



# Kehillah

## NORTH LONDON

Autumn 2018

Charity No. 1163562



# L'shanah tovah

## שנה טובה

# 5779

## MESSAGE FROM OUR SPIRITUAL LEADER – Cantor Tamara Wolfson

How long does it take for a new place to finally feel like home? I'll admit, I don't yet know the answer to this question — but I can tell you that even after two months on the job, I still sometimes get lost walking from the Stoke Newington Town Hall bus stop to the New Community Rooms! It's hard not to feel impatient when adjusting to newness and change. We want to feel settled and comfortable so badly that sometimes we forget how much time and patience we really need. And as we approach the High Holy Days, I've made a promise to forgive myself as I continue to settle, and not to put a timeline on the process. Nobody is perfect — especially not Rabbis and Cantors! — and it's important to be gentle to ourselves whenever we can, especially during the soul-searching and tough-talking Days of Awe when teshuva is front and centre in our minds.

We often translate “teshuva” as repentance, but the literal meaning of the word means “to return”. Some say that this “return” is a returning to a relationship with God or with spirituality, with family and friends, or a renewed relationship with oneself. Our tradition teaches us that all of these areas offer us the opportunity to start fresh, make right our past wrongs, and repair our relationships for the coming year.

But there is another interpretation of the meaning of teshuva that resonates with me this year and that I'd like to share with you. In Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuva, our sages teach us that the meaning of repentance is “when a person has the opportunity to repeat the same mistake and possesses the ability to do so, but separates and does not do so.” In this example, a person literally returns to “the scene of the crime” but does not commit a repeat offence. I think of how often we find ourselves in these situations in our daily lives: trying to break bad habits, to learn from our mistakes, and even struggling to combat our addictions. We are all faced with opportunities to keep doing what we've been doing, or to make a radical change. Here, our tradition reminds us that even when we find ourselves returning to an old bad habit, we can rewrite our histories through teshuva.

I'm really looking forward to observing the Days of Awe with all of you and exploring the many meanings of teshuva for us as individuals and as a community. For each of us in our own ways, this time will be complex and will feel both old and new, both familiar and foreign. I hope that in navigating these High Holy Days, we will slowly find that feeling of homecoming together.

### NEW TO OUR COMMUNITY

**NEW MEMBERS:** Orsi Plesz, Ashleigh Loeb

**FAMILY ADDITIONS:**

Josh Loeb & Rachel Levy, and big brother Louis welcomed Rosa Hannah Loeb to their family.

Ruth and Oli, and big brother Samuel welcomed a new baby girl to their family.

**MAZEL TOV!!!**

## MAZEL TOV

### BENJI & MIRANDA

Following a civil ceremony at Stoke Newington Town Hall on May 3rd, Miranda and I celebrated our marriage with a Jewish Blessing and a big fun party at Hamswell House on the outskirts of Bath on May 6th. The ceremony was officiated by Rabbi Shulamit, who was the Rabbi at our community for many years.

Beforehand, there was some wonderful Sephardi music from north Africa and the Arab peninsula played by Los Desterrados (book them, they're amazing!), and afterwards, we got down to lots of Jewish dancing on the lawn and later in the marquee.

For many of the guests, especially from Miranda's side of the family, this was their first ever Jewish wedding and they loved it - many of them approached Shulamit afterwards asking her how they could sign up! Miranda looked completely sensational and I looked like I couldn't believe my luck. It really was the best day of our lives.



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### Rachel's Bat Mitzvah

 at Kehillah was a wonderful day for our family. It brought together Rachel's relatives from Jerusalem and Budapest, members of our community who she's grown up with and her school friends.

The community was so supportive in ensuring she had everything she needed to prepare her parasha and the details of the day itself. It felt like a really warm and welcoming place for the very diverse crowd we brought to the big day.

Rachel has had a really good grounding in Judaism at Kehillah and her involvement with the community will continue to act as a great source of support and enrichment as she makes her way towards adult life.

Despite all the hard work and battles involved in getting Rachel to do her studying, Rachel's little brother hasn't ruled out following in her footsteps...



## THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**Robin Samson**



I am the chair of the management committee. I have been a member of Kehillah for about 10 years. I love the diversity of the community, the warmth of the relationships we have with each other and our openness to new ways and ideas. I am on the committee because I was asked, and because there's a job to do – the continuing life of the community is very personally important to me, and that needs people to put the work in, so I do, to the best of my ability.

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**Sue Lukes**



I've been on the Kehillah committee for a while, I'm now vice chair, and I joined NLPJC in 2004. In real life, I advise, teach and research on how to make migration work for all communities. I am an elected local councillor for Highbury East, in Islington where I live and a proud grandmother of three. I have found the Kehillah a wonderful place to explore my Jewish identity, meet people like me and people utterly unlike me and worship, learn, celebrate, work with all of them. I joined the committee because I like making things work and enjoy catering for meetings.

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**Liz Reiner**



I have been a member of Kehillah since it first started. I like how we try to be as inclusive as possible, even when we are having difficult discussions, and how we are not afraid to try new things. I am the honorary secretary and also secretary for marriages, making sure we comply with our legal obligations.

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**Catherine Gardner**



I am a teacher specialising in Early Years and manage a nursery in the voluntary sector. I have been a member of KNL for over one year but have been attending services for many years. I like many things about the community: it is diverse, egalitarian, personal, caring and supportive - a true community. I am on the committee as I want to deepen my commitment with the community and to help it reach others who may want to be part of Kehillah.

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**Benji Layando**



I used to be a journalist and now run a photography startup in Shoreditch. I joined KNL at the beginning of 2017 with my then-fiancee-now-wife Miranda, and we love the community for its inclusivity, positivity and eccentricity! I'm hoping to help the committee in any way I can.

## THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**Steve Mendel**



I've been a Kehillah member since around 2007, joining because of its openness and size, which requires member involvement. I've been involved in many different roles, such as linking Kehillah with other religious communities and volunteering with Hackney Winter Night Shelters, joined sometimes by members in cooking for guests. I've been on the committee for a while and I am currently interested in re-establishing Friday night Come Shabbes With Me.

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**Joanne Hart**



I am a financial journalist and magazine editor. I joined Kehillah North London a few years ago, when I was looking for a community with genuine integrity, an understanding of difference and an appreciation of diversity. I've been a member of the management committee for about 18 months. I try to help wherever I can and I edit this newsletter.

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**Robert Freudenthal**



I have been a member of Kehillah since 2015. I absolutely love being part of such a diverse and inter-generational community and particularly value the emphasis on inclusivity and growth. I am particularly interested in thinking about how we can continue to build our community for all of Kehillah's members. My role on the management committee is focused on the pastoral elements of Kehillah, as well as the week-to-week running of the community, and I am also the adult safeguarding lead for the community.

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**Omar Portillo**



I was raised in New York City, moved to London in 2014 and joined Kehillah in 2015 with my husband, Robert. I was instantly attracted to the racial diversity of our members and that all types of families are part of our communities. In the last year I have changed career from being a mental health social worker to web developer. My role on the managing committee has included supporting with the newsletter and website. I have also enjoyed occasionally helping with youth activities and organizing Passover Seder dinner, and the community bbq.

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**Ashleigh Loeb**



I'm not an elected member of the Committee but I attend as part of my paid role. I became administrator for Kehillah North London in January 2018 and have been so impressed with the community that I became a member in August 2018! I love the intimacy of the community, the community's progressive and social improvement values and the community commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion.

## DIVERSITY ALSO MEANS NEW SOUNDS

**By Daniel Zylbersztajn**

It was back in spring, when Michael and I first started to think that we ought to task Kehillah to do something new. Our community is known for its diversity in many ways but we noticed that when it came to the way we sing songs or prayers at Kehillah, we have kept in line with European Liberal Jewish tradition.

We thought it might be interesting to encourage people to come with new versions of prayers and songs. Maybe you come from a Sephardi, Indian or Mizrahi background and always wanted to try singing one of the songs in the way you remember it. Maybe you'd like to sing in a Hassidic or Yiddish way or try an Ethiopian or Yemenite Jewish tradition. Maybe you have friends from other Jewish traditions, that you could find out about or even research on YouTube. What Kehillah would be better suited to integrate all of these ideas than ours?

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**By Cantor Tamara**

I'll never forget the first time I went to a new synagogue for Shabbat services, and the melodies were completely different from the melodies I had grown up with. It was jarring for me — even a little traumatic — and I felt like it was harder for me to pray during those services, because I didn't have the familiar Shabbat experience I was expecting. Moving here to England, I find that I am experiencing that anew: the melodies and customs here are very different from anything I am used to, and I am learning so much every day about the things that make British Jewish prayer so uniquely wonderful.

I know exactly how it feels to have a melody unexpectedly changed, and that's part of what makes my job as a cantor so challenging. On the one hand, as Daniel wisely points out, it is important to bring musical newness and variety to services every once in a while. On the other hand, change can be very difficult to adjust to and can leave people feeling disappointed.

So how do we find a balance? If I've learned anything in my years of service-leading, it's that it is impossible to make everybody happy. But what we can do is start conversations about our community's music: the melodies that people are bored of, and the melodies that people can't live without. We can identify the moments in a service that should rarely change, or the moments in a service that have become a bit stale.

My main job over this next year isn't to sing: it's to listen. I want to hear from you about the melodies you love, the melodies you hate, the prayers you connect the most to, and the prayers you may even roll your eyes at. The more I know and the more I learn, the more we can work together to create a culture at Kehillah that sensitively combines the old and the new, honouring both the traditions we've all come to know and love, as well as exposing ourselves to new things we can learn from.

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE CHAIR, by Robin Samson

It's become a bit of a Kehillah refrain to say how much change we're going through, and to wonder what it all means for the future of our community. There will come a time when we won't need to keep repeating it but, personally, I'm not quite there yet.

On 1st July, Cantor Tamara Wolfson joined us as our Spiritual Leader. Within less than a week, she was with us at our AGM. A dynamic new Management Committee was elected and we all spent a delightful evening eating together. Since then she has dived into getting to know us. Alongside a small team of very hard-working community members, she has been deeply engaged in preparing for the High Holydays and thinking about our programme for the coming months.

Our July Summer of Welcome included Cantor Tamara co-leading two Shabbat morning services and continuing our recent tradition of a short Friday night service. Attendance has been good, and we are enjoying how she is both finding out how things are done the Kehillah way and at the same time bringing us her own style, knowledge and wisdom. Our community barbecue, thanks to the generosity of hosts Omar and Robert, was a great opportunity to enjoy existing friendships and make new ones. People got the chance to chat with Tamara in an informal way and I know she plans to create further opportunities to become better acquainted with members.

I am looking forward to embracing change as we continue our collaboration: not change for the sake of change, but where it enhances what we do, and grows from our core values. One way we really need to change has already become clearer over the past eight months: although lots of people help out very generously with important one-off tasks (and the community would not function without that help), we still need more people to take ongoing responsibility for running our Kehillah. It is primarily run by volunteers and there are whole areas that need someone to think about them long-term and ensure they function well. The AGM quite rightly asked me to tell you what the gaps are, hence the 'ads' on the last page. Will you consider taking something on? It's a great way to become more central to your Kehillah. Even if you're not quite sure, talk to me or Cantor Tamara or any Management Committee member.

Kehillah is a unique and wonderful community. Please help us to continue being one.

### **Services are held at:**

The New Community Rooms  
Spensley Walk  
Stoke Newington Church Street  
London  
N16 9ES

### **Address for Correspondence:**

71-75 Shelton Street  
Convent Garden  
London  
WC2H 9JQ

**Administrator:** [kehillah.northlondon@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kehillah.northlondon@yahoo.co.uk) or 0770 635 4602

**Kehillah Management Committee Contact:** 0759 402 1973

## VOLUNTEERING VACANCIES AT KEHILLAH NORTH LONDON...

To find out more, talk to Cantor Tamara, Ashleigh, Robin or anyone on the Management Committee.

### **Treasurer**

Can you use a basic spreadsheet? Are you well organised? Are you willing to learn? Do you have a bit of time to spare? You don't have to do the bookkeeping, and you don't have to be a chartered accountant! Training is available...

### **100 Club**

Liaise with Ashleigh to make sure you know how many numbers to put in the hat, remember to see to it that a winner is drawn once a month during Kiddush on Shabbat morning, let Ashleigh know who the winner is. Simple as that!

### **Cupboards**

Have flair? Imagination? A love of orderliness? And/or a commitment to the safety of our sifrei Torah and their accoutrements? We have three different cupboards at the Community Rooms, and each needs someone to love it and look after it.

### **Co-ordinate the co-ordinators**

Recruit a co-ordinator for each of our events (festival services and celebrations, big shabbat morning services, etc), help them understand what they have to do, support them in their work. New job: make of it what you want to make of it...

### **Service leading rota**

Assist the service leaders' group by co-ordinating who is going to lead each service, who is going to read Torah and who is going to give a dvar Torah or sermon. Very little time commitment, very big help.

### **Warden, Gabbai, Shamash, S'gan, Beadle, Sexton...**

Do the logistics for the service, set up the room (with help), fill the mitzvah slots, back the service leader by making sure everything and everyone is in the right place at the right time. Above all, the person who creates the atmosphere, the focus.

### **Education Officer**

Help think about and plan for the development of our Cheder, liaise with the Management Committee, working closely with Orsi the Cheder teacher and Cantor Tamara. Preferably, join the Management Committee to do this job.

## **BEFRIENDING OPPORTUNITY**

*Do you like doing cultural things around London and would like to get in free as a carer to art exhibitions, the theatre or to music and dance?*

*Could you commit to one day a month?*

*Can you manage a manual wheelchair on and off bus ramps?*

One of our lovely members, Davina, would love someone to regularly volunteer to take her out. I'd be really happy to talk this over with anyone who might be thinking of this. I currently volunteer for Davina once a month and I really enjoy it. Davina and I are now friends and I like her company very much. We love fringe theatre and she's introduced me to wonderful classical music at the Barbican.

**Please feel free to email me on [Anna.sklair@gmail.com](mailto:Anna.sklair@gmail.com) and I will arrange a time to talk.**