlep to St John's Wood from far SW London, and spending even more time on the District line. That's certainly come true, but the wonderful people and experience of singing together is so worth it. I was immediately made welcome and the choir is now a huge part of why the LJS feels like my religious home. Working with Cathy, Martin and the rest of the choir within our beautiful liturgy is a real privilege.

To keep my hand in with the Anglican repertoire and balance out my soprano time in the Members' Choir with some alto practice, I also sing Evensong once a month at St Bart's the Great in the City. By day, I work in education policy, representing the interests of sixth form colleges in Westminster.

## Max Loble



I have been a member of the LJS for as long as I can remember and have been involved in music-making at the LJS for almost as long. Some of my earliest singing memories were joining in with the children's choir at

the Religion School before class on a Saturday, and so joining the Members' Choir (when I was old enough) seemed like a natural transition.

I feel very fortunate to sing with a talented and supportive choir, many of whom have also sung with the Members' Choir for a number of years. Alongside an occasional appearance with the Professional Choir, it sometimes feels slightly strange to not be sitting in the choir seats!

I love how much the choir has grown in recent years and the variety of projects we have been involved in, both inside and out of the Sanctuary. A special thanks to Cathy and Martin who are both so encouraging and ambitious in what they plan.

## Megan Keller Maley



I have had the pleasure of singing with the Members' Choir for over two years now, and this amazing group plays a critical role in my life. As a (soon-to-become-British) American who travels frequently for my corporate

role in fashion, the LJS has become an anchor for me in London, and the centre of my community. My 7-year-old daughter, Leonie, loves spending time at Rimon, and I have found both friendship and musical inspiration in the LJS Members' Choir.

Although every Shabbat is very special, three things have been major highlights for me during my time in the Members' Choir: 1) Our 2023 concert 'The Human Spirit', where we performed Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, as well as two new pieces from contemporary composers; 2) Our recent trip to Paris, where we sang in Liberal congregations while enjoying the City of Light as a group; and 3) discovering my voice with my friend, teacher, and Professional Choir member Tami Tal.

I'm looking forward to the future, as our choir continues to grow, evolve, and create beautiful music together.

## Noah van Renswoude



I originally come from and grew up in the Netherlands. During the last few years, I have been travelling around the world for my studies in Egyptology and Hebrew and Aramaic Linguistics. Now my love for singing and theatre

has brought me to London where I am currently studying for a Masters degree in Musical Theatre Performance.

Joining a new congregation is always a bit daunting, but joining the choir meant that we already had one thing in common: making music. This made feeling at home at the synagogue easier because even when we are not singing, I will always find fellow choir members to sit with during services or even outside the synagogue. It is such a warm and welcoming group of people!

I was lucky to join the choir when I did as my second time singing with the choir was in Paris. It was such a great trip both musically and socially.

## Ashley Crawford Innes



I first discovered the LJS in 2021 and joined the Members' Choir in 2022. My first performance was 'The Human Spirit' concert in 2023, which was a real highlight. I enjoy singing as an alto alongside my husband Matthew, who is

a baritone (and, of course, my assistance dog Tevye, who fortunately refrains from contributing!).

I play piano and violin and have sung in choirs before. I grew up singing very little in Hebrew, so the Members' Choir has been a rewarding educational experience. I now have a much deeper understanding of the works we sing at services each week and happily join in from the congregation during other services. The choir has also been a great way to meet people at the synagogue.

When not at the LJS, I work as an Asian art specialist, conducting valuations and provenance research.

# The Use of the Organ in Synagogue Worship



The use of the organ in synagogue worship is mainly limited to the Ashkenazic synagogues of Europe and the United States. Considered by many Jews (both past and present) to be an

instrument associated with Christian worship, the early use of the organ was ironically forbidden in Christian worship until the Middle Ages.

‘Although the history of organs in Judaism does not begin until the Middle Ages,’ writes Tina Frühauf in her book *The Organ and its Music in German-Jewish Culture*, ‘the Hebrew Bible cites the *ugav* four times and occasionally identifies it as a predecessor of the organ. Psalm 150:4 lists it as one of the instruments that serve to praise God.’

Looking at definitions of the *ugav*, it would appear to be a panpipe-type instrument, and likely to have been a long end-blown flute of the kind found in Egypt and Sumeria.



Ancient and modern panpipes, precursors to the organ

Later evidence from Spanish sources depicts the organ as an ensemble instrument. The illustration, taken from the Kaufmann *Haggadah*,

(Castile, mid-14th century) shows such an ensemble accompanying Miriam and a female chorus.

Amongst 19th century European Jews who were adapting Shabbat and Festival

services in the nascent Reform movement, arguments resounded about whether any instrument, let alone the organ with its Christian associations, may be played on Shabbat and Festivals. Nevertheless, the use of the organ began to proliferate, and its first use took place in 1810 in Germany in the Jacobstempel Synagogue in Seesen, Lower Saxony. The Seesen synagogue also introduced services both in German and Hebrew, as well as allowing men and women to pray and study together.

Following this, the organ grew in popularity in 19th century Germany and Austria, and its use inspired the volumes of ‘new’ synagogue music by such composers as Louis Lewandowski and Solomon Sulzer. Many of these instruments were destroyed during the Holocaust. Nevertheless, the accompanied western European style of music continues to form the basis on which much of our current worship style proliferates in Progressive synagogues throughout Europe and the USA.

*Cathy Heller Jones, LJS Director of Music*



Kaufmann *Haggadah*, Catalonia, ca. 1370, folio 3vs.

## Remembering Bryan Diamond 13 August 1936 – 12 March 2025

We remember with gratitude and affection Bryan Diamond who passed away in March. Bryan was a longstanding member of our community, and played significant roles in synagogue life. He served two terms on the LJS Council, served on the Services Committee, Library Group, Heritage Committee, and he was Social Action Chair. He revised the Guide to the LJS building which can

be found on the LJS website. He was an archivist for Liberal Judaism and then for the LJS, setting up a new catalogue and preparing portraits for an exhibition on Claude Goldsmid Montefiore. Bryan’s book on Montefiore, *Claude Montefiore: Jewish Scholar, Communal Leader, Philanthropist*, was published in 2023 and can be purchased from the LJS.



# The Learning Circle

## Adult education classes at the LJS

Our rich adult education programme includes Classical Hebrew classes at all levels and opportunities for learning and discussion about Judaism and Jewish life. Full details can be found in The Learning Circle brochure which is available online on the LJS website ([www.ljs.org](http://www.ljs.org)) and in print at the LJS. The new topic for Learning with Texts is outlined below.

Please note that registration for all courses is online only: <https://www.ljs.org/form/adult-education-registration-summer-2025.html>

If you have any questions, please email: [education@ljs.org](mailto:education@ljs.org)

### Shavuot (Summer) term class dates

Tuesday classes continue until 8 July, with half-term 27 May; Wednesday classes continue 9 July, with half-term 28 May; Shabbat morning continue until 5 July, with half-term 24 and 31 May.

#### Tuesday mornings 11.15am – 12.30pm

**Tuesday Conversations** *In person and online*

#### Tuesday evenings 5.45 – 6.45pm

**Understanding the Geography of the Torah** *Online*

**Hebrew level: Upper Elementary**

**Tutor: Dr Dov Softi**

#### Tuesday evenings 7.00 – 8.00pm

**Classical Hebrew for Not Quite Beginners** *Online*

**Tutor: Susannah Alexander**

**Reading Bereishit (Genesis): Mothers, Brothers, Birthright and Blessing** *Online*

**Hebrew level: Elementary/Upper Elementary**

**Tutor: Dr Sally Gold**

**Understanding Biblical Hebrew** *Online*

**Hebrew level: Pre-Intermediate**

**Tutor: Dr Dov Softi**

A parallel class to this Tuesday evening class takes place in person on Shabbat mornings at 10.00am.

**The Psalms** *Online*

**Hebrew level: Pre-Intermediate to Intermediate**

**Tutor: Rabbi Alexandra Wright**

#### Tuesday evenings 8.10 – 9.15pm

**Exploring Judaism** *Online*

**Tutor: Rabbi Igor Zinkov**

**Continuing our Jewish Journey** *Online (fortnightly)*

**Tutors: Rabbi Alexandra Wright and Dr Dov Softi**

#### Wednesday evenings 8.00 – 9.00pm

**First Steps in Classical Hebrew Texts and Grammar** *Online*

**Hebrew level: Elementary/Upper Elementary**

**Tutor: Susannah Alexander**

#### Shabbat mornings 9.45 – 10.45am

**Women in the Bible** *Online*

**Hebrew level: Pre-Intermediate to Intermediate**

**Tutor: Nitza Spiro**

**Learning with Texts** *In person and online*

**Mishnah Berachot**

**Facilitator: Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton**

The Mishnah is the foundation compendium of rabbinic law, assembled in the 2nd and early 3rd centuries of the Christian era. *Berachot* (blessings) is the very first part of the Mishnah, and details rules for the recital of the Shema, the Amidah and Shabbat Kiddush as well as blessings said before and after eating various foods.

Texts will be made available in Hebrew and English. Knowing Hebrew is not a requirement for these classes, but familiarity with synagogue services will be a help.

**The LJS Chavruta**

Please register here to take part in a study group:

<https://tinyurl.com/ljschavruta>

# Council Report

*Gaby Lazarus, Chair of Council, summarises key points from the March and April Council meetings.*



March and April both saw encouraging numbers of new members joining the LJS – Council was delighted to note the increase in families and young adults, and the statistics for the first four months show a

positive trend, with 50 new members since the beginning of the year. As Rabbi Igor wrote in the last newsletter, our Kulanu group of over 100 members are attending a range of events aimed specifically at their age group of 20- to 40-year-olds in growing numbers; many are visitors to the LJS and therefore potential new members. Other community events have been well attended: the Purim service and Chavurah supper in March and the ‘*Making Music in our New Home*’ concert in April were both attended by around 80 people, while our second night Pesach Communal Seder sold out with 120 tickets bought.

Both March and April Council meetings were primarily devoted to discussions around the documentation provided concerning the proposed creation of the new Movement for Progressive Judaism (MPJ). Following publicity in Shalom LJS and personal emails to all members, three community forums took place, two in March (one online) and one in April, inviting members to share their thoughts and have their concerns answered by Rabbi Charley Baginsky and Karen Newman (CEO and Chair of Liberal Judaism respectively). On behalf of Council, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous amount of preparatory work that has gone into the process of uniting the Reform and Liberal movements, and in particular the specific support that the LJS has been given by Charley and Karen, who have made themselves available on many occasions to answer Council’s questions and respond to all concerns raised. We are also grateful to Jacob Head, our LJS Honorary Lawyer, for his invaluable input and guidance.

The original information pack, including updated guidance from the Path to Progressive Judaism Implementation Committee (created specifically to address feedback from all communities) is available at [www.pathtoprogressivejudaism.org.uk](http://www.pathtoprogressivejudaism.org.uk)

Council is now confident that we have gauged the feel of the community following the final community forum held on 26 March, and that we have carried out our due diligence appropriately. Therefore Council, along with the endorsement of our Rabbis, intends to vote ‘Yes’ to the creation of the MPJ at our Council meeting on 8 May. This allows the Chair of Council to vote accordingly on behalf of the LJS Synagogue, when all Liberal Judaism communities will vote at the Liberal Judaism Extraordinary General Meeting on Sunday 18 May. The Movement for Reform Judaism will be holding its EGM (for their communities to vote) simultaneously.

We are still in the process of editing our three-year strategic plan, and amended drafts have been presented and discussed at each Council meeting. We will have this document published in time for the AGM which takes place on Thursday 19 June at 7.30pm (see page 3). I would strongly encourage you to attend this important annual event either in person or online.

We say goodbye with grateful thanks to Lindsay Maltz, Rimon Education Administrator, who joined us on a temporary basis and in an online capacity in February 2023, and we welcome Sarah Sinizer-Hopkins to this role. Sarah is already a Rimon teacher and her presence at the LJS on a weekly basis is an asset in her new role supporting Rabbi Elana.

I would like to finish by congratulating our six Kabbalat Torah graduates who led our services so eloquently on Friday 25 and Saturday 26 April. You are a credit to, and the future of, your LJS community; please know that we look forward to your continuing involvement in the coming years and that we are here to support you.

# Rimon Corner

**Rabbi Elana Dellal, Director of Youth and Family Engagement, shares some recent Rimon activities.**

## Creative Writing

The following diary entry was written by students in Kitah Heh/Vav as part of a creative writing exercise. Students were asked to write from the perspective of one of the characters in the Purim story. This piece, written from Queen Esther's point of view, was created in preparation for our L'Dor va'Dor service, a special event held once a term when our Rimon students lead the Shabbat service for the entire community.

Dear Diary,

Today I woke up and tended to my tree. I could hear soldiers knocking on everyone's doors. Mordechai took me inside and tried to hide me. But it was too late. The soldiers took me away to compete in a beauty contest for the king, Achashverosh. I was intimidated walking into the palace seeing women adorning themselves with jewellery and fancy furs. I felt so awkward as they stopped to stare at me.

Ding, dong! It was time for me to present myself to the king. My stomach surged as I stepped through the doorway. 'Who are you and why are you here?' boomed King Achashverosh. 'My sir, I am here for the beauty competition.' 'Why aren't you wearing any jewels?' he asked. 'Beauty doesn't just come from the outside, it is also from the inside,' I replied timidly. 'You will be my Queen!' said King Achashverosh.

I don't know how to feel – scared that I'm Jewish, happy I'm the Queen, or vulnerable without Mordechai's protection.

Night night,  
Esther

This next piece was written by students in Kitah Chet as part of a thoughtful exercise connecting Tu Bi'Sh'vat (New Year of Trees) with the format of the Yom Kippur Vidui (confessional prayer). Through this creative approach, the students contemplated

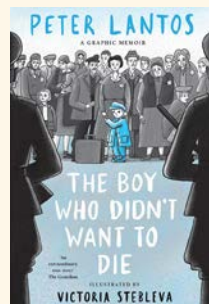
humanity's environmental responsibilities, and reflected on what we must collectively acknowledge in order to improve our relationship with the natural world. This environmental Vidui represents their understanding of how we might take responsibility for our actions and make meaningful change for the betterment of our planet.

We cut down the trees and ruined the forests.  
We heated up the planet like an oven.  
We took your fields and made them into factories.  
We disrespected your trust and kept animals in cages.  
We destroyed the habitats of the animals that couldn't protect themselves.  
We polluted the sea with our waste.  
We attacked our fellow humans in greed.  
We have destroyed the atmosphere with poisonous gases.  
We melted the cast sheets of ice.  
We took advantage of the precious resources provided.  
We warm the planet with our own actions.

## Talk and discussion with Peter Lantos



Holocaust survivor Peter Lantos, a valued member of the LJS community, joined our teenagers for a powerful session sharing his remarkable story of survival and resilience. Students prepared for this meaningful encounter by reading his graphic novel *The Boy Who Didn't Want To Die*, with each participant receiving their own copy of this moving testimony.



## The LJS Members' Choir in Paris!



Meeting at St Pancras on a bright Friday morning, there was a palpable buzz among the 18 singers of the Members' Choir. In fact, such was the excitement that everyone was on time – something our director, Cathy Heller Jones, probably wishes was the case more often. We were off to Paris, where we had the privilege of singing with two synagogues affiliated with the French Liberal movement. First up was the Communauté Juive Libérale for Kabbalat Shabbat, where some members of the choir sang during the last such trip seven years ago. Rabbi Pauline Bebe, the first French female rabbi, led an enthusiastic congregation singing along with gusto to both congregational tunes and the choir's pieces – completely dispelling my preconceptions of French hauteur! – alongside our fantastic accompanist Martin Sanders-Hewett. After the service, we were treated to a family-style dinner, chatting to congregants in French and English and swapping numbers with new friends; we also sang some extra pieces for our supper, harmonising organically from our separate tables.

The next morning, we trekked to the opposite end of Paris to attend morning services at Kehillat Geshar (*pictured*), a bilingual synagogue led by Rabbi Tom Cohen, Pauline's husband. Our more reflective melodies were interspersed with impassioned Hasidic-style chant by the Rabbi, whose energy in keeping the two-hour service (including aliyyot for both Cathy and Rabbi Alex) moving was a sight to behold. Kiddush featured whisky and, remarkably, kosher French cheeses. We met again that evening for dinner at a fabulous French-Israeli restaurant, sharing lamb shoulder and falafel, and presenting Megan Keller Maley, who organised most of the logistics of the trip, with a Seder plate as a token of thanks.

While my Airbnb-mates and I filled the gaps between activities largely with coffee and cocktails, some more cultured choir members found the time to visit the restored Notre Dame and several art galleries. Our all-too-short trip was an unqualified success and a delight; let's hope we don't wait seven years until the next one.

*Noni Csögör*

Copy and ideas for the newsletter should be emailed to: [communications@ljs.org](mailto:communications@ljs.org)

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The LJS is a constituent synagogue of Liberal Judaism

liberal judaism

### The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

The Liberal Jewish Synagogue is a company limited by guarantee (Company No 09113305) and a registered charity in England and Wales (Charity No 1159292).

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