

HADASHOT

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B'Omer
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WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Miko Billurcu
Wargrave

Gil & Chamutal
Peleg
Wokingham

Steven & Lauren
Rose
Maidenhead

CONDOLENCES

Jane Badley on the
loss of her sister

Family of **Gerald**
Cohen

Caroline Lehmani on
the loss of her mother

Family of **Ian Black**

Family of **Gerald**
Koss

Family of **Nicholas**
Marks

MAZEL TOV

Gill Morris for the birth of her
second great grandchild and
Richard & Lesley Alfred for their
second grandchild **Joshua**
Geoffrey.

Steve & Sharon Parnell for the
birth of their third grandchild and
first grandson **Jacob Kai**.

BEST WISHES ON THEIR NEW HOME

Roger & Sara Walton, Taplow

GET WELL SOON

Graham Hudes

THANK YOU

Thank you to **Hava Feary, Janet Lawson and Willow Morrigun-O'Connor** for cleaning the kitchen ready for Pesach.



THANK YOU FOR HOSTING KIDDUSH

*To book the date for your kiddush, please contact,
Pauline Keyne at pauline.keyne@maidshul.org
Pauline is happy to find you a 'Kiddush buddy' if you would like one.*

Shahar & Liya Ayash
for Be'eri's Barmitzvah

Lucy Henning

**Francis Spencer &
Libby Schweber**

Barbara Rosenberg

Barbara Grossman

Share Your News!

Good, bad, big or small – important things are happening to us all. Please share your news with the rabbi, who will share it with the community or keep it in confidence.

Please contact Rabbi Rene at rabbi@maidshul.org or 07495 491325.

Please dispose of Hadashot responsibly!

When you have finished with *Hadashot*, please shred or return it to shul for disposal. Do not put it in your paper recycling. There is a lot of great information inside, and some of it is sensitive! Thank you. Shul Security.

Monthly Musings From Rabbi Rene

Finding Light in Darkness: The Hidden Power of Lag B'Omer

Imagine counting each day as if it contained a unique treasure waiting to be discovered. This is the essence of the Omer – a 49-day spiritual journey that begins on the second night of Pesach (this year, Sunday evening, April 13th) and carries us to Shavuot.

Unlike other Jewish festivals fixed to specific calendar dates, Shavuot arrives only after we've completed this deliberate counting. It does not have a specific date in the calendar, emphasising the profound connection between freedom at Pesach and the gift of law and purpose on Shavuot. In ancient times, these seven weeks marked the transition from barley harvest at Pesach to wheat harvest at Shavuot. But what began as counting a physical measure of grain evolved into something far more profound – a spiritual path-

way connecting our physical existence to our inner growth.

During these seven weeks, we're invited not just to count days, but to make our days count. The Kabbalists transformed this period into a powerful framework for self-reflection, mapping each week to a specific Sefirah (divine emanation) – challenging us to explore dimensions of loving-kindness, harmony, endurance within ourselves and others.

Yet within this period of contemplation lies a shadow. Tradition tells us that during the first 32 days, we observe certain restrictions to commemorate the death of the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva who perished because "they did not treat each other with respect" (Yev. 26b) – a timeless reminder of how essential mutual respect remains in our fragmented

world.

And then comes the 33rd day – Lag B'Omer – like a sudden burst of light in the midst of sorrow.

This day marks the moment when the plague afflicting Rabbi Akiva's students finally ceased. It celebrates Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai who, after hiding in a cave for 13 years to escape Roman persecution, emerged transformed – not broken, but illuminated with wisdom that would later become the foundation of Kabbalah. The Talmud (Shabbat 33b) tells us that his spiritual power was so great that whatever he gazed upon was consumed by fire – inspiring the tradition of lighting bonfires that pierce the darkness on Lag B'Omer.

The message of this holiday speaks directly to our hearts: even in periods of darkness and uncertainty, joy remains not just possible but essential. As we navigate today's challenges and uncertainties about tomorrow, Lag B'Omer

stands as a powerful reminder that we can bring light into our lives.

We may not control the sweeping changes around us, but we can choose how we face them – with resilience, with hope, with light. Rabbi Shimon's story teaches us that even forced isolation can become an opportunity for transformation rather than a prison of despair. The plague that devastated Rabbi Akiva's students eventually ended – reminding us that difficult periods do conclude. For them, it ended when they learned their lesson, when they learned to honour each other across their differences.

We can bring light into dark corners. We can discover meaning within hardship. And we can carry forward the resilient flame of Jewish wisdom that has illuminated paths through uncertainty for countless generations.

May this spring awaken new possibilities within you – a season of unexpected hope and profound renewal.

Rabbi Rene

TAZRIA

תַּזְרִיָּא

By Francis Spencer

Two whole chapters of Leviticus are devoted to a condition that has a name (tzaraat) and symptoms (whitened patches of skin, boils, hair loss, even mildewed walls), but which no one can now diagnose. The Septuagint, the first globe-trotting translation from the Hebrew, used the Greek word *lepra* (leprosy), and that is what has stuck ever since. This is not so surprising to us now, when we read how its sufferers are made to cry, “Unclean! Unclean!”, and to dwell alone outside the camp – cut off both physically and spiritually.

What? For catching a disease? Quarantine, yes. But spiritual removal? How can that be fair, just when they need help most? And if

not fair, then how can it come from God?

Centuries later, it was perhaps this dilemma that led the oral tradition to search out a crime to fit the punishment. Noting that Miriam’s skin became *metzoraat*, ‘as white as snow’ after she had badmouthed her brother, Moses, and that Moses’s own hand turned leprous white for doubting the people, the rabbis concluded that *tzaraat*, whatever its physical symptoms, had a moral cause, *lashon hara*, ‘evil speech’. It is this which sows suspicion and mistrust, destroys reputations, relationships and communities, and which can eventually undermine whole democratic societies.

We know the wisdom of this

Parasha Tazria – Leviticus 12:1 – 13:59 – The parasha deals with ritual impurity.

and may even extend it to social media, as if it carried some deadly contagion, which, metaphorically, all untruth does. But that may stretch the metaphor a little too far, for in the parasha, we see the Levites reacting to an actual, physical disease, not as doctors but as priests, concerned with ritual purity and impurity around the presence of God. One mistake, they believed, risked jeopardising the entire community by cutting off our connection to the source of life itself.

Somewhere behind these two responses and their logics, the priestly and, post-temple, the rabbinical, we can get a sense of just how vulnerable ancient peoples were to the threat of disease, its truly frightening, disfiguring and isolating symptoms. We recognise the human suspicion that illness

and misfortune must somehow be ‘our fault’, a kind of karma, a punishment for some undiagnosable sin.

What is striking and hopeful in this passage, however, is that it shows us a model for a society determined to heal and to reintegrate people back into the community when ‘uncleanness’ (medical or moral) is passed; that this is possible, redemptive, even normal. In this, the Torah seems to recognise such sicknesses as temporary, aberrant, not part of our true nature or destiny as sons and daughters of God. It is a thought borne out in countless generations, by the realities of love and friendship, of people, families, all doing all they can, and at great risk, to bring their loved ones back into their arms, back into life.

The Promise: a short story

Malcom Jacks

My name is Katy Cole, retired diplomat, journalist and translator.

It all sounds very impressive, but I am an unassuming person. The other day, I was interviewed and asked about my life, and it was only then that I started to look back on my past objectively.

Really, my life changed when my sister and I were in a terrible accident, which left my practically twin sister paralysed. I say practically twin sister as she was just a year younger than me. She was 20 and I was 21. For the next few years, our family was involved in many court cases, because the accident could have been prevented.

Eventually, we won the case and got a hefty payout, but that didn't help my poor sister's condition.

My sister Evelyn insisted I take the money, on the condition that I would travel the world and keep her informed of all my experiences. That way, she could at least live her life through me.

During my travels, I picked up

different languages and experienced different cultures. I wrote to Evelyn daily. It got me into trouble on several occasions. Some countries would censor my letters, and I was once accused of spying and put in prison. I agreed to everything, as long as I could have paper to write to my sister.

My escapades eventually reached the press, and I was employed as a journalist. Then my life started to take on a different meaning and I began to see the world differently. My work was picked up by the US Government, who hired me as a diplomat.

All the time, I would keep my dear sister informed. It made her very happy to follow my adventures – even my love stories, so that she could share some of the experiences that she missed out on due to her disability.

Although she has since passed away due to her injuries, as I look back on my life, I have much to thank my sister for, and I am so happy that I could give her a window onto the world, even if only through me.

After Work Drinks

Jo Berman

Hands up if you are of working age!

There are more than 24 of you! You just missed out on a brilliant evening a few weeks ago. March 5th was the date of our second After Work Drinks at the Belgian Arms in Holyport. What a buzzy evening of chatter, relationship building and laughter. We also celebrated Emma Holt's birthday!

The purpose of our evenings and the monthly co-working days is to tap into the 'Hidden Middle' and engage with members who are "too old for cheder and too young for the Wednesday Social".

Don't complain there's nothing on the shul schedule for you, because now there is! Great friendships are building from these two relatively new initiatives, and we have other ideas in the pipeline.

If you're interested in upcoming events to get to know other people your age, and would like to join my database, then drop me a line at

Jo.berman@maidshul.org



Why I Teach

A new occasional series in which we profile the wonderful cheder teachers at Maidenhead! This month: Ossie Anderson-Peled.

How long have you been teaching at cheder and what group do you teach? This is my 8th year and I teach Vav (Year 6 equivalent).

How long have you been a teacher at a school, and where? I am a Learning Support Assistant for children with SEN. I have worked in both mainstream and Special Needs schools in Wokingham for the last ten years.

What inspires you about education? The questions children ask. I may decide, "This is what I'm going to teach today", then a child asks a question and I realise that they have a different perspective or understanding, or that what they are asking is just as important as what I have chosen to teach, and the lesson moves in a new and interesting direction.



What made you want to teach a cheder class? Rabbi Jonathan asked me, and I said "Yes." It didn't even occur to me not to. I'd been a visiting Judaism speaker at my children's schools, and this was a perfect opportunity to share my knowledge and love of Judaism in our own community.

Why is it meaningful to you? Being a member of Maidenhead Synagogue has given me and my family so much. Being a teacher in the community allows me to contribute, as well. We Jews are all links in a history that stretches back millennia. I want our children to feel that same sense of

belonging, that sense of being part of something amazing, that sense of carrying our history forward. This is particularly important for our children of mixed relationships, with multiple influences that we accept and respect. I also get to see our teenagers blossom in the year or two they spend with me as assistants. Starting off shy and uncertain, ending up confident and proactive. Wonderful!

What would you say to anyone in the community who is considering becoming a cheder teacher? Jump in – the water’s lovely! (OK, bracing at first.) You don’t need to be a trained teacher, just someone with reasonable knowledge of Judaism and enthusiasm for sharing it. I don’t deny I was terrified when I began, but I was welcomed warmly and well supported. I have learned so much from the children, and so much more about Judaism since I began teaching.

Hamantaschen Making



Purim



Erev Shabbat in Reading

Helen Godson



Here are some members of the Reading network enjoying a lively and convivial "bring and share" Erev Shabbat dinner kindly hosted by a network family. Following the lighting of several sets of Shabbat candles and communal reciting of the Shabbat blessings, Rabbi Rene led us in songs to welcome the Shabbat followed by a short study session

and discussion. Then a wonderful variety of food was served, each dish clearly prepared with love, and the rest of the evening provided an opportunity to chat, rekindle friendships, make new friends, and exchange recipes.

Everyone agreed it was a resounding success and that the network should include this on its regular program of events.

Wellbeing Survey at Maidenhead Synagogue

Email address: _____

You may have already seen an online survey that was circulated to our membership in the weekly bulletin. You will find below the same questions on a paper version, for those who are more comfortable to express themselves on paper.



This survey is confidential and will be used to create the framework of the Care Team. Please write your answers on a separate sheet of paper and send them to me at the synagogue.

1. How can we help?

The synagogue would like to offer a range of support that contributes to the wellbeing of the community.

Please tell us if any of the following services would be helpful to you.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular phone calls
<input type="checkbox"/>	Home visits
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dementia Café
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bereavement Counselling Group
<input type="checkbox"/>	1:1 Counselling
<input type="checkbox"/>	A buddy for Shabbat services
<input type="checkbox"/>	Workshops covering various topics such as teenage challenges, transition to retirement, becoming a parent, adjusting to ageing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ad hoc lifts to/from shul
<input type="checkbox"/>	Signposting i.e. help identifying where to get support via third parties such as NHS or charities.

Don't forget, we have clubs and activities on our weekly schedule that you can also get involved with that are great for meeting other members of the community and feeling supported.

2. If you are a carer (someone who is providing care for a family member or close friend who couldn't cope without it), would you benefit from a carers' support group?

3. Volunteering

We rely on the skills and goodwill of our members to deliver our care remit and make our community thrive. We are always on the lookout for volunteers and appropriately trained professionals for the growing care needs of our members.

Would you be able / willing to help in the following: be part of a team that offers home or hospital visits, offering volunteered counselling if you are a trained counsellor, or more generally, if you are willing to offer time to the synagogue for events?

4. Any other ideas?

We all have great ideas, but in order to be implemented, they must meet the needs of the community, and must be self-sufficient in terms of human resources and cost.

Shul Theatre Group

At our first meeting, everyone quickly responded to the call to take part in and contribute to the varied activities on offer. Group movement, observing and copying actions, helping to comfort a stranger in the absence of a common language, all began to show how working together and for each other builds our confidence and exercises our hidden talents.

Based on ideas voiced by the group, the second session (Sunday 11 May, 2-3pm) is likely to concentrate on developing the skills needed to present ourselves to an audience.

Come and join us! Mike Consden: mikeconsden@aol.com

Communal & Young Family Seder







VOTE OUR ISRAEL

DEFENDING ISRAEL'S DEMOCRACY IN THE NAME OF JUDAISM

arzenu
uk ארצנו



liberal judaism



The movement for
REFORM JUDAISM

Through the World Zionist Congress elections, Progressive Jews in the Diaspora can cast a vote that will influence policy and \$1 billion in budget decisions in Israel and advocate for democracy, pluralism, security, and humanitarian causes

**To be able to vote you must
register before 13 May**

To register to vote scan QR code here or visit
<https://uk.eventmagix.com/>



MAY EVENTS DIARY

EVERY SUNDAY

Children's Choir at 9:30 am

Group meets before cheder. For any further details, contact Julia at juliashumway@gmail.com or on 07707 223946.

EVERY MONDAY

Exploring Judaism at 6:30 pm (Adults)

Contact Rabbi Rene at rabbi@maidshul.org for more details.

Hebrew at 7:30 pm (Adults)

"Because Jews Love Stories" at 8:30 pm (Adults)

EVERY WEDNESDAY

Wednesday Social from 11:30 am

This mid-week social is for our senior members. Come along each week and enjoy a three-course lunch, games, gentle exercises, or relax and have a chat over a cup of tea with friends. And, if you have something to celebrate, this is a special invitation for you – we love to celebrate all birthdays and other things, too!

For further information, please contact Agnes Fixler at admin@maidshul.org or on 01628 673012.

EVERY THURSDAY

Ganon Nursery – 2½ to 5 years old from 10 am

For further details, contact Sheila Veniar at sheilaveniar@gmail.com

Mothers & Bumps/Babies/Toddlers from 10 am

Feel free to come regularly or periodically. Bring along any special toys, snacks or other essentials. For any further details, contact Julia at juliashumway@gmail.com

MUSICAL SERVICE

Friday 2 May at 7:30 pm

Shabbat Ruchani (a spiritual Shabbat), with Tom Smith on the guitar. This service will be musical, with new melodies, meditation, prayers – a gentle way to enter Shabbat.



TORAH BREAKFAST

Saturday 3 May at 9:15 am

Discussion Group

Join us before the Shabbat service on 3 May for an in-depth discussion of the portion Tazria – Leviticus 12:1 – 13:59. Coffee and tea are available. No RSVP is necessary.



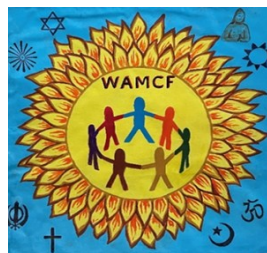
WOMEN'S INTERFAITH GROUP

Tuesday 6 May at 7:30 pm

Part of the Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum (WAMCF).

Please do join us at St Luke's Church. You are guaranteed an enjoyable and interesting evening!

Ladies of all faiths or none are welcome to come along and share refreshments. If you would like details of the meetings planned for 2025, please email Barbara Grossman at projects@maidshul.org



Dance and Fun!

19:00 - 19:30 – Beginners

Communal Meal

Discussion Group



WAMCF Spring Dialogue Thursday 15th May 2025

**What do you find most
meaningful in your life?**

Join us to explore this topic

7pm – 8.30pm (followed by refreshments)

Thames Hospice, Windsor Road,

Maidenhead, SL6 2DN

Free Admission



MEMORY CAFÉ

Tuesday 13 May at 3 pm

A new support group launching this month aims to provide an opportunity for carers to connect with each other, as well as providing stimulation for those living with dementia.

The first session will be on Tuesday 13 May but in order for it to run successfully, volunteers are needed.

Please contact Suri Poulos at suriepoulos@gmail.com

RABBI'S ROADSHOW - BEACONSFIELD AND GERRARDS CROSS NETWORK

Friday 16 May at 7pm



Rabbi Rene is making his way around the networks to meet members and discuss changes to the shul that the membership is interested in.

For all enquiries, please email Myriam Silverman:

myriam@silvermanhome.co.uk

THE FORUM DISCUSSION GROUP

Sunday 18 May at 10:15 am

Discussion Group



The Forum is a lively discussion group at Grenfell Lodge focusing on a Jewish topic and is led by **John Dunston**. There will be a 30-minute break during the discussion at 11:15 am. If you have any questions, please email John at johnhdunston@gmail.com

BACKGAMMON

Wednesday 21 May at 2 pm
Grenfell Lodge – Elvira's Room



Whether you're a complete beginner, novice or experienced player come along and either learn how to play this fascinating board game or play in a mini tournament with other players at your level. **Anyone interested, please email Irving Lomon at irving.lomon@gmail.com**

SHUL SOCIAL SUMMER ADVENTURE **Friday 30 May to Sunday 1 June** **2025**

Gloucestershire

We will be at the Far Peak Climbing Centre, Northleach, Gloucestershire, GL54 3JL on 30 May. You are welcome to come for the day or stay for the whole weekend. Local B&Bs, Glamping and Camping options available. Restaurant and street food on site and good quality pubs nearby also so no need to cook. Price will depend on the activities you choose.



For more information, contact Oliver Lawton by email at oliver.lawton@maidshul.org or on 07788 727994.



Kaytana 2025

(SUMMER CAMP IN HEBREW)

**MONDAY 28 JULY
TO
FRIDAY 1 AUGUST**

Summer Camp for our
young members
aged 3 and up to Year 8!

Exciting activities!
Make friends!
Have the most amazing time!
Supervised, happy and
relaxed environment!

**REGISTER AT
PROJECTS@MAIDSHUL.ORG**

SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS

One of the most positive aspects of belonging to our community is the wide range of support options available to members.

If you feel in need of support, of any kind, not just those listed below, please get in touch with Rabbi Rene, who will be able to advise on options for help.

Rabbi Rene can be reached on 07495 491325.

SHALOM COUNSELLING SERVICE

This confidential service, staffed by trained counsellors who are members of the synagogue, can offer support in understanding your situation and help you explore ways to cope with life's difficulties. **Please contact Rebecca Senel on 01491 579446 or Rabbi Rene on 07495 491325, who will discuss the next steps with you.**

MAIDENHEAD SYNAGOGUE CARE SCHEME

Do you need any help getting to a doctor's appointment or help with the shopping? Feel lonely and need a visitor? The synagogue runs its own care scheme to help members of the community in whatever way. **Contact Lucy Henning on 01753 624977.**

BIASED AND INACCURATE MEDIA REPORTAGE

If you identify biased and inaccurate media reportage on Israel, please send the examples via email to reportingbias@bod.org.uk. Include as much information as you can, but in particular, the date/time and media outlet/platform. Please cc bod@maidshul.org. Our BoD representatives are Leigh Dworkin and Sapir Tal.

Rabbi Dr Rene Pfertzel
07495 491325
rabbi@maidshul.org

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Grenfell Lodge
Ray Park Road
Maidenhead
SL6 8QX
01628 673012
admin@maidshul.org
The office is staffed
Monday to Thursday.

Synagogue Website:
www.maidshul.org
Forgotten your password?
Click on *Members Area* and
press *Reset Your Password* and
enter your email address.
For any problems email:
admin@maidshul.org

Kosher Shop:
Tamar Leeper
tamarleeper@hotmail.com

Community Projects:
Barbara Grossman
07855 801937
projects@maidshul.org

HADASHOT

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Sapir Tal

Email: hadashot@maidshul.org

Submissions are welcomed from all
sections of the community, but we
**reserve the right to edit all
contributions.**

- Material should be provided as a Word document and photographs as jpg files.
- Articles for publication in *Hadashot* should normally be between **150 and 200 words in length.**
- Copy deadline is the 8th of the month preceding the issue date.

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Maidenhead
Synagogue is a
member of the
Movement
for Reform
Judaism.



May 2025 DIARY

Every Wednesday	11:30 AM	Wednesday Social
Every Thursday	10:00 AM	Mothers & Bumps/Babies/Toddlers Ganon: 2 ½–5 years old
Every Friday	7:30 PM	Erev Shabbat Service (Except 9th May; please see below)
Every Saturday	10:30 AM	Shabbat Service
Every Sunday	9:30 AM	Children's Choir
	10:00 AM	Cheder

Friday	2nd	7:30 PM	Musical Shabbat with Tom Smith
Saturday	3rd	9:15 AM	Torah Breakfast
Tuesday	6th	7:30 PM	Women's Interfaith Group
Thursday	8th	7:30 PM	Israeli Dancing
Friday	9th	6:30 PM	Erev Shabbat Service
		7:30 PM	Friday Night Dinner
Sunday	11th	10:15 AM	The Forum Discussion Group
		2:00 PM	Shul Theatre Group
Tuesday	13th	3:00 PM	Memory Café
Thursday	15th	7:00 PM	Windsor & Maidenhead Community Forum Dialogue
Friday	16th	7:00 PM	Rabbi's Roadshow - Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross Network
Sunday	18th	10:15 AM	The Forum Discussion Group
Wednesday	21st	2:00 PM	Backgammon
Thursday	22nd	7:30 PM	Israeli Dancing
Friday	30th	Weekend	Shul Social Summer Adventure

All services at Grenfell Lodge are now in-person and livestreamed.
Visit www.maidshul.org – the link is in the upper-right corner of the homepage.

To access Zoom Kiddush
for both Erev Shabbat and Shabbat mornings immediately after each service
Meeting ID: 963 7834 1361 & Password: 891244