

The Ladies' Tikkun with Megillat Ruth
by Anne Elliott with Deanna Levine
on Thursday, 1 June 17 (2nd day of Shavuot, 5776)

The second afternoon of Shavuot at Woodside Park was extra special this year because our hugely popular and unique annual Ladies' Tikkun was combined with the shul's pioneering Women's Megillah Reading of the Book of Ruth.

Both sessions appealed to teenager, octogenarian and all ages between. None of your age discrimination here! An interval between the 2 sessions enabled the women to be free to attend one or both events.

The 25 + year-old tradition of staging the Ladies' Tikkun, followed by sumptuous refreshments, reached its apogee at the home of Esther and Edwin Shuker, who had amazingly hosted the event for the previous 12 years. It now came to pass that about 80 ladies wandered over in the warm sunshine to this year's venue, the lovely welcoming home of the Hackenbrochs. We were greeted with happy smiles by Gila and her daughters and with refreshingly cool water.

On the way there, we encountered the Rabbi and his sons trekking to the home of Michael Cohen, who generously hosted this year's Whisky and Wisdom event (formerly known as "The Lads who Lurch") for the men and youths. This was ably and humorously compered by John Chart, who readily sponsored the amber nectar.

Back to the ladies. The air was abuzz with excitement as the seats filled to capacity in eager anticipation of the uplifting, spiritual fare to come.

21 ladies and post-batmitzvah girls sat in two rows with anxious but excited faces deep in thought, as they took a last look at their megillot, some silently mouthing their portion. They were about to share in the leining of Megillat Ruth, taking four verses each.

A hush descended, heralding the warm introduction by our very own Gila. All clutched a copy of Megillat Ruth with the English translation under each portion rendering it easier for everyone to follow. As each participant began to sing, something incredible occurred. The garden birds also began to sing. As they continued, more birds joined in loud chorus. When the last participant finished her rendition, so did the birds! It was weird, utterly astonishing, yet magically inspiring.

The Megillah rendition was followed by a short break, during which some left and more arrived. Time now for this year's 7 speakers of the Ladies' Tikkun, introduced by Deanna Levine, who, incidentally, co-chairs the Ladies' Tikkun with Gila.

Pam Nelkon opened by reading 3 beautiful poems on friendship and kindness, two of Judaism's most important cornerstones. Danielle Brull followed with the incredible revelation of how Irena Sendler managed to smuggle 2,500 children out of the Warsaw Ghetto under the noses of the Nazis.

Gila presented next. She is completing her second Masters in Systemic Family Psychotherapy at The Tavistock. Expounding upon her work at the Jewish Marriage Council, she highlighted the problem of mental health issues throughout society and the vital work this charity provides to the Jewish community, so desperately needed by dint of the extremely long NHS waiting lists.

Deanna Levine's presentation, entitled "Mother-in-law Episode 1", was laced with pertinent mother-in-law jokes, but inspired by Megillat Ruth, thereby marking the very warm and positive

relationship between Naomi and Ruth. Estelle Phillips' talk, entitled "Mother in Law Episode 2" comprised interesting Jewish background, which included honouring one's in-laws, followed by descriptions of mothers of sons and their new daughters-in-law today. Attendees could clearly relate to this subject!

Maxine Zeltser next with the 5 sisters, the daughters of Tzefalchad, who were orphaned in the desert and who pressed Moses to rule on their inheritance and thus entered the laws of female inheritance. We concluded with a fascinating, lively interactive presentation by Carolyn Raven entitled Jean-Paul Gaultier & the Chassidim. Carolyn encouraged us to observe and discern anything unusual in two pictures depicting fashions worn in two different Jewish communities. She also challenged us to consider why and how, as Jews, we dress like we do.

If you'd like to read the full version of some of the talks, go to the Woodside Park Synagogue website, which is so competently run by Karen Simon.

After the talks, the Rabbi and his merry band of menfolk from the Whisky and Wisdom event began to lurch in, as we moved into the kitchen and the garden where tables were laden with a wonderful variety of cheesecakes, other delicacies, fruits of all kinds and drinks, all prepared and painstakingly laid out. We ate, drank, chatted and then eventually drifted slowly away from a very satisfying afternoon.