



# Our Story

Mazel tov to BES@Yavneh on our Bar Mitzvah

October 2020



Mazel Tov wishes...

“

*We were so fantastically welcomed. We felt part of the community within weeks. Yavneh is home.*

Saul Muzlish

”

## Foreword: Rabbi Alex Chapper



Mazel tov on BES@Yavneh's 13th anniversary!

Just as thirteen is a significant milestone in the life of a Jewish boy so too in the life of a community. It's an opportunity to give thanks to G-d and celebrate the successes, review past achievements and look to the future with hope and expectation.

So much has been achieved in such a relatively short period of time with the vision, energy and hard work of both rabbinic and lay leadership.

In Pirkei Avot, the Mishna lists the various stages of a person's life: at five years old, a child should begin to learn Torah, at ten it's Mishna and aged thirteen they become obligated to keep mitzvot, hence the celebration of a Bar Mitzvah. The Markevet HaMishna explains that this is actually describing a process of maturation which is unique to human beings. Whereas animals are born intellectually complete and don't increase in this capacity as they grow, the human brain grows from birth and a person experiences intellectual development as they mature in years. The Pirkei Moshe says that it's this process that leads to a person's completeness.

The same principle can be applied to a community. It should be in a state of continuous growth and development as it matures, building on previous experience and always striving to improve. BES@Yavneh has embodied this idea and that's why, from small beginnings, it's now bursting at the seams. Long may this continue.

How are we to understand the tremendous importance of a community?

The Torah tells us, “You are children of Hashem, your G-d” and as the Nesivot Shalom points out, this is phrased in the plural. Why? Because an individual isn’t called ‘G-d’s child’ only a group of people who come together as one and then G-d is called ‘our Father’. Similarly with kedushah – holiness, it’s only mentioned in relation to “all the congregation of the Children of Israel” and as a collective we’re referred to as a ‘holy nation’. An individual is unable to reach the level of holiness on their own and that’s why certain prayers such as Kaddish and Kedushah can only be said together with a Minyan.

This is the power of tzibbur – community – where people come together, regardless of their differences, to achieve more than they could alone. When a community is bound together like one person with one heart it’s guaranteed to be successful. BES@Yavneh has proven this.

At this wonderful moment in the life of our community, we make the familiar request:

בָּרְכֵנוּ אֱבִינוּ בְּלִנּוּ בְּאֶחָד בְּאוֹר פָּנֶיךָ

“Bless us, our Father, all of us as one,  
with the light of Your face”

May G-d bless BES@Yavneh and the entire BES community.

#### Mazel Tov wishes...

“

*Anyone who has stood doing security or taken  
a children service is my true hero.*

Rachel Fink

”

## Foreword: Simon Mitchell



It probably won’t surprise you to know that I am fascinated by community development projects. Anywhere in the world, when I go to a shul I always try and get a newsletter or find out a bit more about their programming.

The BES@Yavneh story is definitely one for the text books.

It’s a case study of how a small group of committed individuals can take advantage of an opportunity to create positive transformation in a Jewish community.

It’s a case study in communal empowerment and of listening to the voices of the largest possible group to form a collective destiny.

It’s a case study in forward thinking community management where flexibility, communication and lack of politics has allowed a dynamic, future proof communal model to form and grow.

It’s a case study in innovation and can-do attitude, generating programmes and ideas that have spread across Anglo Jewry.

13 years is a significant milestone and our challenge is to ensure we continue to adhere to those first principles and maintain our level of energy and innovation. Under the leadership of Rabbi Sam and Rebbetzin Emma Taylor, and of course powered by a myriad of volunteers from across BES I am confident that BES@Yavneh can continue to grow and develop – recreating it’s legacy again and again.

Happy birthday BES@Yavneh and thank you to all those who have poured and continue to pour their work, love and energy into making it so special.

## Foreword: Rabbi Boruch Boudilovsky



When detailing the functions of the biblical trumpets, the Torah distinguishes between a congregation or community and an encampment.

“Make for yourself two silver trumpets of hammered work; and they shall be to summon the congregation and for causing the encampments to set forth.” (Numbers 10:2)

What is the difference between an encampment and a community?

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik suggests that that an encampment is a gathering designed to provide comfort, strength, or self-defence. When emperor penguins huddle together for warmth in the harsh Antarctic winter, or when buffalo gather together for protection against a potential predator, an encampment is formed. Indeed, in a different verse, the Torah uses the word “encampment” in the context of preparation for battle: “When an encampment goes out to face your enemies” (Deuteronomy 23:10).

A community, however, is a collection of individuals with a common future, and shared aspirations. Unlike an encampment motivated by fear, a community is driven by ideas, a sense of mission, and a common goal shaped by a shared past.

A Jewish community in the diaspora functions in these two capacities. Like an encampment, we come together for comfort, to belong, and to share our experiences. At the same time, we collectively embody a set of values designed to guide

our lives, inspire our choices, and direct our nation.

As we celebrate 13 years of outstanding communal achievement, we look forward to the future with a fresh commitment to mutual support and a new sense of mission and direction.

Congratulations to the entire BES@Yavneh family on reaching this milestone.

Thank you to my colleagues and successors Rabbi and Rebbetzen Chapper for their outstanding and dedicated service to the community. I extend a warm welcome to Rabbi and Rebbetzen Taylor and wish them both many years of joy and success in the community. Yavneh is extremely fortunate to be led by such a professional team.

Finally, on behalf of Esther and our children, I wish the BES@Yavneh family a happy 13th birthday! Lechaim!



## Introduction: Simon Berman

April 2020 marked the 13th anniversary, the Bar Mitzvah milestone, of the first BES@Yavneh service, and the beginning of the BES@Yavneh community.



Initially, we wanted to create a minyan that was family focussed but inclusive and friendly for all, that was willing to adapt and change, and that provided a meaningful place for prayer and learning.

We started running occasional Friday night services in 2007 at the Yantin's and the Grose's for those that wanted to be able to easily walk to shul in the Southside of Borehamwood.

In the same year, BES decided that it was time to run an overflow Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services at the newly built Yavneh College. Suddenly we were catering for hundreds of people!

With Rabbi Brawer providing strategic support, we held the first of our monthly first Shabbat morning services in Yavneh and soon our services were fortnightly. By this time, Rabbi Boudilovsky had become our regular Southside Rabbi, helping to further develop our future, and leading to weekly services from Succot 2014.

Alongside this, the Southside Committee was formed, initially as an ad-hoc group then as a sub-committee of the BES Board, chaired by Jo Grose, providing direction for our expanding services and activities and representing the many rotas and

volunteers that come together to make BES@Yavneh the success that it is.

Our gabbaim have been elected since 2011 and since February 2016 there have been two Honorary Officers representing BES@Yavneh, initially Damian Schogger and myself and currently Cindy Goldstein and David Nathan.

The start of 2016 was also when Rabbi Finn stepped in to fill our pulpit. Rabbi Chapper joined us in 2017 and continued to help us grow whilst helping us remain true to the values that have defined us since we began.

Striving to make everyone to feel welcome, enjoying being Jewish with one another, building our community together and supporting one another, always seeking to improve, and celebrating a relevant Judaism that brings us meaning and inspiration. Values that we should always strive to hold close to the heart of our community.

I can't write about the story and values of BES@Yavneh without remembering how truly wonderful it was to be part of our community during the days, weeks and months after our daughter Shani died. Feeling the support and love of community, through words and deeds and prayers, helped us get through the darkest of times. Shani loved shul. As David Nathan put it at the time, after she left there was a Shani-shaped hole in the community. And she showed us quite how important community is.

BES@Yavneh: Our Story is being published during Tishrei, a time for reflection. On Rosh Hashanah we think deeply about who we really are and what is important to us in life: our values. And on Yom Kippur we work out what we are going to do to improve





ourselves and the world around us: our goals.

The same process can and should be applied to organisations and communities. We have our values but how often do we spend time thinking about them and why they are important? We might know what we are doing week by week (although in the current coronavirus world, that is questionable) but how often are we clarifying our goals and checking that whatever we are doing is moving us towards them?

Now that we have 'come of age' as a community, it is a time to feel nostalgic, to reflect on the wonderful memories we've made together, and to feel proud at what we have achieved, but it's also the perfect moment to look ahead, to think about what we want to do to ensure a vibrant and successful future and to make the world a better place.

With Rabbi Sam and Rebbetzin Emma Taylor having recently joined us, it's a great time to get involved and shape a very exciting future.

As President Bartlett used to say in West Wing when a crisis had been averted or a big goal achieved, 'What's next?'

Mazal tov BES@Yavneh on your 13th anniversary and looking forward to seeing what we can do together over the next 13 years!

Simon Berman

Ex BES Vice Chair (Yavneh)

### BES@Yavneh during Lockdown

What fun family Shabbat lockdown activities have you discovered?

“

*We've been using the Home Shulim sheets every Shabbat and yom tov lunchtime - sometimes we include some of our favourites Rabbi / Gabbai impressions!*

Juliet Berman

”

“

*The decorum at our children's service is very good, though we struggle to get enough children to volunteer to buy the 5 challahs in a baker's shop (dolls end up buying the majority).*

Jason Braier

”

## Cindy Goldstein

Our Yavneh journey began when we moved to Borehamwood early in 2015. We only knew a handful of people and were hoping to find a modern orthodox community that was friendly and welcoming, where we could make good friends and become involved.



For us, BES@Yavneh was all of that and more and this wonderful community has become part of our extended family.

It was very easy to become involved and we quickly found ourselves engaged in security, Kiddush rota, welcoming and more. Our children enjoyed the different services and activities and there was lots to join in with. There are no words to describe the excitement of our first Succot in the area, having offered to host 4 Succah crawls, inviting literally 100s of people into our Succah.

I was invited to join the Southside Committee and then later on, the Board of Management, and was thrilled to be able to contribute. Five years on, and I am privileged to hold the position of Vice Chair (Yavneh), following in the hallowed footsteps of Jo Grose and Simon Berman, and now feel even more invested in the success of our wonderful BES@Yavneh community.

Celebrating its thirteenth year is a significant milestone, and we are delighted to be a part of these celebrations. Similarly to a Bar / Bat Mitzvah, Yavneh is growing from a dynamic new community filled with energy and enthusiasm into a more

grown-up, well-established community and this brings about new challenges.

As BES@Yavneh continues to go from strength to strength, we need more help than ever to run our ever increasing list of activities and to implement our vision and strategic ideas for further development – I would welcome your involvement so please do get in touch!

We feel fortunate to be part of such an amazing community and I am passionate about creating an environment where all members feel welcome and valued, and have the opportunity to be involved.

BES@Yavneh is a community filled with opportunities to have a meaningful impact and to achieve personal growth.

Mazal Tov BES@Yavneh! B'hatzlachah – may you go from strength to strength.

*Cindy Goldstein*

BES Vice Chair (Yavneh)

## Mazel Tov wishes...

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*Two memories out of thousands that I have: those fabulous crazy themed Kiddushes where we all had to shout L'Chaim to Rabbi Boudilovsky before we could eat! And the first year we decorated the Shul for Shavuot – just a few flowers and bows but it felt very special.*

Juliet Berman

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## Rabbi Dr Naftali Brawer

Nelson Mandela famously said “it always seems impossible until its done.”

I was reminded of this quote when recently looking over my notes from a sermon I delivered early in my tenure at BES, in which I invited the congregation to imagine developing a community at Yavneh College. At that point we held monthly Friday night services at Yavneh, and while the early founders of this minyan recognized its potential for further growth, not everyone in the wider BES community shared their enthusiasm. It was difficult for some to conceive of a single community across multiple geographic centres. In the months and years that followed these concerns proved to be unfounded. The BES@Yavneh minyan is one of the most remarkable success stories in community building.

Rather than create a narrative arc, I thought it best if I share a few vignettes of my time at Yavneh.

- » I vividly remember the first time we davened in the Yavneh shul (a converted gym). The smell of fresh paint, the gleam of the highly polished brand-new pews, and that odd choice of light wood paneling. On our way out after the service, one of the Yavneh gabbai'm –who shall remain nameless – opined out loud that the wood paneling reminded him of a Swedish Sauna!
- » Our first Friday night Shabbaton with Guest of honor Chief Rabbi Sacks dancing on a chair in the dining room amidst



much spirited singing.

- » Perhaps the most beautiful service of the year, the early morning Rosh Hashanah Hashkamah minyan. Moving, silent, with sun streaming through the oversized windows.
- » The delightful chaos that unfolded on Sukot as too many people tried to circle a bimah for Hoshanot in too small a space!
- » Walking back from shul on Friday night with my dear friend and successor Rabbi Baruch and the wonderful conversations we had on the way and lingering at the corner long after everyone else had passed us by.

I could go on, but I've been given a strict word limit. So, let me conclude by saying, that Yavneh was the colourful background to much of my religious and spiritual life. It will always have a place in my heart and will continue to occupy some of my favourite memories from my time in Borehamwood.

Yashar Ko'ch to all those young leaders (yes, we were all so young then!) who shared a vision of what Yavneh could become, and my sincere blessings of continued success as BES@Yavneh attains this important milestone.

Mazal Tov!





## Dan Grose

To understand my relationship with Yavneh, you need to go back a bit; further than the 13 remarkable years that the Yavneh community (or Southside Minyan as it was known) has existed. Back in 2004, a young couple decided that their small flat in West Hampstead wasn't the right place for them to raise a family and try and be more involved with the Jewish community.

But where should they go?

They tried Edgware where many of their friends were, but found that their religious outlook was a little different to that of the average Edgwarian. A mixture of Modern Orthodox creative enthusiasm twinned with a laissez-faire, non-judgemental accepting outlook just didn't quite fit. So they went to stay for a weekend in Borehamwood with Judith & Jonny Friedman and went for Shabbat morning to Croxdale Road where they were struck by just how welcoming the community were, and left with a sense that in WD6, you could be as involved as you wanted. Here, finally, wasn't a place of 'machers' but rather, a place that had somehow retained a more 'provincial' feel; accepting of all and welcoming of those that wanted to play an active role or were just passing through. Here was somewhere that the young couple could call 'home'.

Fast forward a couple of years, and that couple are living in South Borehamwood and have a child, and schlepping to



Croxdale every Shabbat (this was pre Eruv) wasn't frankly, a massive draw – especially on Friday evenings. By this point, we'd been joined on the Southside of Borehamwood by a couple of other young families (Juliet & Simon Berman, and Suzanne & Gary Yantin).

Being of a similar age, and with young families, we commiserated together on many a trek with the kids to Croxdale Road about how useful it would be if we had a Shul on Southside and an idea began to germinate. After all, precedent had been set, the Elstree Friday night minyan was a well-established and permanent fixture within Borehamwood & Elstree Synagogue, maybe we could create something similar on Southside. After all we felt, it was only a matter of time before more families moved in, so surely the demand would be there.

I went to check out the Elstree minyan one Friday night and, similar to the vibe at Croxdale, I came away inspired, feeling that, here was a small yet welcoming minyan and a tremendous example to us – surely we could do something similar and see if it was popular.

So, shortly afterwards, we started Friday nights at either chez Yantin or Grose. Chairs were appropriated, siddurim borrowed from Croxdale and posters printed. That first year of Friday nights will always remain with me; the warmth and depth of feeling from those that attended (even though I was often the last person to arrive – even when it was hosted at my house). We always had a short D'var Torah and a kiddish, and the ruach (energy) was definitely present.

Gary, Simon and I were fortunate to be able to build on those humble beginnings and by the time Yavneh College was

nearing completion, Malcolm Gordon invited us to view the almost completed School Shul with a view to potentially using it. The then BES Rabbi (Naftali Brawer) was hugely supportive of a Southside Minyan, and we put together a case for BES to use Yavneh College Shul.

The Southside minyan had outgrown its cottage industry beginnings and was in the process of morphing into something a lot bigger than we could have imagined.

From monthly Shabbat mornings, to bi-weekly to weekly... the journey wasn't necessarily smooth, after all, this was something completely new. We wanted the minyan; the community, to remain informal and welcoming; we wanted to inspire and attract new attendees and above all drive that sense of inclusivity and accessibility.

For me, a few of the highlights; one slightly fraught Friday night service at home where we had to rush Yigdal, as my wife Jo was experiencing contractions ahead of the arrival of child number two. Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur, where the hall was jam packed (in later years we even needed to arrange chairs on the slope down into the hall due to lack of space). Other notable memories were chatting to people who had started coming to Shul when their kids were in children's services as they wanted to learn and pass on knowledge to their kids. What was so brilliant was that, even when their kids weren't coming to children's services, they were still attending. I think everyone involved really wanted to set up something special, something different and look to inspire, and I think we managed that; not only for some of the community but also for ourselves.

From opulent rolling kiddushim on Simchat Torah as well as

themed kiddushim throughout the year, to running Tikkuns (late night learning programmes) on Shavuot, to Sukkah crawls for both men and women, and the annual communal lunches, it remains one of the initiatives I am most proud of and most grateful for being involved.

All BES@Yavnen achievements were of course the product of a multitude of people; from lay leaders to the Rabbinic team, to the caretakers and the army of volunteers that we had. Those volunteers and attendees in turn inspired us all to do more; to try more, and of course to continue to build.

It's customary for the Bar Mitzvah boy to receive a blessing when he hits 13, and my blessing for our community is to be brave, to continue with the principles of inclusivity and warmth but also to leverage creativity and a sense of pioneerism to continually drive an ongoing sense of renewal.

BES@Yavneh Welcoming local families

We are delighted to announce that there will be weekly Shabbat morning services at Yavneh from 18th October

Yavneh College, Hillside Avenue, WD6 1HL

|              |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 17/18 Oct    | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb | 20/21 Feb |
| Bereit       | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 17:45        | 17:45     | 18:48     | 17:09     | 17:09     | 18:11     | 17:09     | 17:09     | 18:11     | 17:09     | 17:09     | 18:11     |
| 24/25 Oct    | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb | 27/28 Feb |
| Noach        | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 17:45        | 17:45     | 18:48     | 17:09     | 17:09     | 18:11     | 17:09     | 17:09     | 18:11     | 17:09     | 17:09     | 18:11     |
| 21/21 Nov    | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar | 24/24 Mar |
| Lecha Lecha  | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 16:21        | 16:21     | 17:22     | 17:35     | 17:35     | 18:38     | 17:35     | 17:35     | 18:38     | 17:35     | 17:35     | 18:38     |
| 7/8 Nov      | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar | 13/14 Mar |
| Yavneh       | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 16:58        | 16:58     | 17:59     | 17:47     | 17:47     | 18:50     | 17:47     | 17:47     | 18:50     | 17:47     | 17:47     | 18:50     |
| 14/15 Nov    | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar | 20/21 Mar |
| Chayei Sarah | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 15:58        | 15:58     | 17:02     | 17:59     | 17:59     | 19:02     | 17:59     | 17:59     | 19:02     | 17:59     | 17:59     | 19:02     |
| 21/22 Nov    | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar |
| Pinchas      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 16:54        | 16:54     | 17:54     | 18:11     | 18:11     | 19:14     | 18:11     | 18:11     | 19:14     | 18:11     | 18:11     | 19:14     |
| 28/29 Nov    | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar | 27/28 Mar |
| Yavneh       | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 16:54        | 16:54     | 17:54     | 18:11     | 18:11     | 19:14     | 18:11     | 18:11     | 19:14     | 18:11     | 18:11     | 19:14     |
| 5/6 Dec      | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   | 3/4 Apr   |
| Vayichil     | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 15:38        | 15:38     | 16:46     | 19:22     | 19:22     | 20:30     | 19:22     | 19:22     | 20:30     | 19:22     | 19:22     | 20:30     |
| 12/13 Dec    | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr | 10/11 Apr |
| Vayikhl      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 15:38        | 15:38     | 16:46     | 19:22     | 19:22     | 20:30     | 19:22     | 19:22     | 20:30     | 19:22     | 19:22     | 20:30     |
| 19/20 Dec    | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr | 17/18 Apr |
| Shemini      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 15:38        | 15:38     | 16:46     | 19:22     | 19:22     | 20:30     | 19:22     | 19:22     | 20:30     | 19:22     | 19:22     | 20:30     |
| 26/27 Dec    | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr | 24/25 Apr |
| Vayigash     | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 15:          |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| 16/17 Jan    | 15/16 May | 15/16 May | 15/16 May | 15/16 May | 15/16 May | 15/16 May | 15/16 May | 15/16 May | 15/16 May | 15/16 May | 15/16 May |
| Yavneh       | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 16:07        | 16:07     | 17:16     | 20:33     | 20:33     | 21:42     | 20:33     | 20:33     | 21:42     | 20:33     | 20:33     | 21:42     |
| 23/24 Jan    | 20/21 May | 20/21 May | 20/21 May | 20/21 May | 20/21 May | 20/21 May | 20/21 May | 20/21 May | 20/21 May | 20/21 May | 20/21 May |
| Parashat     | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 16:17        | 16:17     | 17:26     | 20:42     | 20:42     | 21:51     | 20:42     | 20:42     | 21:51     | 20:42     | 20:42     | 21:51     |
| 30/31 Jan    | 29/30 May | 29/30 May | 29/30 May | 29/30 May | 29/30 May | 29/30 May | 29/30 May | 29/30 May | 29/30 May | 29/30 May | 29/30 May |
| Beshalach    | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 16:31        | 16:31     | 17:38     | 20:50     | 20:50     | 21:59     | 20:50     | 20:50     | 21:59     | 20:50     | 20:50     | 21:59     |
| 6/7 Feb      | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   | 5/6 Jun   |
| Yavneh       | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 16:44        | 16:44     | 17:51     | 20:58     | 20:58     | 22:18     | 20:58     | 20:58     | 22:18     | 20:58     | 20:58     | 22:18     |
| 13/14 Feb    | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun | 12/13 Jun |
| Mishpatim    | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    | ENDS      | STARTS    |
| 16:57        | 16:57     | 18:01     |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |

shabbat times 5775

 borehamwoodshul.org  
For Community

 BES@Yavneh

## Gary & Suzanne Yantin

It started 13 years ago with a Shabbat afternoon chat about the new Yavneh high school that was going to open the following year. "Maybe we could use it now and again for Shabbat services?" When broaching the idea with fellow Southsiders and our Rabbi at the time, we thought we would have at least a few months to plan it. Rabbi Brawer's response was "why wait? Start with Friday night services, use your house, we'll go from there". Daunted by the task, we went along with it anyway, borrowing a stack of chairs, a box of siddurim and coat rail for a mechitzah.

So began our Thursday night routine of tidying up our lounge, putting away all the toys and turning our house, or the Grose's house, into a shul for Kabbalat Shabbat services. Then tidying it up again in order to have dinner as the local toddlers had ransacked our toy boxes and book shelves. One memorable Friday night involved having to remove a child who had tried to climb into our fish tank. A solid minyan started to grow.

When Yavneh College allowed us to move our minyan to their campus and out of our lounges, it came with a sense of relief and trepidation. In our homes, our minyan consisted of friends and neighbours. We were (nearly always) there to greet people as they arrived and welcome them to our homes. Running a service in a proper shul was a different challenge entirely. People would arrive before us, bringing their friends and family and choosing their regular spots. We had to field questions



about when we were going to have a Shabbat morning service. We had to start thinking about the number of children attending and cater to their Shabbat needs too. We had to arrange Kiddush. We needed to start planning for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

A series of firsts quickly followed. Our first Friday night Gingerbread Storytime where the story was ready by our then six year old (she seemed so big at the time!), our first Shabbat morning service, our first Rosh Hashanah service. Our first Kol Nidrei. Our first Explanatory Service. Our first communal Friday night dinner when the Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks encouraged the whole room up on chairs to join in a zemirot sing along.

8 years ago, we made Aliyah and it has been a genuine pleasure watching the Yavneh minyan grow from strength to strength. On the few occasions where we have found ourselves in Borehamwood for a Shabbat or Chag it has always been a joy to return to Yavneh for a service. It's like coming home, especially when having the privilege of coming back for a simcha.

Mazel tov to all BES@Yavneh congregants on a stellar 13 years of building such a warm and welcoming kehillah and good luck and best wishes for many, many more years.



## Asher Friedman

*Asher is one of the few to have been born in the Southside of Borehamwood, to have grown-up as part of the BES@Yavneh community, and to have had his Bar Mitzvah in the same year as BES@Yavneh. Mazel Tov Asher!*

Going to shul isn't something we did every week when I was little.

At the start of Yavneh, it was on once a month, and we would always go.

It is where I went to children services from nursery, and learned more about Judaism.

As I got older, I would start going into shul, and hear people lein from the Torah.

I used to do Anim Zemirot before my Bar Mitzvah.

This year, it was my barmitvah, and I was lucky enough to be able to do it in shul, just before the coronavirus pandemic.

I enjoyed standing on the bimah, leining, and getting a call up.

I will forever savour that moment.

Yavneh is where I have met a lot of my friends, and is where I get to see a lot of them.

Mazel tov Yavneh!



## Jonny Friedman

When I think about the inception of BES@Yavneh and its 13 year story, I feel such a connection and a privilege to have witnessed its entire development thus far.

For many years Yavneh has become a way of life for our family. Being active members of the community has been rewarding on so many levels.

But it wasn't always like this.... I grew up in a traditional, loving Jewish home in Leeds with a very frustrating relationship with the synagogue. I had other interests that I was much keener to pursue – anything sport related and quite frankly I found the idea of shul incredibly boring and uncool.

My detached relationship with shul remained even as I moved down to Borehamwood in 1999. As friendly as the community was – it just seemed so big. Without realizing, I was looking for something that was more intimate, something tangible and something I could be a part of without it being entirely prayer focused.

Things changed for me with the inception of BES@Yavneh. Three of my closest friends Dan, Simon and Gary took it upon themselves to build a Community on the Southside of Borehamwood. I tagged along for the ride, to watch from afar, to learn from my three trusted compatriots and I began to feel such pride for what they were doing and accomplishing. My senses towards shul slowly awakened – I noticed a sense of fulfilment and meaning at watching local groups of people



being brought together through a new set of services and teachings creating a new community that I was now a part of. Witnessing the birth of this felt very special and as this began to play out it challenged me to develop my own thinking and to take a new turning towards thinking about shul, Judaism and the community.

What I realised was that I had been inherently selfish – expecting others to provide, it was someone else's job, others are more frum than me – and therefore better qualified to help – and as I grew a little confidence, I began to stop using these things as excuses and to face into the challenge of feeling comfortable within a shul and to help others who may have felt similar in their journeys around shul to feel more of a connection.

I'm so thankful to the leaders of BES@Yavneh and their openness and willingness to enable a modern 21st century community experience. I was grateful to be part of the Think Tank that produced the vision and mission statement that is still very much alive today. Additionally, I was fortunate to sit on the selection committee that appointed Rabbi Boudilovsky, and help set up our Welcoming Committee, Challenging Judaism (for parents and children years 5&6) and our We Remember committee – devoted to Holocaust remembrance. I have also enjoyed facilitating the Club 13 programme for pre-Bar Mitzvah kids. All of which helped dispel the myth that I must be frum to make a contribution.

I hope that others reading this may feel encouraged to step forward and make your own mark. Never has the desire within our wider society for spiritual fulfilment been so great and never has the opportunity to make a difference been so available.

## Peta & Alan Freedman

We joined the BES community in 1987 as newlyweds, and went to Croxdale for many years. In the early days of Yavneh, when it was only used for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we were very happy to go there. After all it's a 10-minute walk to Yavneh but 25 minutes to Croxdale Road – no contest really.



Alan was not a regular Friday-night minyan attendee, but once Southside services started in Gary and Dan's homes, he started going. Was it really 13 years ago? Then the Shabbat minyan in the shul at Yavneh College started, monthly to begin with, and we decided to support it immediately. As it moved to fortnightly, and then weekly we continued to attend. To be honest, at first we felt a bit like the older citizens as most of the Yavneh community were young families. But the age difference didn't matter as there was always a warm welcome and we were never excluded from anything.

Despite large numbers of very young children, the services were much quieter than we had been used to at Croxdale, and we found we enjoyed that. Damian, and now David, are always around to give people the gimlet eye if they speak during the service. But noise from the wonderfully large number of small children is always tolerated. We get a great deal of pleasure seeing the children coming out of their services to the Kiddush. It might be a bit of a rugby scrum, but they are our future and the hubbub is part-and-parcel of the special atmosphere and

concrete proof of the success of the community.

Over the last 3-4 years, an increasing number of older (but not old!) people have discovered Yavneh, many of whom have now become friends. Many have downsized or moved into the area to join their children and grandchildren, so it is now a much more mixed Kehilla. It's all about inclusivity.

When we were asked to write a few words about Yavneh, we wondered what we could write. Our daughter laughed, saying Peta was always going on about how important, and lovely, it is to be part of a community and how good we feel when we meet fellow congregants around the town. Trips to the kosher shops and Tesco often take far longer than necessary as we stop to pass the time of day with friends from shul. We greatly value being part of the family of BES@Yavneh.

This Shabbat Zachor  
BES@Yavneh is excited to present  
**Comedy from Ashley Blaker (and lunch!)**  
on Shabbat 28th February

Including  
an exciting children's programme,  
toddler lunch  
and a community lunch for all

Comedy starts after Kiddush

Prices:  
Adults £10 members £7.50 non-members  
Children £10 members £3.50 non-members  
Toddlers under 4s £3

book online at  
[borehamwoodshul.org/tickets](http://borehamwoodshul.org/tickets)

[borehamwoodshul.org](http://borehamwoodshul.org)  
Our Community

## Dalya & Marc Wittenberg

We moved to Borehamwood 15 years ago just before BES@Yavneh was starting out and we were dedicated attendees to the once-a-month services. As the frequency and size of Shabbat services grew, we became more involved, and we have loved being part of the growth of the Yavneh family as our own family has grown!



Dalya was part of the Big Summer Conversation that helped to define the future shape and strategy of the community and Marc was on the Rabbinic Selection Committee for Rabbi and Rebbetzen Taylor. We have been part of many rotas including children's services, Kiddush, security and medical, and latterly Marc was on the Southside Community holding the Welcoming portfolio.

We love being part of BES@Yavneh and it is a huge part of our lives. We have met many wonderful people who we are lucky enough to call friends. We wish the community Mazeltov and may it go from strength to strength in its adulthood.

### Mazel Tov wishes...

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*It's a wonderful community and one in which we have found a home and some amazing friends. Thank you all!*

Avner Radomsky

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## Debbie & Peter Marks

In 2007, our first encounter with BES@Yavneh was when we received our Rosh Hashana tickets and seeing that we were being separated from all our friends. They had tickets for Croxdale Road and we had a venue unknown to us, Yavneh College. Having been a Borehamwood resident since 1985 this was potentially an upheaval for both us and our boys, not being able to meet up with our usual crowd. However Croxdale Road had become far too crowded in previous years so we had to move on.

Yavneh proved very welcoming from the start and everyone was made to feel included. The decorum was unlike anything



else Borehamwood had previously known. Fast forward 13 years and we would not want to go to any other venue. It's great that it's a 5 minute walk after Yom Kippur whereas it used to take more than 5 minutes to walk back to wherever we had left the car before Kol Nidre.

Following the success of the first Yom Tov, BES@Yavneh held a Shabbat morning service, the first weekend of every month which proved so popular that it wasn't long before it was a service every Friday night and Shabbat morning. And in spite of the popularity of Yavneh the decorum still remains good. The Kiddush at Yavneh was legendary thanks to Lauren, Judith and now Jacqueline and their teams.

We have also been incredibly fortunate to have had wonderful Rabbonim at Yavneh, the appointment of Rabbi Boudilovsky added an extra dimension to the services, then Rabbi Finn and Rabbi Chapper kept up the very high standards. This often resulted in Croxdale congregants climbing the hill to daven at Yavneh.

Sadly because of the Covid-19 pandemic we are unable to celebrate at present but look forward to some normality returning in the not too distant future.

**Mazel Tov wishes...**

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*So lucky to be a part of such a special community. Thank you all.x*  
Shelley Brent

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## Judith Fraser

Someone once said, 'Our children are our mirror. When you observe their faults, you are identifying the flaws in your own character. Yet the reverse is also true – their every virtue is a credit to you.'



Between us, we have lived in Borehamwood for between eight and ten years and have raised nine beautiful children here. In that time, we have shared moments of both incredible joy and devastating tragedy. Throughout it all, as every parent does, we have done our very best to ensure that we set the best possible example for our children – we have tried to teach them by example and pass on to them the values that we were taught by our parents and which we hope that, one day, they will pass on to their children.

But, as BES@Yavneh celebrates its Bar Mitzvah year, one thing we have learned over the last decade or so is that children are not just a reflection of their parents or even of their wider family but of their entire community.

Our children are not just an essential component of their families but also of their community and they are not just learning about who they are from their families but from their community – our community.

Shul has become an essential cornerstone of their lives. It has been a constant source of Jewish tradition, Jewish life and Jewish values that are at the heart of their identity.

As we watch them grow up therefore, we feel a deep sense

of gratitude for the positive impact that it continues to have on all of their lives. I don't think we'd be able to say that about every other Jewish community out there. Sadly, there are some places in which Judaism is no more than something that your grandparents cared about and has long since become obsolete. There are others in which Judaism is treated a competition or a lens through which to pass judgement about others. A child, raised in those environments, would no doubt come to reflect those values as they grow up. At BES however, and particularly BES@Yavneh, we are fortunate to live in a community that is warm, welcoming, family orientated and never judgemental.

Please God, as our children grow up they will be a reflection of the values they have been immersed in as part of this wonderful community.

To everyone associated with BES@Yavneh, from the Rabbis and the lay leaders to the volunteers and the members, we are more grateful than we can say – thank you and Mazeltov!

*Jonny & Sara Kibel, Dan & Rebecca Fox,  
Mark & Judith Frazer*



## Rabbi Boruch Boudilovsky

Communities are evolutionary. Like any organism or social structure, communities are born, mature, thrive, sometimes decline, and inevitably endure various changes along the way.



The community on the Southside of Borehamwood was born with the establishment of a beautiful Jewish school in the heart of the neighbourhood, the subsequent communal vision of my predecessors, and the pioneering passion of idealistic local families. When Esther and I arrived in Borehamwood and Elstree in 2010 to accept the role of Associate Rabbi of BES, BES@Yavneh ran weekly Friday night services, monthly Shabbat morning services, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services, and an occasional Shabbat communal lunch.

In 2013, under the outstanding leadership of Anne Gordon (then Chairman of BES) and Jo Grose (then Southside Community Portfolio holder on the BES Board of Management), BES@Yavneh developed unprecedentedly. In retrospect, I characterise the development as the emergence of BES@Yavneh from an occasional feature to a permanent existence. With a new contract and job description which allocated BES@Yavneh its own Rabbi, Esther and I moved to the Southside where we spent some of the most beautiful years of our lives.

A start-up community could not have asked for better conditions. We had a stunningly beautiful synagogue with comfortable and modern adjacent facilities, hundreds of

young families already living in the area, and the devotion and excitement of outstanding volunteers. By 2016, we had established ourselves as a dynamic community with a permanent Rabbinic family, services throughout every single Shabbat and Yom Tov (except for Simchat Torah morning), Shabbat and Yom Tov afternoon services, and Bat and Bar Mitzvah

celebrations. Our genuinely friendly and welcoming communal approach created a reputation which helped attract people in extraordinary numbers. Indeed, by 2016, the shul and children services were attracting hundreds of participants every week. Our strategy was innovative and cutting edge. The Southside committee consistently employed an out-of-the-box approach, challenging any precedence if necessary. Our respectful decorum in shul created a sacred sanctuary where one can search for faith and connect with Judaism. We offered attractive, diverse, and exciting Kiddushim including toddler's Kiddush lunch with birthdays for the young children, an apprentice Kiddush, South African Kiddush, sports team Kiddush, Israel Kiddush, ice cream Kiddush, chocolate Kiddush, Kiddush on Rosh Hashanah, and more! We included

### BES@Yavneh Welcoming local families

We are delighted to welcome Rabbi Boruch and Rebbetzen Esther Boudilovsky to Southside.

For more information or to get involved email [yavneh@borehamwoodshul.org](mailto:yavneh@borehamwoodshul.org) or see our Facebook page: [BES@Yavneh!](https://www.facebook.com/BES@Yavneh/)

| WHEN                      |  | FOR KIDS  |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Mincha & Kabbalat Shabbat | Every Friday night                                       | Gingerbread Storytime                                 |
| WHEN SHABBAT COMMENCES    | FROM NOV 1 <sup>st</sup>                                 |   |
| Shabbat Morning Services  | Fortnightly FROM OCT 12 <sup>th</sup> 9:30 <sup>am</sup> | Children's Services NURSERY - YEAR 6 11 <sup>am</sup> |

SAVE THE DATE  
**BES@Yavneh** launch  
 Friday night dinner for all  
 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
 With a children's programme for Nursery - Year 6

 Borehamwood & Elstree Jewish Synagogue  
 100 Southside Community Centre  
 100 Southside Community Centre  
 100 Southside Community Centre



more Shabbat lunches and dinners, pre-Purim comedy presentations, social action Shabbat, Community Stories, Rosh Hashanah explanatory and Hashkama services, Shavuot night learning, Sukkah Crawls, to name just a few. We invested in our children's services offering support and guidance to our leaders. Additionally, the community supported my decision to be absent from the shul once a month after leining to lead a children's service and develop a relationship with the children. We ran a children Bikur Cholim squad, bringing the children to a local old age home where they created flower decorations for the Shul on Shavuot, and even offered an inspiring children-only Simchat Torah evening service with dancing for the children and their parents. Indeed, by 2016, the creativity and commitment of everyone involved made BES@Yavneh one of the most exciting and promising Jewish communities in the country.

On a personal level, Esther and I enjoyed these years immensely. The Shabbat we celebrated our son's Bris was unforgettable. Shira's inspiring Batmitzvah was a highlight. We opened the doors of our home on a weekly basis to members and visitors, trying to make BES@Yavneh not only a shul but also a home where one can always turn to. We were fortunate to have been surrounded by people who were supportive, kind, and appreciative, and we made special friendships which continue to endure despite our departure to Netanya in 2016.

None of this would have been possible without the encouragement, support, and hard work of the Southside committee, the wardens, and a fantastic Kiddush committee under the leadership of Lauren Schogger. I am particularly grateful to Jo Grose who was (and continues to be) a

remarkable lay leader. During those years, Jo chaired the project with patience, sensitivity, wisdom, commitment, vision, and friendship.

Esther and I are most grateful to every single one of you. You believed in our collective vision, chose the shul amongst other options, woke up on a Saturday morning to get the kids dressed and come to shul in the rain, invested your time and resources in building a communal home, and embraced us with love and friendship. We are forever indebted and pray that Hashem rewards you with many years of health and joy, from strength to strength.

In our memorable and emotional visits back to Yavneh, when speaking from the pulpit, I always conclude by inviting you all to visit us in Israel. I can assure you that over the years many people accepted our open invitation. I extend our invitation again. We would genuinely love to see you.

Finally, on behalf of Esther myself and our children, I would like to wish you and your families a safe, happy, healthy and sweet new year.



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*Truly one of my proudest achievements to have been involved in establishing the Yavneh minyan and to have seen it grow from strength to strength.*

Gary Yantin

”

## Jo Grose

*When is a minyan not a minyan?  
When it becomes a community.*

In summer 2013 this was what I was thinking about when I took on the newly-formed role of 'Southside Development' on the Shul Board of Management. As more and more Jewish people moved into Southside it became evident that there was potential to transform Yavneh from monthly Shabbat morning services into something bigger.

Anne Gordon, the Chair and I shared this ambition. As I walked through Luton airport to catch a plane to Israel for work that July, two critical conversations took place on my mobile. The first, between Anne and I, was to agree that BES would strengthen and grow if services and programmes were run from two locations. We explained the strategy with the phrase 'one community, two sites'. The second call was with Rabbi Boudilovsky who had been given the role of Southside Rabbi. I'm not sure we said much on that call apart from to share our commitment to the project and excitement at working together.

In the following weeks a new Southside committee was formed and we put together marketing for the new 'BES@Yavneh' which would now be running fortnightly Shabbat morning services and broader programming locally. We described it as a community within a community, welcoming local Jewish people in the Southside of Borehamwood. We dropped flyers into letter boxes and, at Rosh Hashanah showered the Yavneh



site with postcards letting people know the new dates of services.

The formal launch of BES@Yavneh was a Friday night dinner in the hall at Yavneh, the first time we had held a communal meal in this way. A dedicated and resourceful group of people made sure that the food was good, the room was decorated and the evening felt special. The dinner sold out. I might be biased but I'd like to think that the atmosphere that night was warm and inclusive. Looking back at my notes from a short speech that I gave that year, my main message was to let everyone know that this new community was owned by and was for everyone – we were all equal participants in its development.

Rabbi Boudilovsky and I worked closely together from that point on building this new community and brand. I learnt much from his approach, his persistence and imagination, and understood the importance of building a strong lay/Rabbinic relationship. The Rabbi and Esther opened their home to many for meals and I know that the relationships built around their table were not only long-lasting but helped to instil a love for community life, and Yavneh in particular.

Early on Rabbi Boudilovsky gave Lauren Schogger and I a lecture on the importance of the quality of a kiddush. If I'm honest, I was sceptical but Lauren accepted the challenge and, in those first few months we enjoyed many themed kiddushim: chocolate, coffee and pastry, cholent, sushi. I seem to remember there was even one based on the colour pink! We introduced the idea of birthday cakes and there was a chorus of Happy Birthday to someone almost every week. We also used to walk the kiddush pouring shots for people and introducing ourselves to new faces.



Perhaps because things felt new, volunteer levels were very high – everyone played their part. The Facebook group was set up and played a key part in engaging new people and building a sense of belonging. Children's services flourished and new initiatives were introduced such as the Toddler Lunch, Community Stories, the community lunches, kiddush deliveries for those at home unable to attend shul, paper-flower making for Shavuot, Tea in the Park on Shabbat afternoon, the Southside Tikun Leil and succah crawls, smaller activities in homes and educational events and discussions on weeknights in Yavneh.

The aim was to build community and, in all honesty, family moments of nachas aside, there is nothing I am more proud of than what we achieved over that time. Walking to shul on Shabbat morning and seeing other Jewish people also heading

up Hillside towards Yavneh was immensely fulfilling. Every week I counted attendees and one Shabbat morning, I realised that the shul was beginning to feel full. We no longer needed to prove ourselves any more.

In September 2014 we moved to running weekly Shabbat morning services and by early 2015 we were already worrying about how to remain welcoming when our numbers kept growing. We were also challenged with how to keep up the level of active participation that had helped us to grow so quickly. These questions, and discussions about values, supporting volunteers and governance became critical and helped take BES@Yavneh to its next stage.

I stepped down as Southside Chair in early 2017, handing over to Simon Berman who had been on the Yavneh journey from the start. I am immensely grateful for having learnt from so many wonderful people as we built community life together. It was, and will remain, a shared accomplishment. As I tried to convey at that first dinner, our Yavneh community belongs to us all. Its success is our collective success and its future is in our hands.

#### Mazel Tov wishes...

“Mazel Tov, what a wonderful friendly community it is, we have been made to feel so welcome here, may the community go from strength to strength and celebrate many Simchas together in good health and happiness!

Leah Mitz

”



## Damian Schogger

It was my privilege to be a BES@Yavneh gabbai for six years, from 2013–2019, during which time the community developed in so many incredible ways. Standing on the bimah is a special honour which I miss and never took for granted.



Working alongside the inspirational Simon Berman, with Rabbinic support from Rabbis Brawer, Boudilovsky, Finn and Chapper, we endeavoured to establish a new way of 'doing shul', encompassing everything from Shabbat and Yom Tov services and education to kiddushim and volunteering ... and much more, in an effort to create a unique modern orthodox Jewish community.

My responsibility was primarily BES@Yavneh's services, including Shabbat and Chagim. When my tenure began, we held Friday night services on a weekly basis and Shabbat morning services monthly, then fortnightly. This was supplemented by services on Chagim, including the huge logistical challenge of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when over 1,000 people of all ages visit the site on each day. In 2014 we took the plunge and committed to running weekly Shabbat evening and morning services, which proved to be a real game-changer in terms of many people feeling like Yavneh was now their shul and their community.

While changing the culture of a shul – built upon decades of established traditions – is almost impossible, I recognised a real

opportunity to set the tone for BES@Yavneh services that would set it apart from most other United Synagogue shuls.

Simon and I were determined that Yavneh would offer welcoming, friendly and spiritually uplifting services, underpinned by good decorum. Unplanned, "absolute silence" became my unofficial slogan and one that many people attending shul bought into. Just as coming into a shul where people are talking gives apparent license for anyone to join the chat, entering a quiet shul usually encourages people – whether regulars or visitors – to adopt the practice of those around them, and focus on the service, rather than catching up socially.

Striking the right tone in enforcing respectful decorum was critical for me in getting people on board with the approach to being quiet during key parts of the service. Whether this was reminding people that they'd be waiting longer for Kiddush if we had to keep stopping the service, or encouraging friends of Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrants to be quiet – just as they'd expect their friends to do on their special day – I always aimed to deliver my pleas with an element of humour.

Many families celebrating a simcha don't attend shul regularly. It was therefore foremost in my mind to provide them with as much support in the run-up to their celebration, giving aliyot to fathers and Bar Mitzvah boys-to-be to ensure they were comfortable and confident at their own simcha.

I was also keenly aware of the need to involve our young members following their Bar and Bat Mitzvah. While Youth Services provide a great forum for developing a dedicated service for teenagers and enabling them to learn new skills

around davening, leining and delivering a d'var Torah, giving young boys and girls the opportunity to do those things in the main Yavneh service was very important to me. This resulted in frequent Youth Takeovers, with the youth conducting most of the service including davening, leining, being gabbaim and gelilah, with a young lady encouraged to deliver a d'var Torah as part of the service.

I look back on my time as a gabbai with great fondness and hope BES@Yavneh goes from strength to strength.

### BES@Yavneh during Lockdown

What fun family Shabbat lockdown activities have you discovered?

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*It's all about pyjama shabbat, and getting dressed in time to go for our walk*

Katherine Brownstein

”

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*Walks obviously, and naps and reading and board games (we discovered last week that monopoly cheat is infinitely less irritating than regular monopoly!) and we all daven together in the garden.*

Tania Arden

”

### Lauren Schogger

I fondly remember having a meeting with the wonderful Rabbi Boudilovsky who told me that Kiddush was the most important part of a Shabbat morning and so he wanted to raise the stakes! I had recently taken over running Kiddush at BES@Yavneh and so started thinking about creative Kiddush ideas. The challenge was on!

We came up with and delivered a variety of themes including everything from chocolate, Israel, Australia, salt beef and the colour pink (not all together I might add!!). We even ran competitions where teams had a budget and each created a Kiddush table with their own ideas. The level of creativity and effort was extremely high.

We marked a variety of special occasions with Kiddushes including Bat and Bar Mitzvah's, births, marriages, anniversaries and even football teams winning trophies. We also initiated holding Kiddushes on Pesach and our tea/coffee and honey cake Kiddushes on Rosh Hashanah!

It wasn't just the themes of the food that was the focus: volunteers worked incredibly hard in displaying the food in a beautiful way! Who remembers spending time piping humus onto little crackers?!?

We also introduced what we called the “Yavneh cake” – it's the most gooey, sweet chocolatey cake you will find, it's actually the Chocolate Yeast Cake from La Brioche. If you haven't tried it,



I highly recommend giving it a go!!! In our house we still call it Yavneh Cake!

The launch of BES@Yavneh moving to weekly on Shabbat was a huge milestone for our community and we obviously had to pull out the stops with a canapé and cocktails Kiddush!

Kiddush couldn't have been done without my partner in crime Ronit Hammerman and the wonderful team of volunteers who always arrived so early to work so hard in creating a wonderful Kiddush.

Yavneh Kiddushim became well known locally, reflecting Rabbi Boudilovsky's strategy for Kiddush being such a vital part of our community.



## Shoshana Bacall

My Yavneh story began in 2015 when I moved to the Southside of the Wood with my husband, Dan and our baby, Lior. Since then we have added Amira and, very recently, our Lockdown baby, Levana, to the family. We joined the BES@Yavneh kehilla with hopes of it being a perfect place to meet the needs of our growing family: it has surpassed our every hope.



When we arrived I felt nervous joining a big community having grown up in a small one in Reading, but it quickly became clear that the more you get involved, the more people you meet and the smaller it actually feels.

I have learnt first-hand how encouraging and inviting BES@Yavneh is to newcomers and anyone who shows an interest. It all started for me when I was walking home one evening when I saw Damian Schogger, who asked me if I would come to a Yavneh "welcoming meeting". Unsure what it was but remembering the advice of a wise friend to say "yes" as much as possible in our early weeks here, I said "yes" and later that week found myself at the centre of a discussion with veteran Borehamwoodites about whether BES@Yavneh was a welcoming community, and how it could do more for newcomers. I gave my honest feedback including that recently on our first visit to Yavneh we had gotten completely lost on campus and missed the whole service.

My feedback was embraced and shortly afterwards a

welcoming committee was established which I joined, and was later asked to run the weekly welcoming rota. This introduced me to a caring and thoughtful group of people. The welcoming team is just one manifestation of the extensive collaboration which goes on in the community across all ages and stages of life.

The BES@Yavneh family is a community of shared experiences, whatever the challenge or celebration, there is always someone to share it with. For my family, Yavneh has become our safe place where we feel nurtured and a genuine sense of belonging.

One standout experience for me where I felt this most was the BES trip to Poland 2020. There is absolutely no doubt that a major contributing factor to the enormity of the impact that experience had on me was the supportive group experience with members I had never met before. An open and inclusive environment was created to process and come to terms with what we had seen together. This experience and the group identity forged on that trip will stay with me forever.

One of the strongest features of BES@Yavneh and BES as a whole is that innovation and creativity are championed: we are on a continuous journey of reflection to be better and do better. I've had the privilege of working with a range of people throughout the community on the Rabbinic Selection Groups which have shown me that one of the community's biggest strengths are its volunteers, who have an unending willingness to devote time, energy and ideas into ensuring that the community continues to thrive and evolve.

BES@Yavneh is a community filled with opportunities to have a

meaningful impact and to achieve personal growth. I will never forget the experience of delivering a Kol Nidre appeal. During my research I learned that BES has a formidable infrastructure which ensures that when people go through times of crisis they are not alone.

At BES@Yavneh there is a palpable sense of people rooting for one another and I am excited for the next 13 years of shared experiences amongst friends.

### BES@Yavneh during Lockdown

What fun family Shabbat lockdown activities have you discovered?

“

*We re-enacted the grab for the sweets post  
Bar Mitzvah boy Haftarah last week.  
New ritual perhaps?*  
Jo Grose

”

“

*TBH I have been really disappointed with  
the quality of the sermon! But each week  
I try and make a new treat...this week is  
chocolate macaron.*  
Rabbi Yaacov Finn

”

## David Nathan

As I sit down to reflect upon the BES@Yavneh journey and of my family's journey within it, I think about the fact that our journey doesn't go all the way back to the beginning. While we have been in Borehamwood for quite a while (17 years and counting) we only arrived at Yavneh a little more than 5 years ago.



However, the moment we walked in I knew it was home for me.

One fine Shabbat all the way back in 2015, we came for a celebration Kiddush for one of our close friends and as soon as we walked into the shul I knew that this is where I wanted to spend my Shabbat and Yom Tov mornings. Within a few weeks I was asked if I would help out with the running of the services and, always being happy to help (not to mention being ready to end my 5 year responsibility for the year 1 and 2 children's service at Croxdale) I agreed, and I haven't looked back since.

I spent 4 years as an assistant gabbai and the last year and a half as Warden and for me that feeling of friendliness, support and welcoming which grabbed me the moment I walked in, is the exact same feeling we try to recreate for every single person as they arrive at shul. It doesn't matter whether somebody is a regular shul goer, brand new into the area or just visiting for the very first time. We want everyone to feel welcomed and part of our family from their first step into shul. I believe that these are the very same ideals that Yavneh was founded upon.

It's important to reflect as a community on how much strength we get from being part of the wider BES community and from the incredible Rabbonim whom I have had the privilege to work closely with during my time at Yavneh. I was talking to Gabriel (our 12 year old) last week and reflecting on the many fantastic rabbis who have either worked with us or who have visited us for Shabbat or Yom Tov. Because we live on the Northside (no booing please), we often have the pleasure of walking rabbis between the two sites and we were reflecting on the many inspirational experiences that we have been honoured to have. We were reminiscing about some of our favourite moments and even scoring our favourite rabbis (I've promised to keep the results a secret).

During our bar mitzvah year it is wonderful to look back on the many happy moments we have had with a simcha almost every week and frequently more than one! However, it is also important to reflect on some of the more sombre moments. Whenever these difficult moments arise, either individually or communally, it is wonderful to see how our community pulls together as a family. On a number of memorable occasions, I have stood up to make the announcements with a real lump in my throat. It is the BES@Yavneh family which keeps me coming back week after week.

And that is why as we return slowly to shul following lockdown, with a booking system, reduced capacity, face masks, no singing and the many hardships in these Covid-19 times, I am confident that getting back together as a family in shul is the most important thing we can do despite how unusual and strange and difficult it may appear. I for one am certain that as a community we will continue to go from strength to strength.



## Sue & Henry Hantman

Having lived in Borehamwood for most of the last 32 years, I've seen a lot of change in the area including the establishment of the Borehamwood Southside community, alongside the Yavneh College school.

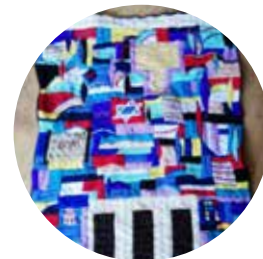
Remembering the initial discussions about the Friday night services, followed by occasional Shabbat services and whether there was really enough demand as well as service leaders and volunteers, not least to man the security needs for another site, it all seems so academic now. When I moved back to Borehamwood in 2015, I would move between the main service at Croxdale, the Limmud minyan and the BES@Yavneh service. I was immediately struck by the mix of familiarity of Yavneh – the site, Rabbi Boudilovsky and some long-standing friends – and the new people who'd moved into the area in the previous few years.

Joining the Welcoming Committee (much to a few people's surprise), the Kiddush Rota and then the Rabbinic Selection

Group, I got to know more of the new people and spent quite a while explaining to those on the Northside that it isn't just for children and young parents and there are plenty of "our" contemporaries who attend the services, as well as new people moving into the area.

Within three weeks of Henry attending Shabbat services in August 2017, he'd been invited to take a service and is now as much a part of this community as I am; those who have joined the community since then are often surprised that he's a "newbie". Henry is now a firm part of the davening rota and a warden in the Southside services.

In June 2018, we held our wedding at Yavneh Shul, followed by dinner in the school hall on what was one of the hottest days of the year. With Rabbi Chapper and Rabbi Plancey conducting the service, and Chazanut from Benjy Caplan, the sun shone on our wonderful Shul providing the perfect backdrop.



We remain committed members of the community (stalwarts apparently) and have joined the group attending and hosting Shabbat Mincha and Seuda during the Southside Summer season. With the absence of Shul since March, we've joined many Zoom services and discussions.

The BES@Yavneh services remain among the most enjoyable I've been part of, davening in the beautiful Shul, and in a wonderful atmosphere.



## Judith Radomsky

One of my first memories of joining the BES@Yavneh community was the Kiddush. Back in those days, Kiddush was in the corridor which meant that you had to walk passed where the Kiddush was being prepared to get to children's services.



I remember being impressed by the friendly people setting-up Kiddush, the themed Kiddushim that they produced, and that people noticed that I was newish to Borehamwood and a first timer at Yavneh and said hello to me.

I'm not much into the shul part of shul, more the social and getting my teeth stuck in and doing something, and the years of waiting outside children's services were coming to a close. I knew instantly that I wanted to get involved.

And there began friendships that will last a lifetime, and my family become part of the BES@Yavneh community.

Whilst preparing Kiddush, and eventually running Kiddush, with such wonderful ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, I have befriended many, many people in the community from all ages, and I have grown to care about so many of the members of the BES@Yavneh community and far beyond that.

There is nothing like food to bring Jews together.

BES@Yavneh is there during the good and the bad, and it is a true community. BES@Yavneh is a caring place where there is always a huge amount to do and get involved in. Never

be afraid to give some of the volunteering opportunities a try because you might just meet some pretty special people.

I came to BES@Yavneh knowing so few people and now I feel like part of the BES@Yavneh family. Giving back to your community makes you feel part of it and opens up doors that you didn't know were possible.

## BES@Yavneh during Lockdown

What fun family Shabbat lockdown activities have you discovered?

*"We have been trying to stick to the post-davening Kiddush but the standard of finger food over here is pretty low... (we're missing cake)"*  
Jo Grose



## Mazel Tov wishes...

*"Wishing you a hearty mazeltov. Very happy memories of my being there at the beginning. Friday night minyanim held at the Yantin's and Grose's when we lived in Furzehill Road. May you go from strength to strength."*  
Leon Silverton



## Rabbi Yaacov Finn

It's been remarkable to see BES@Yavneh develop over the years. My very first involvement was all the way back in 2007, the first year there were Rosh Hashanah Services. It was second day, my brother was davening Musaf and I was asked to deliver the sermon.



Already then, you could tell there was something special brewing, a wonderful atmosphere, sense of excitement. Unfortunately, I must not have impressed as it would be over 8 years before I would be asked to return. (It probably did not help that I spoke for over 15 minutes – and you wonder why I now go for 7!).

When Rabbi Boudilovsky announced he was leaving, I was running the Limmud minyan at Croxdale, having been Interim Rabbi in Shenley and in Northwood, and the shul asked me to step into the BES@Yavneh pulpit while a replacement was found. It was great to part of the team. At the time the enthusiasm was amazing, we were still building something, developing an identity. There were the amazing sing-along Friday night services, great Kiddushim (although a bit cramped in the foyer), the launch of various 'alternative' initiatives, super popular children services and (what was unique at the time) an active Facebook group. It was a great 10 months, working with a passionate group of volunteers, constantly pushing the boundaries of normal in order to continuously improve. It was also a time where we saw an influx of people moving into Borehamwood and I remember week after week new people

visiting, joining for the first time, being welcomed by different parts of the congregation, many choosing to settle into the community.

Fast forward two years, and I was once again asked to step into the BES@Yavneh pulpit (following Rabbi Chapper's promotion). This time, a new team, a community no longer in 'start-up' phase but still the same desire to constantly improve, not to rest on laurels. This is what is amazing about BES@Yavneh, a constant desire to do community better. On Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur BES@Yavneh is now packed to the rafters (easily double numbers who attend all those years ago) yet still manages to maintain the 'informal' atmosphere that has always (in my mind) been critical to its success.

I have lots of great memories from my involvement in BES@Yavneh, whether it be Tikkun Leyl at the Grose's or dancing through Hallel on Simchat Torah. I look forward to seeing what innovations come about under Rabbi and Rebbetzen Taylor's leadership and while I will always be happy to visit once in a while to deliver the odd sermon, it will hopefully be many more years before I am asked to return for a third stint.

## Mazel Tov wishes...

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*It is hard to believe that 3 years ago kiddish was being held in the foyer, it was then moved to the theatre and now the dining room.*

Rachel Fink

”

## Rabbi Alex Chapper

Warm, welcoming and friendly.

These were my first impressions of BES@Yavneh and the more I learnt about the community, the more I discovered that this wasn't by chance. The leadership has a clear vision for BES@Yavneh inspired by Jewish values and it permeates everything that they do. It has been a privilege to see this first-hand. At the same time, a great team of committed volunteers ensures that every aspect of communal life is covered. This means that everyone who arrives at Yavneh is actively welcomed, Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat morning services are well-organised, decorum is exceptionally good



and the ruach generated by participation is uplifting. All ages are catered for, with fantastic services for children and youth and everyone enjoys the spectacular Kiddushim.

What is so impressive is that BES@Yavneh has a 'can do' attitude which is really refreshing and it enables the organisation of some great activities – large scale Shabbat lunches, Community Stories, Challenging Judaism, What's My Line and J-Live to name just a few.

Celebrating its 13th year is a significant milestone and it's clear that BES@Yavneh retains its youthfulness with the energy and enthusiasm which that brings. Just like a Bar Mitzvah, Yavneh's challenge is to continue to grow as a place where everyone can feel spiritually enriched and those in need are supported. I'm excited to see its continued development and pray that G-d blesses the community to go from strength to strength.



## Steven Fink

One of the memories that best sums up the community spirit of BES@Yavneh for me is the BES@Yavneh's Got Talent show.

With erev Simchat Torah taking place at the first time at Yavneh College in 2017, one of the challenges faced was how to entertain and engage the large numbers of children attending the celebrations. And whilst a kid's dinner was an easy idea, in true BES@Yavneh spirit it was recognised that something more innovative was required. Thus was born BES@Yavneh's Got Talent, a chance for all the kids in the community to showcase their talents and to entertain each other, with representatives of the Youth as judges.

I was asked to host the show, which was held in the Yavneh College theatre and which took place straight after the dinner. Donning a waistcoat, I got up on stage and all I could see before me was a sea of people – the place was jam-packed with no seats left and people spilling out into the corridors (scenes that are unlikely to be witnessed for some time in this post-Covid world!).

We had about 11 acts that first year, ranging from singers, dancers, magicians and comedians. Keeping decorum was a huge challenge, and was made even more difficult given that we were unable to make use of the microphones or sound equipment. But the children were incredibly enthusiastic and in the end, it was the singing voice of Adina Frazer who came out



on top of the youth's judging.

What was so incredibly special that evening was at the end of the night, we got Adina up to sing her winning song again and the whole community in the theatre sang along with her. Watching that scene from the stage, one really felt what an amazing community BES@Yavneh had evolved to become. And the scene was just as special the following year when Annie Shorick stole the show.

They say the children are our future, and it has been special watching the children in the BES@Yavneh community grow over the past 13 years. Many are now part of the Youth and many more having joined the community through that time, and will set the community up for a strong future.



## Saul Muzlish

“Mazaltov!” All the best people miss the glass first time round if you ask me!

A week after our truly magical wedding in August 2018, we are about to bring in our first Shabbat in Borehamwood and the question was, which of Borehamwood’s several minyanim should we try first? I fretted over this decision until I remembered that I grew up in Pinner, a 30-minute walk from the Shul. I then realised the answer was incredibly simple, go to the closest one! After a 7-minute walk, I arrived at Yavneh. After being welcomed by Rabbi Chapper, I shyly slid into the corner of the back row, trying to daven quietly and not draw attention to myself. My attempt to keep a low profile failed and a very nice gentleman walked over to me and invited me to sit with him. Soon after that, Rabbi Finn approached and introduced himself. After wishing Shoshi and myself a “Shkoyach” for escaping Birmingham and Pinner respectively, he invited us round for a Rosh Hashanah meal.

On Shabbat morning I returned, this time with Shoshi. It was slightly daunting walking into Kiddish, so we promptly found a corner to hide in. We clearly weren’t very good at hiding because before we knew what had happened, we had several weeks of meal invites booked. So many that, we eventually had to start declining!

As the weeks and months passed, I became good friends with David Nathan (although I do like to remind him that I am closer



in age to his kids than to him!). One Kiddish he said that he was taking over as Gabbai and had an opening for an assistant and would I be interested? I can remember thinking, “I’ve only been here 9 months, how on earth can I become a Gabbai?” Clearly, I didn’t protest loudly enough as, a few weeks later, I was David’s assistant and self-appointed counsellor.

When I read Yavneh’s ‘statement of values’ I see two themes, warmth and growth. BES@Yavneh lays out a beautiful yellow brick road to their dream community, starting with preparation (‘welcoming’ and ‘community’), followed by process, (‘contribution’ and ‘improvement’), finishing with the end goal (‘spiritual enrichment’). BES@Yavneh recognises that first you must make people feel warm and comfortable, then get people involved to continually enhance the community, then you can reach the Emerald City and find home.

We didn’t particularly want to come to Borehamwood, we wanted to be with our friends in Hendon, but we couldn’t afford it. We settled on Borehamwood by default. When we moved here, we didn’t plan on staying long. We planned to save up and in a couple of years and make the jump to Hendon. After a few months at Yavneh, we realised that we were in the Emerald City. Almost by accident we had found home and we knew we were there to stay.

Thank you, Yavneh, for helping us build our Bayit Ne’eman B’Yisroel here in Borehamwood, our home.



## Rabbi Sam Taylor

Mazel tov to the BES@Yavneh community on its Bar Mitzvah year!

The number 13 has special significance because it's the gematria of the Hebrew word ahava which means love. What's interesting is that the root word of ahava is hav, which means to give, which teaches us that loving is synonymous with giving. So when one person gives to another (ahava - 13) and when this giving is reciprocated (ahava - 13), you get the number 26 which is gematria of G-d's name. This means that if you want to dwell in the presence of the Almighty there must be a culture of giving to each another.

I believe that because the BES@Yavneh community has understood this message the Shul has experienced tremendous growth and success. Throughout our interactions with people in the area we have seen a wonderful spirit with everyone wanting to contribute in their own way, whether it be with regard to services, education, security and other areas. Seeing so many people giving up their precious time for their community has without doubt made BES@Yavneh the incredible Shul it is today. May we continue to have this attitude and may we all therefore be able to sense the presence of the Almighty in our lives.



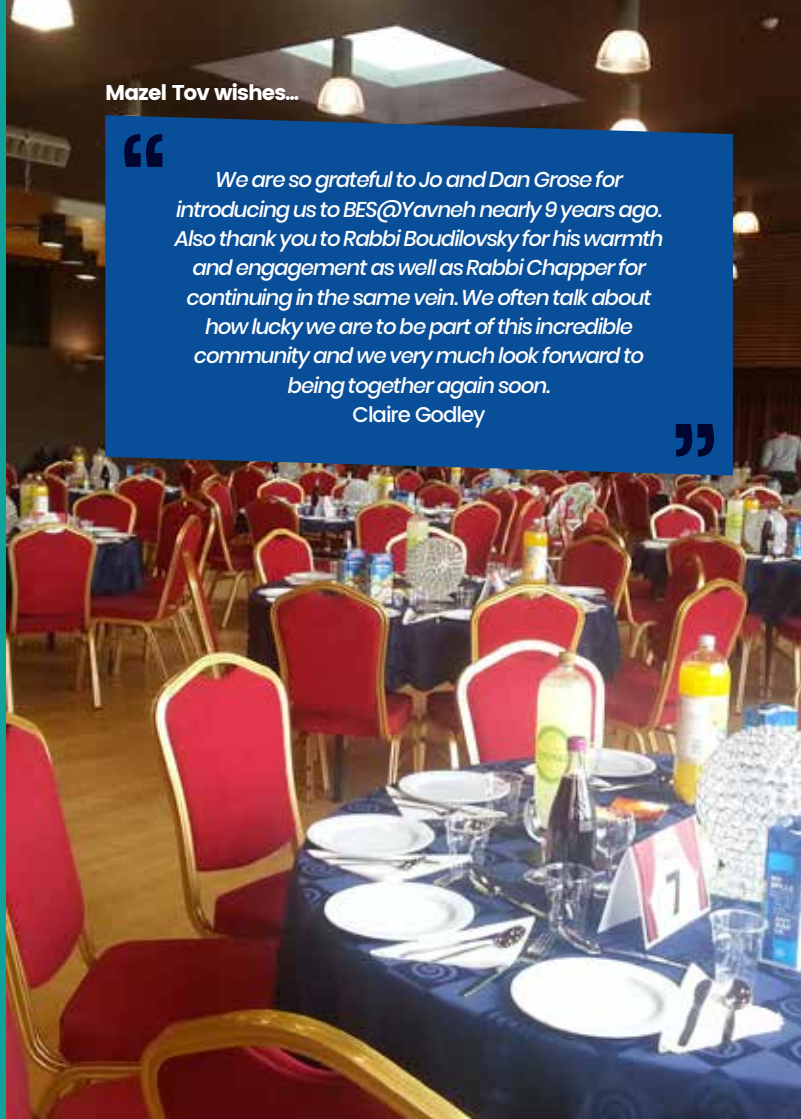
Mazel Tov wishes...

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*We are so grateful to Jo and Dan Grose for introducing us to BES@Yavneh nearly 9 years ago. Also thank you to Rabbi Boudilovsky for his warmth and engagement as well as Rabbi Chapper for continuing in the same vein. We often talk about how lucky we are to be part of this incredible community and we very much look forward to being together again soon.*

Claire Godley

”







The HOs and Rabbinic team wish BES@Yavneh Mazel Tov!



**Borehamwood  
& Elstree Synagogue**  
Our Community



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