

# European Union for Progressive Judaism

January 2019 Newsletter

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## Surviving the Shoah

**In 2005, the United Nations designated January 27 as an International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. On this day in 1945, Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration and death camp was liberated. We've compiled a selection of articles that fit in with the theme of survival.**

**S**ome 1800 Torah and other scrolls miraculously survived the Shoah in Czechoslovakia. They were sent to the Jewish Museum in Prague and under the communists, they were transferred to a damp warehouse just outside the city. Thanks to the generosity of Ralph Yablon and the co-operation of Rabbi Harold Reinhart, 1564 scrolls were saved from further deterioration and brought to the Westminster Synagogue in London in 1964.

The Memorial Scrolls Trust (MST), a non-profit charity, was set-up to care for them and over the years, nearly 1400 scrolls have been allocated to communities around the world – in Europe, South Africa, Australasia, South America, the Caribbean, North America and Canada.

The MST encourages scroll-holders not only to use the scrolls for services, but also to be part of memorials, for educational purposes and for inter- and intra-faith work, reminding people of what they have in common rather than of what divides them.

In addition to those in the UK, existing EUPJ

scroll-holders are: Beth Hillel, Brussels, Belgium, acquired in 1966; MJLF Paris, France, acquired in 1997; Eitz Chaim, Strasburg, France, two acquired in 1966 and 1973; Lev Chadash, Milan, Italy, acquired in 2003; Verbond, Amsterdam, Holland, acquired in

1967; Gelderland, Holland, acquired in 1967; Haaksbergen, Holland, acquired in 1981; Or Chadash, Zurich, Switzerland, acquired in 1978; and Migwam Basle, Switzerland, acquired from Or Chadash in 2017.

We now have only a limited number of scrolls available and would welcome applications for them from members of the EUPJ. Never sold, they are allocated on long-term loan, only to be returned if the scroll holder



**Through these scrolls, we seek to remember European Jewish life before the Holocaust, as well as its tragic destruction, challenge those who interact with the scrolls to confront prejudice and hatred, and inspire them to action by committing to their Jewish lives and working to build bridges across communities.**

closes. We ask for a nominal initial donation plus a small annual donation to help fund our work. For new or small communities, we are willing to agree to a five-year renewable loan.

For further details, please send an email to [Jeffrey Ohrenstein](mailto:Jeffrey.Ohrenstein@eupj.org), Chairman of the Memorial Scrolls Trust.

# Newly restored Holocaust-era diary

A unique Holocaust-era artefact, a diary written by Holocaust survivor Alfred Ziloni while incarcerated in the Warsaw ghetto, has been restored by [Yad Vashem](#), the World Holocaust Remembrance Center.

The youngest son of the family, Alfred was born in 1897 in Warsaw. His father and one of his brothers died before World War II, and another brother immigrated to Mandatory Palestine. During the war, the Germans imprisoned Alfred and the remainder of his family in the Warsaw ghetto. While in the ghetto, one of Alfred's sisters died from illness, while his mother, wife and son were deported to Treblinka, where they were all murdered.

Alfred decided to write a diary and record his daily life. The diary, written in Polish, was severely damaged by fire and water in the course of the Polish uprising, leaving it in shreds. In 2006, it was donated to Yad Vashem by the Ziloni family.

For more than a decade, Yad Vashem's paper preservation laboratory has been working with handwriting experts and researchers, as well as with Alfred's son, to decipher its content.

"By using cutting-edge techniques to rescue this unique document from destruction, we are able to gain knowledge of the daily life of the Warsaw ghetto at that critical time," said Dr Haim Gertner, Director of the Yad Vashem Archives, and Fred Hillman, Chairman of Holocaust Documentation.



Before restoration



After restoration

The diary was revealed by Yad Vashem at the Jewish Federations of North America's General Assembly Conference last year.

Yad Vashem also makes it possible for people to research their individual family connection to the Holocaust through its extensive [Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names](#), which currently contains more than 4.7 million names of Jews murdered during the Holocaust.

"We must ensure that the Holocaust is never viewed as merely 'another historical event' in human history," the Centre's Chairman, Avner Shalev said. "Yad Vashem continues to work tirelessly on developing educational and technological tools that will continue to educate humanity

towards a more responsible and tolerant existence, and to ensure the memory of the Holocaust victims and survivors and their personal stories lives on."

## Chairman's Message: Facing new challenges together

Let me begin by wishing you all a very happy and healthy new year 2019. The first day of January has, of course, no special significance in the Jewish calendar, but we all live in a number of different annual cycles like, for example, the fiscal and the academic year.

These cycles vary across the globe. Personally, I think it is very suitable for us humans to think and live in cycles. They have beginnings and they have ends, allowing us to start over, to develop, to evolve, to move on, and where necessary and appropriate, to leave behind. All these aspects are important to any process, any progress.

As we all, in our very different roles, jointly care for the growth of the Progressive Jewish Movement in Europe, let us appreciate our joint strengths and find new energies, resources and ideas.

This year is bound to be full of both challenges and new opportunities. Now, in the second half of my first year as our organisation's chair, I look forward to connecting – and hopefully meeting – with as many of you as possible.

Please be in touch with me and all my colleagues on the Management Committee, whenever and wherever relevant, to help us serve our movement as best we can. All best wishes. – [Sonja Guentner](#), [sonja.guentner@eupj.org](mailto:sonja.guentner@eupj.org)





### Kindertransport survivors: A landmark agreement

**T**he German government has agreed to make a compensation payment to child refugees who came to Britain on the Kindertransport. Those who are eligible

will receive a one-off payment of €2,500. Survivors are still eligible for this payment even if they have previously received a compensation award, and there is no income limit for eligible applicants.

The announcement comes after lengthy negotiations between the Claims Conference and the German government and you can [read more about it here](#).

If you are a surviving Kind or know someone who is, please pass on this information to them. The Kindertransport Fund is open for applications and our friends at the Association of Jewish Refugees will be able to help people complete the forms if they are unable to do it themselves.

While we welcome this announcement, we also recognise that no amount of money can compensate for the traumatic experience the children and their families endured.

Our archives have been a valuable resource for many people whose family members arrived in the UK in the 1930s or 40s as refugees. Please help us continue to spread the word and let other people know about them. – [Rebecca Singer](#), World Jewish Relief



Kindertransport Memorial in London

### “Facts about the Holocaust” website launch

**T**he World Jewish Congress (WJC), with the support of UNESCO, presented a new website entitled "[Facts about the Holocaust](#)" in a ceremony on November 19 at UNESCO's headquarters.



The website is designed as an interactive online tool to counter messages of Holocaust denial and distortion circulating on the internet and social media. It is a response to increased hate and disinformation online.

The [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization](#) (UNESCO) is a specialised agency of the United Nations based in Paris.

Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO's Director-General, has tried to redress the organisation's anti-Zionist (anti-Semitic) reputation within the French Jewish community since her appointment in October 2017. Audrey first produced an educational programme to fight anti-Semitism (five years after UNESCO developed a similar programme to fight Islamophobia) and now has launched the new website to fight Holocaust denial in partnership with the World Jewish Congress.



L-R: Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur, Audrey Azoulay and Ronald Lauder, World Jewish Congress President

## Memories of Klaus Barbie's trial

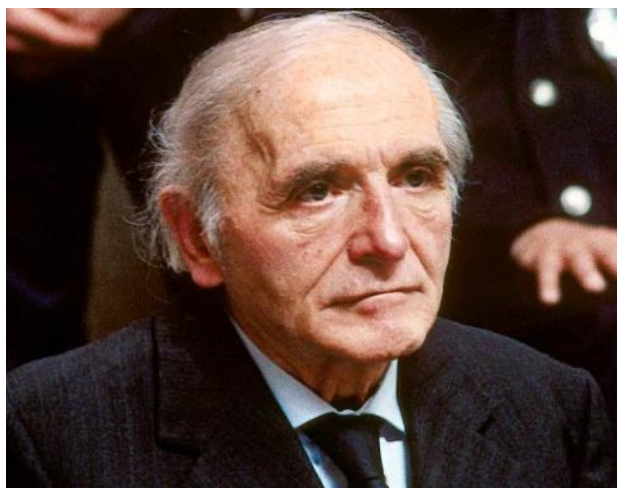
**G**IL Geneva will host the former French prosecutor, Jean-Olivier Viout, on January 28 in honour of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

Viout will speak of his memories as Deputy Prosecutor at the trial of Klaus Barbie, which was held in Lyon in the spring of 1987. Barbie was known as the "Butcher of Lyon" because he sent thousands of people to their deaths and was responsible for the deportation of many children during World War II.

An exceptional speaker, Viout accompanies his remarks with visual testimonies, including those of some survivors of the death camps.



Jean-Olivier Viout (front) with Pierre Truche, Attorney General, at the trial



Former General Counsel at the Court of Appeals of Lyon, he fulfils many positions in the service of the justice, in particular, those of Member of the Commission of Ethics of the Judiciary and Member of the Pedagogical Council of the National School for Magistrates.

Find out more about the event [here](#).

In October last year, France honoured Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, the couple who found Klaus Barbie. [Read more](#) about these famous Nazi-hunters and their awards.

Klaus Barbie on trial. Photo courtesy [Spiegel Online](#)

## Editor's Note: Standing together

**W**hen I visited Oxford towards the end of last year, I decided to check out the Progressive Community in the area. I was very surprised to see that three communities shared one building – Progressive, Conservative and Orthodox!

While services are separate, many (not all) of the cultural and educational activities are shared. This says so much about this community and stands as an example to all of us. While we may not agree on how we practice – two Jews, three opinions – there are ways for us to co-exist.

This is my wish for 2019; that the communities within the EUPJ and without can stand together against the growing anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism and hatred towards the other, no matter at whom this may be directed.

Happy New Year to all of you. May it be a year where challenges are met, problems are overcome and we can all feel safe and secure in our homes, schools and synagogues. – [Darryl Egnal, newsletter@eupj.org](mailto:DarrylEgnal@eupj.org)

### Thanks for your support

*I'd like to thank Miriam Kramer for all her assistance with the newsletter over the past year, and Bianca Bertola and Norman Conroy for assisting me with translating articles.*

*I'd also like to thank all those who have contributed on behalf of their communities, some of whom have done so on a regular basis and are always willing to help. Without their contributions, this newsletter would not be possible.*





# A fond farewell to Jeffery Rose

Jeffery Rose, a past EUPJ Chairman and one of our Honorary Life Presidents, passed away on December 13.

Jeffery, together with his wife, Joyce (z"l), were core leaders of Reform Judaism in the UK for many years, both in the wider movement and at Alyth synagogue in north London. Jeffery served as Alyth Chairman from 1966 to 1968 and as President from 2003 to 2009.

"During all my years in leadership of our synagogue, the European Region (of the WUPJ, now EUPJ), and the world movement, Jeffery and Joyce were there to guide, advise and offer support," said Ruth Cohen, another EUPJ Honorary Life President.

"It is rare that two people are respected and loved; many are respected and a few are loved, but very few are both respected and loved in so many areas of the communal, medical, and caring worlds. They will be remembered and missed by all who knew them," she said.

Carole Sterling, WUPJ Chairman commented that she had "personally never had the privilege of meeting Jeffery", but that she was "well aware of his good works, dedication and commitment to

Progressive Judaism.

"We are grateful for his leadership and know that his good name will be an enduring legacy. May his family be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem," she said.

On Sunday April 3, 2007, the European Region (EUPJ) held a dinner in honour of Jeffery (to mark the occasion of his 80th birthday the previous

December) and Joyce to recognise their outstanding contribution to Progressive Jewish life throughout the world.

More than 100 people from around the world gathered at Alyth, where Jeffery was a lifelong member. During his illustrious career, he was

also Chairman of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain (now Reform Judaism) and the Leo Baeck College, and was involved with establishing Sim Shalom, the Progressive community in Budapest.

"I never sought office, but I have always answered the call," Jeffery said. "I dislike vacuums and like working in the Jewish community."

May his memory be a blessing.



## Who's who at the EUPJ?

### Honorary Life Presidents

Leslie Bergman  
Ruth Cohen

### President

Gordon Smith

### Vice-President

Miriam Kramer  
Robert Weiner

### Chairman

Sonja Guentner

### Vice-Chairman: Governance

John Cohen

### Vice-Chairman: Finance

David Pollak

### Vice-Chairman: Israel & Twinning

Michael Reik

### Vice-Chairman: Education and Interfaith

Rabbi Menno ten Brink

### EUPJ Rabbinic Assembly

Rabbi Dr René Pfertzel,  
Chairman

### European Beit Din

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

### EUPJ's European Union Office

Bill (William) Echikson, Director

### Administrator

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### Newsletter Editor

Darryl Egnal, Israel  
[newsletter@eupj.org](mailto:newsletter@eupj.org)



## Rabbinic Ruminations: Rabbi Jackie Tabick

Working for so many years with Rabbi Hugo Gryn (z"l), the work of the EUPJ and the World Union was always at the periphery of my mind, but it wasn't until I took over the EUPJ's Beit Din about four years ago that I became aware of the incredibly beautiful and wonderfully diverse world embraced by the EUPJ, and the wonderful people I would meet.

When the EUPJ's *Beit Din* was founded, it was decided it should comprise three rabbis whose rabbinic diplomas come from recognised rabbinic colleges and that it should be independent of the rabbi that was sponsoring the candidates for conversion to avoid any suggestion of bias.

In addition, the decision was taken to ensure detailed notes were kept of any court hearing with the records properly

archived and accessible for those who might need to prove their Jewish status in order to join a new congregation or make *Aliyah*.

In practice, this means that only countries that have at least four rabbis and a means for



proper archiving can run their own *Batei Din*, so I get the privilege of running courts in such places as Poland, Spain, Italy and Slovakia, among others.

So off I go, three or four times a year, to hold courts and hear really inspiring cases of people reclaiming their Jewish heritage lost through historical circumstances or of people who have found Judaism through love of another or others through deep explorations of faith. And through these stories, I am constantly reminded of the beauty of our heritage, which I was so lucky to have enjoyed since birth.

I also work for West Central Liberal Synagogue, a unique EUPJ congregation in the centre of London. We were founded by Lily Montagu over 90 years ago to meet the needs of the women employed in the *shmatka* (clothing) business in the west end of London.

These women had to work Shabbat mornings so service took place at 3pm and were followed by tea, a tradition that continues today. In the winter we sometimes make *kiddush* and then have to follow it almost immediately by Havdalah! These days we are very small, but friendly, and we run a wide selection of educational opportunities as that has always been at the centre of my rabbinate.

For me, being a rabbi is something of a family concern. I met Larry, my husband and also a rabbi, while studying at Leo Baeck College and we married in 1975, just months before I received *smicha*. In fact, I had threatened to hand my dissertation in to the Dean of the college under the *chuppah*.

Larry has recently retired from serving *Shir Chayim*, a small Reform congregation in London, and is settling down to add to the books he has already published.

Our middle child has become a Masorti rabbi and our youngest is studying for a PhD in Talmud at the Jewish Theological College in New York. He's the only one who hasn't yet accepted the likelihood of him too gaining the title of rabbi.

Many have said I should write my memoirs as the first woman ordained as a rabbi in Britain, but I kept no diaries and I am aware memories are often not to be trusted as providing basic truths. Besides, I find working as a rabbi now too much of a wonderfully



privileged role to spend extra time at a keyboard. And any spare time is spent enjoying our grandchildren. So life for me is blessed with a great family and plenty of work, and I hope I will meet some of you around Europe as I go on my travels with our mobile Beit Din.

### Calling all rabbis

We introduced this column recently to enable readers to find out a little about the EUPJ rabbis who serve our communities.

This is not a column for the *parsha* of the week or religious studies. It is a way to get to know the various rabbis across Europe.

If you would like to contribute to this column, please email me at [newsletter@eupj.org](mailto:newsletter@eupj.org).

# European *Batei Din* meet in Brussels

**Heads of the European *Batei Din*, religious courts dealing with conversion and other issues relating to Jewish status, met recently in Brussels. The principle of mutual recognition of conversion certificates, issued by all the different Progressive *Batei Din* across Europe provided circumcision and *mikveh* had taken place, was reaffirmed.**

Organised by the European Rabbinical Association (ERA), leaders attended from Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and both Liberal and Reform Judaism in the United Kingdom.

The goal of this day was to share our various practices, which are actually pretty different from country to country, so as to work toward a better and more formal mutual recognition of each other's acts and decisions, especially regarding conversions and status.

If things usually go smoothly for most people, this would allow us to avoid the few cases where things do not. This is a follow-up to our earlier statement

this year where we reminded congregations and communities which European Batei Din are effectively recognised by the EUPJ and where they are competent.

The simple opening of such discussions was ground-breaking. We have not yet reached a publishable statement, but this was a very good and fruitful meeting.

We expect to reach this step on our next meeting at the ERA *Kallah* in Amsterdam from May 19-20 where all Progressive European rabbis will be welcome and where the ERA will hold its next AGM. – [Rabbi Marc Neiger](#)



Front L-R: Rabbi Marianne van Praag, Beit Din Netherlands; Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Rabbi of L'JG Amsterdam and ERA Secretary; Rabbi Colin Eimer (front), Reform Judaism UK Beit Din, ERA Board Member; Rabbi Pauline Bebe, Kerem (French-speaking countries) Beit Din, ERA Board Member; Rabbi Mark Solomon (front), Liberal Judaism UK Beit Din.

Back L-R: Rabbi Jackie Tabick, Head of EUPJ's European Beit Din and Reform Judaism UK Beit Din; Rabbi Ruven Bar Ephraim (Switzerland/Austria) Beit Din, ERA Board Member; Rabbi Jonah Sievers, ARK (Allgemeine Rabbiner Konferenz) Beit Din Germany; Rabbi Marc Neiger, Kerem Beit Din and ERA Treasurer; and Rabbi René Pfertzel, ERA Chairman

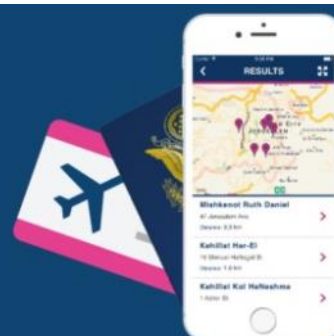
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# Social scene in Brussels

When we produced the *EUPJ Newsletter: Special Edition* summarising the events of the EUPJ's European Union Office opening in December, we didn't have space for all the social photographs taken over the weekend. We decided to include some of them here because everyone thoroughly enjoyed this exciting weekend and we wanted to celebrate it and share it with you. *Photos by Benjamin Dobruszkes and Darryl Egnal*





















# A week of miracles



Photo: Stephanie Lea-Elisheva van Tittleboom

Although Chanukah is technically a “minor” Jewish festival, today it is considered one of the most popular Jewish holidays, filled with light, joy and celebration with family.

During Chanukah, we celebrate the miracle of one day’s worth of oil lasting for eight days and the remarkable achievement of a small Jewish army, which defeated a larger oppressing one. We also remember the re-dedication of the Jerusalem Temple after the Maccabees defeated the Syrian Greeks.

Different communities throughout Europe and the UK held Chanukah parties, dinners, candle-lighting ceremonies and more. Some celebrated with latkes, some with *sufganiot* (doughnuts) and some with both. The food flowed and the fun was shared by all.

## IJC Brussels celebrates family

Due to the enormous generosity of members Lisa Kelman and Joris Visser, the International Jewish Center (IJC) in Brussels once again held its Chanukah party in their beautiful and spacious home. Joris was hard at work making latkes hours before the event for what turned out to be a record number – more than 60!

Regular IJC members attended and many new faces joined the event, ranging from grandparents to new-born babies. Rabbinic intern Brian Doyle led Havdalah and children passed around spice boxes. Brian then moved to singing the Chanukah blessings while the children lit the many Menorahs brought to the event and sang *Ma’oz Tzur, Oh Chanukah*, and of course, *I have a little Dreidel*. There were also many games and an arts and crafts table to keep them busy.

This was topped off with the consumption of mountains of *latkes* and a huge array of desserts.

As Chanukah is also a time to think about the well-being of others, many people brought non-perishable food items for Navitas, a soup kitchen located in downtown Brussels.

All in all, it turned out to be an incredibly warm, friendly event and it was clear that everyone enjoyed coming together to share in the joy of the Chanukah spirit. Just as it should be. – [Diana Kanter](#)



## Chanukah

# Chanukah lights up Paris

MJLF celebrated Chanukah with several highlights.

The fourth candle was lit in a joint celebration with ULIF-Copernic, the community with which MJLF plans to merge in due course. This evening was organised in co-operation with KKL-JNF France and Beit Daniel in Tel Aviv. It was one of a growing series of events that have been arranged jointly by ULIF and MJLF.

Rabbis Jonas Jaquelin and Philippe Haddad of ULIF-Copernic conducted the service, while Rabbi Floriane Chinsky, MJLF-East, gave a lecture on Chanukah's meaning for us today. Gad Weil, MJLF President, spoke warmly of the plans to bring MJLF and ULIF progressively closer together.

A candle-lighting video and greeting was screened from Beit Daniel. Mr Weil and Fino Edery, KKL-JNF Secretary-General, also spoke during the evening. The event was highly successful and a great preview of things to come.

The sixth candle was lit just before Shabbat Alef, the monthly Friday night service for young children, and Shabbat Zimra, the highly popular adult musical service. On Sunday, the *Talmud Torah* group celebrated lighting eight candles. – **Robert Ley**



Photo: Revital Berger Shloman

## A miraculously bright last night

Candle-making (from organic beeswax), story-telling, text study, prayer, song, a festive meal, and most importantly, the lighting of several Chanukiot brought more than 65 people to the Liberal Jewish Community of Montpellier (CJLM) on Sunday December 9.

Among the participants were members of the Montpellier Judeo-Christian Friendship Group and included its president, Simon Bouheret. – **Rabbi Stephen Berkowitz**



## Beit Warszawa celebrates

Beit Warszawa in Warsaw celebrated Chanukah in traditional style with more than 30 members and visitors. As if to

repeat the historic miracle of supplies never running out over the entire eight-day period, it seemed as if there were more latkes and *sufganiot* available at the



end of the evening than there had been at the beginning, despite constant and devout consumption.

We had a shiur based on the First Book of Maccabees and several groups played *dreidls*, though without dire financial consequences. Great miracles happened there! – **Rabbi Dr Walter Rothschild**



## Chanukah

# A celebration for every age group

Or Chadasch Zurich's Chanukah festivities all began with the relaxed and informal gathering at the Jewish nursing home, Sikna, which was organised by our Social Commission.

On Thursday, the fifth night, there was a special festival in our religious class where the children lit



the Chanukah candles and presented their Chanukah play.

The festivities continued on Erev Shabbat with a service featuring the debut of our new choir, followed by a fun-filled, Israeli-themed evening. There was a potluck dinner and songs by Rabbi Ruven Bar Ephraim and our youth leader, Omer Nero.

A Chanukah party, organised by our Youth and School Committee, our Membership Committee and our Culture Committee, was held on the last night of Chanukah. Members of our congregation and their families came from near and far for a wonderful evening filled with celebrating, playing, dancing and eating.

Our board members would like to extend their thanks to all our volunteers who helped make all the events meaningful and entertaining. – **Written by Sylvie Goldberger, translated by David Feder**

## Different faiths unite in Kingston

An interfaith Chanukah celebration, which drew about 70 people, took place at Kingston Liberal Synagogue (KLS).

A special service, candle lighting and Chanukah tea was attended by members from the local Christian, Muslim and Humanist communities, as well as non-Jewish friends and family members of KLS.

Rabbi René Pfertzel invited representatives from each community to light one of the Chanukah candles, including Beyza Coskun from the local Turkish Muslim community.

Jeremy Rodell, from the South West London Humanists, then hosted a discussion entitled, 'What does light mean to you?' where attendees formed mixed groups to discuss the role of light in their different faiths and in everyday life.

Afterwards, everyone enjoyed plenty of festival food, including *sufganiot* and latkes.

"The evening was a really enlightening experience, if you'll excuse the pun!" said Ricky Thomas, a non-



**Beyza Coskun and Rabbi René Pfertzel**

Jewish friend of one of the KLS members. "It was so interesting to see how Chanukah is celebrated and wonderful to see the community share this with other faiths."

Read more about the event in the [Surrey Comet](#).



## When in Rome...

Beth Hillel Rome celebrated a very meaningful and joyous Chanukah party on December 8. About 80 people, including more than 30 children, took part in the event conducted by Rabbi Joel Oseran.

After the Havdalah ceremony, many colourful *Chanukiot*, some of them made by children, were lit up followed by the singing of traditional Chanukah songs. The children were also entertained by a very amusing magician.

*Sufganiot* and other traditional desserts were then served. The party ended by distributing the much-awaited gifts. – **Fabio Ben Fantini**

## Denmark

### Shir Hatzaфон launches new *siddur*

In June 2018, after nine years of hard work, heated discussions and helpful input from numerous friends in the Progressive Movement, our new *siddur*, named for our synagogue, Shir Hatzaфон, finally arrived.

**A**rthur Buchman, who represents the Danish Progressive Jewish Community on the EUPJ Board, presented the new *siddur* to the European communities at the EUPJ Executive Board meeting in November.

Like most *siddurim*, it is not a standard one. Stressing our goal to be an open and welcoming congregation, the text comes in four parallel versions – Hebrew, Danish, English and a transliteration of the Hebrew. Other ‘newish’ Jewish features are extra blank pages for writing down your own prayers, and line drawings by the artist, Joseph Salamon.

The English translation from *Siddur Lev Chadash* was generously put at our disposal by Liberal Judaism, providing an indispensable and inspiring basis for our work.

Our founding rabbi, Rabbi Charles Middleburgh, helped us get off to a good start and our current rabbi, Rabbi Tirzah Ben-David, made sure we reached our goal – a complete Progressive *siddur* for the home and the synagogue – through her

indefatigable work on the text.

Several lay members contributed their time and skills, especially our *gabbai*, Elias Ole Tetens Lund, who – in addition to the Danish translation and

Hebrew transliteration – also provided a novel layout of the four texts. In a small congregation like ours, where we cannot provide weekly services yet, and with a membership spread over all of Scandinavia, a good *siddur* has a special significance. It becomes a vital resource for the daily Jewish life of our members and a strong link to Shir Hatzaфон and Judaism.

We are therefore especially thankful for the generous contribution from

the NLPS Trust which made it possible for us to overcome the final financial obstacle and have the *siddur* printed in a fine and lasting quality.

Finally, it deserves mention that 20 copies were quickly picked up by the nascent Progressive congregation in Oslo, Norway, where Rabbi Tirzah Ben-David will be using it during their services. –

**Martin Salamon**



Arthur Buchman presents the new *siddur* to the EUPJ

## Hungary

### Bet Orim at Limmud Festival

Congregation Bet Orim was invited to hold the Kabbalat Shabbat service at the Limmud Festival in

Budapest at the end of October. Our guests were part of a delegation from Temple B'nai Torah of Wantagh, New York.

The service was conducted by our Rabbi Ferenc Raj, and Cantor Flóra Polnauer. Rabbi Daniel Bar-Nahum of Temple B'nai Torah brought greetings to the participants, and Cantor Rica Timman sang Debbie Friedman's beautiful *Misheberach*.

A very special spirit prevailed during this Kabbalat Shabbat. Almost 100 people attended the service and the dinner thereafter.

Love and humour brought us all together and we'd like to thank our new friends from across the ocean for sharing this wonderful experience with us. – **Miklós Gárdos. Photo: Chaya B'racha**





## Sharing culture, language and history

The Liberal Jewish Thought Circle (CPJL), Keren Or's cultural division, launched a series of seminars entitled "One Language, One Landscape, One People" in November. The first seminar was dedicated to the Sephardi world.

Having left the land of Israel, the Jewish Diaspora spread across the Mediterranean basin and western Europe. Through contact with other cultures, it constructed hybrid languages and mixed Aramaic, Spanish, Arabic and German, but always jealously preserved Hebrew as a sacred tongue.

In their turn, the languages of the host countries were changed by adopting typical expressions from Hebrew.

Abraham Bengio, former Cultural Affairs Regional Director, former Delegate General for the French language and the languages of France, and Honorary Associate Director of the Rhone-Alps region, was the guest speaker at this event.

There was also a screening of Safinez Bousbia's film, *El Gusto*, the story of a group of Jewish and Muslim musicians separated by history for 50 years and now reunited on stage to share their

common passion: *Chaabi* music (folk music from North Africa).



Abraham Bengio

The second seminar focuses on the rebirth of Hebrew and Israel and will take place on January 27. Revital Berger Shloman, who is Cheder Director of MJLF in Paris, a Hebrew teacher and a poet, will give a presentation on how Hebrew had been revived in Israel and who the "founding fathers" were. She will use some examples of Modern Hebrew poetry to add substance to her talk.



There will be a parallel activity for the children when they will explore Hebrew and street art in Israel.

The seminar will be followed by a typical Israeli meal. Then we will watch an Israeli film, *The Apartment*, which relates to the theme of memory and *Aliyah*.

Thereafter, Revital will facilitate a discussion on the film. – **Student rabbi Daniela Touati**

## MJLF's Jewish Books and Culture Day

More than 30 authors came together on Sunday November 18 to participate in the 29th anniversary of MJLF's Jewish Books and Culture Day, in partnership with the Lamartine bookshop.

Writers and poets, journalists and historians, doctors and philosophers contributed to a rich day of

discussions, lectures, music, book browsing and book buying.

The work of Marcel Proust, whose father was Catholic and famously said, "They have all forgotten I am Jewish, but I have not," was celebrated in a round-table discussion with Jean-Paul and Raphael Einthoven (left), a prominent father-and-son team in contemporary French cultural and media circles.

Children enjoyed stories about Proust's life and made little "Madeleine" cakes with renowned cookbook writer, Sylvia Gabet.

The MJLF Prize for a first novel went to Adeline Baldacchino, a senior public servant who studied ethnology, philosophy and political science, for her dramatic star-crossed love story set in Nazi Germany.

In addition to the round-table discussion, there were Jewish food and cooking demonstrations as well as performances of Jewish music. – **Robert Ley**



## France

### Israel comes to Lyon

Keren Or, Lyon, and Arzenu France, hosted a fascinating Israel conference in November. The event was sponsored jointly by Arzenu and the World Zionist Organisation (WZO).

Jonathan Aikhenbaum, Director of Greenpeace Israel, explained how important -- and how difficult -- it was to bring environmental concerns and Orthodox Judaism into constructive confrontation. He encouraged those sharing his concerns to question the rabbis on how today's Jews should interpret and apply the many environmental references in our sacred texts.

Gil Mihaely, historian, journalist and co-founder of the magazine *Causeur*, demonstrated just how important Christian Zionism was in developing and



Celia Naval with Jonathan Aikhenbaum

sustaining support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

He identified sources in Great Britain long before Lord Balfour, in the United States and now also in Latin America and Africa; powerful and growing movements motivated by belief in the "second coming". While this support was highly valuable today, it carried the potential for trouble tomorrow if continued support ends up coming with demands. – [Robert Ley](#) and [Celia Naval](#)



L-R: Celia Naval, Gil Mihaely and Robert Ley

## Germany

### Ten years of cantorial training

*Shiru l'Adonai shir chadash* (Sing to God a new song)... Together with other graduates and the students of Abraham Geiger College, Cantor Isidoro Abramowicz (centre) took a fresh take on familiar tunes to mark the 10th anniversary of our cantorial programme.

The cantors opened a treasure trove of synagogue music from the 19th century until today with all its different pitches, modes, colours and timbres. With popular pieces newly arranged for organ, vocals and string quartet, the concert taught an enthused audience how Jewish sacred music

grows and develops.

The performance ended with a standing ovation and lively discussions. *Yasher koach* to Isidoro who will become the *chazzan* of Berlin's Pestalozzistrasse Synagogue on March 1.

A special thank-you to Sara Charney who opened this amazing concert on behalf of [Women of Reform Judaism](#), our dedicated friends and supporters in Northern America.





# Rabbi Menno ten Brink honoured

The City of Amsterdam has awarded Rabbi Menno ten Brink the Frans Banninck Cocq Medal for his work in the Jewish Community of Amsterdam over the past 25 years.

**R**abbi ten Brink received the prestigious award from the Mayor of Amsterdam, Femke Halsema, and was also addressed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Hugo de Jonge.

Rabbinic leader of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, Rabbi ten Brink was ordained at Leo Baeck College in July 1993. He has also been awarded a Fellowship of Leo Baeck College.

Leslie Bergman, EUPJ Honorary Life President, and Miriam Kramer, EUPJ Vice President and also representing Leo Baeck College, made presentations during the Chanukah service at which he was honoured.

The Frans Banninck Cocq Medal was established by the city in 1996 and is awarded for particular services to Amsterdam over a minimum of 12 years.

During his studies, Rabbi ten Brink served as student rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Utrecht. After he qualified, he became part-time

rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Rotterdam, and was also the *chazzan* (cantor) of various congregations.



Between 1991 and 2004, he was the Jewish Chaplain of the Dutch Armed Forces. When he became Senior Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam in 2004, he gave up many of his other roles and responsibilities.

Since 1998, Rabbi ten Brink has been a member of the Advisory Board and an executive of the Anne Frank

Foundation. He is currently EUPJ Vice Chairman with responsibility for Education and Interfaith matters, and a member of the European Rabbinic Assembly (ERA) board.

On behalf of the EUPJ and the ERA, we'd like to wish Rabbi ten Brink *Mazal tov* on his achievements and thank him for his dedication and his commitment to his community, the ERA, the EUPJ and the Progressive Movement as a whole. Long may he continue!

## The Netherlands

### Training Dutch lay leaders

Fourteen participants from several *kehillot* (congregations) in Holland received certificates for the *Ba'al Tefillah* ("Master of Prayer" or lay leadership) training. The full course took place over five weekends last year starting in January and ending in December.

During their training, participants learned how to lead services (*Shabbat* and *Shiva*) and also gained background and experience in lay leadership. The programme included how to give a *Dvar Torah*; their attitude

while leading the service; background to the *Amidah*, *Shema*, *Kaddish*, and other prayers; how to lead *Kiddush*, *Havdalah* and *Birkat Hamazon*, and more.



Front L-R: Leaders of the training: Annette Boeckler, Francine Püttmann, Rabbi Menno ten Brink and Rabbi Marianne van Praag. Back: Course participants

During the periods between the course sessions, they practised by leading Friday evening or Saturday morning services in their own Progressive synagogues. The rabbis of the various congregations helped them with their studies and gave feedback on their development.

The training was organised by the [Levisson Institute in Amsterdam](#). – Francine Püttmann

# The future is now!

**The second general assembly of the Italian Federation for Progressive Judaism (FIEP), entitled “The future is now”, was held in November.**

**T**he FIEP general assembly started with a report from the co-presidents, Franca Eckert Coen and Joyce Bigio, and continued with a constructive and lively debate on the current

state and perspectives of the Jewish Progressive Movement in Italy.

The afternoon programme began with a talk by Professor Bruno di Porto on the history of the Progressive Jewish Movement in Italy, the birth of the four current congregations, and the founding of FIEP.

After the discussion, Franca declared, “We are really making history in the Italian Jewish World.”

The workshop on “How to Grow a Community – The New Models in a Modern World” conducted by Mario Izcovitch, Director of the Pan-European Programmes of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), was very engaging.

Mario has years of experience in the growth of Jewish communities throughout the world and he offered some advice and a few suggestions to FIEP member congregations on how to grow further, one of which was to adopt new and less vertical

organisational models to attract new generations. He also gave encouraging comments to participants, saying he found a strong energy and enthusiasm at the assembly.

Then it was the turn of the presidents of the four

Progressive congregations (Beth Hillel, Rome; Beth Shalom, Milan; Lev Chadash, Milan and Shir Hadash, Florence) who spoke about the status of their communities and the various activities, from Rome’s *Talmud Torah* classes for 30 children to the various religious and cultural courses at Lev Chadash; from the new membership of young people in Beth Shalom to the many activities for the



children of Shir Hadash.

The FIEP co-presidents concluded by giving a report on the participation of FIEP at the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (UCEI) general assembly during which they explained to the delegates the path of the Progressive Jewish Movement – a reality now rooted in Italy. FIEP made a clear request for its recognition by the Union. FIEP’s participation at this assembly gave the Federation great visibility. – [Fabio Benjamin Fantini](#)

## Recognising achievement

**B**eth Hillel Rome hosted the ceremony of the 2018 Educals Award in conjunction with the International Day of the Disabled.

Guest of honour was Richard H Bernstein, Judge of the Michigan Supreme Court of Justice. Justice Bernstein has been visually impaired since birth and has been a source of inspiration for many throughout the United States.

During the event, he was awarded a prize by Educals for his outstanding contribution to society. Educals is an Italian organisation that educates people about the legality of various acts, agreements, or contracts to ensure they are consistent with the law.

At the end of the evening, Justice Bernstein was invited to speak at our community. This was the second time he has visited Beth Hillel in Rome. In September, he took part in the High Holy Day celebrations and gave a very emotional speech



on his experience as a disabled person. – [Fabio Ben Fantini](#)



## Italy

### The art of the *sofer*

During the European Day of Jewish Culture at the end of last year, Lev Chadash in Milan had the pleasure of hosting two well-known *soferim* (Torah scribes), Marc Mordechai Pinchas Michaels and his wife, Avielah Barclay. They introduced us to the secrets of the *soferim*.

They were joined by Dr Erica Baricci, a researcher from the Milan University who led us in exploration of the intertextual biographies of the Medieval *soferim*.

At the end of the day, all the attendees had the opportunity to test their manual skills by trying to learn the difficult art of Hebrew calligraphy.

Lev Chadash President, Carlo Joseph Riva, welcomed delegates and Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild gave an introduction to the programme for the day.



Back: Marc Mordechai Pinchas Michaels (*sofer* and speaker) Front L-R: Carlo Riva and Rossana Ottolenghi.

### Biblical Night in the city

The city of Bergamo (Lombardy, Northern Italy) hosted a "Biblical Night", a non-stop reading of the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, last year. The reading was part of an annual festival known as "Many faiths under the same sky", which has been taking place in the city for many years.



This festival welcomes believers of all faiths to share their knowledge and culture. All the participants read extracts from the Hebrew traditional texts; among them were Mayor Giorgio Gori and Bishop Francesco Beschi.

Lev Chadash responded to the invitation by sending two representatives, Eva Mangialajo Rantzer and David Caressa, who lit candles to mark the start of the Shabbat and then read *Bereshit* 1.1-1.19 in Hebrew and Italian. Rabbi Sylvia Rothschild, Lev Chadash's rabbi, and Rabbi Michael Oblath from Beth Sholom in Anchorage, Alaska, each gave a *drasha*.

The evening ended with an interesting analysis of the relationship between number and meaning of the word *Bereshit*. The participants were all quite intrigued by Lev Chadash's approach to study. Thereafter, some families gathered in a private house for a Kabbalat Shabbat.

Eva Mangialajo Rantzer and David Caressa

## Spain

### No more lies, no more silence

Bet Shalom, together with Neder BCN, StandWithUs and other Jewish organisations in Barcelona, is participating in a series of discussions in Spanish about Israel entitled "No more lies, no more silence" from January 18-20. Ilan Lopez, a Venezuelan living in Israel and director of StandWithUs Latin America, will present the talks.

The sessions are aimed at 18-28-year olds and will focus on "Israel and the world: Winning the communications battle", "Telling our story effectively" and "Israeli News: from the port of Jaffa to the USB port".

Find out more about these discussions [here](#).



# The time has come for equality for all Jews

**Last November, in the wake of the tragedy in Pittsburgh, a special session was convened in the Knesset on bridging the equality gap between different streams of Judaism. The two-hour intensive discussion focused on strengthening of the ties between Israel and the Diaspora and promoting religious tolerance and recognition by the State of Israel of all streams of Judaism.**

For the first time, Knesset Members from the opposition and the coalition participated in a discussion on the issue of equality for all streams of Judaism by the State of Israel. Among them are: Yair Lapid, Stav Shafir, Aliza Lavie, Elazar Stern, Amir Ohana, Saran Haskel, Oded Forer and Tamar Zenberg.

Also present were Rabbi Gilad Kariv and Dr Yizhar Hess, respectively the leaders of the Israeli Reform and Conservative Movements, as well as members of Noar Telem, the IMPJ's Youth Movement.

There was a wall-to-wall agreement regarding the necessity of recognising and granting equality to the Reform and Conservative streams in Israel.

"It is not easy to be a Reform or Conservative rabbi in Israel," Rabbi Kariv said, "but every year, more and more young Israelis choose this way of life and

this mission. There are hundreds of thousands of men and women – Sabras and immigrants, Ashkenazim and Sephardim, leftists and right-wingers – who are interested in an open, creative and egalitarian Israeli Judaism and who want to choose how to express their Jewishness, outside and inside the synagogue.

"No less important is the mission of those rabbis and the hundreds and thousands of Israelis who choose to be leaders of volunteer communities, founders of new communities, leaders in *Tikkun Olam* and activists in the public arena. These social leaders are also vital to Israeli democracy and the moral image of Israeli society," he added.

To see video coverage of the session (in Hebrew), click the following links: [Video 1](#), [Video 2](#), and [Video 3](#).



**Representatives of the Progressive Movement. From centre: Rabbi Gilad Kariv, IMPJ President & CEO; Reuven Marko, IMPJ Chairman; and Anat Hoffman, IRAC Executive Director**

## WUPJ

### World Union Jewish Music Cruise

The WUPJ is organising a Jewish Music Cruise around the Iberian Peninsula that promises to be memorable in every way. Passengers will be able to share in Jewish fellowship and music from Sephardic to Ladino and beyond. During the tour, we will also celebrate our global movement and history with concerts and prayer services, as well as meetings with local Progressive Reform communities in Lisbon and Barcelona.

The cruise will take place from May 3-11 aboard Azamara Journey, a luxury cruise ship, which departs from Lisbon and travels to various places along the Iberian coastline, culminating in Barcelona.

The tour will be led by Rabbi Daniel Freeland, WUPJ President, and features Rabbi Joe Black, an inspiring singer/songwriter, concerts, sing-alongs, learning opportunities and more. There are also



optional pre- and post-tours in Lisbon and Barcelona. So don't miss this enriching travel opportunity! Find out more [here](#) and sign up!



## New president for HUC-JIR

Dr Andrew Rehfeld, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Federation of St Louis, Associate Professor of Political Science at Washington University in St Louis, and a prominent leader of the St Louis Jewish community, has been elected the 13th President of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) by its Board of Governors.

Dr Rehfeld, who succeeds Rabbi Dr Aaron Panken (z"l), will begin his tenure on April 1.

As HUC-JIR President, Dr. Rehfeld will lead the four-campus international Jewish higher education and seminary for Reform Judaism institution (Cincinnati, Jerusalem, Los Angeles and New York).

HUC-JIR educates leaders to serve the Reform Movement and the Jewish people worldwide as rabbis, cantors, educators, and non-profit management professionals, and offers graduate



programmes to scholars and clergy of all faiths. Read the full article [here](#).

## Beutel Seminar: Last chance to register



The Beutel Seminar is a prestigious 10-day seminar in Jerusalem run by the WUPJ Center for Leadership Development and Education. This year's seminar will take place from February 7-17 and is based at the headquarters of the WUPJ, 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. [Registration](#) closes soon so don't delay.

## Sweden

## Sweden's Progressive Siddur: Correction

Was the new Swedish *siddur* mentioned in the EUPJ's October newsletter really the first Progressive *siddur* in Sweden since 1877?

It turns out that it wasn't. This was really the date when *Baal T'fillah*, the first "Progressive" *siddur*, was published by German-born cantor, Abraham Baer (documented in *A Prayer for Modernity* by Anders Hammarlund).

But among the more than 100 *siddurim* registered by the National Union Catalogue at the National Library of Sweden, there was no other Reform or Progressive *siddur* to be found.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Stockholm synagogue was so "Reform" that it didn't even use the word *siddur* for its prayer book. Thus their titles, *Prayers for the Swedish Service* (in Swedish), and *Prayer Book*, were drowned among all the Christian prayer books of this Protestant country.



The Stockholm synagogue in fact continued to be Reform for the whole first half of the 20th century. After the war, however, it became more traditional, identifying with the Conservative Masorti Movement, to which it was formally affiliated as recently as 10 years ago.

Although the congregation is a so-called *Einheitsgemeinde*, comprising all the main movements Orthodox, Conservative and Progressive, it now has two Orthodox synagogues and one Conservative, each with a rabbi according to its affiliation, but no Liberal/Reform/Progressive one. The Progressive *minyan*, formally founded in 2005 with some 50-70 participants at a *shabbaton*, has no synagogue, no rabbi or cantor, and is entirely lead by lay people.

But it is rapidly and vibrantly growing! And with the new *siddur* is hoping to reach out to all those Jews who haven't yet found a *minyan* to think of as their Jewish home. – [Eva Ekselius](#)

# Speaking out

Liberal Judaism's senior rabbi, Rabbi Danny Rich, has joined other religious leaders to speak out against the rise of anti-Semitism in the UK and the persecution of Christians in many parts of the world.

Rabbi Rich was a signatory to a letter in The Times that read: "Anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic discourse is noticeably growing in public life and within social media in the UK. As leaders of the Jewish and Christian communities in the UK, we are concerned where this situation may lead.

"Anti-Semitism has no place in our society and those in positions of power and influence must listen to these concerns. Similarly, we continue to speak

out on anti-Christian sentiment and persecution of Christians in many parts of the world."

Other Jewish leaders to sign included Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, Reform Judaism's senior rabbi, Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, the senior rabbi of Masorti Judaism.

Christian leaders included the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby; the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, Cardinal Vincent Nichols; and the head of the Greek Orthodox Church

in Britain, Archbishop Gregorios. Read the full article [here](#).



## Education

# Promoting adult Jewish learning

The Lehrhaus, the Adult Jewish Learning programme at Leo Baeck College, is now in its fifth year. The aim is to promote the development and growth of adult Jewish learning for 21st century Jews, although the [Lehrhaus](#) is open to everyone, regardless of religion.

In addition to our courses which take place in London at the Sternberg Centre and those that take place in individual communities – *Lehrhaus on the Road* – our online courses, known as *Lehrhaus in the Clouds*, enable those in different locations and time zones to study with us from the comfort of their homes.



Rabbi Dr René Pfertzel has been teaching an online course and Adrian Coyle, one of the participants, spoke about it.

"I'm not sure what I expected when I signed up for the four-week online course on *Reading troubling texts from Torah*. I remember wondering if I'd end up in a group of students who were well-informed in *Talmudic* hermeneutics, leaving me with nothing much to contribute apart from 'That text just makes me really uncomfortable'. Also, I wondered about the online format. Would it all be technical and distant? Despite those misgivings, I decided to give it a go. I'm so glad that I did," he said.

As he reflected on the course, Adrian noticed that he had spoken about the students first rather than the course leader, Rabbi Pfertzel.

"I think that's because René's approach was focused on creating and directing an effective learning group, something he did with skill, subtlety and care. He shared his deep knowledge of *Torah* and his wide-ranging, creative insights into the texts. At the same time, he knew exactly which questions to ask to encourage our explorations and to 'unlock' sometimes unexpected layers of resonance and meaning. Under René's guidance and encouragement, I found familiar texts that I'd often glossed over began to speak in fresh ways!" Adrian concluded.

The Lehrhaus is planning to have Rabbi Pfertzel teach an on-line course in French during Spring. – [Dr Jo-Ann Myers](#)