



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kingston Liberal Synagogue Press release: 30th June 2008

New rabbi for Kingston community

Kingston Liberal Synagogue (KLS) has just celebrated the ordination of its new rabbi. Rabbi Charley Baginsky was ordained on June 29th having passed her final examinations after 5 years of rabbinic studies at Leo Baeck college. At the special ceremony, held at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in North London, she was personally ordained by KLS's previous rabbi of 20 years, Rabbi Danny Rich (who is now Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism). Her presenters (sponsors) were Rabbi Pete Tobias, well known for his regular slots on Radio 2's Wogan show, and the eminent and prolific Rabbi Charles Middleburgh.

Rabbi Baginsky, aged 29, is the only female rabbi in her cohort to be ordained this year. She is also the only rabbi in Liberal Judaism to use a blog to reach out to her community. (See <http://www.klsrabbi.blogspot.com/>) This is particularly useful as her rabbinic duties extend beyond the synagogue to the wider Kingston community: she is chaplain to the Mayor, works with various interfaith groups, and regularly visits local schools.

Her route to a rabbinic vocation included several years running a bar in Israel. Having been involved in Jewish youth movements all her life, she initially began studying theology at Cambridge University but left her studies after a year to live in Israel, where she ran the Jerusalem bar 'Mike's Place' then helped set up the Tel Aviv 'Mike's Place' which was blown up by a terrorist bomb in 2003. She returned to England, after deciding she wanted to finish her degree, in London. Rabbi Baginsky said:

"My ordination marks a special point in my life. First as a youth worker, then in Israel, I began to feel that I could best express my Jewish identity by working and teaching in communities in England, and raising awareness of the meaning of being Jewish and relating to Israel in today's world".

Paul Levene, Chair of KLS's council, said: "we are fortunate in having Charley as our Rabbi. Her dynamic but sympathetic approach makes her popular with the whole congregation, young and old. She made a big impression presiding over our recent 40th anniversary celebrations."

Rabbi Baginsky has been student rabbi at KLS for the past 2 years and was previously its head of Education. She now takes up her post as its full-time rabbi.

About Kingston Liberal Synagogue

Founded in 1967, KLS is a local Jewish community of several hundred people who meet regularly for prayer, education and social events. It has recently celebrated its 40th anniversary. KLS members live in and around Kingston, Surbiton, New Malden, Elmbridge, Wimbledon, Richmond, Twickenham and Teddington.

About Leo Baeck college

The Leo Baeck College is Europe's premier centre for Progressive Jewish learning. It is unique - training Rabbis to develop Progressive Jewish congregations throughout the UK for the 21st century. The College reaches out to support the growth of today's Jewish communities across Europe and beyond. It is the first College in Europe to train Rabbis from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe - who are then able to return to lead their home communities.

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