

European Union for Progressive Judaism

April 2019 Newsletter

© European Union for Progressive Judaism

Bergmans honoured

The World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) will honour Leslie and Dee Bergman, and Stanley and Marion Bergman, with the 2019 International Humanitarian Award at a dinner at the Pierre Hotel in New York on May 29.

Every Jew learns the key aspects of Judaism from two fundamental ideas: *Tsedek*, *tsedek tirdof* (Justice, justice shall you pursue) and *Tikkun Olam* (Repairing the world through acts of loving kindness and charity).

It's no surprise then that the Hebrew words for justice (*tsedek*) and charity (*tsedakah*) have the same root – and it's no wonder that the Bergmans, who hold these ideas close to their hearts, are recipients of the highest award given by the WUPJ.

The International Humanitarian Award was introduced by the WUPJ in 1992 to recognise individuals who exemplify humanitarian activities reflecting their unwavering belief in the imperative of strong international Progressive communities and leaders.

It honours those who demonstrate a commitment to Reform and Progressive Judaism, whose vision, activism and involvement grow and strengthen our movement.

When the recipients of this year's award were

Stanley and Marion Bergman



announced, Sonja Guentner, EUPJ Chairman, sent out a message of congratulations to the Bergman family.

"You have provided the Progressive Movement and the wider Jewish world with some outstanding leaders. For the EUPJ, I could not think of a more worthy recipient than Leslie, our Honorary Life President, and I am delighted that his contribution to our movement and to the future of Progressive Judaism in Europe receives the international recognition it deserves.

"Leslie and Dee, Stanley and Marion, a huge MAZALTOV to you all," she said.

Rabbi Richard Hirsch, Honorary Life President of the WUPJ, was one of the first three recipients of the International Humanitarian Award named in the year of its launch in 1992.

Other recipients have included Former President Shimon Peres (2009), Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak (2002) and outgoing WUPJ President, Rabbi Daniel Freeland (2015).

Leslie and Dee Bergman



Chairman's Message: Looking forward

After what sometimes felt like an endless winter, spring has finally arrived in Europe, and we are about to celebrate the quintessential Jewish spring festival: Pesach. I am sure that in all your households and communities' preparations are well under way and you are all looking forward to a meaningful time with your family and friends.

At EUPJ, we have been very busy with a wide range of things and it is with the greatest pleasure that we are looking forward to our Shabbaton in Rome in mid-May to celebrate Beth Hillel's fifth birthday. We will also have an Open Executive Board meeting and our annual AGM, the European Assembly. Registration for the Shabbaton is going to remain open for



another short while. If you are looking for a fantastic excursion in May - go to our website, which lists all the details, and join us.

As many of you have noticed, EUPJ is undergoing an overhaul of its communication structures, which is quite a complex task. We continue to invite your input and ideas and look forward to your feedback on and contributions to the newsfeed, which has been added to our website, as well as the revamped Facebook page. In the future, we will be publishing all time-critical information and announcements via these two tools.

On behalf of all the EUPJ Team: Happy Passover to you all and let us enjoy and appreciate the precious gift of freedom - as well as the

responsibilities that come with it. – [Sonja Guentner](mailto:sonja.guentner@eupj.org)
sonja.guentner@eupj.org

Editor's Note: Landmarks, endings and beginnings

Pesach is a time for reflection, thought, consideration, remembrance, celebration, joy, expectation and thankfulness. It's an ending that leads to new beginnings through a major landmark event that catapulted the Jewish people to freedom.

This year is also the start of new traditions. In Spain and Portugal, two emerging Progressive Jewish communities are holding public *Sederim* for the first time. Not only is this a remarkable milestone for these communities, but it is also a sign of a constantly growing Progressive Jewish movement in Europe despite all the issues currently facing Jews on the continent.

Then there's the exciting EUPJ Shabbaton in Rome, which culminates in the joyous occasion of Beth Hillel's fifth anniversary.

All in all, this is a time filled with hope and anticipation, a time to face the future and embrace change, which brings me to an important question.

What makes this newsletter different from all other newsletters?

Well, for starters, it's my sweet 16th issue that has taken me on a journey physically to Prague, Brussels and London, and figuratively to every European country that makes up the EUPJ. It has been a wonderful experience and I have met many amazing people; however, this too must end in order to make way for another new beginning.

Therefore, this is going to be the last monthly newsletter produced by the EUPJ. The newsletter will now be produced when there are special events that the management committee wishes to publicise. This has not been an easy decision, but we are moving into a new age within the organisation, one that has already seen some modifications to the [EUPJ website](#) and the [EUPJ Facebook group](#).



We have been introducing changes slowly, but surely. If you've been to the website, you will have seen our news feed scrolling along the bottom, and if you visit our Facebook page, you'll see various interesting items that have been posted. Please visit our website, not only to see the first few changes, but also to register for the Rome Shabbaton. You won't regret it.

As for me, I will still be involved in the EUPJ and its projects. We will soon be setting up a dedicated email address to which you can submit news items for the news feed, but in the meantime, [join the EUPJ Facebook group](#) and send us your news.

Although I won't be seeing you in Rome, I look forward to meeting you again soon, perhaps in Israel. *L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim and Chag Pesach Sameach.* – [Darryl Egnal](mailto:Darryl.Egnal@eupj.org),
[newsletter@eupj.org](mailto:Darryl.Egnal@eupj.org).

Copy Editor: Miriam Kramer. Translators: Bianca Bertola and Norman Conroy.

Rome is only a moment away

The next EUPJ Shabbaton in Rome is almost upon us – only one month away. This will be a weekend of prayer, study, eating, exploration, meetings and celebration, beginning on Erev Shabbat, May 17, and finishing with a gala dinner on Sunday evening, May 19, where Beth Hillel Roma will celebrate its fifth anniversary.

This Shabbaton promises to be an educational and joyous experience and includes: Welcoming Erev Shabbat service, followed by community dinner; Saturday morning service, followed by Shabbat lunch; walking tours of Jewish Rome; Havdalah; Sunday workshops, an open Executive Board meeting and the European Assembly.

On Sunday evening, there will be a dinner to celebrate Beth Hillel's anniversary. However, there are limited places remaining to attend this dinner,



for which a fee is payable. Please [contact Ben Fantini](#) for more details.

The weekend will also be an ideal opportunity to meet, engage with and hear from the EUPJ Management Committee and Board Members, and to meet members of our Italian communities. All events will take place at the Grand Hotel Gianicolo.

Delegates must book their own transfers and hotels. We have negotiated special rates. Deadline for registration is May 1.

Kindly note that the dress code is smart casual to formal for the religious services and formal for the gala dinner on Sunday evening.

[Register online now](#). If you have any questions or problems, please get in touch with [Deborah Grabiner](#) or [Ben Fantini](#).



Who's who at the EUPJ?

Honorary Life Presidents

Leslie Bergman
Ruth Cohen

President

Gordon Smith

Vice-Presidents

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

William (Bill) Echikson, Director

Administrator

Deborah Grabiner
administrator@eupj.org

Newsletter Editor

Darryl Egnal
newsletter@eupj.org





Geneva is calling: EUPJ Biennial

It might not be Brexit, but the EUPJ has its own deadline – and it's just a year away. With snow-capped mountains, a fountain that resembles a skyscraper, trams, shops to make your wallets tremble and as many cuckoo clocks and chocolate as you'd ever want, we're going to the European home of the United Nations. Yes, we're off to Geneva.

Some may believe that Geneva's fame is founded on the many humanitarian headquarters based in the city, but they'd be wrong. For those of us who have been fortunate enough to visit the home of the GIL, this city boasts the very latest in design with the traditions of a city whose history dates back to the Roman Empire.

The GIL, or to give it its full name, the Communauté Juive Libérale de Genève, does not date back more than 2000 years. However, it will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year and it is therefore more than appropriate that we should be celebrating our next Biennial Conference in the heart of Switzerland and that the GIL should be our hosts.



For our next Biennial, and following the success of the "Next Generation" conference within a conference in Prague, we have decided to make this next conference one that puts our Next Generation at the heart of our theme and our programme.

Our target is to raise sufficient money to allow us to invite up to 150 young adults from across the European region to attend, participate in and help

our communities' current leadership to look into the future and prepare Progressive Judaism for the Next Generation of Progressive Jewish leadership.

Preparations are well on their way to providing everyone who attends with an experience that we will never forget, and will prepare all of us to take our Movement to new heights in the future.

Over the coming months, we shall be releasing news of how the conference is coming together, so be ready to register in September and block your 2020 diaries from April 30 to May 3 when you come to Geneva – and we promise, there will be no extensions of deadlines! – **David Pollak**



Rabbinic Ruminations: A sermon that led to the EUPJ

On Yom Kippur 1978, I gave a sermon on the Torah Scroll from which I had just read. It was one of the Czech Memorial Scrolls from the Westminster Synagogue. The certificate that came with the scroll said it came from Kolín. This led to me visiting and taking groups to Kolín and other Czech towns whose scrolls we also had. The communists were then ruling Czechoslovakia and I found it an exciting adventure – as if I were in a spy story. – Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein

During my visits, I became close to a number of the brave Jewish leaders trying to keep the community going despite opposition from the authorities. It was a case of visiting and giving moral support; one could not lead services or teach. However, it did mean that after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, I was already known in certain circles and, in the newly freed country, was soon asked to help in the re-building of the Jewish community.

Not long after, Sylvie Wittman, who had started a company offering Jewish tours of Prague and the rest of the country (Wittman Tours is thriving still), reached out to me. She had founded a Reform congregation

named Bejt Simcha and needed some help. From 1990, I visited regularly to take services, teach and help develop the community.

I recall taking Joe Barnett, the then Chairman of the “European Region of WUPJ”, which we were called in those days, to introduce him to the community as we realised immediately that Prague was where we had to develop a Progressive presence. I also took Joe’s successor, the late Dr Leo Hepner, and several groups to visit Prague and the country.

Soon, other communities approached asking for help and, at one stage, I was travelling to Prague

to give a lecture and teach proselytes on a Thursday night, by train to lead a Friday night service in Brno, then on to Olomouc for a Shabbat morning service, before a final long train trip to Plzen to give a lecture on Sunday night. Just look at a map – it was a mad-cap, but exciting adventure.

In all of these activities, the European Union for Progressive Judaism (EUPJ), as we later became, gave constant support. Naturally, I got invited onto its Management Committee and took over from Gordon Smith as Chairman in 2008. I was involved in organising our Biennial Conferences in Vienna (2008), Paris (2010) and Amsterdam (2012), and

was on the committee for our latest and, I believe, most successful conference in Prague last year.

Currently, my main role in the EUPJ is to Chair the European Beit Din, supporting our devoted Convenor, Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick. This has led to hectic visits to Bratislava, Barcelona and Krakow to conduct courts that have accepted into Judaism scores of individuals and given great support to the emerging communities in these

countries. And I am most excited to be on a new committee seeking to really expand our presence in Prague and the Czech Republic.

All along, I have been the rabbi of a growing and active synagogue, involved in Liberal Judaism in

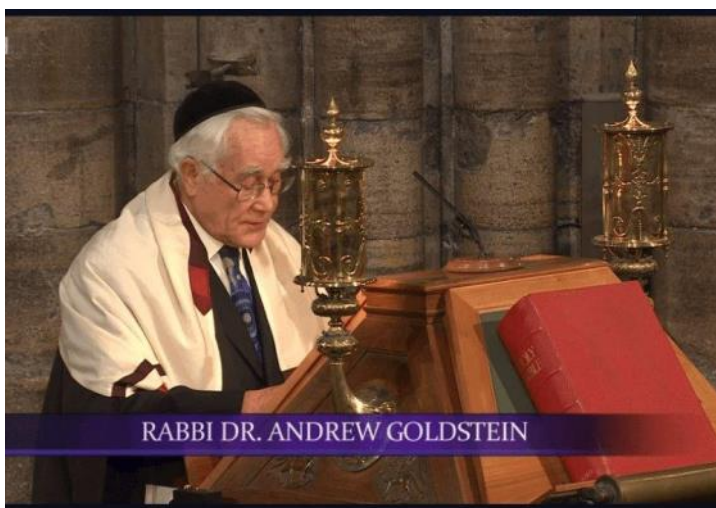
many ways (now as Honorary Life President and also co-Chairman of the Beit Din of Liberal Judaism), yet it has been my work for and with the EUPJ that has given me greatest satisfaction and has come to mould my career and life these past 40 years.

Indeed, the sermon in 1978 was the most effective one I ever gave.

– Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein

agoldstein@tovmod.co.uk

Rabbi Goldstein was ordained at Leo Baeck College in 1970 and became rabbi of the Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue, a growing community he had served previously for five years as a student. He says he “was fortunate to stay there, eventually as Senior Rabbi and now, Rabbi Emeritus, until 2008 when my son Aaron took over”.



Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein leading prayers at Westminster Abbey on Commonwealth Day



The mystery of the miniature Sefer Torah

Perusing the last EUPJ newsletter, I was very excited to read about the anniversary ceremony at Temple Emanu-El in New York for 70 of the 1564 Torah scrolls rescued from Czechoslovakia after the Shoah.

I had heard about this collection, now in the care of the Memorial Scroll Trust in London (Kent House), while gathering information on the origin of my five-inch-high family Sefer Torah. The artefact was discovered after my mother's death in a small ark in her clothes closet.

I thought that Kent house might shed light on Torah writing and so help me with my inquiry. What I did learn was that the collection contains no tiny scrolls like ours. This was just one of the pieces that fit into the puzzle inspiring me to meet with scribes, academics and rabbis, all impassioned experts in the techniques and rules of Torah production.

My goal was to uncover the past of the miniature Sefer Torah, which is unsigned and undated. During the course of my research, I learned that small Torah scrolls were often owned by religious or wealthy families, usually for travelling purposes. However, miniature ones as small as ours are quite rare. I have written and presented my conclusions in several forums. It is highly likely that the scroll is

18th or 19th century Eastern European on account of its Hasidic *Ari Zal* script and of the bone finials of its staves (*Atsei Hayim*).

Exploring the secrets of the little Torah raised many questions. How could my family have been unaware of the existence of such a rare item in its midst? Why had my parents, and especially my father, never

spoken of it? How had the scroll, dedicated to my paternal grandfather, come into the possession of my family in the first place? This remains a matter of conjecture, though my grandparents' Judaica shop might have been the source.

Delving into the family past awakened a need to better understand the relationship with my father, another aspect of my quest. In addition, the research opened up another side of the long story of the Jewish people to me... An interesting and fun journey.

– Francis Moïsi



Francis Moïsi is a fourth-generation Parisian, born into a French Jewish family of Romanian and Lithuanian origin. He was raised in an observant Jewish household and has been a long-time member of the MJLF, a Reform congregation in Paris, where he is now a member of the Executive Board and a Vice President.

Belgium

Purim Party Extravaganza!

The IJC Brussels Purim Party was a wonderful success, with more than 60 members and families coming together to celebrate the holiday. The Hebrew School children put on a fantastic Purim

play, entertaining the entire IJC community with the tale of the wicked Haman, the brave Queen Esther and the wise Mordechai.

Tot Shabbat had a minyan of 10 tots to celebrate

Purim. With princesses, fire fighters and a ninja, IJC's youngest ones learned about the story of Queen Esther who saved the Jews, together with her uncle, Mordechai. The children made *groggers* (noise makers) and baked their very own *hamentaschen* – cookies shaped in a triangle with a special filling.

The community shared a tasty pot-luck lunch followed by a Purim party for the young and young-at-heart. Prizes were given to all who participated.

A special thanks to Lisa Kelman and Joris Visser, their daughter, Heike, and all the other volunteers who lent a helping hand. A good time was had by all! – Ilana Sumka



Belgium

Explore Amsterdam with IJC

IJC is organising its own special tour of Amsterdam to visit key Jewish sites on May 19. You can learn all you want to know about Dutch Jewish culture, history and traditions in one day.

Highlights will include the Jewish Cultural Quarter, the Jewish Historical Museum, the imposing Portuguese Synagogue, the Hollandsche Schouwburg, and the National Holocaust Museum.



After a short lunch break, the afternoon will concentrate on a visit of the Anne Frank House. And all this with just one ticket.

An IJC chartered bus will depart from Brussels at 08:00, arriving in Amsterdam at around 10:45. At 17:00, we hop back on the bus to Brussels, hoping to arrive around 19:30. The deadline is April 30. Find out how to register [here](#).

Spain

Connecting through Seville Shabbatot

Makom Sefarad is a cultural project dedicated to facilitating spaces of dialogue and co-existence through activities and

programmes connected to the history and legacy of Jewish Spain. The organisation hosted a **Shabbaton in Seville** over the weekend of March 29 and 30, and will be running two more over the next few months.

Our March Shabbaton was attended by local Jews, members of Beit Rambam and three visitors, one from Liberal Judaism UK, one from the Reform community in Stockholm, and the third from Keren Or in Lyon.

During this Shabbaton, we held a special activity for children where they learnt together about Pesach and made their own Seder plates, while the adults had a guided tour of the medieval Jewish quarter. One of the main guest speakers, Professor Dr Barry Schneider, gave an interesting lecture about the spirituality of Mordecai Kaplan.

Although the Shabbaton was intended to be for

Spanish speakers only, it is interesting to see how well attended it was by many others as well. Seville is fast becoming a meeting place for Progressive

Jews. We will have a **Spanish-French Shabbaton** over the weekend starting May 31.

In addition, we are thrilled to launch our **first summer conference in Seville**, which will take place from July 15 to 17, in co-operation with Leo Baeck College. The main objective of this conference is to facilitate a better understanding of the co-existence between Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Spanish Middle Ages, as well as the cultural exchange between Sephardic Jews and other cultures in Spain and the Sephardic diaspora.

Makom Sefarad has set up an academic programme combined with cultural and

leisure activities. If you want to learn with scholars from Leo Baeck College and the universities of Tel Aviv and Seville as well as meet other people and have fun in the heart of Andalusia, then this should be your plan for the summer! – **Rabbi Haim Casas**



Progressive Jewish Education

The Bergman Seminar for Progressive Jewish Education, which takes place from July 4-14, is an intensive 10-day programme for teachers and professionals in the fields of Education and Jewish Education from around the world.

It is a specially-designed educational experience through which the participants will explore professional implications and their personal connections among the basic concepts of Judaism: Connecting Land, People, State and Torah of Israel.

The seminar challenges and motivates Jewish educators about Israel and world Jewry, creating a deep and meaningful connection to bring back to share with their students. The seminar emphasises the four central components of Jewish existence: the Jewish people, the Torah, the State and the Land of Israel.



2018 Bergman Seminar participants

Participants will gain knowledge about Israel as a Jewish state, a deeper understanding of Jewish history, diverse pedagogical skills and methods through learning from each other, communications skills in interacting with other cultures.

If you'd like to find out more about the Bergman Seminar, click [here](#).

Shnat Netzer gap year



Registration for Shnat Netzer is now open!

Shnat Netzer is the gap year programme of the global Progressive Jewish movement, bringing together post-high school young leaders from around the globe for a transformative Israel experience. It will start in January 2020.

Our re-designed programme offers participants a chance to discover Israel through touring, learning, volunteer work, social action projects, and more.

Share this Shnat Netzer announcement with youth leaders in your communities.



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They support us.**



Culinary delights and *Purim-shpil*

March means spring and the colourful and joyful Purim festival, which took centre stage at the Jewish Community of Hamelin. A few days beforehand, Olga Gerr and 12 other women had gathered in the social hall and kitchen to bake *Hamantaschen* with the dough which Liubow Pesin prepared the night before.

The traditional recipe of our late Betia Kholmer (a founding member) was used once again as were other recipes. Poppy seeds, jam- and date-filling bubbled from the triangular cookies. Sweet smells



coupled with songs from home eased the women's work. The result was mounds and mounds of *Hamantaschen*, which we enjoyed on March 20 and which we could pack into gift baskets, *Schlachmones*, for the elderly and members who are homebound. Many thanks to all who baked these delicious sweets for our festival of Purim!

On the Purim eve, we celebrated with imaginative costumes, the reading of the Biblical Esther story, music and a *Purim-shpil* (play). Rabbi Offenbergl read from the 200-year-old handwritten *Megillat Esther* (Scroll of Esther). She honoured specific members who also read chapters in German

and Russian.

Young and old were involved in the reading. Whenever the name of the evil Haman was heard, there was a cacophony of noise, drowning his name out. Young and old had fun reading as well as dressing up in costumes.

Upon completion of the *Mitzvah* of reading and hearing the *Megillah*, the children's *Kehillah* performed a *Purim-shpil*. The children had practiced their parts, lyrics, songs and the scripts for weeks. The fact that our children's group has grown and developed enormously over the past two years was obvious by their performance. The youngsters were so excited and enthusiastic and the appreciative audience rewarded them with applause and Purim gift bags. Our choir, "Shalom", under the direction of Faina Pelts, treated everyone to beautiful Purim songs before we all feasted at the Purim tables. –

Rachel Dohme



Budapest communities share Shabbat

As I approached the unfamiliar building, I could not help noticing the low reliefs on the corner depicting scenes of children and women being deported and working in the concentration camps. We entered the [Újpest synagogue](#) on a Friday evening at the beginning of April and recited the Hebrew prayers, with an Ashkenazi pronunciation.

Our rabbi, Rabbi Dr Ferenc Raj, addressed the joint congregations from the Újpest faithful, a [Neolog](#) synagogue, and Bet Orim, a Reform community. Together, we recited the Kabbalat Shabbat prayers and at the end of *Lecha Dodi* (Come, lover) singing *Boi v'Shalom* (Come in peace), we all turned around to welcome the Shabbat bride.

There was poignancy in this gathering. The synagogue where we were seated had a striking history. Built in the 19th century, its members suffered the horrors of the Shoah during the Second World War. Commemorative plaques and stained-glass windows impinged on our glances from every angle, showing that this was a synagogue of martyrs.

The place cast a solemn atmosphere, punctuated by Rabbi Raj's sermon, in which he reminisced about his years serving the Újpest community, a community that suffered the restrictions of the



communist government in Hungary during the 1960s. This was the community he served until he left for the United States in 1972.

Rabbi Raj's words evoked *Tikkun Olam* and he emphasised the quote from Elie Wiesel: "The mission of Judaism is not to make the world more Jewish. The mission of Judaism is to make the world more humane."

Judaism is not a monolith, and there are many paths, traditions, observances, and socio-economic backgrounds. We came together that evening in empathy and solidarity with our long-suffering people. Perhaps the most powerful feeling that night, at least for many in my generation, was thankfulness for not having had to endure the horrors of war or the deprivation of freedom that ensued thereafter.

Both congregations united for this joint liturgy, commemorating ponderous moments in the history of Hungarian Jewry and in our beloved rabbi's personal life. We summoned together our wishes to pursue justice, to pursue peace and to witness the gradual restoration of our decimated Jewish communities in Central Europe.

We were hosted by the present rabbi, Rabbi Ervin Szerdócz, and the event was also attended by Dr Károly Vajda, the Rector of the University of Jewish Studies. – [Luis Fernando Murillo](#)



Need help for the High Holy Days?

The High Holy Days are always a very important time in our congregational lives. If you are a community who needs a rabbi, cantor or student to help lead your services, please let us know. If you are a rabbi, cantor or student who is willing to work in a European Progressive community, please get in touch with us as well.

The [European Rabbinic Assembly](#) (ERA) will happily make the *shidduch* for you – and it doesn't have to be for the High Holy Days. It can be any time of year.

Please reach out to [Rabbi Pauline Bebe](#) and we will do our best to help you find the right person or the right community.



Rabbi Ruven Bar Ephraim honoured

HUC-JIR's Jerusalem Ordination and Academic Convocation took place on November 7 last year at Merkaz Shimshon Beit Shmuel. HUC-JIR's Taube Family Campus in Jerusalem is the academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development centre of Reform Judaism in Israel.

Rabbi Ruven Bar Ephraim was presented with the Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*.

Rabbi Bar Ephraim was born in Amsterdam and grew up in the Liberal Jewish Congregation. He was very active in the youth group of the congregation, as well as in Habonim. After school, he made *Aliyah* and settled on Kibbutz Yahel, where he lived for 10 years.

After receiving his BA in Jewish History and MA in Biblical Bible Studies from Hebrew University, he received his rabbinical ordination from HUC-JIR in Jerusalem in 1993.

In Israel, Rabbi Bar Ephraim served congregations in Nahariya Emet v'Shalom, Har Chalutz, and Kiryat Tiv'on, Kehilah Chadasha. In 1995, he moved to The Hague where he served the liberal congregation, Bet Jehuda, for 11 years.

Simultaneously, he was employed by the Ministry of Justice as a prison chaplain.

He has served the Liberal congregation, Or Chadasch, in Zurich since 2007. From 2014 to 2018, he sat on the Executive Board of the EUPJ as its rabbinic advisor. Between 2016 and 2018, he served as the founding Chairman of the European Rabbinic Association (ERA).

Previously, while in The Hague, Rabbi Bar Ephraim was deeply involved in inter-religious, interfaith work, and he has continued this in Zurich. He is a member of the Municipal Council for Religions in both cities. Rabbi Bar Ephraim is married to Sylvia Dym, and they have five children and seven grandchildren.



Concerning trends and upheavals

On Sunday, April 7, the Liberal Jewish Congregation, Or Chadasch Zurich, held a symposium celebrating the awarding of an Honorary Doctorate on our Rabbi Ruven Bar Ephraim for a lifetime of engagement in Liberal Judaism. The honour was bestowed upon him by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's (HUC-JIR) Jerusalem in November last year.

The symposium, attended by about 80 guests, focussed on the historic development of Judaism and the development of the Liberal Jewish tradition beginning in the 19th century. The symposium opened with the exhilarating music of the Klezmer band, Kach Arba.

Professor Konrad Schmid analysed the variations of Judaism as described in the *Tanach*. Professor Emanuel Tov followed with an investigation of the Masoretic texts as presented 2000 years ago in the

Dead Sea Scrolls. At that time, many different variations of text co-existed.

Rabbi Bar Ephraim vividly described the political and social upheavals of 19th century Europe and the impact the Emancipation had on Judaism,

culminating in the development of Liberal Judaism. Professor Irene Zwiep gave us a vibrant look into her research concerning the topic of "*Minhag* in Europe". Rounding out the symposium, Rabbi Michel Bollag, assistant rabbi of the Jewish Unitary Congregation of Zurich, described the upheavals taking place within the Orthodox community concerning the inclusion of women in religious matters.

Closing our vibrant symposium, Rabbi Bar Ephraim expressed his wish for the future of Or Chadasch Zurich for further shared learning experiences as manifested in our symposium. – **David Feder**



Women bring about change

This year's International Women's Day occurred on Friday, March 8, and allowed us to experience a new dimension in our synagogue, the Jewish Liberal Congregation, Or Chadasch Zurich. We decided to create a special *Ma'ariv le Schabbat* service put together and carried out exclusively by women.

Our co-President, Iris Ritzmann, together with our General Secretary, Susi Saitowitz, Rabbi Bea Wyler and board member, Brigitta Rotach, put together a beautiful and creative service dedicated to Jewish women past and present.

Referring to the fact that in the *Tanach* only 140 women are mentioned compared to the naming of 3000 men, 20 candles were lit symbolically to remember these women.

During the service, Rabbi Wyler referred to the text of the Golden Calf and Iris Ritzmann read the text from *Sch'mot* 32, 1-5. Brigitta Rotach read the

interpretation from *Pirke deRabbi Elieser* (Chapter 45); she explained the meaning behind the women's decision to refuse to have their golden jewellery melted down to be used to form the Golden Calf. An act of civil (biblical) disobedience.

Of particular interest was the reference to Rosh Chodesh and the beginning of the new month being more closely observed biblically by women than by men. In our congregation, this has not been the case, but there is now a consideration to use the impetus of the women to create an ongoing awareness of their role in celebrating Rosh Chodesh.

The heartfelt endeavour of the women created a very special atmosphere in our congregation shared equally by the women, men and children attending the service. Plans have already begun in preparation for the International Women's Day service in 2020. –
Written by Brigitta Rotach. Translated by David Feder

EUJS

European Jewish students challenge the EU

The EUPJ supports the Pledge for Jewish Life in Europe proposed by the European Union of Jewish Students (@EUJS) to MEPs and candidates for the

next European Parliament. The aim is to get them to take the pledge and let everyone know what they would do for an #EUJew.

What I will do for an #EUJew

As an #EUJew, these are the 10 commitments that I ask my representatives to make so that I can continue enjoying my Jewish life in the European Union:

1. Provide education and training for policy-makers in the fields of education, law, health-care and others to foster a better grasp of antisemitism and the needs of the Jewish community.
2. Celebrate, support and incorporate Jewish heritage and Jewish cultural institutions within the cultural heritage narratives of the EU.
3. Publicly condemn hateful rhetoric and support the implementation of Codes of Conduct that can hold people accountable to evident ethics standards.
4. Make Holocaust education mandatory and encourage remembrance and understanding promoted through informal educational initiatives.
5. Defend access to religious rights, including slaughter; wearing of head cover; the practise of male circumcision; and enable the observance of Sabbath and other festivals in places of work and study.
6. Promote peace projects that unite communities, and resist boycotts that divide communities.

7. Promote good relations, understanding and cooperation between all of Europe's faith and minority communities, working to build a brighter and more tolerant Europe.

8. Actively oppose all forms of hate crime, including antisemitism, by encouraging state-funded community security and better monitoring and reporting.

9. Support the fight for gender equality, ensuring the equal role of women in European society.

10. Promote a more just and sustainable future in Europe and further afield; supporting efforts to tackle poverty, climate change and human rights abuses.

Are you a politician, policy-maker or just a mindful EU citizen? For this upcoming EU election please PLEDGE your support for these ten asks on social media with the hashtag #EUJew and tag

f @EUJS - European Union of Jewish Students

t @EUJS

i @EUJS_official

Praise from Prince Edward

Prince Edward, the Earl of Wessex, visited the Bradford Synagogue on Thursday, March 14, where he described the shul's interfaith work as 'fantastic'. It is believed that the royal visit is a first for a synagogue in the north of England.

The Bradford synagogue faced closure in 2013, but has survived with the local Muslim community being an unfailing partner in the fight to keep the building open and flourishing. It is thought that the community is the only synagogue with a Muslim member on its council, Jani Rashid, who has served since 2015.

The Earl of Wessex took part in a special service at the synagogue alongside

members of the community and local faith leaders. He was presented with a silver Kiddush cup to mark the occasion by 11-year-old Amber Jacobs, the great-great-great granddaughter of Joseph Strauss, the founding rabbi of Bradford Synagogue. Six generations of his family were present at the service.

"Bradford's Jewish population is now below 50," said great-grandson, Richard Stroud. "This synagogue is supported by members of the Muslim community.



L-R: Rabbi Douglas Charing, Richard Stroud, Prince Edward and Rudi Leavor



L-R: Amber Jacobs and Prince Edward with portrait of Rabbi Dr Joseph Strauss, Bradford's founding rabbi

We don't know what the future of this building is, but by being open-minded, having common values and learning from each other, Bradford can demonstrate to the world what can be done to create harmony in communities. This visit really puts the royal seal of approval on the work being done in Bradford," said Stroud. "It has been brilliant to meet so many of you today, and find out about the work you are doing in a community within communities," Prince Edward said after unveiling a plaque commemorating the visit. "Keep up the fantastic work. It's good to know there's some really positive work here in Bradford; it's a snapshot of our heritage in this country. I hope you will continue to look after this beautiful building," he concluded. – Photos: Guzelian

Inclusive education benefits children

Liberal Judaism's senior rabbi, Rabbi Danny Rich, has joined other faith leaders in signing a letter supporting the government's new regulations and guidance on sex and relationship education in England.

The letter came in response to a backlash from the more reactionary parts of the religious world, including some ultra-Orthodox Jews, against the inclusion of LGBTQI+ education in primary schools as part of this new guidance.

It was put together by the LGBTQI+ campaigning organisation, Stonewall, and published by [iNews](#).

Read the contents of the letter [here](#).



Focus on well-being at student retreat

Progressive Jewish Students (PJS) recently held their first Reconnect Retreat in the Peak District's Hope Valley. The residential weekend was a getaway for students looking to connect with their Jewish identity through spiritual practice and Jewish learning.

Students experienced musical Shabbat services, country walks, meals and workshops led by the Alliance for Progressive Judaism's chaplain, Rabbi Daniel Lichman, and PJS Student Fieldworkers, Maya Skaarbrek and Francesca Kurlansky.

There was a strong focus on resilience and well-being, addressing students' needs on campus.

"We wanted to create this unique weekend retreat to equip the students with tools to help them with their day to day resilience and connection with something bigger through Jewish spiritual practices that can be brought into everyday life," Rabbi Lichman said.

According to participant, Tilly Grossman, the weekend was a fantastic opportunity that gave her the tools to deal with the stress and challenges of university in a mindful and resilient way. "I left feeling



refreshed and ready for the rest of the semester," she said.

"Reconnect was an inspiring weekend spent with inspiring students in an inspiring setting," said Francesca Kurlansky. "It was wonderful to see how keen the participants were to engage with their Judaism as a tool for creating optimum well-being. We chanted, learned, sang and ate together, and all in the beautiful Peak District. It is safe to say that we cannot wait for next year!"

[Progressive Jewish Students](#) is a joint initiative between Reform Judaism and Liberal Judaism.

#ActiveAllies against hate

A number of Liberal Jews, including Rabbi Janet Burden of Ealing Liberal Synagogue, took part in the annual conference held by Jewish/Muslim women's network, Nisa-Nashim, on Sunday, April 7, where they made a commitment to take firm and united action against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

The 250 delegates – who also included members of Peterborough Liberal Jewish Community, Kingston Liberal Synagogue, East London & Essex Liberal Synagogue, Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue, Birmingham Progressive Synagogue and youth movement LJY-Netzer – signed up to the #ActiveAllies campaign and charter.

Speaking to BBC News from the conference, Rabbi Janet Burden said: "It was fascinating to hear how much similarity there is between anti-Semitism and



Islamophobia and how women are particularly targeted. We must now be #ActiveAllies and support each other – I will call out Islamophobia and my Muslim sisters will call out anti-Semitism – because hatred is hatred is hatred."

You can read the full article [here](#). – Photo: Yakir Zur



Between Liberty
and Social Responsibility
ANNUAL REPORT 2018 | 5778/5779

A year in review

Last year was a period of tremendous growth for the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism. Read all about it in the [Annual Report for 2018 – 5778/5779](#), including highlights and special impact on current events.

PLEASE NOTE

While every effort is made to provide accurate information and correct spellings of names in this newsletter, sometimes gremlins step in and mistakes appear. This is not intentional and we apologise in advance if we have offended or upset anyone.



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Please respond by May 8

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