



European Union for Progressive Judaism

April 2018 Newsletter

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Francophone Biennial: Living our Judaism

France was host to a spectacular weekend of inspiration, learning and connectivity last month. More than 100 rabbis, leaders and members from about 15 French-speaking Liberal Jewish communities in France, Belgium and Switzerland gathered together in Paris for the fourth Francophone biennial conference.

The conference theme was “Living our Judaism in a Complex World”, an attempt to balance Jewish anxieties with French *joie de vivre* (enjoyment of life). The conference was rich with

top-notch speakers addressing topical issues, full house services, fine choral music and excellent food, rounded out with lunch-and-learn sessions and practical workshops. Events took place in three different synagogues and a Paris town hall.



Opening ceremony at MJLF with (L-R) Miriam Kramer, EUPJ Chairman; Marc Koncztaty and Stéphane Beder

The Shabbaton enabled the delegates to exchange ideas and reflect on Jewish life and the further prospects for developing a Judaism anchored in tradition yet modern, open and consistent with citizenship obligations. The event focused on three areas: “The Liberal communities in our countries”; “Reaching out to the unaffiliated” and “Israel and our communities”. The rabbis presented their vision of Liberal Judaism in 2030 and workshops were held

on the challenges facing the French-speaking communities.

Chaired by Marc Koncztaty, co-ordinator of the conference, the weekend started on Friday

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Endings and beginnings: A farewell message

In writing this column, my final one as EUPJ chairman, I feel a bit like Janus, the Roman double-headed god who guarded beginnings and endings – and who had the ability to look both at the past and at the future. Rest assured that I do not consider myself a deity (Roman or otherwise) but as I come to the end of my term chairing EUPJ, it gives me a moment to indulge in some reflection.



It is six years since I was entrusted with this office, and what a privilege it has been. My predecessor, Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein, was and continues to be most generous with his expertise and advice. Along the way there have been many delights and also some challenges.

Among the former was

the opportunity to travel throughout our region (and beyond) to meet our communities and to share some of their significant moments. From the congregations who are just starting on their Progressive Jewish journeys to those who have been established for many decades, I have had such joy in meeting the people – and after all it is people who matter – who are similarly enthusiastic about our particular strand of Judaism.

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Living our Judaism cont...

afternoon at MJLF with a presentation by three speakers, Gilbert Lederman (Brussels), Celia Naval (Lyon) and Rabbi Yann Boissière (Paris). They spoke of the situation in their local communities.

They agreed that there is a need to reach out to non-affiliated Jews wherever they are, to engage with those who have no idea of the potential of a non-traditionalist approach, and to retain those who approach the Liberal community on an occasion, usually a lifecycle event.



The Kehilat Geshur Choir gave a magnificent concert at the CJL synagogue during the biennial

Rabbi Gilad Kariv, IMPJ President and CEO, then gave an impassioned and inspired address. Highlighting the immense challenges faced by the Reform Movement in Israel and the progress being made, Rabbi Kariv called for a major collective effort to advance the cause. He mentioned that Arzenu could play a major role in promoting religious pluralism and social justice. Only in the Zionist institutions does Progressive Judaism have the strongest voice.

There were two wonderful services, Friday evening at ULIF-Copernic and Saturday morning at MJLF, which brought all our participants into two of the Paris synagogues alongside their respective members. The services were filled with excellent music, a great atmosphere and a number of B'nei Mitzvah.

Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur from MJLF gave a pre-Pesach Drasha on the fifth wine glass at the Kabbalat Shabbat service at ULIF-Copernic.

Alexandre Adler, a foreign affairs specialist and ULIF board member, offered after-dinner encouragement for those hoping Saudi Arabia would lead a Sunni movement to accept Israel in its neighbourhood, curb religious extremism and promote tolerance toward Jews.

(L-R) Robert Ley, Rabbi Gilad Kariv and Marc Konczaty. Thanks to KKL for its support.



(L-R) Pascal Bruckner, philosopher; Stéphane Beder, President, the Assembly of Liberal Judaism and Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur

At the prestigious town hall of the 16th arrondissement, Rabbi Horvilleur, sharing the stage with philosopher Pascal Bruckner on Sunday morning, delivered a superb rendering of what our texts have to say about responsibility towards others.

Star of the Israel session, "Israel and the French-speaking Liberal communities", was Shimon Mercer-Wood, who had recently arrived at the Israeli Embassy in Paris after stints in London, New York

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Delegates at the conference



Chairman's Message

Endings and beginnings cont...

The *minhagim* may vary from place to place, but underneath it all there is a strong foundation on which our movement will continue to grow.

The appointment of a rabbi, the donation of a Torah scroll, the celebration of a significant anniversary, and the opening of new premises are but some of the events to which I have been invited and which I have been privileged to share. Long may they continue!

I mentioned challenges. It won't come as a surprise to learn that there are sometimes strongly-held differences of opinion in our communities. Most of the time these arguments are genuinely for the sake of Heaven, similar to those between the Schools of Shammai and Hillel, but occasionally this is not the case. It causes my colleagues and me considerable distress when this happens and we cannot see or broker a solution. My request is that, in those situations, all those who are involved pause, think deeply about their disagreements and their reasons, and ultimately reflect on how best to attain consensus on coming together again.

In my term of office, I have been fortunate to work alongside a wonderful team of dedicated people. These people are the officers, Executive Board members and staff listed in the Annual Assembly publication (also available on our website), but there is one name missing from this list. Stephen, my husband, has been the quiet person in the background who became accustomed to my frequent absences, lengthy conference calls (some at very unsociable hours) and pre-occupation with the working and welfare of 17 EUPJ member countries. With his recent retirement and the arrival of our first grandchild, we look forward to re-introducing ourselves to each other.

Sonja Guentner will lead the team that will take EUPJ forward. My wish for her is that she has a higher proportion of delights and a lower ratio of challenges than I have had. With God's help, and yours, that will come to pass.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the EUPJ Biennial Conference! *L'hitra'ot*. – **Miriam Kramer**

Francophone Biennial Conference



Alexander Adler speaking during the Kabbalat Shabbat dinner at ULIF-Copernic

and New Delhi. He was joined by Annie Cohen of the Toulouse community and Robert Ley, the president of Arzenu France. The animated question and answer session suggested that there is much still to discuss on Israel-Diaspora relations.

The youth leadership workshop discussed ways to bring in the leaders of tomorrow and how to encourage those in the working world to include synagogue commitment and involvement in their busy schedules.

In the final session, many of our rabbis and student rabbis projected their vision of Liberal Judaism in our region in 2030, discussing the complementary relationship they believe is essential and inevitable, of digital access and synagogue attendance, with the overwhelming notion that, while always maintaining our basic tenets, we cannot remain static in the way we live and transmit. – **Celia Naval and Robert Ley**



Round table on relations between lay leaders (presidents) and rabbis. (L-R) Sophie Bismut, Kehilat Kedem Montpellier with no permanent rabbi; Rabbi Tom Cohen, Kehilat Gesher; Rabbi François Garai, GIL, Geneva chairing; Student Rabbi Daniela Touati, Keren Or Lyon; and Anne Sebbag, Kehilat Gesher President

Editor's Note

While the theme of the Francophone Biennial Conference was "Living our Judaism", it is something that all Jewish communities throughout the world have to contemplate constantly in order to move into the future. Putting this newsletter together on a monthly basis has shown me how determined the Progressive Jewish communities are to live theirs – and how well they do it.

Living in Israel means that I'm living my Judaism in a very practical way on a daily basis. This year, I was fortunate enough to attend a Pesach Seder in Jerusalem. I have now experienced this three times since I made Aliyah nine years ago and each time, it gives me a feeling that's hard to explain. Each year I'm not in Jerusalem, I can say the words "Next year in Jerusalem" knowing it could very well be true. I wish this experience on all of you.

Yom Hashoah is another of those heart-warming experiences. When the siren sounds on Yom Hashoah in Israel, every single person, no matter who he/she is or from where he/she comes, stops what he/she is doing and spends two minutes in silence remembering those who were murdered in the Shoah. Nothing unites the nation quite like this siren. And it happens on Yom Hazikaron as well, a



day when we remember Israel's fallen soldiers.

This month of remembering and celebrating culminates in Yom Ha'atzmaut, which is the biggest event in the Jewish calendar that brings Jews together the world over. There is nothing quite like celebrating Israel's independence. No other country can say it has as many major Independence Day celebrations around the world as Israel. Wherever there are Jews, there is an event. I hope you all enjoyed whatever you experienced during Yom Ha'atzmaut.

As you know, the EUPJ Biennial is upon us. Soon, we'll all be together in Prague to discuss ways to regenerate, revitalise and build the future.

If you're interested in sharing your experiences at the conference or giving a "biennial eye view" of the workshops, events, talks or anything else, please send me your comments, thoughts and summaries as soon after the conference as possible. Let's make our May issue a bumper issue that provides a wide range of experiences. I will do my best to include everyone's contributions.

I look forward to meeting all of you soon. Have a great week. – Darryl Egnal (newsletter@eupj.org)

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European Assembly: Don't forget to prepare!

The 2018 European Assembly meeting will take place on Sunday, April 29 at 11.45 at the Prague Marriott Hotel during the EUPJ Biennial Conference.

All delegates attending the conference are welcome to join the Assembly meeting, but only delegates from Constituent Members are entitled to vote on the proposed resolutions.

The Notice calling the Assembly meeting was issued on March 23 and the Notice and all documents attached are available on the EUPJ website. Click [here](#) to read them. You can download the 2017 Annual Report [here](#).



Protecting Personal Data

As mentioned last month, the new European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into effect on 25 May 2018. For the EUPJ, the GDPR presents a significant change in how we both use and store individuals' data. We need to ensure that we do not consider data as "our data to use". It is data that individuals are allowing us to use.

The key concept is that any data that is identifiable is personal data. So our aim needs to be to minimise the amount of data we share. We will be sending a detailed communication to all individuals and organisations on our data base explaining how they can "opt in" in order for the EUPJ to be able to continue communicating with them. Please take a moment to agree to this when the communication arrives. – [John Cohen](#)

EUPJ Newsletter Deadlines

Please note: These dates are subject to change.

MONTH	COPY/PHOTOS	PUBLISH
May (post-conf)	Wed 16/05/2017	Thu 31/05/2018
June	Wed 13/06/2018	Thu 28/06/2018
July	Wed 11/07/2018	Thu 26/07/2018
August	Wed 15/08/2018	Thu 30/08/2018
September	Wed 12/09/2018	Thu 27/09/2018

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.

IMPJ: Israel Reform Movement Biennial

Join us in celebrating Reform Judaism in Israel at our 23rd IMPJ Biennial. Share in a Shabbat weekend of engagement, learning, music and prayer with fellow Israel Reform congregants, leadership, rabbis as well as our friends and partners from around the world.

This is the second time that we will be running an International Track at the IMPJ Biennial. As part of this track, you will enjoy lectures, workshops and panels in both English and Russian, as well as the musical performances, Kabbalat Shabbat and

Shabbat morning services and other activities.

The main opening plenary at the Biennial will be accompanied by translation into English.

[The International Track](#) will be held alongside the general Biennial programming, with more than 1,200 people in attendance, including members of our 50 Israeli congregations. Hebrew speakers coming from overseas are welcome to attend any of the Biennial programmes.

Registration and payment can be made through the Biennial's [secure website](#).

An experience of a lifetime

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



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A nation built in the Diaspora

I had the pleasure of attending the annual conference for the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). My trip has allowed me to reflect, yet again, on the importance of world Jewry relations and the IMPJ's relationships with Reform and Progressive Jews worldwide.

As the story of Passover reminds us, our nation was not built in Israel. We came to the Promised Land already a people, having survived slavery in Egypt and 40 years wandering in the desert. Just before entering Israel, Moses reminds the people of Israel – “Hear, O Israel! Today you have become the people of the LORD your G-d” (*Deuteronomy 27:9*), as if to stress the fact that our peoplehood had to be established before actually entering the land.

Am Yisrael was shaped and established by and during our experiences outside of Israel. After the destruction of the Temples, we were again shaped by our lives in Babylon and in the Diaspora, where most of Jewish thought and scripture was created.

We must take this into consideration when viewing our relationship as part of world Jewry. Judaism can spread its light in and from Israel, and it also spreads its light in and from centres of Jewish life all around the world.

It spreads from Orange County, California, at the CCAR convention; from Paris, where I travelled to attend their gathering of French-speaking Liberal and Progressive Jews; from Berlin, where inspiring Reform and Progressive young adults met for the Roswell Klal Yisrael Fellowship; from Buenos Aires, where the newly-formed IberoAmerican Institute for Reform Rabbinical Education began its first year of classes; and all over the world where Reform and Progressive Jews are shaping our Judaism.

Here in Israel, we continue to strive for a Jewish and democratic society where there is mutual respect and tolerance between all Jews, no matter what their religious practice, or where they live. – **Rabbi Gilad Kariv, President and CEO, IMPJ**



Instilling a strong Jewish identity

An intimate, but enthusiastic Progressive Seder was held in Porto for the first time. With the participation of three families who make up the youth movement in the city, the children were excited to show off their newly-acquired knowledge as the Seder went along.

The Porto Youth Movement's Seder was a huge success!

The Seder was led by Shaliach Dr Annette Boeckler and organised by Rosane Schonblum. There was great team work and loads of enthusiasm and *kavanah* from all the participants! May this be the first of many! *Kol hakavod!*

The focus of the youth moment in Porto is mainly on instilling a strong Jewish identity in the children. They would not have a place to learn Judaism if it weren't for the EUPJ project to create a youth movement in Porto.



Portugal is deeply grateful that the EUPJ believed in and supported our project to bring Progressive Judaism to this country. – **Ana Scherer**



Pesach fun at Kol Chai

Pesach at Kol Chai, the Hatch End Community in the UK, was a great family event. The children had plenty of fun creating Seder plates, hunting the Afikoman and making Pesach plague masks.

This was a special Seder that focused specifically on the children. Led by Rabbi Naomi Goldman, everyone was entertained throughout and the children, and therefore their parents, left feeling happy and fulfilled.

Pesach Celebrations

Lisbon's inspiring Seder

With 54 people from more than 15 different countries, the Ohel Jacob Synagogue in Lisbon hosted a very welcoming and inspiring Seder. Led by the community's Shaliach, Dr Annette Boeckler, there was a great deal of singing and sharing as the night went along. The president of the congregation, Danilo de Souza, welcomed all with a heartfelt speech.



Thanks to all the volunteers, to our Shaliach Dr Boeckler and to the Zurich Hotel without whom the Seder would not have been possible! The hospitality was impeccable and the food was wonderful.

This year's Seder was a true testimony of the growth and development of Progressive Judaism in Portugal. – [Ana Scherer](#)

Reform Judaism UK hosts interfaith Seder

Two Bishops, two correspondents covering religion, a top Muslim representative, a senior civil servant, a comedian, a businessman, a blogger and a Reverend all joined Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Senior Rabbi to the Movement for Reform Judaism UK, at her home for an interfaith Seder.

The annual event gives prominent individuals from different faiths and backgrounds a glimpse into Jewish tradition and beliefs. This year, Bishop Libby Lane, the first-ever female Bishop, hid the Afikoman, while Harun Rashid Kahn, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, was the lucky finder of the well-hidden piece of matzah.

Journalists from the BBC and The Times enjoyed discussion (and jokes) with top Muslim comedian, Imran Yusuf, while Hardip Begol, Director for Integration and Communities, asked what we mean when we use the term "Chosen People".

Ablly led by Rabbi Janner-Klausner and Rabbi Kath Vardi of North West Surrey Synagogue, the event,

now in its fourth year, has allowed some of the most prominent religious leaders in the country to form strong links with Reform Judaism.

Nabz Pat, a young Muslim, who attended the Seder, her first, filmed the experience. You can watch it [here](#).



A modern-day Pesach story

The Keren Or community in Lyon held two Sederim this year. The first was celebrated with Rabbi Haim Casas and 75 members and friends of Keren Or.

Not only was this Seder characterised by the usual recounting of the story in turn by different readers, singing the prayers and questioning enthusiastically, but also by a special Ladino version of Chad Gadya with some dancing to celebrate our ancestors' freedom after escaping from slavery in Egypt.

The second evening was run by Student Rabbi

Daniela Touati and former Head of Education, Catherine Colin. This Seder was distinguished by a very moving rendering of last year's interview between Rabbi Harry Jacobi, who had been welcomed in the UK as a young teenager and a young Syrian refugee.

Two of our members, a young member of the community and one of the seniors, stepped up to reinforce the Pesach story when they re-enacted Rabbi Jacobi's interview and recalled the ongoing theme of fleeing one's land at different times.

Pesach Celebrations

Getting to Freedom

Sim Shalom held one of its most memorable Pesach Seder celebrations this year. About 120 people attended, including 20 from other countries – Israel, the US, Russia, Finland, Sweden and a few others.

The theme chosen by Rabbi Kelemen was “Getting to Freedom”, riffing on the main message of the Haggadah. What made it unique was that four people talked about their own life experiences of reaching freedom.

One spoke about his arrival in the west from a severely limited life as a Jew in Russia. Another told how finding a path to Judaism was a very liberating experience at a very stressful time of life.

All four were very heartfelt and revealing and gave the evening a personal character that one doesn't



get from the communal freedom story we read of the escape from Egypt.

The other unusual factor was the music. Our former Cantor, Milan Andics, was in Budapest, on holiday from his Cantorial studies at the Abraham Geiger College in Berlin. He sang most of the musical melodies, which in our tradition covers a large part of the Haggadah.

What made it exceptional was that one of the main parts of his studies this year was the Pesach liturgy, so he brought many new tunes we'd never heard before. Parts of the service that had been read in the past were now sung very beautifully.

Our present Cantor, Diana Senechal, contributed to the musical scene with a beautiful Yemeni tune from her B'nai Jeshurun past experience, which she taught us all during the Seder. It was a wonderful evening enjoyed by all. – [Jesse Weil](#)



Dublin marks Pesach with B'not Mitzvah

The community at Dublin Jewish Progressive Congregation (DJPC) celebrated a very special Passover service, which included B'not Mitzvah celebrations for Orla Godfrey and Yasmin Abrahamson Schwartz. A first in the congregation's 72-year history, the combined Pesach and B'not Mitzvah service was led by Rabbi Dr Charles Middleburgh.

Orla, who was born in Hong Kong, has been a regular attendee at services and Cheder since her parents Jeremy and Julie moved to Dublin. She was joined on the Bimah by Yasmin, who lives in Israel, and was visiting family in Dublin over Pesach.



Both families were enthusiastic about holding the events on the same day, and so it was that Orla and Yasmin celebrated their B'not Mitzvah on the first day of Pesach, making this a truly memorable occasion for everyone present.

To make the event even more unique, Yasmin was the fourth

generation of her family to celebrate a Bat Mitzvah at DJPC, following her mother Tali Abrahamson Schwartz, grandmother Hilary Abrahamson and great-grandmother Jacqueline Solomon.

Jacqueline, a Dublin founder member, celebrated her Bat Mitzvah 10 years ago at the age of 82, with the service also being led by Rabbi Middleburgh.

[Orla Godfrey \(Left\)](#). (Below: Clockwise) Four generations: Tali, Yasmin, Hilary and Jacqueline



Pesach Celebrations

LJY-Netzer celebrates Pesach at Machaneh Aviv

LJY-Netzer Machaneh Aviv spring camp was even more special than ever this year, with a last night Seder for more than 100 young people.

Seeing out Passover in style, the Seder featured cultural contributions and traditions from all around the world ranging from Gibraltar charoset to the Persian custom of hitting ourselves with spring onions while singing Dayenu.

With the camp taking place in Sussex, far from the nearest Kosher supermarket, leaders had to bring plenty of supplies – resulting in more matzah than could possibly be eaten. Luckily members put their Liberal Jewish values into action, donating the remaining three crate loads to a local homeless charity.

“One of the main things we try to provide is the chance to explore Judaism in a fun and exciting way, while also providing Jewish experiences for those who haven’t had them before,” said Hannah Stephenson, LJY-Netzer movement worker. “This is why the last night’s Seder was so special as it



put those things into practice.

“This is the first time Aviv has taken place on Pesach for 20 years, so we wanted to make it special... and it truly was. Being in the room while more than 100 children were singing Dayenu and hitting themselves with spring onions is a sight I will never forget. The excitement throughout the Seder

was infectious and it was an incredible evening,” she said.

Participants on Aviv also enjoyed a range of activities from learning new songs and chants and discussing homelessness to the traditional wide game consisting of hundreds of water balloons, several large water guns and some well-known superheroes.

For those already missing Aviv, or who missed out this year, please don’t worry – our flagship Machaneh Kadimah summer camp will be here soon. It takes place from August 13-26 and we can’t wait to see as many of you there as possible.

For more information, visit LJY-Netzer’s [website](#).

Yom Hashoah

Holocaust heroism and hope

Seventy-five years ago, in the spring of 1943, Jewish rebels took up whatever arms they could secure and orchestrated the largest single revolt by Jews during World War II. Led by Zionist youth groups, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising lasted three weeks before it was squashed by the Nazis.

This rebellion offered a glimmer of hope and became an anchor of pride in step with the Zionist narrative of strength and self-defence. Thus, it became the story that the fledgling Jewish State chose to emphasise in creating Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Memorial Day. On the 28th day of Nissan, we remember the heroism of resistance and we remember the victims who fell at the hands of evil in arguably the lowest moment in human history.

Where are we as a people 75 years later? Today there are 14.5 million Jews worldwide, two million fewer than there were on the eve of WWII in 1939. In 2017, 14,428 survivors passed away, bringing us closer to the day when no first-hand witnesses are around to tell their stories. Today, although three quarters of a century has passed, we are only at the early stages of unravelling the trauma caused by this devastating loss. Today, we are still asking ourselves what it means to internalise the lessons

of the Holocaust.

The cloud of the Holocaust permeates most elements of Israeli society. Our historic victimhood has caused us to see every enemy from Nasser to Nasrallah as Hitler. Yet, the awareness of our glaring victimhood

also causes us to fill the streets in protest over the treatment of other persecuted peoples, and even to open our homes to hide those at risk of deportation as was done for us. The trauma of living through genocide has fed our collective commitment to the promise of “never again”.

We are required to remember and bear witness not just to honour those we lost, but also to ensure that this violence does not happen to anyone else. The whole world has fallen short in this mission many times since. May we create a future where that promise is fulfilled! – **Rabbi Josh Weinberg, ARZA**



The gentle chaos of defiance

During the week of Yom Hashoah, I visited Poland for the very first time. I've probably avoided this journey because I grew up in a Holocaust-drenched home and then lived in Holocaust-steeped Israel. A few years ago, I visited Lithuania where our family comes from and where, in the village which my great-grandfather left, 2000 Jews were locked into the synagogue and burnt alive.

I am so glad I finally went to Poland. We were beautifully held within the loving, gentle community of March of the Living UK, and guided by knowledgeable, wise, calm educators. The March of the Living is particularly outstanding in its educational approach as it is neither emotionally manipulative nor has a religious or Zionist agenda. I am most deeply grateful that I could weep without embarrassment, free to do so because others held my hand and did not fret.

The March itself was on the last day of our journey and is an ingathering of thousands of Jews and allies from around the world. We filled the paths of Auschwitz.

I was concerned about being squashed amongst what seemed like a vast number of people. Eleven thousand of us marched in defiance of the Nazis and in memorial to our victims. The people there



who I knew and loved from the UK and from Israel were too numerous to count. Then the penny dropped. This was the first time I have managed to have a sliver of comprehension of the enormity of the number of victims. Our large group that day was the same as the number of people who were gassed and burnt and exterminated in Auschwitz every two days, when the conveyer belt of hate was functioning fully.

On the March, people swap badges, bandanas and benign March of the Living memorabilia. It's gentle chaos. Initially this jumble of people, sounds and motion grated on me, but then I realised that it is precisely this organised *balagan* (apparently originally a Polish word) which vindicates this beautiful display of *Am Yisrael Chai*. I imagined the ghost of the Auschwitz camp commander,

Rudolf Höss looking down on us. Not only were we there — thousands of Jews and friends and among us survivors in defiance of the Final Solution. Our reverent irreverence in and of itself representing and celebrating the opposite of the repulsive perverse “order” that the Nazi regime attempted to force on the world.

I feel blessed to have gone, and even more blessed to return. — **Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner**, published in *The Jewish Chronicle*

Shnat Netzer visits Yad Vashem

In honour of Holocaust Memorial Day, Shnat Netzer joined 500 other gap-year programme participants in a MASA-sponsored day of tours and discussions at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem.



Shnat went on the “First Timers” track with a two-hour guided tour of the museum followed by meeting with a survivor to hear testimony first-hand.

At a moving ceremony at Yad Vashem honouring the memory of the martyrs and heroes of the Holocaust, Shnat Netzer participants joined 500 other gap year participants in closing their day's experiences by singing Israel's national anthem, Hatikva. Listen to it [here](#). Read the full story [here](#).



Lyon continues a tradition

The duty to remember does not only fall upon the Jewish community or the families of the survivors. In the face of the current rise of forces of darkness, it is in the united, conscious memory of our history and in looking towards the future that we will maintain concord in the land in which we have chosen to live.

The objectives of Lyon's Yom Hashoah commemoration were the recalling of those torn away, support for the survivors of the Shoah and their families, and a call to vigilance among our fellow-citizens.

On Erev Yom Hashoah, Rabbi Haim Casas and a number of members of Keren Or participated in a Yom Hashoah ceremony at the Grande Synagogue in Lyon, held to honour our deportees and members of the resistance, who were all victims of the Nazi regime.

The following day, the Yom Hashoah memorial service started with the public reading of the names of those deported from the country by the Nazis during World War II. In 1991, Rabbi Daniel Fahri, a Liberal Jewish rabbi, initiated this practice and it has since become tradition. The reading started in the morning and continued until 18:00. This event



Commemoration of Yom Hashoah and the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising at ACI Tilsit

is open to all; some stay throughout and some attend for a short while.

Following the reading, CPJL, the Cultural Circle of Keren Or, organised a solemn ceremony in the heart of town alongside LICRA, the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism.



(L-R) Sylvie Fresco, CPJL President. Rabbi Haim Casas saying Kaddish. Reading the names: Jean Paul Rosner, member of Keren Or and LICRA; Marcel Dreyfus, President of Tilsit synagogue and Alain Bloch, Keren Or member

Remembering the children

The annual Grenoble Yom Hashoah ceremony, attended by local officials as well as a large representation of the various Jewish associations, was held at the Resistance Museum.

Pupils from the Jewish school read out the 90

names of the children who were deported by the Germans.

This was accompanied by very moving words and a beautiful song by one of the school girls, and several rabbis recited different prayers. – Celia Naval

The Persecuted and the Persecutors

The Memorial de la Shoah institute in Paris has dedicated a large exhibition to a series of portraits taken during the Nazi era by the German socialist and pacifist photographer August Sander (1876-1964).

Around the year 1938, Sander took many individual portraits of Jews and Nazis. At the end of the war, he combined these with photographs taken by his son

Erich, a communist who died following ill-treatment by the Gestapo.

The power of their work emphasises the uniqueness of individual human beings.

The exhibition will be open until 15 November 2018. If you're in Paris and would like to visit the Institute, check out the [website](#) for relevant information.

Making their voices heard

The March for Our Lives on March 24 coincided with the annual international Netzer Leaders Assembly (Veida), where teen delegates from over 14 countries gathered to discuss the future of the Progressive Youth Movement. This year's conference focused on "Tikkun Olam: As Reform Jews, does it require action or is it just an abstract value?"

The answer played out dramatically. As hundreds of thousands marched against gun violence all over North America, the Netzer Veida participants met Stoneman Douglas High School survivors who were in Israel for spring break. The student survivors shared their experiences, their trauma and their hope.



Protesting the Israeli deportation of African refugees



Being interviewed on Israeli TV

"I appreciate that people around the world are speaking out and supporting us," said one of the Parkland students. "We feel the Jewish community around us and that gives me hope."

Later that day, an Israeli television crew came by to interview the students. The teens from 14 countries then travelled to Tel Aviv to attend a massive rally protesting the Israeli deportation of African refugees. Discussions about healing our world were no longer abstract as the teens added their voices to those of over 25,000 Israelis.

Empowered by our movement, the teens made their voices heard, eager to make every effort to repair our world, knowing that our Reform communities support them.

"Ending Shabbat with such inspirational messages – that we can make a difference, that we share the same values, and that we can stand up for justice anywhere in the world – assures me that we, the youth of our movement, are leading the way," said one Veida participant.

Netzer Veida



Creating meaningful connections

The Bergman Seminar for Progressive Jewish Educators, "Creating Meaningful Connections", an intensive 10-day programme for educators from around the world, takes place from July 12-22.

Run by the WUPJ Center for Leadership Development and Education, it combines classroom and text study with site visits in Jerusalem and around Israel that bring the texts and ideas to life.

The seminar will focus on the multitude of Jewish narratives inside and outside Israel, and play off the creative tension that has existed between Israel and Diaspora communities throughout Jewish history.

The faculty will include some of Israel's finest teachers, offering an extraordinary opportunity for intellectual exploration. Read more about it [here](#).

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Hungary

Sim Shalom's gift to its Methodist hosts

Sim Shalom's Rabbi Katalin Kelemen presented Reverend Gabor Ivanyi, leader of the Methodist Church, Sim Shalom's former host, with a thank you gift for allowing the community to use the church premises while Sim Shalom was being renovated.

The beautiful hand-painted wall hanging of the *Birchat HaBait*, the Blessing for the House (in Hebrew and in Hungarian) was created by Eva Rakosi. An interesting tidbit: the reverend's ancestors were Jewish. – [Jesse Weil](#)



Eva Rakosi reads the *Birchat HaBait* she created to the Reverend before the presentation



Rabbi Katalin Kelemen presents the gift to Reverend Gabor Ivanyi

United Kingdom

Liberal Judaism President leads prayers

In our last issue, we mentioned that Reform Judaism was represented at the Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey, which was attended by Her Majesty The Queen and Prime Minister Theresa May, on March 12. Liberal Judaism President, Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein, was also one of the religious figureheads leading prayers at the event.

"It was a great privilege to be invited and to read a prayer from Siddur Lev Chadash in Westminster Abbey," Rabbi Goldstein said.

More than 600 schoolchildren attended the service, as did people of all faiths and none. Reform Judaism was represented by Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers.

Prayer recited by Rabbi Goldstein

Eternal God, we pray for the coming of the day when all your children will live together in peace

and friendship; when oppression, discrimination, and prejudice will be relics of the past. May that day come soon: when all men and women will know and understand that they are brothers and sisters, and be united in humble reverence to you, and in mutual

love and respect. How good it is, and how pleasant, when sisters and brothers live together in unity! (*Psalm 113:1*)

The Queen, who is head of the Commonwealth, told guests: "Through exchanging ideas and seeing life from other perspectives, we grow in understanding and work more collaboratively

towards a common future.

"There is a very special value in the insights we gain through the Commonwealth connection; shared inheritances help us overcome difference so that diversity is a cause for celebration rather than division," she said. Read the full article [here](#).



RABBI DR. ANDREW GOLDSTEIN



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Muslim Day of Social Action with Liberal Jews

Members of Peterborough Liberal Jewish Community and Nottingham Liberal Synagogue braved snow and ice to take part in Sadaqa Day, the Muslim-led day of social action inspired by Mitzvah Day.

In Peterborough, the community teamed up with the Masjid Khadijah Islamic Centre in a series of projects including enrolling new stem cell donors, picking up litter in the local areas and serving tea and cake at Werrington Lodge, a care home for older people including those living with dementia.

Both the Jewish and Muslim participants enjoyed working together and said the day went a long way



Sadaqa Day in Nottingham



Sadaqa Day in Peterborough (Photo: Toqeer Sethi) towards fostering community cohesion in the city.

In Nottingham, the synagogue put on a special evening event at the Salaam Shalom Kitchen, which it runs jointly with Muslim charity, Himmah.

Together they served more than 60 meals to local homeless and vulnerable people, helped by additional Muslim volunteers from the Al-Nisa Network.

The two events were part of a record 25 Jewish/Muslim partnerships around the UK on Sadaqa Day, which took place on and around Sunday March 18.

To read more about Sadaqa Day, please visit the [website](#).

Award for outstanding leadership

LJY-Netzer leader Lauren Keiles has won the Joy Cohen Award for Outstanding Young Leadership by a Woman. Lauren received the honour at the United Jewish Israel Appeal (UJIA) Ladies Night event, held last month at London's Grosvenor House.

She was praised by judges for her leadership work within Liberal Judaism's youth movement, Leeds University Jewish Society and the Union of Jewish Students. Earlier this year, Lauren was also presented with the Emerging Jewish Leadership Award at the annual World Union of Jewish Students ceremony.

"I speak for everyone in our movement when I say how proud we are of Lauren and her achievements," said Rabbi Charley Baginsky, Liberal Judaism's Director of Strategy and Partnerships. "She is a truly outstanding leader within LJY-Netzer and beyond, and it's wonderful to see that recognised so publicly." Read the full article [here](#).



Join our Biennial Weekend Community Project

Liberal Judaism is inviting all 43 of its congregations to take part in a special Community Project to be unveiled at this year's biennial weekend in July.

Designed to fit perfectly into the theme for our flagship event – "The Formula for Truly Progressive Judaism" – each community is being asked to design its own chemical symbol to form an overall periodic table of Liberal Judaism.

The communities have been sent a piece of material to decorate in a way to denote their congregation and all the things that symbolise it and make it unique. On the biennial weekend itself, all these pieces will then be brought together to create the final periodic table.

Read the full article [here](#). For more information on the Biennial weekend, click [here](#).

Reform leads the way on loneliness

Reform Judaism brought together experts from across the Jewish and professional spectrum for the first time to forge a new path to tackle loneliness.

Around 100 delegates at the Combatting Loneliness and Isolation Conference were inspired to action on the growing problem, discussing isolation caused by bereavement and dementia as well as loneliness among younger people.

From the benefits of volunteering to the importance of dancing and also preparing ourselves for old age, attendees from around the country heard from experts including Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director at Age UK, Sharon Daniels, Welfare Officer at Reform Judaism and Trisha Powell, Executive Producer of Channel 4's documentary "Old people's home for four-year-olds".

Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism, opened the conference. She explained that loneliness comes in many forms and mentioned how proud they were to be hosting the first conference of its kind within the British Jewish community.

According to Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger, Senior Rabbi at West London Synagogue, loneliness isn't new, it isn't original; it's just extremely important. "Nearly half of all people over 75 live alone. Nine percent feel trapped in their homes".

The Combatting Loneliness and Isolation Conference was part of Reform Judaism's "Communities that Care Initiative" and took place at West London Synagogue in March.

Read more about the conference in Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger's [blog post](#).



Rabbi Baroness Julia Neuberger



Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner

Menorah's fifth Choral Extravaganza



On the evening of Sunday 18 March, Menorah Synagogue hosted its fifth annual Choral Extravaganza. The evening saw people from many backgrounds and faiths gather together for an evening of friendship and fellowship through music.

An audience of over 200, including the Lord Mayor of Manchester and guests from the communities of the visiting choirs, watched and listened to performances from the Mriya Ukrainian Mixed Voice Choir, the Mandarin Fellowship Choir, the Siddique Group from the Azeemia Sufi Order Muslims and the Menorah Synagogue Choir.

All of the choirs performed varied and entertaining programmes and none more so than the Menorah Synagogue Choir, led by Ruti Worrall. For the finale, the four choirs gathered together on stage to lead the audience in a joyful sing-a-long with songs being sung with enthusiasm in Ukrainian, Mandarin, Urdu, Hebrew and English.

Proceeds from the evening go to the Manchester Interfaith Network. Plans are already underway for the sixth Choral Extravaganza. Read the full article [here](#).

Reform Judaism's biggest ever conversion weekend

Reform Judaism has held its biggest-ever residential weekend for people considering conversion to Judaism, currently in the process of conversion or who have recently converted. This innovative event first took place in 2014 and underlines Reform Judaism's commitment to an open and inclusive Judaism, seeking new opportunities and spaces in which to engage with people wherever they are on their Jewish journey, including those becoming Jewish, as well as people with partners who are currently not Jewish.

About 30 people from diverse backgrounds took part in the event held over Shabbat in Nottingham. It was led by Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick, Convenor of Reform Judaism's Beit Din. Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers, Reform Judaism's Community Educator, and Rabbi Larry Tabick were also present to teach

and engage in discussions exploring the participants' journeys into Judaism.

Workshops explored practical skills, spiritual aspects of Judaism and questions of identity and becoming part of the wider Jewish community.

One participant said: "I can't imagine a better programme than this. The experience of sharing with other people in a similar position gave a sense of

community, and I am confident that I am on the right track."

"It is wonderful to see this unique event go from strength to strength," said Rabbi Tabick. "It really empowers people on their Jewish journeys and it is a privilege to be part of it as my own Judaism is enriched and I learn new ways of expressing my Jewish life from the participants."



Left: Rabbi Dr Jackie Tabick showing participants how to lay Tefillin. Right: Participants involved in a workshop



An exploration of Reform Judaism at JW3

Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain and Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner led a discussion on Reform Judaism at the JW3 community centre in March.

The discussion focused on "Nine Reasons for Being Reform and One Reason for Not". It was a great opportunity for Reform members to bring friends who are not themselves members, but might be interested in exploring what Reform Judaism means with two of Reform Judaism UK's leading exponents.

If you'd like to find out what these rabbis believe are the "Nine Reasons for Being Reform and One Reason for Not", read the full article [here](#).

**Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain
and Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner**

