



# European Union for Progressive Judaism

March 2015 Newsletter

© European Union for Progressive Judaism

## EUPJ General Assembly a happy success in Geneva



**EUPJ Annual Assembly attendees anticipating Geneva's famous fondue**

I write this in the afterglow of a marvellous weekend in Geneva. The EUPJ's Annual Assembly was held on Sunday 22 March at GIL, our community in that city. Led by Rabbi François Garaï and President Alex Dembitz we could not have been made to feel more welcome; many of us spent Shabbat there as well. It was especially pleasing that Rabbi Danny Freeland, President of WUPJ, attended; it was, I believe, the first regional assembly for him in this role.

The highlights included the admission of Beth Hillel Roma as a full EUPJ member and Bet Januká in Andalucia to associate membership. Representatives of both congregations gave presentations to introduce their communities.

We wish mazal tov to Beth Shalom, our congregation in Munich, who celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the day of our assembly. Our former chairman, Leo Hepner, represented EUPJ at the celebrations.

While I am on the subject of gatherings it is not too late for you to attend Connections 2015, WUPJ's Biennial Conference, which will be held May 13 to 16 in Rio de Janeiro. The deadline for registration is imminent so please go to [www.wupj.org](http://www.wupj.org) for further details. These conferences are really terrific.

As we head towards Pesach and once more tell the story of our deliverance from captivity let us spare a thought for those who are still in some kind of slavery. On behalf of the officers of EUPJ I wish you a very happy Passover.

**Miriam Kramer, EUPJ Chairman**

## Breaking Out in Rio: CONNECTIONS 2015 Programme to explore Progressive Judaism's hot button issues

CONNECTIONS 2015, the World Union for Progressive Judaism's worldwide celebration of our movement taking place May 13-16 in Rio de Janeiro, will feature a compelling and challenging series of Breakout Sessions that will analyze virtually every aspect of contemporary Progressive Judaism. Learn more about what's in store [here](#).



**Ready for Rio? Online registration for CONNECTIONS 2015 is [now available!](#)**

## EUPJ Honorary Officers and Staff 2015

### Honorary Life Presidents

Jeffery Rose  
Ruth Cohen

### President

Leslie Bergman

### Vice-Presidents

Alex Dembitz  
Sonja Guentner  
Rabbi Dr Walter Homolka  
Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris  
Jonathan Lewis  
Félix Mosbacher

Gordon Smith

### Chairman

Miriam Kramer

### Vice-Chairmen

Stéphane Beder  
Michael Reik

### Honorary Secretary

John Cohen

### Honorary Treasurer

David Pollak

### EUPJ Rabbinic Adviser

Rabbi Ruven Bar-Ephraim

### Administrator

Deborah Grabiner [administrator@eupj.org](mailto:administrator@eupj.org)

### Newsletter Editor

Arthur Buchman [newsletter@eupj.org](mailto:newsletter@eupj.org)

Gillian Thomas, Assistant Editor



## The NLPS Trust for Progressive Judaism

### New NLPS Trust Website

The NLPS Trust for Progressive Judaism has launched their new website ([www.nlpstrust.org.uk](http://www.nlpstrust.org.uk)) where you can access information about the Trust and the grant application form.

### Liberal Jewish Synagogue seeks rabbi

The largest Liberal congregation in the UK, the Liberal Jewish Synagogue on St John's Wood Road, London, is seeking to appoint a rabbi to join the team working with our Senior Rabbi, Alexandra Wright. This is an exciting time to join the LJS, which has more than 2000 members and has recently celebrated its centenary year. We welcome candidates who have a passion for the principles of Liberal Judaism and want to play a full role in all day-to-day rabbinic responsibilities. The appointed rabbi(s) will be expected to engage comfortably with younger members in particular, whilst also providing intellectual stimulation for the whole congregation. As a member of our Senior Professional Team, there will be opportunities to introduce new ideas and to work in specific areas of interest, including education, social action and interfaith developments.

This is a full-time position, which might be filled either by one rabbi working full-time or by more than one rabbi on a part-time basis in order to secure the blend of rabbinic skills and experience that we need.

For a job description and further information about this rewarding opportunity, you can find the recruitment pack on our website [www.ljs.org](http://www.ljs.org) or contact [recruitment@ljs.org](mailto:recruitment@ljs.org). You are also welcome to discuss the role informally with Rabbi Wright (initial contact: [alexandra@kvish.co.uk](mailto:alexandra@kvish.co.uk)).

Communication will be treated as confidential. Closing date for applications: Monday 30 March

Visit the EUPJ website at [www.eupj.org](http://www.eupj.org).

Subscribe to the EUPJ Newsletter [here](#).

Read & download EUPJ Newsletter archives in English and French [here](#).

Read the Community Connections Newsletter [here](#).

Send us your feedback [here](#).

### Synagogues everywhere

Progressive Shabbat services can be found nearly everywhere during your travels. Click on a blue link to find a synagogue near your destination. [Europe](#) / [Worldwide](#)



Bet Januká, Rota, Spain

## Community Connections

We are pleased to let you know that you can read the most recent Community Connections Newsletter and all our past newsletters: just [click this link](#). We hope you will be interested in the news from our twinned communities and friends in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia as well as in the UK, and we thank all our members for your work in making our twinning links successful. If your community is not yet part of our network and you would like to find out more about how you could set up a link, please do contact us by email at [communityconnections@eupj.org](mailto:communityconnections@eupj.org) and visit our website [here](#).

Please support  
Friends of Progressive Judaism  
in Israel and Europe.  
They support us.  
[www.fpjie.org.uk](http://www.fpjie.org.uk)



## Rabbi Nathan Alfred inducted at UHC Singapore



The UHC Singapore welcomed a number of special guests for the induction of their new rabbi Nathan Alfred (formerly of IJC Brussels, 2nd from right), including l-r: Alex Dembitz (President of GIL), Stefanie Green (President of UHC Singapore), Emeritus Rabbi Lenny Thal, Miriam Kramer (Chairman of EUPJ) and Carole Sterling (incoming Chair of WUPJ)

## Assistant editor appointed

As this newsletter grows, and as other obligations increase for your editor, the EUPJ Newsletter needs assistance. Last month we asked for help on this page, and I am happy to announce that Gillian Thomas responded and will be Assistant Editor of the EUPJ Newsletter as of this issue. Gillian is a law graduate, copy-editor and copy writer based in Lund, Sweden. -Ed.



Gillian Thomas



Due to many requests, registration for the April 26-30 Ride4Reform will continue until a week before the ride. All information about the ride and registration can be found at [www.riding4reform.org](http://www.riding4reform.org). Contact us with any questions at [hadass@reform.org.il](mailto:hadass@reform.org.il). Write directly to the IMPJ but also cc Michael Reik, EUPJ Vice-Chairman at [jhgroup.t21@btinternet.com](mailto:jhgroup.t21@btinternet.com). Michael is chair of the EUPJ Israel Committee and wants to coordinate individual involvement with community representation between the EUPJ and IMPJ.



## Apply now for Paideia Fellowships in Jewish Studies 2015-2016

Explore the plurality of Jewish Civilisations! The Paideia One-Year Jewish Studies Programme offers a unique international experience during eight months in Stockholm with the possibility of a Master in Jewish Civilisations at the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg. Grants for tuition and living expenses are available. For more information visit [www.paideia-eu.org](http://www.paideia-eu.org).

## Four for Pesach

Did you ever notice the way the number four appears and reappears during Passover? In our Seder, we ask The Four Questions, we drink four cups of wine, tell the parable of The Four Children, and we have four specific symbols on our Passover table; *Pesach*, the sacrifice (shank bone, yam or beet), *Matzah* (unleavened bread), *Maror* (bitter herb) and *Charoset* (apples and nuts reminding us of mortar).

We have four names for our festival: *Chag haMatzot* (The Festival of Unleavened Bread - Exodus 23:15), *Chag haPesach* (Festival of The Passover Sacrifice - Exodus 34:25), *Z'man Cherutaynu* (Season of our Freedom- from the liturgy), and one you may not have heard, *The Crossing-Feast* (Philo, referring to Exodus 14:21-31).

In our *Hagadah*, we read the four promises God made to us in Torah: *I will bring you out from under the burden of enslavement; I will deliver you from bondage; I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgements; I will take you to Me for a people*, (Exodus 6:6-7)

The number four is a foundational number, and for us foundation can be seen as the ideas on which we stand. The fourth letter of the Hebrew *aleph bet*, *dalet*, means door. The Passover Seder (order), provides us with the doorway through which we journey to examine our foundations, the ideas on which we stand.

It is the *kavanah* (intention) with which we practice the rituals of Passover that will open us to the possibilities of receiving God's promises.

Wishing for all of us a *Chag Sameach*, rich with self reflection, learning and freedom.

Rabbi Zoe B Zak, Temple Israel, Catskill, NY  
(Rabbi Zak is the EUPJ Editor's sister.)



Rabbi Zoe B Zak

## CCAR/WUPJ Joint Solidarity Trip to Brussels and Paris

This is a highly anticipated mission to Europe, a compelling collaboration between the WUPJ and the [Central Conference of American Rabbis](#) (CCAR).

From April 19 to 24, the Solidarity Trip to Brussels and Paris will explore the impact of anti-Semitism on western European Jewry and Progressive/Reform congregations. Rabbi Rick Block, CCAR's President, and Rabbi Dan Frelander, WUPJ's President, will bring the group to meetings with political, journalistic and Jewish community leaders.

After departing from the United States on April 19, the programme begins on April 20 in Brussels. Participants will visit some of the city's Muslim neighbourhoods and meet with members of the two Progressive congregations in Brussels, [Beth Hillel](#) and the [International Jewish Center](#), among other scheduled activities. Between April 21 and 23, the Solidarity Trip will be in Paris.



Image by [elsablog.com](#)

This well-planned trip will provide you with a thorough understanding of how the local Jewish communities are responding to the recent acts of terror. *The complete program and registration information are available [here](#).*



## Rabbi Abraham Dahan is 2015 Mensch



Rabbi Abraham Dahan

The CCLJ (David Susskind Lay Jewish Community Centre in Brussels) awarded the Mensch of the Year 2015 Prize to Rabbi Abraham Dahan. For Beth Hillel, celebrating its Golden Jubilee this year, this honour bestowed upon Rabbi Dahan in recognition of his work in the *yishuv* is particularly moving and exhilarating. The Mensch of the Year award ceremony took place Sunday 29 March at CCLJ.

## Progressive Jewish Czech wedding



David Maxa and Judith Bergman under the chuppah with Rabbi Joel Oseran

On Sunday March 8, David Maxa and Judith Bergman were married in the Spanish Synagogue in Prague – a wedding unlike any wedding the Jewish community in Prague has ever witnessed. David is a first year rabbinic student at Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam and, like Judith, is a native of Prague.

Never before in the history of the Prague Jewish community has a Progressive Jewish wedding taken place in the illustrious Spanish Synagogue, with a Progressive rabbi officiating at the wedding of a Progressive rabbinic student. The officiating rabbi, Tom Kucera, is himself a Czech national and was in the first graduating class of Abraham Geiger College.

One of the other remarkable features of the Maxa-Bergman wedding was the fact that for the first time in the history of the Prague Jewish community, the Town Hall auditorium was used for a Reform Jewish event. Speaking at the wedding dinner, Sylvie Wittmann, former Chair of Beit Simcha and a long standing leader of Progressive Judaism in the Czech Republic commented that “it would have been impossible to imagine years ago that the Progressive movement would have celebrated a wedding reception in the Jewish Town Hall auditorium”. Such changes are helping to establish a more solid footing for Progressive Judaism in the country – a position which will be greatly strengthened when David Maxa becomes Rabbi David Maxa.

While this was indeed “just” a wedding, it symbolised a great many advances for our movement.

Rabbi Joel Oseran

### Shir Hatzafon in Copenhagen offers "Jewish Life in Practice"

Shir Hatzafon, Progressive Judaism in Denmark, held the first session of an exciting course over four afternoons with Rabbi Rebecca Lillian on the topic "Jewish life in practice" on 22 March. The purpose is to gain insight into what a practical Progressive Jewish life can be. The course covers the historical, religious and philosophical background of the practical exercises that are part of each theme.



Rabbi Rebecca Lillian

Over four Sundays from 12:00 to 17:00 from March to June this course examines five themes:

- Learning - studying the Jewish way
- The Jewish home
- Daily life - prayers / tefillin
- The meal - kiddush / benchen
- Distinctions - holy / unholy - Havdalah

The first session was a most enlightening and enjoyable success.

in Basel. Many members of Migwan and its partner organisation in Basel, Ofek, shared personal reflections on the history, the present and future visions for liberal Jewish life in the region.

Migwan takes inspiration from its name - which means "diversity" in Hebrew - and provides a warm and personal spiritual community that welcomes all Jews as well as non-Jewish partners, children and guests. Since Migwan's founding, children and families have been very much at the centre of community life. Migwan participates actively in Jewish interdenominational as well as interfaith dialogue.

Leslie Bergman closed the evening with an address to the community. He emphasised the vital role of the liberal Jewish movement in applying traditional Jewish ethical values to contemporary challenges. Tu b'Shevat and the tradition of *Shmitah* (the Sabbath year for trees and plants) could, for example, provide an important impetus for socially and ecologically responsible development.

Peter Jossi, Migwan President

David Conn, Migwan Religious Committee

### Tu b'Shevat Seder at Migwan



Leslie Bergman at Migwan's Tu b'Shevat Seder

A year after moving into its new premises Migwan (Liberal Jewish Community of Basel) welcomed official guests of the Progressive Jewish umbrella organizations: Nicole Poëll, President of the Platform of Liberal Jews in Switzerland (PJLS) and Leslie Bergman, President of the European Union for Progressive Judaism (EUPJ). Guests also included members of ITUC, the Inter-Faith Forum and also cantonal authorities. The joint celebration of Tu b'Shevat - the New Year for Trees - strengthened the bond between the Migwan community and its partners in Basel, Switzerland and all of Europe. Migwan member Paul Piwnicki created and led Migwan's Tu B'Shevat Seder, assisted by David Conn. A Tu B'Shevat theme developed throughout the Seder was the development of Progressive Judaism

### Professor Ruth Halperin-Kaddari's talk at Beith Gil in Geneva

#### Women in Israel: a Social and Legal Perspective

February 16: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" began Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, who, as a practising Jew, wanted to convey that it is a delicate task to speak about the situation of women in Israel, as it does not correspond to Israel's vow in 1948 to ensure equality for all citizens, regardless of religion, race or gender. Over 35 people came to hear her thought provoking talk at Beith Gil's English committee's first event of 2015.



Ruth Halperin-Kaddari

Professor Halperin-Kaddari is an expert on family law and women's rights. She is the Founding Director of the Rackman Center for the Advancement of the Status of Women at Bar-Ilan University, a member of the UN Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the author of *Women in Israel: A State of Their Own*

She explained that though the majority of Israelis are secular, there is little activism in civil society to fight against injustice to women. In the recent electoral campaign it wasn't an issue. Yet among orthodox women there is a movement which has refused to elect men who don't consider women's rights. Although they are rejected by their own community, the speaker sees hope in this direction. The New York Jewish Federation, despite hesitations to criticise Israel, has recently questioned the situation of women concerning divorce and the problem of conversions. So Professor Halperin-Kaddari encourages us, as Jews in the Diaspora, to make our voices heard!

Barbara Vogt-Hornick

## United Kingdom

### Purim at Leo Baeck College



2015 Purim celebration at Leo Baeck College

Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris, Principal of Leo Baeck College, colleagues, board members and rabbinic students celebrated Purim on Thursday 5 March. In the tradition of Leo Baeck College, the megillah was read by the students and staff in different languages and reflecting different traditions. This year, parts of the megillah were read in French by Student Rabbi Danielle Touati, in Ladino by Student Rabbi Haim Casas, in Swedish by faculty member Dr Laliv Clenman, in Greek by faculty member Rabbi Dr Michael Hilton, in Latin by Dean of Leo Baeck College Rabbi Dr Charles Middleburgh, and in Russian by Student Rabbi Igor Zinkov. To complement the languages, Student Rabbi Zahavit Shalev leyned beautifully and senior staff team members Gabriela Ruppim and Jo-Ann Myers invoked a 1960s freedom message in their reading. Noeleen Cohen, Chair of Leo Baeck College, commented that this was the most inspiring reading she had heard in many years. "The range of voices and different languages and interpretations reminded us that Esther was no ordinary heroine. She spoke up, in her language, driven by the values and commitment that continue to be part of our narrative even now. Today the Leo Baeck College students and staff team did just that and reminded us what being one voice, with many different accents really means."

[See more here.](#)

### About Pro-Zion

Pro-Zion is the UK-based organisation that works to support Progressive Judaism in Israel and to promote Israel in Progressive Jewish Communities in the UK.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



Click the logos for news of UK movements



### Sign up for the Day of Celebration

Liberal Judaism's biggest event of 2015, the Day of Celebration, takes place on Sunday June 7 at The Liberal Jewish Synagogue with the theme of Israel. Sign up now to hear keynote speakers including Rabbis Miri Gold and Ofek Meir, as well as a senior Israeli VIP.

### Give away your chametz

Liberal Judaism is supporting Mitzvah Day 365's "Give Away Your Chametz" project. Passover is the time of year for the Jewish community to reflect on periods of suffering, allowing us to be responsive to the hardships and challenges still faced by so many in our society. The "Give Away Your Chametz" project encourages people to donate their chametz to local food banks and homeless shelters as well as clothes thrown out in the "Spring Cleaning". If you would like to organise a food collection or need any extra information please contact [Andrea at Mitzvah Day](#).

### LGBTQI Jewish rituals

Liberal Judaism has joined a prestigious Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project about LGBTQI Jewish rituals in the UK.

[Click here to find out more and get involved.](#)

### Shirei Chagigah is 9-12 July

Shirei Chagigah is the new name for the Movement for Reform Judaism's biennial music conference. It means 'songs of celebration' and reflects the celebration of music and prayer which we will enjoy over this very special weekend. Faculty confirmed include Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller, Noah Aronson, Cantor Zöe Jacobs, Merri Arian and Rabbi Noam Katz.

This celebration of music and prayer incorporating the MRJ Choirs Festival will give you the tools and experiences to learn about and enjoy Jewish music and *t'fillah* (prayer). This is an opportunity to learn from the world's foremost experts in the field of Jewish liturgical music. Through a series of workshops and services you will explore the use of music to enhance religious services, learn new melodies and choral harmonies for traditional prayers - and be part of a remarkable community.

Shirei Chagigah is not only for people who love to sing! For the first time we will be adding an extra dimension by having a programming stream dedicated to those in our communities who lead Shabbat services. Our Shaliach Tzibbur course is designed for you whether you have been leading services for many years or whether it is something you would like to start doing.

In addition the MRJ Choirs Festival will take place on the Sunday from 10am to 5pm and be run by Viv Bellos, Director of Music at Alyth, and aims to enthuse, encourage and inspire synagogue choirs of all abilities from around the country.

[Find out more and book your place today!](#)

1995-2015  
20  
JAHRE**BETH SHALOM**  
LIBERALE JÜDISCHE GEMEINDE MÜNCHEN

## Beth Shalom's 20th anniversary

The Liberal Jewish congregation of Munich Beth Shalom was officially founded on 17 March 1995. The congregation's anniversary is being celebrated with a series of events. The jubilee celebrations started off with the book presentation "Fritz Bauer oder Auschwitz vor Gericht" (Fritz Bauer or Auschwitz in court) by the author and journalist Ronen Steinke in the Jewish Museum Munich on 24 February. On 9 March the festivities were continued at Beth Shalom in cooperation with the Evangelische Stadtakademie (Protestant educational society) Munich with a lecture by Rabbi Jonathan Magonet "David and Batsheba - a story of love and power".



**Mazal Tov! Abraham Geiger College's Rabbi Dr Walter Homolka (left) and Dr Leo Hepner, a long-time supporter of Progressive Jewish communities in Germany and former chair of the EUPJ, celebrate Beth Shalom's 20th anniversary.** © Franziska Werners

On 22 March Beth Shalom celebrated its 20th anniversary with a festive event at the [Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Munich](#).

Together with the congregation's friends, government representatives, delegates from other religious communities and other leading citizens, Beth Shalom presented the story of how it has brought Progressive Judaism back to the centre of Munich life.

The fact that the joyous occasion took place in the heart of Munich's Orthodox Jewish community is testament to the growth of the local Progressive movement.

With a current membership of around 400, Beth Shalom continues to grow. Rabbi Tom Kucera and Cantor Nikola David have greatly enhanced the congregation's religious life, helping it attract many new members and guests.

The board and other volunteers continue to do much of the sacred work of organising and running Beth Shalom's active schedule. They, along with the EUPJ's support, are ensuring that Beth Shalom's future will go from strength to strength, success to success.

## Munich "chain of peace of religions" with Beth Shalom



**Rabbi Steven Langnas and Cantor Nikola David at St Jakobsplatz, Munich.** © F Werners

On Monday, the 2nd of February about 15,000 Munich citizens formed a "chain of peace of religions" by which the Greek Orthodox Salvator Church, the Catholic St Michael Church, the Protestant St Matheus Church, the Forum for Islam and the Synagogue Ohel Jakob were linked. The candle-lit demonstration, which was also supported by the liberal Jewish congregation Munich Beth Shalom, was initiated and organised by Munich citizens Beatrix Jakubicka-Frühwald and Gisela Jahn as a sign for tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Particularly impressive was the performance of Beth Shalom's cantor Nikola David, who recited the blessing of peace together with the former rabbi of the IKG Munich Steven Langnas, and led the demonstrators in singing on the overcrowded St Jakobsplatz.

## School of Jewish Theology relocating

The Abraham Geiger College School of Jewish Theology will relocate to Brandenburg's capital Potsdam on the campus of the University of Potsdam - the former imperial palace. The orangery and the northern gate house as part of a UNESCO world cultural heritage site will be transformed into the rabbinical seminary, the theological department, synagogue and a kitchen, 1500 square metres in all. The German government will cover renovation costs. Further details in the next issue.



## Read the UpJ newsletter

Union progressiver Juden in Deutschland (UpJ), the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany, publishes a newsletter in German, now with English translation. Read and subscribe to it [here](#).

## Germany

### Rabbi Walter Homolka honoured by German president



Rabbi Dr Walter Homolka receives prestigious award from Prime Minister of the State of Brandenburg Dr Dietmar Woidke at the state chancellery in Potsdam

Mazal Tov to Rabbi Dr Walter Homolka, rector of Abraham Geiger College for the training of rabbis and a professor of Jewish Studies at Potsdam University in Germany, who was honoured by Joachim Gauck, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, with the Officers Cross of the Federal Merit Order.

It is worth noting that the conferral of this honour upon Rabbi Homolka had been successfully blocked by the Central Council of Jews in Germany for 14 consecutive years.

"Overcoming this veto means that Progressive Judaism is now perceived as an independent entity. We now have a marker of where we are in German society: the power of the Central Council to stop us or make things difficult for us has been diminished," Rabbi Homolka stated.

On February 27, Dr Dietmar Woidke, Prime Minister of the State of Brandenburg, handed over the insignia in the state chancellery in Potsdam. Woidke thanked Rabbi Homolka for the establishment of the Abraham Geiger College in 1999, the first rabbinical school in continental Europe after the Holocaust. Homolka's initiative also led to the founding in 2013 of the School of Jewish Theology of the University of Potsdam. Rabbi Homolka is professor of Modern Jewish Thought at this Jewish Divinity School. Rabbi Richard Hirsch, Honorary Life President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, noted that "Our world movement has for many years now recognised Rabbi Homolka for his countless creative initiatives in revivifying German Jewry. It is good to see that the government considers his work to be of such merit that it enhances German society as a whole. To honour Rabbi Homolka is also to honour our movement and the role of the larger Jewish community in a new Germany."

### Hamelin news

Our congregation celebrated our building's fourth birthday over the weekend of February 20 and 21. We never cease to be amazed at the miracle of the rebirth of Jewish life in Hamelin, crowned with our beautiful synagogue.

Our rooms buzz with activity day by day. Members come and go, greeting friends and neighbours at services and catching up on family news at Kiddush, hearing lectures, meeting for classes and groups, borrowing books from the library, receiving help from the office and encountering visitors wishing to learn more about Reform Judaism. Rabbi Irit Shillor led us through the weekend's festivities and had these remarks during her Friday night sermon:

"Our synagogue was dedicated four years ago. 'Beitenu - Our House' is a holy space in which we can encounter God. In our synagogue, here and now, we can encounter God's presence in us. This space was created to encourage God's presence to dwell among us, but also for each and every one of us. God lives with us and so also in us. We sang this evening about the Shabbat angels and when we open the door symbolically at the conclusion of the song *Lecha Dodi*, we imagine the presence of the *Shechina*, which if we allow, enter our hearts and souls and gives us strength. With intention, we attempt to reach a level of holiness through our prayers, meditations and deeds and create change in our world as this *Mishkan* evolves to a *Mikdash* - a holy space. May we all take this holiness with us when we go out and when we come in, when we lie down and when we rise up, and may we channel it into the world."



Shabbat performance at Hamelin

As Shabbat ended on Saturday, our musical groups gave an impressive concert. Performing were the groups "Benkshaft," "Schalom" and "Melody". Every seat was taken, and everyone was in awe of the wide spectrum of musical talent in our congregation, including that several of the musicians and singers took part in more than one ensemble. In good Jewish tradition, the pieces offered a menu of both joyous and melancholic music. The performers were thanked with rousing applause and bouquets of spring flowers. We thank all our wonderful musicians for this gala concert in honour of our fourth birthday. Rabbi Shillor dimmed the lights and a sweet hush filled the sanctuary as she led the Havdalah ceremony. Walking home in the chilly night air, filled with gratitude, the first star could be seen in the evening sky. Read the full newsletter [here](#).

Rachel Dohme, The Jewish Community of Hamelin



## Spain



Read our newsletters, numbers 8, 9, 10 & 11.  
Congregacion Bet Januka, Rota (Cádiz)



Torah study at Bet Januká

### ATID plants trees for Tu Bishvat



Congregation ATID in Barcelona (Catalunya) celebrated Tu Bishvat with a very special accent.

Two trees were planted in Israel, one in our own name and another to honour Toni Florido, President of [ACAI, Catalan Association of friends of Israel](#), for their work in *hasbarah* since 2009, to preserve democratic values and to help restore the Jewish presence in our society.

When Toni received the Keren Kayemeth L'Israel certificate, he expressed his appreciation and emotion with these words:

"One of the three fundamental actions in life is to plant a tree. And, if someone does it for you, it not only makes you feel very loved, but also very responsible. I will continue to work and to water this friendship, to make me worthy of this appreciation. *Todà rabà chaverim.*"

*Chag Sameach*  
**HAPPY  
PASSOVER**

**BetShalom**

COMUNIDAD JUDÍA  
PROGRESISTA DE BARCELONA



Javurá Reformista  
Madrid

### Susannah Heschel video conference



Susannah Heschel video conferencing with EUPJ  
Spanish communities Bet Shalom Barcelona and  
Reform Javurah of Madrid

Bet Shalom Barcelona and Reform Javurah of Madrid met with Susannah Heschel on line. It was a huge *kavod* for us to host a video conference with Dr Susannah Heschel, talking about "Abraham J Heschel, a prophetic vision of social justice in contemporary Judaism". This was a part of a *chinuch* series of lectures co-organised by us.

Dr Heschel masterfully related the life of her father: his Hasidic origins, studies in Europe, arrival in the United States and stay in Argentina. Heschel believed the teachings of the Hebrew prophets were a call for social action and worked for African Americans' civil rights and against the Vietnam War. He was criticised by Jews until many understood that fighting for civil rights was for the sake of humanity, American society and the Jewish people.

Not only did Susannah share the legacy of her father with us, but also she generously introduced her very lovely daughters to us, showed us her father's Kiddush cup (see photo above) and some of his personal photos with Dr Martin Luther King and Rabbi Marshall T Meyer.

Our deep gratitude goes to Susannah, the best living voice for transmitting this legacy. May Abraham J Heschel's memory continue to be a blessing.



Abraham Heschel and Martin Luther King, 1965

### Streaming Spanish conversions

**How a family vacation turned into an opportunity to serve**

Since Rabbi Alona Lisitsa, the first female rabbi in Israel to join a religious council, went on a family trip to Europe in 2011, she has become increasingly involved in providing online guidance and support to community members in Portugal and Spain.

In 2011, she visited and conducted services at Lisbon's Ohel Yaakov synagogue, having been contacted on Facebook by Adriana Souza, the congregation's treasurer.

During this initial meeting with Lisbon's non-Orthodox Jewish community, Rabbi Lisitsa became aware of the congregants' deep desire for a local rabbi. This visit resulted in a handful of kehila members connecting with Rabbi Lisitsa on Facebook, where she was peppered with questions on marriage, divorce and conversion.

Then, at the suggestion of Rabbi Joel Oseran, Vice President, International Development World Union for Progressive Judaism, Rabbi Lisitsa attended High Holiday services at Barcelona's Atid community in 2013, where she met more people interested in her growing online conversion course.



Online conversions start here: Rabbi Alona Lisitsa

The success of the Rabbi Lisitsa's online twice-monthly conversion course eventually reached the ears of other Progressive Catalonian congregations. Since last year Rabbi Lisitsa's compelling, inclusive and effective online programme has been attracting new participants. Oviedo's Beit Emunah kehila and Rota's Bet Januka community reached out to Rabbi Lisitsa following her High Holiday appearances at these congregations.

The growing workload was becoming too much for one volunteer, even one as gifted as Rabbi Lisitsa, to handle. Consequently, the congregations in Rota, Lisbon and Oviedo submitted a proposal to the European Union for Progressive Judaism (EUPJ) that the rabbi's relationship with these communities be formalised.

According to Miriam Kramer, "We at the EUPJ are delighted about Rabbi Alona Lisitsa's work in Spain. She is a vital part of bringing Judaism back to that country after more than 500 years."



Havdalah in Lisbon: Rabbi Lisitsa (fifth from left) visits Ohel Yaakov synagogue.

To date, Rabbi Lisitsa has helped three people convert, with another four conversions scheduled to take place in May. Currently, a total of 50 people are participating in the online course, now being conducted on a weekly basis. Half of the participants are Jewish while the other half are conversion candidates.

Rabbi Lisitsa continues to make great efforts on behalf of people considering conversion. In February, she returned to Lisbon to interview 13 conversion candidates. Next, she plans to travel to Rota to meet with an additional eight people considering conversion to Judaism.

During these visits to Europe, Rabbi Lisitsa also leads Kabbalat Shabbat services, Shacharit with Torah reading, study sessions and Havdalah.

While local rabbinic supervision would be ideal, Rabbi Lisitsa's important work is turning the idea of conversion into a real possibility for a growing amount of people.

### The second edition of MahaNetzer



MahaNetzer last year

The communities of the Federation of Liberal Judaism are planning a real summer-camp in the liberal Jewish spirit *EiZeh Kef!* Dates: 6 to 19 July with a crazy 14 July. We will have 60 children aged between seven and 17 divided into three groups. The location is in the beautiful country of Côte d'Or, a village called Baigneux-les Juifs, site of a Roman bath where a Jewish community was present from the 13th to the 15th centuries.



**ULIF COPERNIC**  
**Union Libérale Israélite**  
**de France**

## Events at ULIF Copernic

### Music of the Bible

On Thursday March 12 ULIF presented *Music of the bible and the temple: what do we know and what remains today?* The event was hosted by Hervé Roten, director of the European Institute of Jewish Music with Sofia Falkovitch, Chazan, mezzo-soprano. This fine multimedia conference was preceded by a short concert and a dinner.



Chazan Sofia Falkovitch

### Essence of Easter

ULIF Copernic and the Our Lady of Auteuil church held a convivial evening on Tuesday March 24 at the parish annexe of Notre-Dame d'Auteuil to share and better understand the origin and traditions of Easter and Passover. Participating were Jean-François Bensahel, President of ULIF, Rabbi Philippe Haddad, Rabbi Jonas Jacquelin, Father Olivier Rolland and Father Anthony de Romanet. A complimentary dinner was served.

### Yom HaShoah Concert

The 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Camps Tuesday April 14 at 8:30 pm.

Three poignant, heart-breaking works directly related to the Holocaust will be presented at this concert: Kaddish in memory of the six million by Lazar Weiner, Shlosa Yeladim (Three Children) by Itai Daniel, and Ima or Mother Dispossessed by Serge Kaufmann.

After darkness, light: the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the camps will conclude with the final chorus of Fidelio by Ludwig van Beethoven, where the released prisoners celebrate freedom. This concert is made possible with the support of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah, the Moses Mendelssohn Foundation, the Goethe Institute in Paris and the European Institute of Jewish Music

### Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur film shown

See two trailers [here](#).



Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur

### EUPJ Newsletter en français

Click [here](#) for the French edition of past EUPJ Newsletters, translated by Celia Naval.

### Churchill Lied to Me at KG



Caroline Grimm

Caroline Grimm is a writer and actor. She is also director and producer and will present "Churchill Lied to Me" at Kehilat Geshar in Paris on Monday 6 April from 7 to 8 pm. This is a true story, atrocious and forgotten, of the Channel Islands, abandoned by Churchill in June 1940 and invaded by the Germans two months later. The French "half-Jews" including a great-uncle of the author, were deported to real death camps built on these pieces of land. Churchill never spoke of this episode and does not mention it in his memoirs. The English have forgotten. Yet from 1940 to 1945, the population of Jersey, subjects of the British Crown, had to live under the yoke of the Nazis, collaborating with the enemy and some of them resisting. Caroline Grimm describes the lives of many families in the island in this exciting and moving novel about an ignored part of the Second World War. Sign up at [nicole.g.subias@wanadoo.fr](mailto:nicole.g.subias@wanadoo.fr).

€5 for members, €10 for non members. The presentation will be followed by a book signing, a friendly drink and a snack.

Beth-Yaacov  
בית יעקב

AJTM  
ALLIANCE POUR UN JUDAÏSME TRADITIONNEL ET MODERNE

### Pâtisserie workshop at AJTM

To prepare for Purim, members and guests participated in a pastry workshop with Claudine Dahan on Sunday 1 March from 15-18 in the kitchen of our new synagogue.

Everyone came with an apron, and many tasty delicacies were baked - and enjoyed!





## Starting a community in Poland Beit Trojmiasto

The city of Gdansk (19th century Danzig) has granted [Beit Trojmiasto](#) an apartment which they received recently. The remarkable growth of this community is one of the success stories created by the determination of individuals to create a synagogue space. Over a two year period, many people travelled five hours each way to study at Beit Warszawa for their conversion. With the help of Rabbi Gil Nativ, their efforts soon resulted in an invitation to the Beit Din of the Progressive movement (EUPJ). This confirmed their Jewish status. When they reached two and a half *minyanim* they applied to the city of Gdansk for a place to hold services as until January 2015 the community held meetings in cramped private apartments.



**Kasia Mazurkiewicz,  
convener of Beit Trojmiasto**

Beit Trojmiasto is looking for a "twinning" partner. Twinning is an opportunity for conversation and for building a relationship between this new community and your community. Be a part of the miracle of Jewish renewal in Poland. In addition, there are sponsorship opportunities to help defray the costs of rent, heat, water and electricity. This community is rapidly becoming a regional centre. Many thanks to Kasia Mazurkiewicz, the president of the community, and Ari Homa for their active leadership.

**Rabbi Haim Beliak**

## Purim at Beit Warszawa



**Hamantaschen workshop at Beit Warszawa**

The holiday of Purim at [Beit Warszawa](#) brought out the bakers. Led by [Zivah Nativ](#), 15 stalwarts volunteered to learn the fine art of the "three cornered hat" (*hamantaschen*). The traditional cookie is filled with poppy seeds or fruit fillings. The excitement built as everyone looked forward to the holiday that celebrates chaos and a world turned upside down.

## Beit Lublin Shabbat



**Shabbat in Lublin with Dariusz Szajnert (r)**

On February 13 a group of people gathered for Shabbat in Lublin. Friday evening began with a musical service featuring elements of Welcoming the Shabbat (*Kabbalat Shabbat*) and the Evening Service (*Maariv*). Piotr Mirski started with a short medley of Shabbat songs including a few in Yiddish and the classic *Hineh Ma Tov*.

For the majority attending it was their first experience of a Shabbat dinner with a sing along and philosophical lecture. The evening was part traditional service and part concert.

Following the service, Kiddush, and *hamotzi* guests enjoyed Challah and food prepared by an Israeli studying at the Lublin University, assisted by a couple volunteers. Community organiser Dariusz Szajnert reported that everyone had a good experience, enjoyed hearing Hebrew prayers and expressed a desire to come again. Service are planned for March and April. Several people wanted to learn more about Judaism, a few others asked to take copies of the service home to read.

Dariusz Szajnert has been working in Poznan with Beit Polska as an outreach coordinator and has visited Katowice, Wroclaw, Torun, Gdansk and of course, Beit Warszawa. We are fortunate to have Dariusz because he is a trained social worker, fluent in Polish and Jewishly informed.

Piotr Mirski is completing his doctorate in Lublin in Polish Jewish and non-Jewish thought, reflecting on the memory of the Holocaust and the contemporaneous experiences of Poles during World War II.

Our Friday evenings begin with a musical service – an abbreviated version of a Progressive *Maariv*. Among our guests are Jews, Israelis – who study in Lublin, people of Jewish origin, those interested in Judaism, conversion and/or Jewish culture. On our first Sabbath this year we gathered a group of 25 people. Each event takes place at Frutti di Mare – an independent centre of culture.

We aim to develop the form of the event and start a conversion course in Lublin.

**Rabbi Haim Beliak**

### Pesach 2015 at Beth Shalom, Milan

Please join us for Beth Shalom's 14<sup>th</sup> Seder at the Hotel De La Ville on Saturday, April 4 at 6:30 pm. Rabbi Leigh Lerner will lead us, using our special Pesach Haggadah to celebrate this meaningful holiday. Beth Shalom in Milan organised its first community Seder in 2002. We are proud to have kept this tradition and have always opened our door to guests who live in Milan and those who may be visiting. We expect lots of singing after we have completed the order of the Seder. So please come and join us!

Please reserve your space for you, your family and friends no later than March 30.

Beth Shalom Congregazione Ebraica Riformata

[www.bethshalom.it](http://www.bethshalom.it)

[bethshalom.milano@gmail.com](mailto:bethshalom.milano@gmail.com)

[bethshalom@libero.it](http://bethshalom@libero.it)

### Open Door to Jewish Women at Beth Shalom, Milan

Porta aperta alla saggezza ebraica    Open Door to Jewish Wisdom

Power Pt Discorsi sulla Torah 19:00  
Pizza & "Sentirsi le preghiere" 20:00

9, 16, 23, 30 marzo  
Via Delio Tessa 1  
(ring-citofono 3001)

Power Point Talks re the Torah, 7 PM  
Pizza and "Feeling the Prayers" 8 PM

Come for all or any as is convenient.  
Seguite uno o più lezioni secondo le vostre preferenze



### Lev Chadash Milan concert



Lev Chadash was pleased to host a new exclusive show by Stellerranti: *Freedom through Song* With Cinzia Bauci, voice, Pier Gallesi, keyboards and Lydia Cavidalli, violin, the concert took place on March 29 at 17:00 at Piazza Napoli, 35 in Milan

The programme presented songs and stories about the hardships and joys of freedom on themes of Passover through the centuries, Pesach and passage: out from Egypt, the partisans of the Warsaw Ghetto, migration to America, the wanderings of the soul. These songs of hope, joy and remembrance were very moving.

### Purim in Rome



Spectators at Beth Shalom Rome's fundraiser

Beth Shalom Rome held a Purim Theatre Fundraising event in the Belli Theatre in Trastevere on 2 March. Actors, singers, dancers and choristers on stage gave a very interesting programme that was very well received by the many spectators. The Purim Theatre Fundraising event was followed by the traditional reading of the Megillat Esther on 4 and 5 March.

### Serious fun at Bet Orim



Purim 5775 at Bet Orim, Budapest

Purim 5775 at congregation Bet Orim of Budapest was a true buzz. Weeks of planning preceded the time of serious fun. The celebration was held at Bet Orim's regular location at Bálint House JCC. To reach the widest audience Bet Orim celebrated the community Purim on a Friday. Festivities started with arts & crafts activities. Young and old happily jumped on the opportunity to fashion props and costumes for the holiday. Masks and sceptres, swords and beards were created in the spirited atmosphere. Those who wanted to learn had a chance to uncover jewels of tradition and history in a study session. One of the highlights of the celebration was the Purimspiel. Children and elders alike stepped forward to stage the traditional story of Purim. This was a prime time to shed some light on the glittering hand crafted creations. Drama and laughter, rattling and clapping filled the Grand Hall as the story unfolded. All participants, though exhausted from fun, then greeted the Sabbath Bride and had a feast fit for the halls of Esther.



**WUPJ Calendar**

**April 19-24** Brussels and Paris  
[CCAR/WUPJ Joint Solidarity Trip](#)  
**May 13-16** - Rio de Janeiro  
[Connections 2015, WUPJ 37th Biennial Conference](#)  
**May 28-June 7**- Israel  
[The Israel Study Kallah,](#)  
**July 2-12** - Israel  
[Bergman Seminar for Jewish Educators](#)  
**October 7-22** - Israel and Poland  
[Israel - Poland Mission](#)

**Changing Minds: July's Bergman Seminar for Progressive Jewish Educators now open for registration**

Every year, the Bergman Seminar turns Israel into a giant classroom for Progressive Jewish Educators from across the globe. This 10-day professional development seminar, based in Jerusalem, is carefully crafted to provide maximum impact on the work of formal and informal Jewish educators. This year's Bergman Seminar, being held from July 2 to 12, will incorporate art, culture, spirituality, liturgy, Hebrew, history, politics, text study, Jewish values, pedagogy and more.

Together, the various components of the seminar will address the critical challenges facing the Jewish people, encounter creative projects addressing these challenges and encourage participants to develop their own initiatives.

Designing and implementing the Bergman Seminar is the [Saltz International Education Center's faculty](#), which includes some of the most accomplished scholars and educators in the world.

While this programme is highly regarded for its calibre of speakers and educational content, the magic of the seminar is the diversity of its participants. Last year's seminar attracted exceptional Jewish educators from South Africa, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Argentina, Israel, Australia, Panama, France and the United States.



Sign up for the [Bergman Seminar for Progressive Jewish Educators](#) today! Tell educators in your community about this unique opportunity.

**Beutel Seminar has a Bar Mitzvah**

Between February 5 and 15, [The Anita Saltz International Education Center](#) conducted its thirteenth [Beutel Seminar](#), a prestigious 10-day educational programme in Jerusalem that offers the opportunity to study ancient texts and history; discuss current political and social issues; explore spiritual pathways and concepts of Jewish leadership - all within a Progressive Jewish context. Rabbi Steve Burnstein, Director of the Anita Saltz International Education Center, files his report [here](#).



**CONNECTIONS 2015**

To secure your place at the event that's written on the calendars of Progressive Jewish people around the world, [click here](#) to visit the CONNECTIONS 2015 website.

Taking place May 13-16 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the WUPJ's 37th International Convention will bring members of our far-flung family together to learn about the inspiring vision of our movement's future via a wide variety of educational and entertaining sessions that will touch on the hot button issues affecting Reform, Progressive and Liberal Jews everywhere.



**Ready for Rio? Register on line [here!](#)**

**Torah from around the World**

Every week, WUPJ emails *Torah from around the World*, a commentary on the Parashah (Torah portion) of the week by a rabbi from one of its congregations.

To subscribe, please click [here](#).



**Subscribe to WUPJnews**

[Sign up for WUPJnews](#) to receive on-going updates about our communities around the world. Like WUPJ on [Facebook](#).

**IMPJ Newsletter**

Click on [this link](#) for the newsletter of the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism.