



European Union for Progressive Judaism

January 2018 Newsletter

© European Union for Progressive Judaism

Interfaith communities join together

Kingston's diverse range of religious communities joined together at Kingston Liberal Synagogue (KLS) in Surrey on Saturday December 16 to light the fifth Chanukah candle.



Kingston Liberal Synagogue's Chanukah candle lighting. L-R: Rabbi René Pfertzel, Vili Kiradzhiiev, Marilyn Leach, Reverend Kuhan Satkunanayagem, Major Rashid Laher and Mutlu Sancaktutar

Rabbi René Pfertzel of KLS gave a warm welcome and said: "We come from the four corners of the Earth, but are united by a common identity. We all belong to the human race. Our languages, customs and cuisine may differ and we worship with different ceremonies and practices, but we all come from the same family."

The candles were lit by Vili Kiradzhiiev from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church; Marilyn Leach, lay representative of the Kingston Inter Faith Forum; Reverend Kuhan Satkunanayagem of St Mary's Church; Major Rashid Laher from Faith Associates and Mutlu Sancaktutar, leader of a group of Turkish Muslim families. Craig Simmons, Chairman of KLS, lit the 'shamash' (candle used to light the others). About 100 people attended the Chanukah celebrations, including representatives from Ahmadiyya Baitul-Futuh Mosque, the Kingston Islamic Centre and St Matthew's Church, as well as Louise Walton, Kingston University's Faith Adviser.

Continued on page 2

Paying tribute to giants of Judaism

Although it has been relatively quiet, EUPJ continues its work. The obvious public face of this is preparation for the Prague conference in April – and David Pollak has more to say about this elsewhere in the newsletter – but other aspects have not been neglected.

In addition to the actual conference, we have our Annual Assembly. This is the opportunity for all our members to meet and exchange views, react to the annual report, discuss any resolutions that have been put forward and make plans for the next year. John Cohen, our Honorary Secretary, and Deborah Grabiner, our Administrator, are hard at work assembling the documentation required. It is a mammoth task to put together all the necessary paperwork.

Since our November issue was published, quite a significant number of WUPJ people attended the Union for Reform Judaism's (our North American colleagues) biennial in Boston. One of the highlights was the dinner honouring Nani and Austin Beutel, as well as Rabbi Meir Azari.

The Beutels are Canadian and over many years

have been staunch supporters of the World Union. By creating and supporting the Beutel Seminar, they have enabled future leaders from all regions to be identified and given the opportunity to spend 10 days in Israel to hone these skills. Within EUPJ, we have benefitted greatly from the knowledge and enthusiasm that Beutel alumni bring back to our communities.



Continued on page 2

January 2018 Contents

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Interfaith Chanukah | 9 Spain |
| 1 Chairman's message | 10 Belgium |
| 3 Editor's Note | 11 Czech Republic |
| 4 EUPJ Conference | 12 Hungary & France |
| 5 Community Connections | 13 Germany |
| 6 IMPJ | 14 Italy & UK |
| 7 WUPJ | 15 UK cont... |
| 8 Portugal | 17 Switzerland |

An Interfaith Chanukah

No strangers to interfaith events

MJLF Beaugrenelle celebrated the first night of Chanukah in style, with a special service led by Rabbis Delphine Horvilleur and Yann Boissière. Guest Imam Hassen Chalghoumi, who lit the first candle, is well known in interfaith circles and is an active participant in MJLF's interfaith dialogue, especially through the *Voices for Peace* initiative led by Rabbi Boissière.

MJLF members are becoming accustomed to seeing Christian and Muslim guests periodically at Shabbat services.

This year's celebration was also the occasion for affixing the *Mezuzah* on the central door of the

synagogue sanctuary following the complete ground-floor renovation of the synagogue creating a more open and welcoming entrance hall, a new floor, new seats and fresh paint.

See more Chanukah celebrations interspersed throughout the newsletter.



Left: Imam Hassen Chalghoumi with community members. Right: Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur

Interfaith communities cont...

"The lighting of candles is a proclamation that light must prevail over darkness," said Rabbi Pfertzel. "We can use each of the candles to remind ourselves of our intentions and promises."

Other faith leaders then talked about the significance of light in their own traditions.

This was followed by some joyful singing

and talking over tea and traditional Chanukah specialties like potato latkes and doughnuts.

"When I saw so many people of different faiths sitting together at the tables and chatting, I wished the wider world could be like that," said Jenny Woolfe, one of the attendees.

— Barbara Richards

Paying tribute cont...

While on this theme, I must also pay tribute to Betty and Arthur Roswell, another North American couple with global vision.

Some years ago, they established a significant fund. The annual interest from this fund comes to us at EUPJ so that congregations in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Spain can benefit from educational and other programmes.

The fund is administered by David Pollak and he welcomes applications for grants.

At the URJ biennial, the WUPJ launched an app to help people find member congregations throughout the world. It can be accessed via the WUPJ website and is an invaluable tool for Progressive Jews to find each other. It is entirely appropriate that the WUPJ biennial is called *Connections*; this new app will continue that work between each conference.

At last year's Annual Assembly, I spoke of the then recent death of Rabbi Lionel Blue. Included in the many facets of the Rabbi's remarkable work was his contribution as Religious Director of the European Region (as we were known for many years) of the WUPJ. *European Judaism*, the bi-annual journal, will be publishing a memorial issue in the spring and I encourage all those interested in our history to place an order by emailing [Jarek.Lodzinski](mailto:Jarek.Lodzinski@wupj.org).

Many readers will also remember Leo Hepner (z'l), a former Chairman of the EUPJ who died in November 2015. There will be a concert in his memory on Tuesday May 29 in the Purcell Room of the South Bank Centre in London, which will reflect his twin passions for contemporary music and the viola. The Purcell Room is a very small space so [book your tickets soon](#). — Miriam Kramer

Editor's Note

Happy New Year and welcome to 2018 and a year that promises to be filled with life and luck. After all, 18 is the numeric value of *Chai* (Life) and signifies the importance of life in Judaism.

The number 18 also represents good luck and gifts or donations are often given in multiples of *Chai* (18). So here's hoping you all have a year filled with *Chai*.

Tu B'Shvat, the festival celebrating *Rosh HaShanah La'llanot* (New Year of Trees), is around the corner. Erev Tu B'Shvat is on Tuesday January 30. It's a great time for families, friends and communities to get together to have a Tu B'Shvat *seder* (festive meal) where you eat from the Seven Species (*Shivat HaMinim*) described in the Torah as being abundant in Israel.

They include wheat, barley, grapes (vines), figs, pomegranates, olives (oil) and dates (honey) (*Deuteronomy* 8:8). Many people also plant trees on Tu B'Shvat, either in their communities or in Israel, and hold a ceremony celebrating this.

Whatever you choose to do to mark this occasion, take some photos and send them to us with a summary of the event so we can include them in our February issue.



As mentioned previously, our deadlines will be about two weeks before we publish (see deadlines listed below). But don't let this stop you sending me information and photos of your events AS THEY HAPPEN, even if it is after the deadline. If I can't use it in the current issue, I'll use it in the following one.

And please don't forget, it would be greatly appreciated if you could send your articles in English. This saves an enormous amount of time and prevents

errors in translation. – **Darryl Egnal**
(newsletter@eupj.org)

EUPJ Newsletter Deadlines

Please note: These dates are subject to change.

MONTH	COPY/PHOTOS	PUBLISH
February	Wed 07/02/2018	Thu 22/02/2018
March	Wed 14/03/2018	Thu 29/03/2018
April (pre-conf)	Mon 09/04/2018	Mon 23/04/2018
May (post-conf)	Wed 16/05/2017	Thu 31/05/2018
June	Wed 13/06/2018	Thu 28/06/2018

And God said: "Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit — to you it shall be for food." (*Genesis* 1:29)

EUPJ Honorary Officers and Staff 2018

Honorary Life Presidents

Leslie Bergman, UK
Ruth Cohen, Israel
Jeffery Rose, UK

President

Gordon Smith, UK

Vice-Presidents

Alex Dembitz, Switzerland
Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein, UK
Rabbi Dr Walter Homolka, Germany
Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris, UK

Chairman

Miriam Kramer, UK

Vice-Chairs

Stéphane Beder, France
Sonja Guentner, Germany
Michael Reik, UK

Honorary Secretary

John Cohen, UK

Honorary Treasurer

David Pollak, UK

Rabbinic Adviser

Rabbi Ruven Bar-Ephraim, Switzerland

EUPJ Rabbinic Assembly

Rabbi Ruven Bar-Ephraim, Chairman

European Beit Din

Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein, UK, Chairman
Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick, UK, Convener

Administrator

Deborah Grabiner, UK
administrator@eupj.org



Newsletter Editor

Darryl Egnal, Israel
newsletter@eupj.org

Regeneration: Building the Future

Prague * Thursday 26 - Sunday 29 April 2018

Conference calling loud and clear

With less than four months until the EUPJ Regeneration opening ceremony at the Smetana Hall, Prague, the rush to secure places is in full swing. The “early bird” rate has now been replaced by what we call the “mid-rate”. This will take us through to February 28 when the rate will increase to the “late bookers” rate. It is questionable as to whether we shall still be taking bookings from March 1 since we are already well on our way to filling all the available places. So don’t wait any longer. Book now for the [EUPJ conference](#).

Our workshop programme and plenary sessions are shaping up to be as brilliant as any programme



offered at previous conferences. The words that come to mind are “thought-provoking, challenging, stimulating, controversial, instructive and inspiring”.

The programme will include topics such as: “How we manage the ‘Sandwich Years’,” between caring for children and ageing parents; “How green is our planet?”, examining social responsibility and sustainability; “Does Israel have lessons for Europe?”, “For better or worse” examining mixed-faith marriage and partnerships; “We’re all individuals”, which will challenge conformity; and at the heart of our conference, “Experience isn’t everything”, which might set the scene for the old guard to step aside for the new.

These workshops and many more, led by specialists and experts, and driven by lively discussion between panels and delegates, will leave you bursting with ideas and a determination to take charge and “Build the future”.

We have also decided to repeat the hugely successful and popular *Dragon’s Den*, introduced in London when Beit Warszawa and Beit Polska walked off with the trophy for the best and most innovative community project within our movement. Who will be the winners in Prague? Now is the time

to prepare your entry and dazzle us all with what your community has achieved in the last two years.

The Rabbinic *Kallah* also promises to be an inspiration for all who attend. A great programme has been prepared and our rabbis will explore the diversity of Progressive Judaism in Europe, new avenues in liturgy, recent creations in life-cycle events, and different definitions of Jewishness. This will be a *kallah* of immense importance and should not be missed. Once again, places are limited and [early registration](#) is recommended.

Finally, the reservation rate of the post-conference tours, which will provide the perfect end to the *kallah* and conference, is now gathering pace and the numbers already booked on each of the three days of tours more than justifies the inclusion of these tours as part of our programme. A full description of each tour is included in our registration website and whether you indicated an interest in these tours or not, we strongly encourage you to see what you’re missing and then [register](#) for one or more of them.

The Czech Republic, rich in history and beauty, will send you home with your spirits lifted and a memory of Prague and its surrounding countryside that will live with you for the rest of your lives.

There will be many thanks expressed before the end of April, but at this stage, I would like to thank the large number of people who responded to our call to register before December 31 and took advantage of the early bird rate and the grants and discounts on offer.

We could not have supported so many delegates if it were not for the actions of a few very generous people who have donated funds to allow young leaders and members of communities from around the world to come together in Prague next April.



So far, we have representatives from 23 countries coming to conference and could well match the record number of 25 countries represented in London. This promises to be a very HAPPY NEW YEAR. – [David Pollak](#)

Building relationships: Budapest & the UK

As with any relationship, there is a degree of give and take. Relationships only truly work if both partners are willing to put in the effort and make a commitment to one another. Once they do this, the rewards can be bountiful and so begins a journey of self-discovery and growth.

The same can be said of twinning relationships between congregations. If both partners make a concerted effort, the benefits are plentiful and a beautiful relationship can develop, which over time becomes natural and effortless.

A perfect example of this meaningful relationship can be seen with the twinning of the West London Synagogue (WLS) and Budapest's two small Progressive communities, Sim Shalom and Bet Orim. In 2013, as WLS was approaching its 175th year, it embarked on a project to build upon its existing relationship with communities in Budapest and offer further support to this beautiful city. While this included financial support, WLS wanted to move beyond this aspect and instead offer personal friendships, support, any expertise, experience and skills that could be beneficial to the communities.

When making the decision to twin with another community, there are various factors to consider. In the case of WLS's twinning with Budapest, the decision to focus on this city was based on its large population with Jewish heritage; the struggle of its Progressive communities to operate as legitimate,

approved churches under Hungarian law; and the thirst expressed by many people to explore their often partial Jewish identity.

Initially, WLS tried to introduce a twinning Bar/Bat Mitzvah programme, but though three B'nei Mitzvah have taken place, there are not enough 13-year-olds in either Hungarian congregation to continue this programme at present.

Despite this, the continued efforts of both parties and a true desire to help led to the realisation that a visiting Rabbi would be key to drive forward some of the initiatives WLS had planned.

As a result, Rabbi Ariel Pollak, a graduate of the Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam, was appointed as sessional rabbi for one weekend a month to achieve various goals.

- Minister to and encourage collaboration between Sim Shalom and Bet Orim, such as joint Kabbalat Shabbat Services and informal Havdalah Services.
- Build the community of the Jewishly-engaged '3G' (Third Generation), which has emerged from the two congregations and now includes some unaffiliated people; and in addition, to reach out directly to 3G individuals to encourage them to create their own *chavurah*.
- Teach aspects of Judaism to adults and youth.
- Organise two Shabbaton retreats a year.
- Build a team to broaden and deepen the impact of Rabbi Ariel's work.

The range of activities planned is quite impressive and will leave a marked impression on both congregations.

As the relationship with Budapest goes from strength to strength, contact is constantly maintained by the Chair of the WLS Twinning Group, Rosalind Copisarow, who also makes regular visits to Budapest. So much good work has been taking place, it is hard to pinpoint all the achievements, but here are just a few... the induction of Rabbi Ariel Pollak, a Havdalah evening with members of the 3G Group and a West London Bar Mitzvah in front of the two congregations.

We have a mutually-beneficial and fruitful relationship, with both parties really benefitting from such an active twinning. The rewards go beyond what we can see, as many members of the Budapest congregations, who might otherwise not have had a chance to explore their Jewish identity and heritage, have been given a chance to do so and truly engage in a Jewish experience.

This is the first of what we hope will be many twinning relationships between European communities. If you are a smaller community looking to twin with a larger community or *vice versa*, please email Michael Reik at jhgroup.t21@btinternet.com so he can follow up with you and your community.

– Sarah Smerald and Michael Reik



Preparing a tree for planting on Tu B'Shvat during the EUPJ/WLS Twinning Group's visit to Budapest last year

Twinning success with the Ukraine

Another example of a successful twinning programme is that of Ealing Liberal Synagogue with the Progressive community in Khmelnytsky, Ukraine. This relationship is flourishing and growing consistently.

Igor Ratushniy, Chairman of the Khmelnytsky Community, spoke of their twinning with Ealing Liberal in the warmest terms. They are extremely happy with the arrangement and are working together with the help of Ealing to develop and expand the Progressive community in Khmelnytsky.



Ealing Liberal has been supporting Khmelnytsky with their High Holy Days Appeal for the past three years. The synagogue receives regular updates and numerous photographs from the community in Khmelnytsky, which are shared in the synagogue's annual report.

In addition, Deputy Head Teacher, Rafe Thurstance, regularly sends news and photos to the community in Khmelnytsky. As yet, Ealing has not planned a visit, but visitors from the Ukraine are always welcome to the UK. – [Sarah Smerald](#) and [Michael Reik](#)

IMPJ

Arab Muslim woman heads Leo Baeck Community Center in Haifa



Samia Diab is the first Arab Muslim woman to head a Jewish community centre in Israel. This is a remarkable achievement, which has caught the attention of the international media. Samia is the new Director of the Leo Baeck Community Center.

She was interviewed on December 28 on the "Trending" programme of i24 News, an international television channel that broadcasts news about Israel throughout the world.

Samia spoke about the wide range of shared existence programmes and activities carried out by the Leo Baeck Community Center, many of which are made possible through the partnership with our supporters worldwide.

The interview also focused on the community centre's activities during the Holiday of Holidays celebrations that took place throughout the month of December in Haifa with the participation of hundreds of Jewish and Arab families.

[View the complete TV interview with Samia.](#) – [Rabbi Ofek Meir](#)

Blazing a progressive trail



L-R: Sonja Guentner; Carole Sterling, WUPJ Chairman; Austin Beutel; Nani Beutel; Jane Taves and Rabbi Daniel H Freeland, WUPJ President

Toronto philanthropists Nani and Austin Beutel, and Rabbi Meir Azari, a leader in the Israel Progressive Reform Movement, received the International Humanitarian Award at the World Union's gala dinner event at the URJ Biennial in Boston in December. The event reflected the global reach of the work of these visionaries.

The Beutels are among the Progressive Reform Movement's most cherished leaders, having served on diverse local and international boards and advisory councils, including Austin's term as President and Chairman of the WUPJ and Nani's long tenure on the WUPJ Executive and North American Advisory Boards. Together, they have

shaped the Canadian and the worldwide Progressive Reform movements.

Rabbi Meir Azari, Senior Rabbi at Beit Daniel and Head of the Daniel Center in Israel, has forged the path for the Israeli Progressive Movement, enabling hundreds of Israelis to find a connection to a more egalitarian and inclusive Judaism.

Following speeches and the awards, Israeli conductor and composer, Or Oren, led the 41-piece orchestra in the North American premiere of the Debbie Friedman orchestral suite. The concert featured music drawn from Debbie Friedman's magnificent body of work and paid tribute to Friedman's life and legacy. – [WUPJ](#)

Leading the next generation

At the World Union for Progressive Judaism's (WUPJ) biennial conference in Jerusalem last year, the organisation introduced "Inspiring the Next Generation of Progressive Judaism" as one of three central pillars for its goals and activities in coming years.

To move this important work forward, a task force was formed to build a five-year strategy for engaging youth and young adults around the world. Leaders from across the movement were invited to participate and together, identified the need for a department that supports youth and young adult activities across the entire organisation. An extensive search was conducted for the head for this new department.

We are delighted to announce that Lior Argaman has accepted the position of Director of Youth and Young Adult Engagement of the WUPJ, which she started on January 1. Lior brings a wealth of experience to this role. She was the Interim Director of Netzer Olami, Director of Shnat Netzer, and a

former *shlichah* (emissary) to Netzer and the Progressive Movement in Melbourne.

In her new role, Lior will spearhead implementation of this new vision for the World Union as it seeks to expand its footprint to Progressive Jews across the globe.

The new Department for Youth & Young Adult Activities, headed by Lior, will be supported by a dedicated team of lay and professional leaders who will continue to evolve and support the organisation to best meet the needs of our communities and our youth in all WUPJ regions. – [WUPJ](#)



WUPJ app makes finding a community simple

Travelling overseas? Looking to experience Shabbat or holiday services with other, like-minded Reform, Progressive or Liberal Jews? We'll connect you with communities worldwide for home hospitality, services and more!

What makes Reform and Progressive Judaism so special? The 1.8 million Jews who are affiliated with our inclusive and values-driven movement in over 50 countries around the world.

As the global organisation that represents and strengthens global Reform Jewry, the World Union is proud to help connect you with open-minded and welcoming Jews and their congregations as you travel the world for holidays,



Shabbat or vacations.

Our [Find a Community](#) app puts global Reform Judaism at your fingertips. All you have to do is enter your destination city to discover a range of Reform, Progressive, Liberal and Reconstructive congregations and communities nearby.

Then send an inquiry to get information about services, join upcoming events and make arrangements for home hospitality. It's like visiting the family you never knew you had.

Discover what it means to belong to a global family by reading Sharon Mann's article: [How a Visit to an Amsterdam Synagogue Changed Our Entire Vacation](#). – WUPJ

Beutel Seminar happening soon

The Beutel Seminar, which runs from February 15 to 25, is a prestigious 10-day seminar in Jerusalem run by the Anita Saltz International Education Center. The seminar is housed in Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel, the WUPJ headquarters, which overlooks the dramatic walls of Jerusalem's Old City.

The seminar offers the opportunity to study ancient

texts and history; discuss current political and social issues; explore spiritual pathways and concepts of Jewish leadership – all within a Progressive Jewish context. Participants must be recommended by their community (ie rabbi, Jewish professional and or local lay leader) for their dedication and commitment to their communities (past and future).

Portugal

Reconnecting with their roots

Chanukah was led by our *shaliach* Dr Annette Boeckler. The celebrations included songs, learning and of course, *sufganiot* Portuguese style, which are called *Sonhos* (Dreams). They are indeed dreamy!

For the *B'nei Anussim* in Portugal, Chanukah has a special meaning. People still remember their families hiding the secret of their Jewishness and being afraid of persecution.

To be able to light the Chanukah candles and not being afraid to display them in the windows of the



synagogue is a major victory for Portuguese *B'nei Anussim* who are reconnecting with their roots.

B'nei Anussim (literally "sons of the forced ones") are the descendants of Portuguese and Spanish Sephardic Jews who were forced to abandon Jewish law and convert to Christianity against their will in order to escape persecution during the Inquisition.

The word *Marrano* is a generic Hebrew expression that also refers to them.

A place of Jewish learning and history

The official opening of Makom Sefarad in Seville coincided with Chanukah in December last year. It was a great celebration enjoyed by everyone who attended.

Makom Sefarad was developed as a place to encounter the past and the present of Jewish Spain in order to build and ensure the future.

The launch of Makom Sefarad was a way to present the community and its activities in public as well as to share the end of Chanukah with Jewish and non-Jewish friends. Many Jews from the local community attended the event, which was divided into three parts:

- Launch of Makom Sefarad and its activities.
- Talk on Judaism and diversity by Rabbi Haim Casas.
- Concert of Judeo-Spanish songs and Ladino music by the group Milo Ke Mandarin.



Concert with the group Milo Ke Mandarin

and to ensure that Jews living in Spain as well as visitors have access to a vibrant and personally meaningful experience of Judaism in Spain

We are also inspired by our history of co-existence with people from different faiths. Dialogue and cooperation with other cultures and religions is a



Jorge Gershon, Programming Director of Makom Sefarad presenting the activities

Our educational and cultural activities are devoted to creating a meaningful understanding of Spanish-Jewish heritage for visitors and locals alike.

Makom Sefarad is a pluralistic initiative inspired by the values of the ancient Hebrew Prophets. Our aim is to preserve the rich legacy of the Spanish Jews



Sara Pink, Vice-chairman of Beit Rambam, the Progressive Jewish Community of Seville

central part of our mission.

The event took place at Fundación de las Tres Culturas and was attended by civil and religious authorities and numerous members of the Jewish community. Along with the launch activities, we also celebrated the end of Chanukah. – **Rabbi Haim Casas**

Shabbaton in Cordoba

Rabbi Haim Casas will host a Shabbaton on April 6 and 7 in Cordoba under the auspices of Makom Sefarad. Everyone is invited to join him for a weekend of prayer, discussion, entertainment, music, tours and more.

The Shabbaton is open to all Spanish Jewish communities. This programme has a limited number of places so don't delay your booking. For further information and reservations, please email:

info@makomsefarad.org. There will also be an international Shabbaton in English in Seville-Córdoba in June. More information will follow.

A Sevillian Chanukah



Celebrating Chanukah with Beit Rambam

Chanukah success

The IJC Brussels Chanukah party, held at the home of community members Lisa and Joris on December 16 was a huge success. Many families and quite a few new faces joined in the fun. This was IJC at its best!

Lisa and Joris live in a former 'temple' in Brussels built early last century by an eccentric 'cult' dedicated to 'healing', so festivities were held in a beautiful and welcoming space shaped like a church, complete with choir loft. (How about that for progressive?)

There were dreidel games for the children, Chanukah songs, a "*Besamim*" (Havdalah spices) workshop where the newly-made boxes were then used during Havdalah, and an interfaith family Havdalah book with blessings and explanations, which was used. And the food overflowed. It was a



full dinner for those who were really hungry. Many Chanukiot were lit and the event was enjoyed by everyone who attended.

IJC member, Leslie Oversteins, who was at Nativitas (a soup kitchen located in downtown Brussels distributing hot meals and food packages to those in need) when our charity donation was dropped off, was pleasantly surprised. "WOW! My heart was totally filled to see how generous our community is – YET AGAIN!! All that food will go towards making food baskets for more than 100 families in need and will be delivered in time for Christmas. Mazeltov IJC. A great deed has been done!"

So, a big "Thank you" to Lisa and Joris for their hospitality, to all those who helped prepare the party and to all who came and donated to Nativitas. – [Diana Kanter](#)

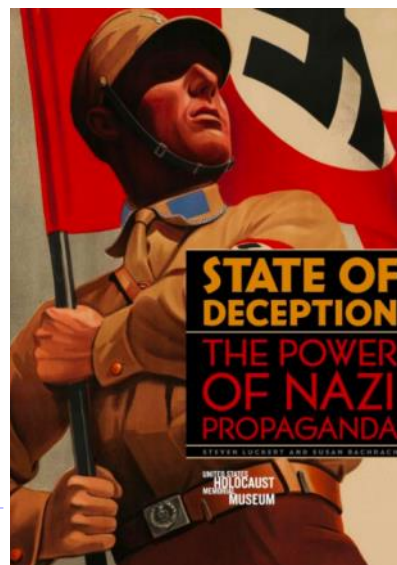


State of Deception The Power of Nazi Propaganda

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum, in conjunction with the European Parliament's Parliamentarium Museum* in Brussels, is marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day with an exhibition on Nazi propaganda.

Entitled *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda*, the exhibition encourages visitors to reflect on the ongoing dangers of propaganda – especially today when many of the techniques and messages developed by the Nazis are being recycled and re-used by extremist groups promoting violence and hatred.

The [exhibition](#) opens at the *Parlamentarium, the visitors' centre of the European Parliament, on January 25 and will run until May 13.



IJC fundraising event

IJC Brussels will host US Holocaust Memorial Museum chief curator Steven Luckert, who will discuss his exhibition on Nazi Propaganda, opening this month at the European Parliament's Parliamentarium.

Come enjoy a home-cooked meal at the home of IJC members on January 29 at 19:00.

Participation suggestion: Members €100 & Non-Members €150. For questions, please contact anusirkku@gmail.com. – [Diana Kanter](#)

Czech communities celebrate Chanukah

The great Jewish festival of lights and the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple was celebrated by the Jewish Liberal Union in the Czech Republic at ŽLU-Hatikva in Prague. This year's event was attended by the youth and adults alike. The Chanukah festivities were accompanied by the Cantor of ŽLU, opera mezzo-soprano Hannah Max, Czech-English writer, playwright and journalist Benjamin Kuras, who presented his contribution "Light of Welfare".

We also welcomed the President and Cantor of ŽLU, David Schwarcz, thanked him for everything he did for our community and his many years of service, and congratulated him on his 95th birthday! During the celebration, the choir of the ŽLU Rimón, led by Dana Kraus, performed for the members and there were plenty of fun things to keep the children occupied. At the end of the evening, ŽLU provided kosher wine, potato *latkes*, *sufganiot* (doughnuts), hummus and other goodies for everyone to enjoy.

Another Chanukah performance took place just before Shabbat when singer Jaroslava Hannah Maxová (mezzo-soprano) and pianist Veronika Ptáčková performed Chanukah songs in Hebrew, Ladino, Yiddish and Czech, the psalms in Hebrew and the psalms composed by Czech composer Antonín Dvořák.



After the concert, the guests from the Jewish communities in Děčín, Ústí nad Labem, Liberec, Prague and other communities, and everyone who attended the concert were welcomed into the synagogue for Shabbat services.



An experience of a lifetime

Shorashim-Israel with Israelis allows all applicants to customise their Birthright Israel adventures and travel with Israelis for the entire experience. Spread the word so people eligible for [Birthright Israel](#) complete early sign up for a journey with [Shorashim!](#)



תגלית • TAGLIT
BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL



Please support the
Friends of Progressive Judaism.
They support us.



Hungary

Lights, art and family fun

The Budapest Bet Orim Progressive Jewish Congregation gathered together on the fourth evening of Chanukah to greet the festival of lights. It was a family programme that took place before the Kabbalat Shabbat service.

The *Chanukiot* and the drawings about the history of Chanukah were made by our children as well as our adult members under the instruction

of our artists.

We then lit the candles and sang the traditional blessings. Our cantor, Flora Polnauer, taught us all the special festive Chanukah songs.

Afterwards, nearly 40 adults and children, together with a number of foreign guests, greeted the Shabbat and enjoyed the delicious Chanukah *sufganiot* during this special Kiddush.



Sim Shalom's varied education programme

Budapest's Sim Shalom congregation has an interesting and varied education and cultural programme. Rabbi Katalin Kelemen is teaching a bi-weekly course on the general topic: "What Judaism can teach us" about things like solitude and community, secrets of aging well, truth, freedom, the afterlife and the Messiah.

In addition, the community has occasional Oneg Shabbat evenings with a short service and then a presentation of some interesting topic. The first was

presented by one of our members, Aniko Pogany, who spoke about three examples of how Jewish thinking was secularised into modern psychology.

The examples she discussed were the writings of the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, the founding of Psychodrama by Jacob and Zerka Moreno, and work on non-violent communication developed by Marshall Rosenberg. Aniko herself is quite involved in Psychodrama, as are a couple of other Sim Shalom members. – [Jesse Weil](#)

France

Liberal Jewish Communities gather in Paris

The fourth gathering of French-speaking Liberal Jewish Communities will take place in Paris from March 23 to 25.

This meeting has become an established bi-annual fixture, which was previously held in Lyon, Toulouse and Brussels.

The Parisian communities will host this year's weekend, which will include Shabbat services, meetings, sharing and talks.

The rabbis and members of some 15 communities from France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland will gather to exchange ideas, reflect on Jewish life,

future prospects and Liberal Judaism in general.

"Being a Happy Jew" is the theme of the weekend seminar. Topics will include discussing how can we live fully and faithfully in a difficult and anxious environment?

Having a good time will also be a constant feature of these three days, which will offer moments of relaxation, tasty and lively meals, music and above all, dialogue. We are expecting a great turn out!

For more information, please call Marc Konczaty on 00 33 6 80 57 16 83, email: m.konczaty@mjl.org or contact us through the [website](#).

Chavurah Gescher marks its 20th anniversary

Please join us on February 23 and 24 to celebrate 20 years of the Gescher community in the Kaisersaal of Freiburg's Merchants' Hall in the Minster Square.

The Kabbalat Shabbat service and Shabbat morning service will be led by Rabbi Diane Tiferet Lakein and Cantor Daniel Kempin. After Shacharit, there will be a workshop with discussions on a variety of topics. An exhibition of photos, pictures and documents on the history of our community will be on display throughout the weekend. The grand finale of this anniversary weekend will be a concert by Daniel Kempin and Dimitry Reznik.

For more information or to let us know you're coming, please email us at vorstand@gescher-freiburg.de.



The Historical Merchants' Hall

Shades of Chanukah

The Jewish Community of Hamelin's Chanukah festival took place on December 12. The synagogue twinkled and sparkled with Chanukah decorations in many happy colours. The decorations dangled from the walls and gave the already warm atmosphere of our sanctuary a special holiday touch.

After retelling the Chanukah story, Rabbi Ulrike Offenberglit the first candle and sang the blessings with our children. The congregation joined in as we sang the traditional Chanukah anthem "Maoz Tzur" together.

The children received Chanukah gift bags in blue and silver, filled with sweets and dreidels and prepared with love by Olga Gerr and Lucia Zajtchenko. The rest of the congregation did not go home empty-handed.

Faina Pelts organised a concert with the kind support of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. Young and old were musically mesmerised by the talented "Berlin Oriental Group". Hands were clapping, feet were stomping and it wasn't long before people were up and dancing to Klezmer and Israeli tunes.

The Chanukah buffet beckoned, lovingly prepared



by Lioubow, and members and guests enjoyed the delicious food, which was baked or fried in oil. Potato *latkes*, sweet, jelly-filled *sufganiot* (doughnuts), fruit and sweets were pleasing to the stomach as well as the eyes! *Dreidelspiele* (dreidel games) and lively conversations ensured the evening came to an end only hours later. Thanks to all who participated and helped to organise the event. – [Rachel Dohme](#)



Day of Remembrance

On the January 27, the Jewish Community of Hamelin, together with the city of Hamelin, will observe a Day of Remembrance.

On January 27, 1945, Red Army soldiers freed the survivors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, the largest extermination camp of the Nazi regime. This Memorial Day was inaugurated by the German Federal President Roman Herzog on January 3, 1966.

The "Hamelin Forum" invites all interested citizens to join us at 18:00 on January 27 at the Weserbergland Centre. Admission is free.

A holiday for children



Rome's Progressive Community, Beth Hillel, had a very big turnout of children and adults for the Chanukah celebrations on December 16. The evening started with an interesting children's activity led by our religion school teacher, followed by the lighting up of candles and the singing of traditional Chanukah songs.



Both children and adults then enjoyed a joyful and funny performance by an excellent magician at the end of the evening, after which the children received their Chanukah presents.

Our Rabbi Joel Oseran, accompanied by his wife Rachel, led the evening with great success. – [Fabio Benjamin Fantini](#)

Righteous of Yesterday and Righteous of Today

Beth Hillel Rome has joined forces with [Gariwo](#) (Gardens of the Righteous Worldwide) to host an event called "Righteous of Yesterday and Righteous of Today" on January 30.

Speeches by Anna Foa and Pupa Garribba will describe the story of three "Righteous of Yesterday", developed in the context of an extraordinary co-operation between two institutions of different religions during the Second World War.

This story also discusses the history of the "Righteous of Today", women and men firmly

opposed to crimes against humanity and totalitarianism, and to encourage peace talks.

The event begins at 17:00 at the Casa della Memoria e della Storia, Via San Francesco di Sales 5, Rome.

Students of the Comprehensive Institute of Largo San Pio V, Secondary School 'Donato Bramante' will have the opportunity to hear the presentation at 10:00 on the same day at the same venue. –

[Fabio Benjamin Fantini](#)

United Kingdom

A lifetime of dedication

Dr Rudi Leavor, Chairman of the Bradford Synagogue, was presented the award for Outstanding Achievement at Bradford's annual Community Stars Awards in December in honour of his "selfless and voluntary service for the past 58 years".

He was nominated by Richard Stroud who said in an article in the *Telegraph and Argus*: "Since he retired over 20 years ago, he has helped improve relationships between the different faiths in Bradford and Yorkshire as well as making a major contribution to the memory of the Holocaust victims and maintaining their memorial."

Rudi, 91, who received a standing ovation when he went up for his award, said: "I am immensely proud and honoured to have been chosen for this award and want to thank all those involved."



Rudi was also presented with the British Empire Medal for Services to the Jewish Community and Interfaith Relations in Bradford. He received the award from the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire at a special interfaith Chanukah service.

Read the full article in the [Telegraph and Argus](#).

The warmth of Chanukah

A great evening was had by all at Newcastle Reform Synagogue on Sunday December 17 at the annual Chanukah party. The shul was packed with more than 50 people, young and old gathering together to celebrate the miracle of the oil.

Religious festivities were led by Rabbi Sybil Sheridan with a small band of volunteers providing fun activities for the young and young-at-heart. These included dreidel decorating (and spinning), eating of dangling doughnuts and making tissue Magenei David. Barbara and Ted Berg treated us to the delights of their freshly-fried latkes.

After a short Havdalah service, the community lit an array of Chanukiot. The warmth of the community was felt even more strongly than the warm glow from the candles.



It was a great evening and we look forward to our next community and family event for Tu B'Shvat at the end of January. – [Jo Edwards](#)

Performing a *mitzvah*

Around 50 Newcastle Reform Synagogue members and friends of all ages, from the very young to the more mature, came together to sort out donations for our local asylum seekers on Mitzvah Day. Joan and Peter Forrest outlined the work they do at the West End's "Drop In". This includes giving asylum seekers access to free legal advice, a hot meal and gifts of clothing and food.

They also described the life of an asylum seeker in the UK today – how they were unable to work until their application was accepted and how they had to manage on an extremely restricted budget.

The community had responded generously to the appeal for toiletries, warm clothing and food, and helped Joan and Peter pack boxes to take back with them. Linda Scott, Chairman of Newcastle Reform Synagogue, thanked Jo Benson and Alison Cookson for organising and planning the morning and for making sure that the volunteers received delicious home-cooked refreshments.

The atmosphere was warm and welcoming and prompted a lively discussion and a desire to develop the links in an even more constructive way. – [Brenda Dinsdale](#)

Deaf awareness service at Radlett Reform

In addition to sign language interpreters, Radlett Reform Synagogue had two very well behaved canine visitors attend Shabbat morning service on December 30. The "hearing" dogs were present to help mark the occasion of the community's

"deaf awareness" service.

Senior Rabbi Paul Freedman spoke about the ancient role of the meturgeman, the translator. This was particularly appropriate as the Torah was leyned phrase-by-phrase in Hebrew by Rabbi Celia Surget interspersed by Rabbi Freedman leyning the translation in English, while the English in the whole service was signed in British Sign Language by Esther Rose Bevan and the Hebrew in American Sign Language by EJ Cohen.

"While our quadrilingual service was particularly accessible, it also served as a useful reminder of how difficult life can be for those in the deaf community," said Rabbi Freedman.



L-R: EJ Cohen, Elizabeth Arendt (recipient of one of the dogs), Rabbi Celia Surget, Rabbi Paul Freedman and Esther Rose Bevan, with Head Warden Jack Alvarez in front

Lighting the lights of Chanukah



The Cheder of Edinburgh's Sukkat Shalom organised this year's Chanukah celebration with a great injection of fun and energy from LJ Netzer students Francesca Kurlansky, Ben Wyatt, Josh Powell and Sarah Brown



Left: Lighting the Chanukah at the City Chambers thanks to the generosity of the Lord Provost

Tu B'Shvat Seder

Celebrate the New Year of the Trees led by Sukkat Shalom's Rabbi Mark Solomon on Friday January 26 at 19:00 in Marchmont St Giles' Parish Church Centre in Edinburgh. Part of the Seder is a communal meal so please bring a dish to share (no meat or shellfish).



International Mitzvah Day: The sequel

Due to the overwhelming success of the first Mitzvah Day with Or Chadash, the Jewish Liberal Congregation in Zurich in 2016, and the spread of interest to Migwan, the Jewish Liberal Congregation in Basel, we decided to join forces and repeat the venture in 2017.

The group of volunteers consisted of three young adults and two adults from Or Chadash, and three adolescents with one adult from Migwan. The goal was to take asylum seekers to the zoo to share a fun-filled day of socialising, and enjoying the animals in a stress-free environment.

The asylum seekers included two families comprising three adults, five children and two babies. We stayed together in one big group and it gave the adolescents the chance to socialise between the two groups, meet and ask each other



questions and above all, to get to hold the babies! The two families came from Afghanistan and Albania and the Jewish volunteers originated from Switzerland, Holland and the USA.

Mitzvah Day was founded 19 years ago in the UK and has since spread to over 24 countries. One exciting thing about Mitzvah Day is that thousands of volunteers around the world participate in Mitzvah Day at the same time (see [Mitzvah Day](#) for more information).

Of course, every day should be a day to do a *mitzvah* and we shouldn't wait until the end of the year to do our *mitzvot*, yet there is something very exciting knowing we are volunteering with thousands of other Progressive Jews all around the world.

The goal of Mitzvah Day is to donate our time instead of our money, something that is a very precious resource for the adolescents and young adults of Or Chadash and Migwan, what with all the tests, essays, work and other commitments that they may have.

We hope the opportunity to donate our time has had a positive impact on both the recipients and those who volunteered. We thank the two families for coming and the six volunteers from Or Chadash and Migwan for taking time out of their busy schedules. We hope the shared experience and the new contacts between the two liberal Jewish organisations will result in further collaborations this year. – [Michelle Giger](#)

The dramatic story of the Jews of Ethiopia

Sigal Kanotopsky is one of Israel's most accomplished and acknowledged female social leaders and is CEO of the award-winning Israeli civil-society organisation Olim Beyahad.

On Thursday, February 1, she will be at GIL in Geneva to share the dramatic story of the Jews of Ethiopia: their mass migration to modern, urbanised Israel, and their ongoing challenge to make the Promised Land their home. Dinner (at a low cost) will begin at 18:45 and Sigal will begin her talk at 19:45.

The Ethiopians journeyed to Zion on foot, covering hundreds of miles. The route was arduous and perilous; four thousand died along the way. But more harrowing than even that was the challenge of becoming Israeli, to gain acceptance in Israeli society, to acclimatise in the Startup Nation where even the Judaism they practiced was often at odds with everyone else's.

So, how did Israel actually take in the Jews of Ethiopia? What was it like to be so different and yet so Jewish? And is it at all possible to change public perception in Israel today? Sigal will be here to report first-hand.

She is a member of the Forum of Activists and CEOs of organisations that work with the Ethiopian

Israeli community. Under her leadership, Olim Beyahad has systematically impacted the employment opportunities of Ethiopian Israeli university graduates and launched them into prominent positions in both the public and business sectors. Its award-winning model is now being adopted by other social-change organisations tackling employment integration.

Please enrol by sending an email to info@gil.ch.

