

# FOR THE JOURNEY

One of the major banks is using the above catchphrase in its current advertising campaign but those words could apply equally happily to our approach to the development of our community.

Essentially the journey began about ten years ago when Henry Grunwald, Bruce Lewin and I met with the powers that be at the United Synagogue to tell them of our plans for the redevelopment of our synagogue. Their initial response was that we must have been indulging excessively at Kiddush as the United Synagogue had never allowed any synagogue to undertake a building operation of such magnitude and, even if they had, Hampstead was not the place for them to embark on such a project. Our community was ageing and declining and the entire concept was insane. In any event they had no funds available and the prospects of us raising any were in their view more than remote.

It was made abundantly clear that if the journey was to even reach the planning stage, our task was to invigorate our community and raise the funds. After a number of false starts in fund raising, we were introduced to a developer whose circumstances encouraged him to pay a premium price for the buildings at the rear of the shul complex. The timing was more than fortunate as if we were selling the land today, the price would be unlikely to exceed one third of the sum paid then.

The price paid should have covered a large percentage of the cost of restoring the synagogue but in the meantime building costs had risen and the condition of the building had deteriorated so that we were facing a substantial deficit. Once again it appeared that the journey might have reached a premature terminus but certain members of our community stepped up to the plate. The Worth, Heller and Corob families were very generous but the train was kept on the track above all by Manny and Brigitta Davidson, who were not only involved financially but also provided invaluable input into many design features of the project.

While all this was going on the revitalisation of the community was gathering pace. By changing the style of our services, we began to attract younger members, both singles and families. We started the highly successful Friday night dinners for 20/30 year olds which were always sold out and at last young people were not only attending our events and services but also actually joining the shul. This culminated in the formation of the LAUNCH Committee by our members in that age group.

We held a consultation facilitated by Adrienne Powell attended by about eighty of our members and certain key figures from the United Synagogue. There followed a resumption of our dialogue with the United Synagogue during which we deluged them with statistics demonstrating the viability of our vision and that we had matched the criteria which had been imposed on us. The community was enjoying a marked revival and a large proportion of the funds

had been raised. Whereas we met mainly opposition before, it was now agreed that we had made our case – we could proceed with the work and the journey could continue.

In November 2007 the works to the Synagogue commenced at which stage William Geller joined the front of the train and became involved intimately in the progress (and sometimes lack of progress) of the project. If anyone is looking for a Project Manager I can recommend William, who has discovered previously hidden talents during these last two years, which I am sure have added some grey hairs to his beard. On a recent count we established that to date the project has involved some 6,000 e-mails and I hate to think how many meetings, many of them lasting several hours – my recollection is that the longest was a marathon of 3½ hours.

So where are we now? How far are we on our journey? We have a magnificent synagogue building but, as Rabbi Dr Harris made clear in his inspiring Rosh Hashanah sermon, we need to ensure that we continue to grow as a community and that we make full use of its state of the art facilities.

Once we have cleared the funding deficit for the synagogue – and we are grateful to everyone who has contributed to date – we must turn our attention to the Community Centre and progress the preliminary plans which we have for its redevelopment and the creation of an atrium between the two buildings. Ideally we should have undertaken that task before the restoration of the synagogue but the dilapidated condition of the synagogue made that impossible – the roofs of certain parts were literally being held up by paper and some of the walls were like wet sponges – and if we had not undertaken the works when we did the building would probably have been lost forever.

We must also ensure that we continue to grow in every way as a community by maintaining the high standard of our services and the cultural and social events which we promote. I hope that everyone can appreciate that what has been achieved so far demonstrates the quality for which Hampstead has long been renowned and we must maintain that quality in all that we do as we continue our journey. If others can see and appreciate the quality which we as a community are capable of achieving, they should be encouraged to come on board.

In a discussion with the Chief Rabbi on the day prior to the Selichot service I reminded him that we have become the exception to his oft quoted remark that change and the United Synagogue are a contradiction in terms. This community has changed markedly and developed as it has progressed on its journey. We have just completed an important stage in that journey and we must now work together in order to reach the next station on the way to our destination. It will be something very special if we can make the rest of the journey as exciting as the last ten years.

**Michael Haringman**

**The journey continues, see over ...**

# THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

## Succot

Hoshana Rabba & Shemini Atzeret

## Simchat Torah

with Communal Lunch on Sunday 11 October

Reserve your place for lunch with Ivor on 7435 1518  
or [admin@hampsteadshul.org.uk](mailto:admin@hampsteadshul.org.uk) by Monday 5 October

## FURTHER AHEAD

### The 2009 Isaiah Berlin Annual Lecture

on Sunday 8 November\* at 8pm

will be given by Efraim Halevy

Reserve a place with the office or [events@hampsteadshul.org.uk](mailto:events@hampsteadshul.org.uk)

### The Annual Quiz Supper

Sunday 15 November 2009 at 7pm

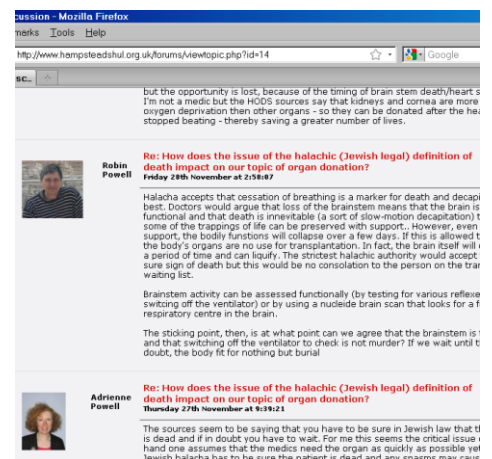
Book online at [www.hampsteadshul.org](http://www.hampsteadshul.org)  
or phone Ivor on 7435 1518

\* Please note new date

## JOIN OUR UNIQUE E-LEARNING EXPERIENCE

We have pioneered a unique form of learning within the community. The participating group (limited to twenty or so people) will have access to a special password protected space on our website. In the comfort of their own homes, the group learn together by looking at supporting material and debating online. Participants access the site at times that suit rather than a set day or time during the week.

**The Jewish Approach to Cloning** is a brand new course starting on **Monday 12 October** and running for six weeks. Supervised by Rabbi Harris and our in-house e-learning team, this course will be extremely stimulating. Although the course does not lead to any Halachic (Jewish legal) rulings, it will help explain the debate within a Jewish context. On Sunday 22 November, the group will go to Pita on West End Lane for an end of term shiur.



The screenshot shows a forum thread with two posts. The first post is by Robin Powell, dated Friday 28th November at 2:58:07. The second post is by Adrienne Powell, dated Thursday 27th November at 8:39:21. The posts discuss the halachic definition of death, specifically focusing on brain stem death and the timing of death relative to organ donation.

## SIGN UP BEFORE MONDAY 5 OCTOBER

with Gabriel at [gberman@hampsteadshul.org](mailto:gberman@hampsteadshul.org)