



# European Union for Progressive Judaism

March 2017 Newsletter

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## A date for your diaries

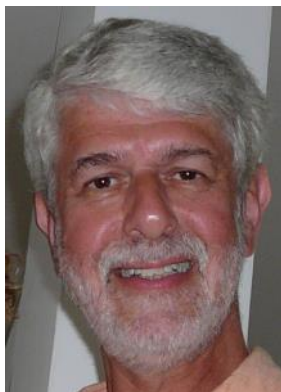
It is now less than a year since our last Biennial Conference in London and a little more than a year before our next conference which we are pleased to announce will be in the Czech Republic city of Prague.

Every two years, delegates leave our conference reflecting on what they describe as the best EUPJ Conference ever. After spending a most enjoyable weekend with leaders and members of our two

communities in Prague, namely Bejt Simcha and ZLU, and experiencing the inaugural Shabbat celebrations with the newly formed Or Tamid (read elsewhere for a full description of our weekend in Prague) we are more than confident that the EUPJ Biennial Conference in 2018 will, yet again, be the best ever.

The city of Prague, rich in its Jewish heritage and described as "the city of a hundred spires", has been admired and treasured as one of Europe's finest cities for over 1000 years, and it rightly deserves its recognition by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Prague was spared the bombing that brought destruction to so many beautiful cities in Europe during the Second World War and so can boast a multitude of physical attractions and landmarks which date back hundreds of years and retain their original construction. Narrow cobble stoned streets and alleyways mingle with splendid squares, and the river Vltava, crossed by a succession of bridges, winds its way through the city offering ever-changing views and photo opportunities.

Enough of the sales pitch! Everyone now needs to mark their diaries with the dates of the Conference which will take place at the Marriott Hotel from **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2018**. The conference facilities of the hotel are second to none and we hope to be able to announce very soon the synagogue in which we shall hold services and the venue of our opening ceremony. We have made every effort to make this conference as affordable as possible and, for those delegates fortunate to pay from euro, dollar or almost any currency account other than pounds sterling, you will discover that the registration fee and hotel accommodation rates will be



David Pollak



The Charles Bridge across the Vltava River in Prague

less than you paid in London and little changed from those charged in Dresden. We anticipate high demand for this conference so our advice is to set yourself a reminder to register your place before the end of this year. We shall have a maximum number of places to offer and when they are filled, the registration site will be closed.

Our conferences have the reputation for being popular, thought provoking, inspiring, spiritually uplifting, entertaining and enjoyable. Prague 2018 will host an EUPJ Conference that has all the ingredients to build on that reputation - and your presence will guarantee its success.

See you there! **David Pollak, Conference Chairman**



Prague

Read more about our Czech communities on page 4.

## March 2017 Contents

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1-2 EUPJ            | 9 Germany          |
| 3 EUPJ Job, Belgium | 10 Italy           |
| 4 Czech Republic,   | 11 Poland, Sweden, |
| Denmark             | Netherlands        |
| 5 Hungary           | 12-13 France       |
| 6-7 Spain           | 14-16 UK           |
| 8 Switzerland       | 15 WUPJ            |

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## Synagogues everywhere

Progressive congregations and Shabbat services can be found nearly everywhere during your travels. Click on a blue link to find a synagogue near your destination: [Europe](#) — [Worldwide](#)



Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh

## Please support

Friends of  
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in Israel and Europe.  
They support us.  
[www.fpjie.org.uk](http://www.fpjie.org.uk)



## Go back to summer camp with the WUPJ.

Join the WUPJ mission to visit Netzer summer camps in Ukraine, Germany and France, July 19-30.



## Progressive Jewish Camping Gets Global

This July, join Rabbi Daniel H Freeland, President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), on a special 10-day mission to experience and learn more about Netzer summer camps across Ukraine, Germany and France. See first-hand how we're reviving Jewish identity and engagement through camping among the next generation.



### Ukraine

Spend Shabbat with campers and kids in the Reform Jewish community of Cherkasy before heading to Kiev. [Learn more.](#)



### France

After stopping at the Babi Yar memorial site, visit the Tarn Netzer summer camp near Toulouse. [Learn more.](#)



### Germany

From Einbeck to Bonn, meet campers and members of the region's Union for Progressive Jews (UpJ). [Learn more.](#)

[Click here for details and sign up today!](#)

## EUPJ website update

We have been working hard to build and launch a brand new EUPJ site for the spring of 2017 after being hacked into in September. Now we are delighted to share with you our micro site ([www.eupj.org](http://www.eupj.org)) pending the launch of the full (all bells and whistles) main site in a few months' time. Corrections of fact and comments for the full site may be emailed to Deborah Grabiner at [administrator@eupj.org](mailto:administrator@eupj.org). We would love to receive exciting interesting photos relating to your community for use on the website. Please send these to Deborah with a caption too.



## Terror Attacks March 22, 2016 – In Memoriam



Beth Hillel, together with the Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de Belgique (CCOJB), took part in commemorating the terror attacks of March 22, 2016 and, once again, expressed their sympathies to the families of the victims and everyone touched by the horrors of this sad day. A little before 8:00 am it was exactly one year ago that terrorists committed two coordinated suicide attacks in the departure hall of the national airport amongst a large crowd of travelers.



## Côte à Côte ... Side by Side

On the Shabbat of January 27/28 Beth Hillel and the IJC conducted their services and community activities, "Côte à Côte ... Side by Side", together. Why? The Belgian Liberal Community (CILB Beth Hillel Synagogue) is supporting the IJC (International Jewish Center) in their search for a place of worship in Brussels.

A working hypothesis is being tested: that of being able to host and conduct two parallel Shabbat services at Beth Hillel, with two distinct communities, the CILB and IJC. Constructive remarks and impressions are being collected with appreciation, and can be sent to [secretariat@beth-hillel.org](mailto:secretariat@beth-hillel.org) by any and all.

## Judeo – Arab Festival in Belgium March 19

Esther & Sheherazade, The Judeo-Arab Festival from March 9 – 15 was continued on March 19.



At the Fédération des Associations Marocaines, 82 rue du Jardinier in Molenbeek, a calligraphy workshop took place. Luc Kreisman of Beth Hillel Brussels and Mohamed Azaitraoui discussed the similarities and differences between the Arabic and Hebrew alphabets. Chantal Ellouz provided entertainment for children between 5 – 12 years. This was a most enjoyable experience for all.

## A job with the EUPJ

### EUPJ Community Connections Coordinator

One 7½ hour day per week at the Sternberg Centre or at home. You will be contacting synagogues throughout Europe as well as Jewish community national organisations, facilitating twinning between EUPJ communities, large and small, as well as developing partners from the former Soviet Union. Additional responsibilities include preparing twinning stories for the EUPJ Newsletter and fielding twinning enquiries.

Writing skills and digital literacy are required, including competency with Word, Excel, other Microsoft applications and the Internet. Experience working with Jewish communities is helpful.

Salary circa £5000 or Euro equivalent per annum.

Reporting to EUPJ Vice Chairman Michael Reik.

Interested candidates, please apply with your CV by April 28 to [administrator@eupj.org](mailto:administrator@eupj.org).



*Pesach Sameach  
Happy Passover*



## Czech Republic, Denmark

### A Prague Renaissance – Or Tamid



#### EUPJ and Czech Republic leadership in Prague

I was very fortunate to join leaders of the EUPJ - David Pollak and Gordon Smith - for a remarkable weekend visit to the Prague Progressive Jewish community on March 3-5.

This was at the invitation of Jonathan Wootliff – a long term British resident of Prague. He is a passionate believer in the huge potential of Progressive Judaism in the Czech Republic and has created a “start up” named Or Tamid, whose aim is to work with the existing communities in Prague and the surrounding area to encourage more people to engage with the Jewish community.

To this end, he and Julie Bergmann organised a hugely successful Kabbalat Shabbat in a Prague hotel which was a complete sell-out with almost 130 attendees and a long waiting list.

The Friday night programme featured an Erev Shabbat service led by student rabbi David Maxa, a buffet dinner, birkat hamazon led by cantorial student Ivan Kohout and much singing and dancing. Many of the people who attended were not members of either Prague community but were very keen to engage and participate in Jewish activities. Other partners in this exciting venture were the Czech Union of Jewish Students, Moishe House alongside the Jewish Liberal Union (ZLU) and Bejt Simcha.

There was a wonderful atmosphere in the room – it was cross generational with many children and even tiny babies. There was an obvious desire for more Jewish engagement, and Or Tamid is developing a programme which will continue to attract more people.

Prague has the most incredible Jewish history with a wealth of historic synagogues. The following morning we were privileged to attend the Pinchas Synagogue for full Shabbat morning service. This is the synagogue with the 80,000 names painted on the walls of Moravian and Bohemian Jews deported to their deaths during the Shoah. Prague residents from Abraham Geiger College, David Maxa and Ivan Kahout, led a deeply moving service. David gave the sermon which drew on his family roots and reflected on where we were praying and the hope for the future.

It was a very positive weekend – we saw potential rabbinic and lay leadership, real enthusiasm and thirst for Progressive Judaism all in one of the most

the most beautiful central European cities with a unique Jewish history. It was obvious that the Or Tamid of Progressive Judaism in the Czech Republic will shine brighter in the future.

And you can all be part of it! The EUPJ has decided to hold its 2018 Conference in Prague 26th – 29th April, so save the date.

**Judy Smith**

### Name change for Shir Hatzafon

Shir Hatzafon, The Progressive Jewish Community in Denmark, is this EUPJ member's new legal name. We have been using Progressive Judaism in Denmark for many years, and the new name better reflects our position as a congregation. It also makes a statement relative to the name change of the orthodox synagogue in Copenhagen, who, despite our clear protests, a while ago changed their name from Mosaic Faith Community (Mosaiske Trosamfund) to The Jewish Community in Denmark. We are quite proud of our new name.

**Arthur Buchman**

### Purim celebration at Shir Hatzafon in Copenhagen a delight



#### Purimspiel 2017 at Shir Hatzafon in Copenhagen

Purim was celebrated delightfully this year at Shir Hatzafon, The Progressive Jewish Community of Denmark. We had over 30 in attendance, including many children. The youngsters enjoyed an arts and crafts table, and the adults engaged in a rather challenging Purim quiz. We also had our traditional hamentaschen baking and costume contests. An annual highlight was the reading of Jesper Joel Andersen's Purimspiel in Danish. That's Jesper in the clown outfit.

**Arthur Buchman**

### Two rabbis at Limmud in Copenhagen



#### L-R: Rabbis Rebecca Lillian, a frequent guest rabbi at Shir Hatzafon, and Jair Melchior.

Here is how it looks when a Progressive and an Orthodox rabbi disagree on some Jewish topic.



### Rabbi's half-century is celebrated from Berkeley to Budapest



**Rabbi Ferenc Raj today and on his ordination day**

Fifty years after becoming a rabbi and more than 40 years after being forced out of Hungary, Ferenc Raj intends to persist at his life's central mission: to teach young people about Judaism, as he has done for more than two decades in the San Francisco Bay Area and for a decade in his native land.

Raj, rabbi emeritus at Congregation Beth El in Berkeley, now spends about half the year in Budapest with a young congregation, Beit Orim, doing the work that forced him to leave Hungary.

As Raj is feted in Berkeley and elsewhere this month for his half-century of rabbinical work, he is looking ahead rather than behind. Beth El honoured him during Shabbat services on March 10, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis marked his accomplishments at its annual convention March 19-22 in Atlanta.

"I always look forward," Raj said. "When I was ordained, I learned my main job was to serve the youth and ensure the future of the Jewish people, to build a Jewish future. Not for myself, for generations to come, to ensure there will be future Judaism."

Raj, 74, fled Hungary in 1972 after the Communist authorities warned him against teaching Judaism to youngsters. He had been meeting with them in coffee shops and private homes, teaching Torah and preparing them for their bar mitzvahs even though such lessons were prohibited.

Now he is teaching the youth of Budapest again.

In 2007 he became the founding rabbi of Bet Orim, a small Reform congregation in the Hungarian capital.

"I really didn't want to go there, but I fell in love with them, a wonderful community of young people and old people," Raj said. "There's no building, no official status under Hungarian law. We meet in the local JCC. We are a virtual synagogue."

Said Rabbi Yoel Kahn, who succeeded Raj as Beth El's senior rabbi, "Most people who make 50 years as a rabbi are at a stage where they are mostly looking back on accomplishments. He's still doing the same work, contributing to the revitalisation of Jewish life where others sought to destroy it."

Read the full story [here](#).

**Rob Gloster**  
Jewish Weekly

### Sim Shalom Budapest news

The second week in February congregation Sim Shalom was overflowing with Shabbat activities and programmes. It started on Friday in the late afternoon with a Kabbalistic Tu B'shvat Seder to celebrate the New Year of the Trees. Fifty people gathered in the Matza Ball Room (no kidding) of the Budapest Jewish Community Center for this celebration, which involves eating a variety of fruits and nuts and the drinking of four glasses in various proportions of red and white wine. There were several readings to remind us of the importance of our dependence on nature to provide us with such an abundance of delectable things to consume, and hence our need to protect our natural environment. Normally this Seder is the main event of the evening, but on this day, it was only the preliminary act.

The main event was the Kabbalat Shabbat Service that was notable in many ways. To begin with, it was the first service led by Rabbi Ariel Pollak in Budapest after his receiving his S'michah from Abraham Geiger College in Berlin. Ariel has been hired by the Budapest Project, sponsored by West London Synagogue and EUPJ, to help build the Reform Jewish presence in Hungary. There were prayers and speeches to commemorate this aspect of the evening. Secondly, several representatives from WLS and EUPJ were present to participate. Thirdly, there was an extended family visiting from London to be present at the Bar Mitzvah the next day of Leo Postyn, whose grandfather is Hungarian and a resident of Budapest. Leo is the second of three sons in the family to have their Bar Mitzvot in Budapest. And finally, the service was a joint one between Sim Shalom and Bet Orim congregations. As you can imagine, with so much going on, three rabbis to speak and many people to be recognised and honoured, it was a long service. But with so much to celebrate, it was a very joyful occasion.



**A chairman, three rabbis and a Bar Mitzvah**

Rabbi David Mitchell of West London Synagogue officiated at the Bar Mitzvah. Leo did a beautiful job of leyning his Torah portion and gave a very interesting D'var Torah. Proud relatives thronged the room. Shabbat ended that evening with a special concert by our cantor, Flora Polnauer, at the Havdalah service held in a pub in the old Jewish Quarter. Truly a Shabbat weekend to remember!

**Jess Weil**

## Spain

### Shabbat in Atid with El Al



On March 22 we shared erev Shabbat with five crew members of the Israeli airline El Al in the framework of a programme called Project Ambassadors. We enjoyed an enriching Oneg Shabbat in which they explained to us about their lives as El Al crew members, spoke of their experiences in flight and shared entertaining anecdotes. We would like to thank El Al and especially Avi Eliyahu, Commercial Representative of El Al, for thinking about our community to develop the project. We would also like to thank the vegan restaurant Hummus Barcelona for providing an excellent dinner, very Israeli!

### Bet Januká news

Bet Januká celebrated Purim with a nice variety of costumes, flavourful hamentaschen, and a lively reading of the Book of Esther. Also in March, members of Bet Januká, Deborah and Ahuvah, represented the women in Judaism in an intercultural/inter-faith round table organised by the Rota City Hall in honour of 2017 International Women's Day. The discussion was a great success with members of four other faiths as well as a woman representing the Romani people. Deborah explained the history of valiant women in biblical times, our matriarchs and the women prophets, as well as laws that protected women in the Tanakh and Mishnah.

This was followed by a chronology of Jewish women leaders in modern times presented by Ahuvah, highlighting the achievements of women in the past such as the Honourable Lily Montagu and women leaders in the present such as Rabbi Dr Alona Lisitsa and Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick. The event took place in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Castillo de Luna where the audience filled of the assembly hall. It was followed by a multicultural sampling of foods representative of different cultures with a long-time favourite among Spaniards, *arroz con leche* (rice pudding) exemplifying Sephardic gastronomy,

Ahuvah and Deborah  
Congregation Bet Januká, Rota, Spain

### Purim at Atid

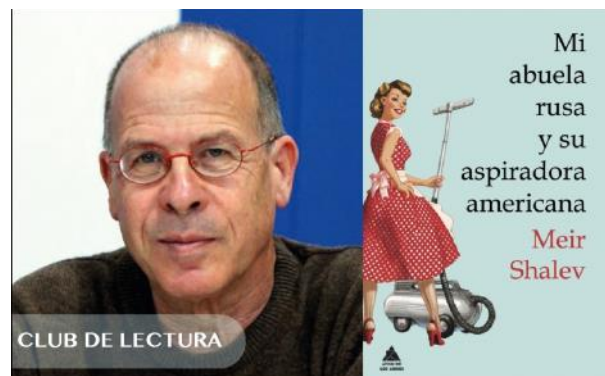


### Swimming in Talmud at Atid



Atid offers classes in Talmud on Thursday evenings, led by Arnau Pons.

### Online sharing in Spain continues



On March 23 Israeli author Meir Shalev and his book My Russian Grandmother and her American Vacuum Cleaner were the subject of a presentation at Bet Shalom Barcelona which was broadcast online to several of Spain's other Progressive communities.

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## Brundibar, a children's opera at Kehila Bnei Israel in Galicia



Brundibar, children's opera at Kehila Bnei Israel Galicia

In order to commemorate the Shoah, we have had a number of events that lasted from late December to the beginning of March.

The first of these events was a collaborative effort of our kehila with many local institutions: the staging of the children's opera Brundibar in Santiago last December. This work was composed by Hans Krasa with lyrics by Adolf Hoffmeister for the choir at a children's Jewish orphanage in Prague before WW2. When the authors were incarcerated at the Terezin Ghetto near Prague, this piece was staged many times in the camp by the children awaiting their deaths as a way of escaping from their terrible destiny.

The opera Brundibar was sung last December by the children's choir of the Cathedral of Santiago ("Scolania") in Galician, the language of this region of Spain. The music was played by the Preludium Young People's Orchestra. The presentation was sold out a week in advance.



Dr Dagmar Lieblova, 3rd from left

The evening before the Brundibar presentation we had a standing room only conference by Dr Dagmar Lieblova, age 87, the only surviving member of the choir that sang Brundibar at Terezin's Ghetto, and a survivor of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. She gave a clear, lucid and emotive delivery which moved everyone. She told us what it meant for the children to stage Brundibar, directed by the author of the opera himself. Mr Krasa, not having direct access to the music score or the lyrics, had to re-create it from memory. She also told us how she escaped death many times by sheer luck and how she rebuild her life without her family, all murdered in the death camps.

## Exhibition: Children Who Drew and Lived during the Shoah

In order to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, Kehila Bnei Israel in Galicia assembled an exhibition of the drawings made by some of the children at the Terezin Ghetto. Copies of the drawings were provided by the Czech cultural centre in Madrid and were supplemented by photographs taken during the war inside the Terezin Ghetto from Yad Vashem. The University of Santiago kindly provided the space for the exhibition at the Fonseca Palace located in the old city of Santiago de Compostela.

At the inauguration date we commemorated the Auschwitz death camp liberation date.

During the Terezin ghetto's early times some artistic expressions were allowed as a propaganda tool for the Nazi regime. Later, many of the children's drawings depicted the inhumane living conditions and were used against high ranking Nazis at the Nuremberg trial.

The exhibition was well received by the public and the local press and a few schools groups undertook guided visits in what it may have been their first and probably the most direct contact with the tragedy that visited the Jewish people during the Shoah.

**Acknowledgments.** The activities described above would not have been possible without the support and dedication of the local Opera Friendship Society (ADOC), the University of Santiago (USC), the school of modern languages at USC, The Czech Council (Madrid) and financial support from regional and city authorities.



## Bet Shalom Barcelona events

Bet Shalom Barcelona celebrated Purim in high spirits with special activities for children and the reading of Megillat Esther followed by a festive celebration with music, food and wine. Purim celebrations were preceded the week before by a study session on Megillat Esther with our rabbi, Stephen Berkowitz. Our Purim joy was even bigger since we had the visit of five members from the Communauté Juive Liberale de Montpellier (CJLM) in France, who also celebrated Kabbalat Shabbat with us. Its President, Youssef Hourizadeh, called for a stronger relationship and exchange between the communities of Bet Shalom and CJLM. Barcelona and Montpellier share unique historical and cultural backgrounds.

Bet Shalom celebrated International Women's Day on March 8 with a conference with Noga Tamolposky of Women of the Wall, who spoke about the struggle of the organisation and about the situation of women in Israel in general.

In addition, we continue to study Pirket Avot with Rabbi Stephen Berkowitz. This activity is open to other Spanish communities and friends overseas.

## Purim in Zurich



**Purim 2017 in Jewish Liberal Congregation Or Chadasch , Zurich**

On March 11 and 12, Saturday and Sunday, Purim was celebrated in the Jewish Liberal Congregation Or Chadasch Zurich. On the eve of Purim we read the classic Megillat Esther, followed by a delicious hamantaschen buffet.

On the day of Purim all our children had a great time. In the beginning of the celebration the story of Esther was recited and of course loudly acted out. Afterwards there was a race in which all the children could demonstrate their expertise at games and singing. All this was followed by our lovely tradition of making Mischloach Manot and delivering them to the local Jewish nursing home.

At the end of the day all the children received a surprise and the day ended with a sing-a-long in the synagogue.

Many thanks to School Director Tamar Krieger, Rabbi Ruven Bar-Ephraim and all the volunteer helpers.

**Tamar Krieger, translated by David Feder  
Jewish Liberal Congregation Or Chadasch Zurich**

## Pot luck dinner/conference at GIL

**Friday March 24**

Professor David Biale of the University of California at Davis gave a talk on "Heresies in Judaism" after Shabbat services and a pot luck dinner. He asked "Can a Jew be a heretic? Are there certain beliefs, as there are in Christianity that are not acceptable in Judaism? In his talk, he examined some important cases of Jewish heretics — from the Talmud to Baruch Spinoza — to try to answer these questions.



**David Biale**

## GIL Shoah commemoration

**Communauté Juive Libérale de Genève**

**Monday April 24 – Commemoration of the Shoah**

On the evening of Yom HaShoah, the community gathers together to remember and listen to:

- The testimony of Bertrad Herz, deported at age 15, author of "Pull-over de Buchenwald":

- "Le chant du peuple juif assassiné" written and read by Yitzhak Katsenelson

- A tribute to Herbert Herz z"l", former member of the resistance

Salle des Fêtes de Carouge, 37 rue Ancienne, Carouge  
Free entry. Doors open at 19:00. Ceremony starts at 19:30.



**Bertrad Herz**

**Claire Luchetta-Rentchnik  
Intercommunal Commission for the  
Commemoration of Yom ha Shoah**

## Basel: Migwan events

**Saturday, March 11, 6:30 pm**

Erev Purim celebration with Megilla readings, costumes and pot luck. With multi-lingual Megilla reading with some fun explanations by Dan D. Everyone was encouraged to come with costumes - adults included - and bring rattles, etc and food for a pot luck supper.

**Saturday, March 18, 10:00 am**

Shabbat Morning Service + Shiur "The Opening Blessing of the Amidah". Led by Rabbi Diane Lakein. Parashah Ki Tissa-Parah. Diane gave a Shiur about the opening blessing of the Amidah after service. There was a pot luck Kiddush too.

We are always very glad when members take over some of the functions of the Shabbat services. Whether leading parts of the service, reading or singing parts of the Torah reading, or preparing a D'var Torah, which can be presented in German or English. Please contact Peter Hurwitz at [peter.hurwitz@gmail.com](mailto:peter.hurwitz@gmail.com) for your contribution.

**Friday, March 31, 6:30 pm**

Family-friendly "something for everyone" Kabbalat Shabbat with singing led by Orah Mendelberg and extended children's programme with our madrichot Lea & Aviva. There will also be a D'var workshop for adults led by Paul Piwnicki: "Is this really what we want to pray for? - How to deal with difficult texts in the siddur."

**Friday, April 7, 6:30 pm**

Kabbalat Shabbat

**Monday, April 10, 6:00 pm**

Migwan Community Pesach Seder at Giger's. As in former years Michelle Giger invites the community to a Pesach Seder in Nuglar. We will improvise and have a pot luck meal. So please bring your Haggadot and something vegetarian to share for the Pesach meal. Please announce your attendance at: [religion@migwan.ch](mailto:religion@migwan.ch) as the places are limited.

**Saturday, April 29, 10:00 am**

Shabbat Morning Service with Rabbi Diane Lakein



### This 90-year-old German rabbi is now a movie star

For many Germans, Rabbi William “Willy” Wolff is the first Jewish religious leader they have ever met.

And he’s the perfect man for the job. Diminutive, with a disarming chuckle and twinkling eyes, Wolff, who turned 90 in February, effortlessly breaks down that uniquely German “Berührungsangst” – fear of contact with others.



Rabbi Willy Wolff

Rabbi Wolff was ordained in 1984 at Leo Baeck College in London. He served several London synagogues when he learned something unexpected: Germany needed rabbis.

Wolff, who fled Nazi Germany as a young boy and returned in 2002 to work in the former East Germany, is the first rabbi many Germans today have encountered in part because of his interfaith outreach over the years as one-time head rabbi for the former East German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, serving three liberal Jewish communities.

“He is really a gifted ambassador for Judaism,” said Hans-Jürgen Abromeit, a Protestant bishop who has worked often with Wolff on interfaith programmes and calls him “a fatherly friend.”

More recently, however, Wolff has reached a new level of prominence thanks to German director Britta Wauer. Her documentary, “Rabbi Wolff — A Gentleman Before God,” has been playing in theatres across the country. One of the top-grossing German documentaries in 2016, it will have its North American premiere in May.

Since the film’s release, the apparently tireless rabbi has been zigzagging around Germany with Wauer talking with dozens of audiences and signing copies of her accompanying book, “Rabbi Wolff and the Things of Life.”

Toby Axelrod

Read the full JTA article [here](#).

### Chavurah Gescher active in Holocaust Memorial Day

Chavurah Gescher was involved in the planning of the programme for another important event which also took place from 28th to 30th January, marking Holocaust Memorial Day. The city of Freiburg invited 50 guests, victims and their descendants, from the USA, Israel and Uruguay as well many European countries, to take part in a weekend of dialogue and reconciliation. It was the personal stories that were particularly memorable and it was so impressive to see people travelling so far and working so hard to bring the victims’ stories to life. The weekend has established contacts between Chavurah Gescher and communities worldwide.

### Hamelin: Our 20th Year



LJC Hamelin's synagogue

We had planned a congregational celebration on our birthday, but due to epidemic levels of flu, we decided to cancel the festivities in February. Not to worry: a new date has been found, and we will celebrate our 20th anniversary on Sunday April 2 at 3:00 p.m. Our choir “Shalom” has prepared a concert for us. Rabbi Offenberg will interject reflective readings between the musical selections. A delicious buffet prepared by Dora, Valerij and Lyudmila will tempt every tongue.

A Jewish Culture Festival (the first ever in Hamelin) will be celebrated on June 11 with an open house day. The programme will begin at noon and end at sundown. The day will offer information booths and multiple opportunities to explore and experience the wonderful world of Judaism, foods, music, dance, Hebrew and much more. It has always been our intention to share our religious and cultural heritage with our friends and neighbours.

Our congregation was established 20 years ago on February 17, 1997 with 18 men and women who had a dream and a hope to re-establish Jewish life in Hamelin. The conviction was to create a Jewish space in a country new to us all - and we did!

We consciously decided to carry on the religious Progressive tradition which was celebrated in Hamelin until the congregation and Jewish life was destroyed in 1938. Our community is steadfast, our synagogue stands and we are indebted and grateful to all those who helped build what we have today. In our 20th year we will celebrate our past, present and future and hope you will all take part.

Rachel Dohme

Read the full newsletter [here](#).

### ‘Beyond Borders’ at Gescher in Freiburg

Following the service on Friday March 3, Rabbi Diane Lakein held a shiur, ‘Beyond Borders’. Everyone brought a dairy or parve dish to share.

For the weekend of Friday March 31 to Sunday April 2, Diane will lead a seminar with Shabbat services titled My God, your God, no God? For further information and registration please click [here](#).

## Italy

### Purim at Beth Hillel

Activities began at 18:00. Children and adults had been strongly encouraged to dress up, and they did! The younger crowd was immediately involved in the activities organised for them with a dedicated reading of the Megillat Ester. Their parents brought small wrapped unisex gifts, worth up to 5€. The gifts, gathered in a basket, were chosen by chance at the end of gathering.

At 18:30 there was a collective reading for adults of the Megillat Ester in various languages. Afterwards there were prizes for the best costumes.

The evening concluded with "Jewish Experience" - a concert with Gabriele Coen on sax and clarinet with Francesco Poeti on guitar. For many years, Gabriele Coen has devoted himself to the encounter between jazz and ethnic music with a special focus on the Jewish musical heritage. Francesco Poeti is a regular presence in major jazz festivals.



Francesco Poeti



Gabriele Coen



### Purim at Lev Chadash Milan



Lev Chadash Milan celebrated Purim with Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild as never before. It began with a gathering of all the Bnei Mitzvah teenagers followed by a workshop with the smaller children who made graggers and rattles. After pizza for everyone, the Megillat Esther was read in a multitude of languages. We followed with a costume party and contest, and concluded with Purim sweets.



Reading the Megillat Esther at Lev Chadash Milan

### Taglit-Birthright programme in Italy



I am pleased to inform you that applications for this summer's Taglit-Birthright programme are now open. This is the sixth year that we are involved in this scheme which is open to any participant between the ages of 18 and 26 with either a Jewish father or mother. Our inclusion and leadership in Taglit was a major breakthrough for de facto recognition by the Italian Jewish community that the Progressive Movement in Italy is a part of the larger Italian Jewish world. The trip this year will run from July 23-August 1. I urge you all to do as much as possible to inform your members of this opportunity and register quickly. It is an extremely worthwhile and wonderful programme which deserves our full support.

Applications should go directly to the Taglit website: [www.taglit-birthright.com](http://www.taglit-birthright.com). If you have questions, please write to me at [dr@sophisticateditaly.com](mailto:dr@sophisticateditaly.com) or to [gadlazarov@hotmail.com](mailto:gadlazarov@hotmail.com)

David Ross  
Beth Shalom Milano

### Lev Chadash Milan activities

Lev Chadash presents a lecture series, The Sea of Halakhah: The making of the oral Torah with professor Elena Lea Bartolini

#### Wednesday March 29

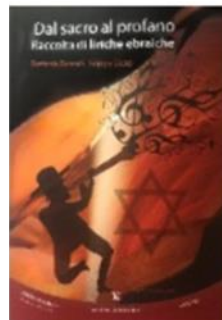
From Sinai to the codification of the Mishna and the Talmud

#### Sunday April 9 at 18:30

The major Talmudic compendia and literature of the responses



Elena Lea Bartolini



#### Wednesday April 5 at 18:00

Rossana Ottolenghi presents a selection of Jewish songs the book 'Dal sacro al profano', From the Sacred to the Profane, by Stefania Rescali and Fillippo Zizzo. The talk will include a musical performance by soprano Lucia Libassi from the Milan Conservatory.





Beit Warszawa

### Events at Beit Warszawa

On March 11-12 at Beit Warszawa Synagogue we again hosted the participants of Shatz Cantorial Course. Many joined us for Saturday open lectures.

**1:15 – 2:00 p.m.** *Purim traditions*

**2:00 – 2:10 p.m.** *Coffee break*

**2:10 – 3:40 p.m.** *Alexander of Macedonia. Hellenization outside of Palestine. Greeks and Jews in Palestine (part 1)* – lecture by prof Hanna Zaremska

**3:50 – 5:20 p.m.** *Alexander of Macedonia part 2* – lecture by prof Hanna Zaremska

The entire program was free to all participants.

The weekend of March 24 and 25 our guest at Beit Warszawa Synagogue was Rabbi Haim Beliak, who together with Cantor Rivka Foremniak led Shabbat services on Friday and Saturday and helped us welcome our new Torah on Friday evening.



Rabbi Haim Beliak

### Paideia Fellowships in Jewish Studies 2017-2018 in Stockholm



Explore the Plurality of Jewish Studies at Paideia in Stockholm! The **Paideia One-Year Jewish Studies Program** offers a unique international Jewish study experience during eight months in Stockholm with the possibility of completing a 120 ECTS Master in Jewish Civilizations at the Hochschule

für Jüdische Studien in Heidelberg, Germany. Scholarships are available towards tuition, accommodation and living costs. **Deadline April 15.** Apply [here](http://www.paideia-eu.org) or visit [www.paideia-eu.org](http://www.paideia-eu.org)



Stockholm

### Dutch Bar Mitzvah at the Kotel



Rikou Blayer receives Bar Mitzvah blessing from Rabbi Menno ten Brink at the Kotel

On Thursday February 23 the Bar Mitzvah of Rikou Blayer was celebrated at the Kotel, at Robinson's Arch. Rikou is a member of the Amsterdam Liberal Jewish Community, and Rabbi Menno ten Brink of the community came with the family for the ceremony. Photo by Riette ten Brink.

### Purim at LJG Twente



Purim at LJG Twente, Netherlands

The LJG Twente held a wonderful and festive service and celebration for Purim, and "celebrated" afterwards too with wine, liqueur and many Purim snacks! A part of the congregation was not able to be there, but those who were the hardy attenders had a wonderful time, as can be seen by the festive photo. Our shul president and chazzan Bert Oude Engberink cantillated the whole Megillat Esther to much noise at certain times, and received a round of applause at the end of this herculean effort. The photo was taken by our other chazzan, Daan Daniëls.



## MJLF Paris news

1. MJLF has launched a new website with key pages in English. To read about MJLF's rabbis, values, history, services and activities, just click [here](#). Visit our Beaugrenelle synagogue near the Eiffel tower next time you are in Paris.
2. Tradition and innovation mark Friday night services. On the first Friday each month at MJLF West (Beaugrenelle), the Alef service for young children is followed by the musical Zimra service for all. At MJLF East (Surmelin) a new Erev Shel Yeladim service offers a joyous family service of song, play and learning. These services attract a full house.
3. Tu B'shvat was celebrated at Beaugrenelle with a group of newlyweds and new MJLF members, notably those most recently welcomed into the House of Israel. Surmelin celebrated in collaboration with Arzenou France, using a new Haggadah.



**Father Michael Remaud from Jerusalem speaking to the Judeo-Christian Friendly Society at MJLF**

4. Interfaith Dialogue: Zionism and Antizionism  
For the first time, on 29 January, MJLF hosted the Judeo-Christian Friendly Society National Council, followed by discussions led by Father Michael Remaud, a 35-year resident of Jerusalem, and Gil Mihaely, historian and co-founder of the magazine Causeur. The session was introduced by Jacqueline Cuhe, President of the Society, and MJLF Rabbi Yann Boissière.

**Robert Ley**  
International relations coordinator, MJLF, Paris



## Keren Or festivals

The festival of Purim was an occasion for young and old to rejoice through the involvement of the children and leaders of our Talmud Torah. When we read the



**Purim at Keren Or, Lyon**

Megillah of Esther in five languages, we did not miss a single opportunity to make a joyful cacophony as soon as Haman's name was pronounced. We warded off fate and booed the name of the one by whom we nearly perished.

At Purim, the story of the Scroll of Esther leads us to questioning the commitment of each person to fight against anti-Semitism and more generally, against any kind of discrimination.

The festival of Pesach, which already is being actively prepared for at Keren Or, calls for acting on this verse, known to all: "Remember that you were a stranger in Egypt." These two festivals, Purim and Passover, recall the importance of preserving our Jewish identity and showing solidarity with the destiny of our neighbour.

I would like to take this opportunity, to thank everybody at Keren Or involved in helping to make these moments of sharing and solidarity possible.

I also invite those, who wish to become more involved in our communal life. Every gesture, every acknowledgment is precious in order to make Keren Or the ray of light in the life of all.

**Pamela Vennin, Keren Or Présidente**

## Three trips for Liberal Jewish Youths

**Don't be late, make your choice ... and especially register!**

Under the aegis of the AJL (Assemblée du Judaïsme Libéral) three trips are being organised this year. These trips are open to all children of AJL's communities in France, Belgium, and Switzerland. AJL will be delighted to enable them to discover France and Israel.

**July 4 – 27:** CJL's super "MahaNetzer" for 6 – 17 year olds, wonderfully organised by Etienne Kerber. Contact her for further information at: +33 6 48 20 80 89.

**July 11 – 25:** The super trip to Israel for 14 – 17 year olds, organised by the MJLF (Oren Giorno). [Click here](#).

**August 1 – 11:** The FREE TAGLIT trip for 18 – 26 year olds, jointly organised by the MJLF (Oren Giorno) and CJL (Etienne Kerber). [Click here](#).





## At Beth Jaakov, AJTM Paris

February 28, Conversation with Kudsi Erguner

The internationally renowned musicologist, composer and performer Professor Kudsi Erguner spoke about the musical heritage of Ottoman Sephards at the AJTM. For several decades, he has been interested in the roots of Ottoman music and the influences of Turkish, Jewish, Ladino, Arabic, Persian, Greek and Armenian cultures. In July 2016, he was appointed artist for peace by Unesco, in recognition of his efforts to promote the universal values of music, an essential instrument of dialogue between cultures.



Kudsi Erguner

**March 23, Debate: The place of the religious in our democratic and secular republic.** Hosted by LICRA, a non-governmental organisation combatting racism and AJTM. Participants were François-Xavier Dupont (representing the Municipality), Rabbi Gabriel Farhi (Liberal Rabbi, AJTM), François Clavairol (President of the Protestant Federation in France), Sheikh Samir Adnane (Imam), Gaëlle Atlan (Moderator, Journalist).

## Travel to Catalonia with CPJL Wednesday May 24 to Saturday May 27



Gaudi architecture in Barcelona

CPJL, Keren Or's cultural branch offers: Girona and its Jewish Museum, Besalu and its mikvah, Jewish Barcelona, a Shabbat service and meal with the progressive community of Barcelona. Transportation is via car-pooling.

The price (including three nights in a double room, transport, visits) about €400

For accommodation just in Barcelona + transport and tours. about €180. Register with Paule Fort: tel. 06 64 03 97 33; email - [fort.paule@bbox.fr](mailto:fort.paule@bbox.fr).



ULIF News

## Events at Copernic, Paris



L-R: Benjamin Duvshani, Rabbis Haddad and Jacquelin

### March 5, What future is there for Judaism?

This was the first lecture of a series which aims to reflect on the Judaism of tomorrow. Benjamin Duvshani joined Rabbis Phillippe Haddad and Jonas Jacquelin. Jean-François Bensahel moderated the event.

### March 13, Lecture by Rabbi Marc-Alain Ouaknin

Rabbi Marc-Alain Ouaknin held a lecture at Copernic as part of a cycle of lectures organised by the ULIF and the DEFI (Développement des Etudes Françaises en Israël). Topic: "Diving into the Talmud VIII: The Tales of a Thousand and one Day - Narrative Dimension of the Talmud."



Rabbi Ouaknin



Shai Maestro, Yotam Silberstein

### March 18, Copernic Jazz Concert

A Jazz performance by exceptional Israeli musicians, the Yotam Silberstein Quartet and the Shai Maestro Trio, took place at 8:30 pm.

All three events were well attended and the public in all instances was well rewarded.

### Northern Liberal communities hold first ever combined service



Liberal Judaism's northern communities gather

The first-ever combined service of Liberal Judaism's northern communities took place in York on February 20, attended by around 120 people.

Liberal Judaism members and friends from as far afield as Cumbria, Northumbria, Nottingham, Durham and Manchester gathered for the service, which was led by Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich (Nottingham Liberal Synagogue), Student Rabbi Deborah Blausten (York Liberal Jewish Community) and Rabbi Robert Ash (Lancashire and Cumbria Liberal Jewish Community).

Addressing the congregation, Rabbi Danny Rich, senior rabbi of Liberal Judaism, promised that the service would be the first of many projects. Danny announced Liberal Judaism's intention to establish a Northern Communities Alliance comprising Durham, Edinburgh, Lancashire and Cumbria, Lincoln, Manchester and York. He said that he hoped the Alliance would hold Northern events and conferences and share knowledge, skills and resources across the region.

Ben Rich, chair of York Liberal Jewish Community, said: "I anticipate that this was one of the largest Liberal Jewish gatherings in the country this weekend. What an amazing thought that it took place in York where, less than three years ago, there was no community."

"Liberal Judaism – because of its inclusivity and openness to all – is truly on the march in the North of England."

A highlight of the service saw the congregation burst into spontaneous applause when it was announced that York members, Sinan and Dena Nuuman and their children, Yara and Liza, from Iraq – who have been seeking asylum in the UK – have been granted leave to remain.

Click the logos for news of our UK movements



### Reform Judaism Update

Welcome to your Reform Judaism Update. We are delighted to launch our [Connecting with Members Telethon](#) with a special message from Maureen Lipman. We are also thrilled to open bookings for [Shirei Chagigah](#), our music conference and to announce a very special celebration marking 70 years of Reform youth.



Maureen Lipman



70 years of Reform youth in three photos



Bookings are now open for Shirei Chagigah

### Rabbi Blue memorial service

A memorial service to celebrate the life of Rabbi Dr Lionel Blue OBE will take place at West London Synagogue on May 8, 6.30pm to 8.00pm.

Dress: Lounge suit. Entrance is by ticket only. For tickets, please contact [RSVP@rjuk.org](mailto:RSVP@rjuk.org)

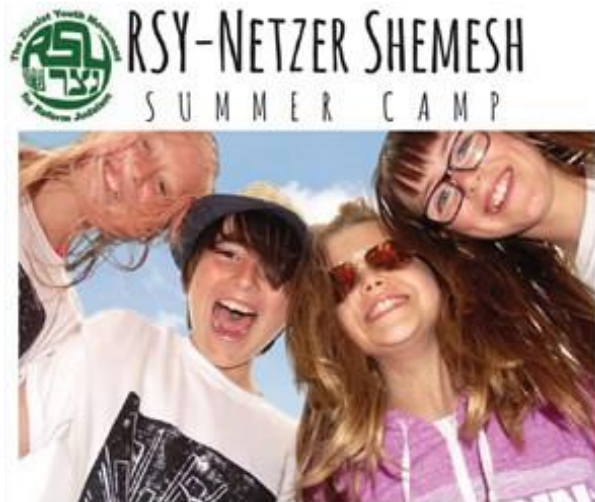


Rabbi Dr Lionel Blue OBE



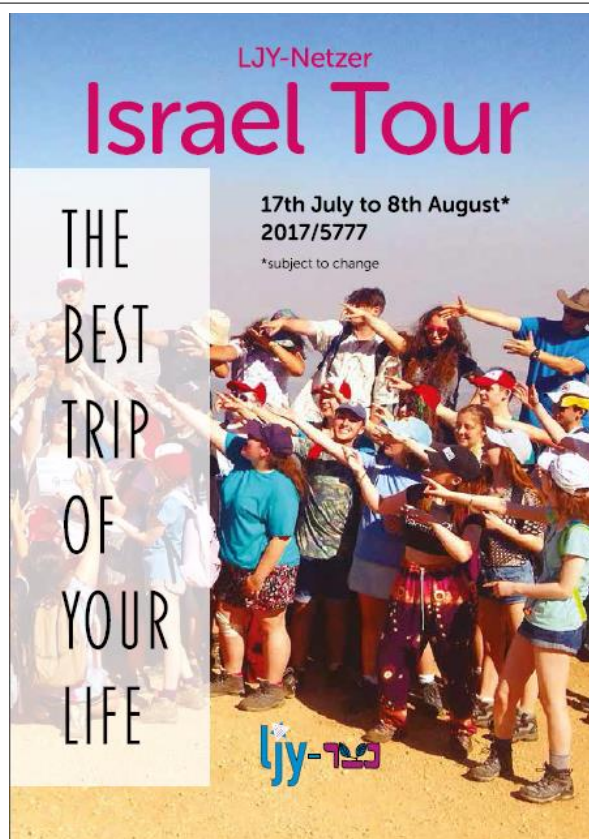
## United Kingdom

### UK Jewish summer programs



Recruitment for RSY-Netzer's famous Shemesh summer camp is in full swing! Shemesh is a wonderful experience for young people to spend an extended period of time in a nurturing, friendly, Reform community, so don't miss out!

[Find out more.](#)



[Click here](#) for more information.

**Click the logos  
for news of our  
UK movements**



### Abraham's Tent: London Jews fundraise to house Syrian refugees



#### Interfaith supporters of Abraham's Tent campaign

A synagogue in south London is raising funds to help house a family of Syrian refugees in the only example of its kind across the capital.

South London Liberal Synagogue launched its 'Abraham's Tent' campaign this weekend, with senior figures from Reform and Liberal Judaism alongside Christian leaders and the chief executive of the Board of Deputies.

The synagogue has already raised some money to convert the former caretaker's flat attached to the building into a home for a family fleeing war in the Middle East, describing it as "the community's most ambitious ever fundraising drive".

Alice Alphandary, chair of the synagogue said: "This project is so important to us as Jews. My dad was a refugee from Egypt. Many people in our community were refugees from Germany and Eastern Europe. We want to give refugees the same welcome and hospitality we received when we came to this country."

Rabbi Janet Darley said: "It was wonderful to see so many congregants, neighbours and friends coming together to support this project. Every house or flat made available means rescue and resettlement for another family."

[Click here](#) for the full article in Jewish News Online.

### Rabbi Neuberger interview

Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger of West London Synagogue was interviewed by The Examined Life which seeks to 'elicit and explore questions from some of today's most interesting thinkers. The project draws on the wisdom of academics, artists, activists and politicians from across the globe'.

Her question: 'How can I make the best use of the short life I have?'

[Click here](#) to read the full interview.



**Rabbi Baroness Julia  
Neuberger**

### Archbishop of York gives inaugural Lionel Blue Memorial Lecture



**Rabbi Deborah Kahn-Harris (l) with the Archbishop of York and Leo Baeck College rabbinical students**

More than 230 people packed into the North Western Reform Synagogue (Alyth) in Barnet to hear the Rt Rev & Rt Hon Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, deliver the first Lionel Blue Memorial Lecture on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

The event was part of the 60th anniversary celebrations for Leo Baeck College, the preeminent institution for the training of Progressive Jewish rabbis and educators, of which Rabbi Lionel Blue OBE was the first alumnus in 1958.

Dignitaries at the lecture included Mayor of Barnet David Longstaff, TV and radio personality Vanessa Feltz, the Senior Rabbis of Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism – Rabbis Laura Janner-Klausner and Danny Rich – and the Principal and Dean of Leo Baeck College, Rabbis Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris and Dr Charles Middleburgh.

The Archbishop started his address by praising Rabbi Lionel Blue OBE who died in December at the age of 86 after a long and distinguished career.

The Archbishop said: "As you all know, Rabbi Lionel Blue was a man of warmth, humanity, faith and wisdom. His wonderful ability to share the truth and humour of his experience of life and God endeared him to audiences across the world.

"People of many faiths and people of no faith were given a glimpse of how God makes himself real and present in the midst of confusion and pain – but also more particularly in the midst of the humdrum ordinariness of daily life."

He went on to deliver a powerful lecture, entitled *Wisdom, Futility, Death and Time: the Voice of Religion in the 21st Century*. It can be read in full [here](#).

In the thought-provoking address, the Archbishop covered topics including knowledge as a commodity, the explosion of social media, celebrity culture, globalisation, nationalism and terrorism – drawing on Jewish and Christian texts and traditions, as well as writers from the worlds of religion, philosophy, art and psychoanalysis.

### Shabbat Resouled 10th Birthday Celebration!



Formed in 2007 with the combined talents of Dean Staker and Rabbi Neil Janes and a bunch of most wonderful musicians, SHABBAT RESOULED has welcomed Shabbat on the third Friday of each

month at Finchley Progressive Synagogue for the past 10 years, creating a musical tradition that has been enjoyed by thousands, and envied and copied by many! Much of Dean's original music is now sung in other congregations throughout the UK and has spread to communities in Australia, Sweden and the USA.

Sooooo on the third Friday of April, that's the 21st, we are delighted to invite you to SHABBAT RESOULED's 10th birthday party! We are hoping that many of the original musicians will join us to see the evolution of the band, and we're also in the process of organising an Oneg/Chavurah Supper following the service (details TBC). Meanwhile, if you haven't heard them for a while, [here's](#) a reminder!

We look forward to welcoming you at Hutton Grove at 6.30 pm on April 21 and ask that you pass this on to anyone whom you know would enjoy celebrating Shabbat in this wonderful musical tradition!

### Building your Jewish Literacy – an online course

**28 March, 25 April, 23 May, 27 June, 11 July**

**8-9:45 pm GMT in the comfort of your own home**

Each part of the course will consist of a session with Rabbi Leah Jordan exploring the basics, and a session with Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers looking at creative ways of applying the topic in the classroom.

#### Topics include:

Torah, Tanakh, Rabbinic literature, Jewish time, Jewish history, The diversity of Jewish life.

Please register by emailing [sonia.leigh@rjuk.org](mailto:sonia.leigh@rjuk.org).

### Rabbi Harry Jacobi in UNICEF video



Liberal Judaism's Rabbi Harry Jacobi, who twice fled the Nazis in childhood, has appeared in a new UNICEF (the United Nations International Children's Fund) video, alongside one of today's Syrian child refugees. Harry and Ahmed share their hauntingly similar stories in the clip, alternating sentences so that their personal tales become one.

Watch the powerful video [here](#). Read the full Times of Israel article [here](#).





## WUPJ 2017 Calendar

**May 13-17** - Jerusalem  
**Pursue Justice: Seminar for Legal Professionals**  
**May 15-21** - Jerusalem **CONNECTIONS 2017**  
**WUPJ 38th Biennial Conference**  
**July 13-23** - Jerusalem  
**The Bergman Seminar for Jewish Educators**  
**July 19-30** - Europe  
**WUPJ/Netzer Summer Youth Camp Mission**

### Creating Meaningful Connections: Bergman Seminar for Progressive Jewish Educators, July 13-23

Educating the educators is one of the Bergman Seminar's guiding principles. An intensive ten-day programme for Progressive Jewish Educators from around the world, the Bergman Seminar, led by the WUPJ's Anita Saltz International Education Center, combines classroom and text study with site visits and face-to-face encounters with individuals and educational projects that explore the multitude of Jewish narratives inside and outside of Israel. For more information, including the schedule and fees, [click here](#).



Bergman Seminar participants visit the innovative ecological classroom of Ein Shemer

## CONNECTIONS 2017 Join us in Jerusalem Register for May 17-20 Biennial

**Open Event Registration Available**  
**Register today - limited space is available**



More than 300 participants, from over 20 countries, have already signed up for this exciting four-day conference. If you haven't taken a look at our confirmed sessions and presenters, please visit our website and register today before registration closes! We will be unable to offer day passes for CONNECTIONS 2017 with the exception of the opening gala for which separate registration is now open!

**Register here for CONNECTIONS 2017 today.**



Every week, WUPJ emails *Torah from around the World*, a commentary on the Parashah (Torah portion) of the week by a rabbi from one of its congregations. Please click [here](#) to subscribe.

### Subscribe to WUPJnews

[Sign up for WUPJnews](#) to receive on-going updates about our communities around the world. Like WUPJ on [Facebook](#).

### IMPJ Newsletter

[Click on this link](#) for the newsletter of the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism.

## WUPJ Saltz seminars in May

*Learn about the legal issues challenging the Jewish state with these seminars*

### WUPJ Saltz Leadership Institute & Pursue Justice Seminar for Legal Professionals

**May 13-17:** Spend five days meeting with leading politicians, judges, legislators, professors, attorneys and activists, each presenting a different facet of the prism that comprises Israel's national and international law. Tour Israel's Supreme Court and meet with justices; visit the Knesset and debate legislation with ministers. [Read more here](#).

### WUPJ Saltz Leadership Institute & IRAC Religion and State Issues Seminar

**May 16-17:** WUPJ and Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC) invite you to spend two days delving into the multifaceted and challenging work that we care so much about: keeping Israel pluralistic, democratic and egalitarian in its public and private legislation.

This seminar is open to all!

[Click here](#) for full information.