



## The newsletter of Sukkat Shalom – Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community July – August 2020

Let us know what you think of Etrog or send us your contributions by contacting the newsletter team at [newsletter@eljic.org](mailto:newsletter@eljic.org) or by leaving a message on **0131 777 8024**

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## Diary

All services and discussions have been cancelled in physical form for the foreseeable future. Rabbi Mark Solomon will be conducting services remotely –

- Erev Shabbat (Friday 7pm)
- Shabbat (Saturday 11am)
- Also Havdalah: on Saturdays, starting at 8.30pm for the next two weeks (5th and 12th September). On the 12th it will be followed by a Selichot service.

every week. He will also conduct the regular discussion groups online: Philosophy (currently Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*), and Tea & Talmud, on Mondays and Thursdays at noon. You need to register for these – see link below for details.

To get links to all of these please [see here](#). If you need a password, please reply to this email explaining how you heard about us.

"Choosing Judaism" classes will be held every Sunday. The programme is [here](#).

## High Holy Day Plans

Plans are progressing for the High Holy Days. As you would expect, all the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services will be held remotely, though we are hoping to meet in person for tashlich – socially distanced, of course – on Rosh Hashanah. All the services will follow our normal timetable quite closely, starting at 7pm for erev Rosh Hashanah (18th September) and for Kol Nidrei (27th September), and at 11am for Rosh Hashanah (19th September) and for Yom Kippure (28th September). The services will be shortened, to allow for everyone's decreased endurance for remote events, and plans for Yom Kippur afternoon are still uncertain – one or both of the services then may be replaced or omitted. Mark will also be leading a Selichot service on the evening of Friday 11th September.

We'll be sending out letters with full details in the post shortly to members and associate members. If you'd like to attend the services but are not a member, please get in touch via [the contact form](#) or the community phone (0131 777 8024).

We're not organising a break-fast meal this year, of course, but we'd encourage you to contact other members to make arrangements to join them remotely or physically, if you can do so responsibly. The WhatsApp group (see "Community Care and Support", below) may be a good place to make arrangements.

## Word from the Sofa



Did you know that we have a Safeguarding policy? I'm guessing that most of us would know that we should have one if we stopped and thought about it, but my suspicion is that it's not something that most of us think about very often. You could say that this is a positive sign in as much as I don't believe we've had any concerns on this topic, but equally if we stop and think about it, just because we've not had concerns is never been a good reason to be complacent. You only have to think about the MeToo movement to realise that bad things can be taking place without anything being done about them. That's why it is important to highlight our Safeguarding policy and to make sure that all of us are aware of our responsibilities to promote a caring culture within our community.

It was over a year ago when I drew up our Safeguarding policy – it's [here on the website](#) if you were wondering – and for a year or so after that we haven't done much with it at all. However I recently went on an on-line course, run by Liberal Judaism about protecting vulnerable members, and it made me realise that we need to up our game. I don't for one minute think that we aren't a caring community, but I would suggest that we perhaps should pay a bit more attention to how we protect vulnerable members of our community. Just thinking about our Safeguarding policy, it is clearly out of date. You could say that this is a trivial point as it is only a name change that is needed, but this to me proves the point that if we aren't looking at the basics on a regular basis then is that indicative of a bigger problem?

At the on-line course I attended there were members of shuls of a similar and indeed smaller size than ours, and members of big London shuls with hundreds if not thousands of members. During the course it was obvious that the bigger shuls have to do more on Safeguarding than we do, for example where a shul has paid members of staff, more formal training is needed. It was made clear that the policies and procedures you set up have to be suitable and relevant for your community, its size and its ways of working. What was clear though is that you can't just say "we're small, we know each other so we're OK". We were given a checklist of things to look at and I have completed that and as Council we'll be using that to review our Safeguarding policies. To be honest there is nothing that we have to do that is difficult, or indeed that we don't already nominally think about. However it is very much about raising awareness and, for example, we now have Safeguarding as a standing agenda item at our Council meetings to make sure that we always think about this topic.

It is Council's responsibility to make sure our Safeguarding policies are in place and effective. However we all have a responsibility for each other. If you think about what we have done during the recent pandemic in terms of ringing round all members, setting up a What'sApp group ([see below for how to join](#)) and suchlike, I would suggest that we are indeed a caring community and we do want to look after each other. However, we should

always be vigilant as that is what Safeguarding is all about – looking out for each other and making sure, as far as we can, that nothing happens, whatever it might be, in the first place.

And by the way, I will be updating the Safeguarding policy as part of reviewing my checklist, but if any of you have any suggestions for how to make it better please do let me know.

**Nick Silk**, Co-Chair

(on behalf of The Sofa: Sue Bard, Maurice Naftalin, Gillian Raab and Nick Silk)

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## Robin Hannah Zollinger

Welcome to this world! Warmest congratulations to Helen, Stuart and [Woody](#) on the birth of Robin Hannah on Sunday 9 August 2020.



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## 'Say hello to... Chavah Tirza!'

After three years of painstaking self-reflection, chats with Rabbi Mark, close friends and emotional conversations with my son Lachlan, I have decided to start using my Hebrew name rather than my secular name.

I'm in the second half of my life and I'm a completely different person than I was in the first half. I thank my faith in Judaism for this. My dedication to my faith was the catalyst that brought about changes that only a few people close to me know about, but the changes are profound - even the folks who don't know my story have seen those changes. I think differently, believe differently, act differently, live differently. So much of "Cathleen" is gone that I no longer feel comfortable with that name. The name Cathy/Cathleen is attached to memories that are so disturbing that it doesn't fit me any longer.



And so, I will be grateful when you see me in Shul, text me or phone me that you would refer to me as my Hebrew name Chavah or Chavah Tirza. Chavah translates to Eve – Life. And

that is very fitting for me.

I'll be forever grateful to my friends who witnessed the darkest part of my journey and who bravely, compassionately and patiently stood by me. And I'm humbled and grateful that Ha Shem would not let my wandering soul rest until I truly embraced Judaism. I unapologetically believe in the existence of Ha Shem and without Him I would not be where I am now. I would not be here at all. I don't say that figuratively, I don't say it lightly – the gravity of those words “I would not be here” hold so much weight that it brings tears to my eyes as I type them.

With love, and a grateful, joyous heart,

**Chavah Tirza Ferguson**

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## Our Community Care and Support

Coming out of lockdown may pose its own problems and anxieties, especially for those who will still have to exercise a lot of care about where they go and what they do. We are still here for each other so don't hesitate to ask for any help and support you may need, including simply the need to talk.



**OUR EXISTING CONFIDENTIAL CONTACT SYSTEM: phone or**

**email [contact@eljic.org](mailto:contact@eljic.org)** and one of the small group of people who respond to calls and emails will get back to you quickly.

RABBI MARK SOLOMON would like you to know that he's available on 07766 141315 and [marksolomon@btinternet.com](mailto:marksolomon@btinternet.com) if you'd like to talk to him.

**OUR WHATSAPP GROUP:** allowing people to be in direct contact with each other very quickly where help is needed. Now that lockdown is eased a bit you could use it to fund people to go for a walk (distanced of course). If you're not already on it and would like to be, send Sue Lieberman your mobile number and ask to be part of the group. You can text her on 07939 014720.

Also, don't forget JAMI, the Jewish Mental Health support service. You can download their current Head Room Café community events programme here and If you'd like to join, email [headroom@jamiuk.org](mailto:headroom@jamiuk.org) .



## Jewish Care COVID-19 Grants

For anyone worried about making ends meet due to the ongoing situation with Coronavirus, Jewish Care have set up a specific COVID-19 Grant of up to £1000 to help with essential expenses, such as food and bills. To be eligible for a COVID-19 grant the following must apply:

- Household has suffered a reduction in income as a direct result of COVID 19
- OR household expenditure has increased as a result of COVID 19

We would also normally expect that you:

- Have savings of less than £1000;
- Apply for, or be in receipt of, any statutory help you are entitled to.

If you would like more information, or are interested in applying for a COVID-19 Grant, please contact us on 0141 620 1800 or email [admin@jcarescot.org.uk](mailto:admin@jcarescot.org.uk).

You will be put in touch with one of our Community Team, who can offer advice and information about what you may be entitled to. Support offered will be dependant on individual circumstances and applicants will be asked to provide supporting documentation

## Kol Nidrei Charities

Our Kol Nidrei Appeal is one of the ways in which we try to recognise our various responsibilities for Tikkun Olam – that is, for the wider world. Each year we choose to support a range of charities that between them represent local, international, Jewish and non-Jewish causes. Every penny contributed goes to our designated charities.

Our charities for this year follow. We hope you will approve of our choices and give as generously as ever. Details of how to donate are at the end of this piece.

**Rene Cassin – the Jewish Voice for Human Rights, proposed by Stephanie Mitchell (see Stephanie’s article about the Uighur in this Etrog).**

The organisation, René Cassin, was set up in 2002 to raise awareness of human rights and encourage activism within the Jewish community.

René Cassin was a French-Jewish jurist, law professor and judge. He co-drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1968. He helped found the

Consultative Council of Jewish Organisations – dedicated to providing encouragement from a Jewish perspective to the newly founded UN human rights system. He died in 1976.

The Rene Cassin Vision is of a world where:

- everyone fully enjoys all their human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- members of the Jewish community are actively engaged in promoting and protecting these rights, both within the community and in concert with stakeholders outside of the community.

For more than a year, Rene Cassin has been running a practical campaign, 'Jewish Action to Stop Uighur Persecution'. Here is their statement:

The persecution of the Uighurs, due to their ethnic and religious identity, serves as a chilling reminder to the horrors committed against the Jews in the Holocaust.

We must honour the victims and survivors of that genocide through our efforts to ensure it never happens again. The memory of the Holocaust lives on in our human rights framework, which gives the Jewish community both a particular authority and an acute moral responsibility to speak out against in protest when such atrocities are now happening to the Uyghurs.

To find out more, go to <https://www.renecassin.org/jewish-action-to-stop-uyghur-persecution/>

### **The Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity, proposed by Helen Zollinger**

Looking after your child in hospital is exhausting and emotional. Almost everything is taken out of your control and all you can do is watch and wait while medicine does its work.

Our son Woody ([see picture above](#)) has spent a lot of time in the Edinburgh Sick Kids hospital, most recently with very severe sepsis. At the time, I was in my first weeks of pregnancy with my second child - just the time when you're told not to let yourself get stressed or too tired.

The Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity provides various services for families to make their hospital stay that bit more bearable. Whether it's a bed to sleep on within the hospital itself, or support, a cup of tea or a massage at their drop in centre for families. They also offer entertainment and activities for the young patients themselves - Woody was able to meet a lovely therapeutic dog!

We would love to shield Woody from ever having to be back in hospital but, like so many other children, he will have to spend time there again. Raising money for this charity means that these children may come to consider hospital a place of fun and play, rather than only about pain and medicine.

For more info: <https://echcharity.org/>

## **The Leo Baeck Education Centre proposed by Rabbi Mark Solomon**

The Leo Baeck Education Centre in Haifa was established in 1938 as a kindergarten for children fleeing pre-war Europe. Now their K-12 schools provide 2,300 children with an education that is based on humanist values and embedded within a Progressive Jewish framework.

Leo Baeck works in Haifa's most mixed neighbourhoods. Their main campus, progressive synagogue, Community and Sports Centre, as well as satellite centres, serve more than 35,000 Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Druze and Baha'i community members. Their programmes support Ethiopians and other immigrant populations, at-risk children and youth, families in crisis and individuals with special needs.

Leo Baeck's commitment to Arab-Jewish shared existence is evidenced by many of the programmes they sponsor as well as the international peace-building programs in which they participate.

For more info <http://leobaeckhaifa.org/>

## **Jewish Blind Society (Scotland)**

The Society was founded in 1967 and started by providing care, entertainment, outings, readings and clubs for the blind and partially sighted members of the Jewish community. With the advances in eye surgery, and treatments over the years, the number of clients has reduced. While the Society continues to support people with visual impairments, its activities have extended into other fields, including Chai Cancer Care in Scotland and people with learning disabilities.

## **There are three ways to donate to the Sukkat Shalom 5781 Kol Nidrei appeal:**

- Letters we will be sending to members and associate members with High Holyday service information will contain Sukkat Shalom's bank account number, which you can credit by bank transfer (we prefer this method);
- If you have a PayPal account, payments can be made to [treasurer@eljc.org](mailto:treasurer@eljc.org);
- If you prefer to pay by card, please go to [our donation page](#) and follow the instructions there.

If you're paying by PayPal: at the last stage before authorisation, please click the link "Add instructions to ELJC treasurer" and add the information that this is a Kol Nidrei appeal donation.

## Edinburgh Book Festival 2020.

In the August edition of Etrog we usually include recommended Festival shows of Jewish interest. No such joy this year, but the Book Festival events are now all available [to view for free](#). Here are two suggestions of Jewish interest.

### **Philippe Sands with Ian Rankin: On the Trail of a Nazi**

**Fugitive** Philippe Sands's much celebrated memoir *East West Street*, which won the 2016 Baillie Gifford Prize, expertly interwove the personal story of his ancestors in the Ukrainian city of Lviv with a professional interest in the establishment of international law in the aftermath of the Holocaust. His superb follow-up, *The Ratline*, delves further into the story of Nazi brigade leader, Otto Von Wächter – a man indicted for mass murder in 1945 but who evaded capture and survived as a fugitive in the Austrian Alps for three years, before holing up in Rome under the protection of a Vatican bishop. From there he hoped to be transported along the secret 'ratline' to Argentina – a well-known safe passage for Nazi refugees. [watch here](#)



### **Amin Maalouf & Jonathan Sacks: Rediscovering Our Moral**

**Compass** chaired by former Bishop of Edinburgh Richard Holloway. How can we rediscover human solidarity when the world feels like it has lost its way? The European Union is under extreme strain, the US has lost its moral credibility, and the world is so divided that it seems unable to address global threats to the environment and our health. In this event, two leading thinkers discuss potential solutions to the world's moral identity crisis. Formerly Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, Jonathan Sacks remains a leading public intellectual and his new book is *Morality: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times*. Born in Beirut, Amin Maalouf is one of the Arab world's most respected writers and winner of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award. His fifth novel, *The Rock of Tanios*, won the prestigious Prix Goncourt while his latest non-fiction book is *Adrift: How the World Lost Its Way*. Join them for an invigorating discussion about how a divided world might rediscover a shared humanity,. [watch here](#)



# Uighur Sufi Shrines: A Visit Raises Questions

## Introduction and background

Since 2014, more than a million Uighur Muslims have been arbitrarily detained in 're-education camps' (or as they've been termed since last year, 'vocational training centres' and 'boarding schools'). China maintains that the camps do not infringe the human rights of the Uighur, a Turkic-speaking ethnic group from China's northwestern region of Xinjiang. Journalists and foreign investigators have been prevented from visiting the camps and requested information has not been forthcoming. However, the testimonies of people who've managed to escape the camps and internal Chinese government documents leaked in late 2019 have revealed the harsh, repressive and involuntary regimes of the camps and the forced detention in them of the inmates.

Most people in the camps have not been charged with crimes and have no legal avenues to challenge their detentions. They have been targeted for a variety of reasons, but often seemingly for being Muslim, with many Uighurs termed extremists simply for practising their religion. Outside the camps, the eleven million Uighurs living in Xinjiang continue to suffer from the decades-long crackdown by the Chinese government on religious freedom and basic human rights as part of its anti-extremism campaign.

At sunset on 29th July/ 9th Av, Rabbi Mark Solomon led a Tisha B'Av service, the focus of which was the plight of the Uighur people. We were privileged to hear Sukkat Shalom member Stephanie Mitchell speak with passion about the Uighur people and their rich history and culture, and you can read her piece 'Uighur Sufi Shrines: A Visit Raises Questions' below. This year, we have selected as one of our Kol Nidrei charities, an organisation proposed by Stephanie, Rene Cassin, a Jewish charity that's campaigning for the Uighur people. Read about it, along with our other chosen charities in this Etrog..

*The article below was originally published published on May 17, 2017 by Stephanie Mitchell on the blog of the Woolf Institute in Cambridge. The Woolf Institute was established in 1998 to combine teaching, scholarship and outreach, focusing on Jews, Christians and Muslims, to encourage tolerance and foster understanding between people of all beliefs. Stephanie Mitchell is a member of Sukkat Shalom and a former student of the Woolf Institute course Jews, Christians and Muslims in Europe: Modern Challenges. This piece is written in her personal capacity and reflects no one's views except her own.*



**In spring 2014 I went on a voyage I'd dreamt about for much of my life**, to Xinjiang in northwest China. Xinjiang (in full, the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region) is the country's largest province, with a population of over 20 million spread over an area as large as France, Spain and Germany put together.

Xinjiang is divided between two enormous deserts, the Gobi and the Taklamakan, separated by thin corridors through which passed Silk Route explorers and traders over millennia. The province is surrounded and further split by the Tien Shan mountains and abuts Tibet to the south, as well as the "stans" of Central Asia to the west.

The Uighurs are a Turkic people who make up about half of the province's present population. The oases of southernmost Xinjiang, the focus of my 2014 travels, are nearly exclusively Uighur. The towns – starting from Kashgar, at the westernmost edge of China, and going on through Hotan, Kiriya, Niya -- are genuine oases. You can drive for hours and see no one until entering the next settlement, with golden sands to one side of the single highway and the way to the towering peaks of the Kunlun to the other. Equally, it takes about nine hours to drive across the Takla Makan from north to south and there is only one 'motorway service' stop about halfway across.

Over a thousand years ago, before the conversion of the population to Islam, many religions flourished here, including Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. Some of the most fascinating sites in the province are grottos full of Buddhist paintings and the area was renowned as a seat of learning where texts were translated from and into a multitude of languages of Central Asia and beyond.



Today, though, the native Uighur population of southern Xinjiang are almost exclusively Sunni Muslim, so it was not a complete surprise that the local guide, a young Uighur man born and raised in the province, would not enter those Buddhist caves with the three of us on the trip (a Christian, a Jew, and an atheist). Some of the caves became known in the West as a result of the actions of explorers who removed wall paintings and documents in actions later decried as vandalism, but which brought medieval treasures to the attention of international scholars. Now there are some graffiti in Arabic as evidently some residents are not happy about the presence nearby of Buddhist figures. (By way of counterpoint, the caves and their contents are well known to Japanese Buddhists, whose support has contributed to preservation efforts and who used to be the most frequent tourist to this remote area.)

The intersection of Buddhism and Islam, the past and the present, while fascinating, was not what most intrigued me; rather, it was the nature and texture of Islam there. Many sites there would look quite familiar to a visitor to other parts of the Muslim world: mosques, palaces or cemeteries feature ogee-shaped tombs of rulers or revered historical figures, sometimes

draped in cloth coverings. People visit some of these places as tourists for an hour or a day, whether out of piety, historical interest, or as sightseers.

Further out of the towns, however, are some very different sacred sites, *mazars* (shrines) in the middle of what is now the desert. They may have a focus point which is supposed to be a Sufi saint's tomb, but without the building and trappings of the more urban locations. There may be a semi-ruined mud brick structure in the middle of the *mazar*, with possibly some local religious presence, but much of the year they are little frequented. Traditionally, periodic pilgrimages to some of them attracted great crowds of people, who spent some days eating, praying and participating in ceremonies.



A few huddled figures, male or female, pray quietly, sitting on the sand in ones and twos, sometimes using the copies of the Qur'an tucked in wicker boxes attached to fencing that barely succeeds in keeping the sands off the ruins. Around the site are hundreds of sticks or branches planted singly and in bunches in the sands, bearing banners and ribbons. Some of the fluttering flags are beautifully made, but most are of what looks like any fabric to hand: from cottons and silks in the pale blue favoured across Central Asia as symbolic of the heavens and vast open spaces, to Gucci scarves, real or counterfeit. The mounds of sand and the clusters of sticks bearing fabric look far more like Mongolian shamanic or Buddhist sites than like Islamic. Here and there are remains of charred meat and bones. And in amongst all this, an occasional figure clothed only in filthy rags.

Our guide pointed one out and explained he was a mendicant Sufi, surviving in this remote place only on charity. Where the guide had previously been quite eager to explain the religious and historical significance of the sites we visited, the *mazar* and those visiting were clearly simultaneously precious and baffling.

"People make pilgrimages here, they have gatherings," he said, smiling – not a look he usually favoured. "And the Sufi" – he used the word to describe any of the few beggars we saw – "we are told this is wrong, this is not Islam".



He paused. "I have looked in the Qur'an, I cannot find anything that says you should live like this. These people – you see their clothes, they have no belongings, they only eat what people give them – and yet their families seem to approve. That is what I cannot understand. People appreciate them, their families help them to live like this, so there must be something good in it. But it is not Islam, as far as I can tell. We should not believe it. But" – he swept his arm out in a gesture to take in everything in the bleak but beautiful surroundings, the mendicant, the fluttering flags, the sky, the offerings – "this is what we do".

I took endless photos of the patterns of the sand, of the flags, and will never forget the unceasing sound of the fabric as it flapped in the endless desert winds. I do not know if what I saw and felt was Islam, shamanism, Buddhism, or any –ism. But that is what they do, those people, in that place.

**Stephanie Mitchell**



## Animal Portraits



Sukkat Shalom member Natalie Hurwitz has been shielding throughout lockdown, leaving her own home and garden for the first time in August, after more than four months in seclusion. During this time, she has been painting a series of engaging and characterful animal portraits for members of her family. These include her granddaughter's working cocker spaniel Jack; a rag doll cat, Georgie, who belonged (she's no longer alive) to her daughter-in-law; and two working cocker spaniel dogs, Beck and Bud, who belong to her daughter and son-in-law.



*Natalie says: 'It was only when I retired that I took up drawing and painting as a hobby. I went on a few courses and afterwards it was like everything else we learn, a matter of practice. Everyone can draw and paint. It is an enjoyable hobby.'*

# Hebrew Manuscripts: Journeys of the Written Word

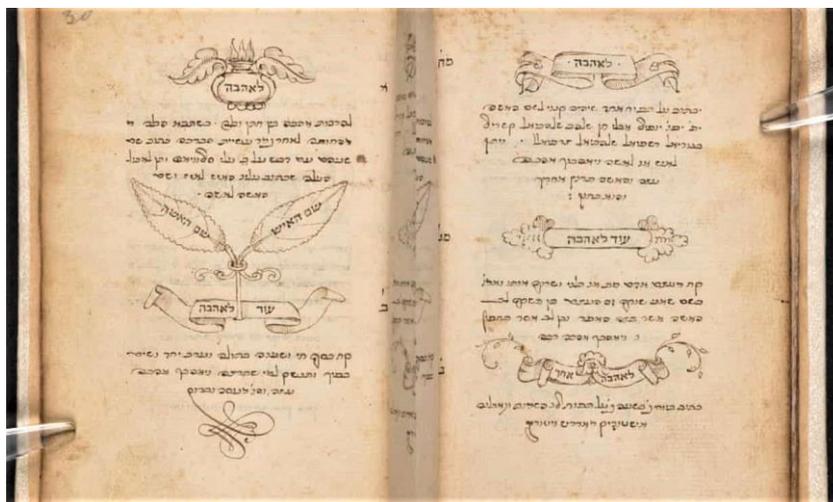
British Library, St Pancras, London

Tue 1 Sep 2020 – Sun 11 Apr 2021

Booking essential <https://www.bl.uk/events/hebrew-manuscripts>

The British Library promises to re-schedule bookings if you can't make it.

The opening of the Hebrew Manuscripts exhibition, which had originally been scheduled for March 2020, is part of the next phase of the British Library's gradual reopening after lockdown. The library has a rich collection of more than 3,000 Hebrew manuscripts and, before lockdown, completed a six-year project to digitise



them. Curator, Ilana Tahan said:

‘It was an extremely demanding and challenging initiative, but we are so proud to have accomplished it and we wanted to celebrate that by exhibiting a selection of manuscripts, some of which have never been on public display before’.

About 40 manuscripts are exhibited, dating back to the 10th century and spanning science, religion, law, music, philosophy, alchemy, magic and Kabbalah. A sixteenth century spellbook is illustrated here. Of particular interest to those of us here in Edinburgh, in Leicester and elsewhere who are participating in Rabbi Mark Solomon's 'Maimonides Mondays', will be the earliest dated (1380) copy of Maimonides' 'Guide for the Perplexed' as well as a letter handwritten by Maimonides to a teacher asking him for specific help.

## All about food

During lockdown, I've been getting the Oxford Poetry Library's daily 'poem for breakfast' and it's been exciting to be introduced to a fantastic and random selection of poems. When Imtiaz Dharker's poem 'Eggplant' arrived in my inbox two weeks ago, it seemed to reference the significance of the eggplant/aubergine in Jewish cookery (see recipe section and 'Food and the Spanish Inquisition') and as such to be a good herald for Etrog's first ever food section, which like the poem itself arrived in an unplanned, self-evolving fashion.

### **Eggplant** by Imtiaz Dharker

Impossible to hold,  
you have to cradle it,  
let it slide against your cheek.

If this could speak,  
this eggplant,  
it would have the voice  
of a plump child-god,  
purple-blue and sleek  
with happiness,  
full of milk,  
ready to sleep.

Poet, artist and filmmaker Imtiaz Dharker was born in Lahore, came to Glasgow aged one and describes herself as a 'Scottish Muslim Calvinist.' She is an eminent poet who was considered for the position of Poet Laureate following Carol Ann Duffy's tenure.

### **Sue Bard**

## ‘A seat at the table: a journey into Jewish food’

This was the name of the course that foodie and writer Ellen Galford, signed up for at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (founded in Vilna but now based in New York City). YIVO is dedicated to the study and preservation of all aspects of Eastern European Jewish history and culture, providing an ever-growing programme of online courses, lectures, publications, exhibitions, and archive materials. It was one of the many courses that YIVO has been offering ‘to provide meaningful content to sustain our minds and soul during these uncertain times’.

### **Ellen says of it:**

Not so much a course in the formal sense as it is the equivalent of a vast and varied buffet — offering heaping platters of social history, cultural anthropology, new takes on old recipes (as demonstrated by, among others, an engaging pair of young hipsterish restaurateurs), and some interesting stories. As with the catering at your second-cousin’s simcha, there is possibly a bit too much of it— It’s divided into seven very chunky thematic units, and by the time I got as far as Number 6, I found myself skipping bits or just staying long enough to sample one metaphorical forkful before moving on. But since it’s all pre-recorded and not interactive, you’re not going to hurt anyone’s feelings if you do. YIVO being NYC based, it’s more Delancey St than Whitechapel — but there’s a lot to learn, even for those of us who consider ourselves, rightly or wrongly, to be mavens already... And it is, like many of YIVO’s current courses, being offered free of charge which makes it ‘a vilde metsiye’ (Yiddish for ‘a real bargain’).

This course is running on from May – December 2020 and you can register at any time on <https://yivo.org/food>

## ‘To Life! Healthy Jewish Food’

**Judi Rose and Dr Jackie Rose, YouCaxton Publications 2020**

There’s a new cookery book on the butcher’s block – a reincarnation (of sorts) of Evelyn Rose’s legendary, and now classic Jewish cookery books. The authors are Evelyn’s daughter Judi, a food guru in her own right, and niece Jackie, a GP. Almost a third of ‘To Life! Healthy Jewish Food’ is devoted to instruction and prescription on ‘healthy eating’ and this tone and language pervades the whole book, including the recipes themselves, which include information on their carbs and calories and the healthy properties of the ingredients. While this approach will appeal to some and not others, the true test of a cookery book is whether its recipes work and whether they taste good. With this in mind, we asked two of our own foodies and talented cooks, Kate Silk and Charlie Raab, to try out some recipes for Etrog readers.

## WILD ROCKET SOUP WITH MINT AND PETITS POIS

### Charlie Raab said:

This excellent, strong-flavoured and colourful soup is easy to make (c. 20-30 minutes). You can play around with the ingredients: I used half spinach, half wild rocket, so the result was semi-house-trained; shallots instead of onion; and sunflower seeds instead of pine nuts. The recipe emphasises smooth blending, and that pays off. Served cold, it packs a punch; but some like it hot. Next time, I imagine a small dollop of sour cream would be a treat. I suppose it would also make it Jewish. I don't know about all the 'healthy' business, which doesn't come with that cultural territory.



*Serves: 6-8*  
large onion  
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
850 ml (1 ½ pints)  
strong vegetable stock  
450 g (1 lb) frozen petits pois  
½ -1 tsp fine sea salt  
1 small bunch fresh mint  
225 g (8 oz) wild rocket or baby spinach  
3 tbsp pine nuts  
10 grinds black pepper

Finely chop the onion. Heat the olive oil and onion in a soup pan with a pinch of salt, and cook gently, covered, for 8-10 minutes, until soft and golden, stirring occasionally. Add the stock, peas, and salt, bring to the boil and cook, covered, until the peas are tender, about 5 minutes. Remove the coarse stalks from the mint and set aside a few sprigs for serving. Add the rocket or spinach and mint to the pan, then simmer for 3 minutes, uncovered to preserve the lovely green colour. Purée in a blender until absolutely smooth (a food processor also works but the texture won't be quite so creamy). If possible, leave the soup to cool for half an hour or so for the

flavour to develop. Toast the pine nuts in an empty non-stick pan over gentle heat, shaking often, until golden on all sides, 3-5 minutes or on a baking sheet in the oven at 180°C/Gas 4 for 10 minutes, shaking the baking sheet halfway through. To serve hot, bring the soup back to a simmer, add the black pepper, then taste and re-season if necessary. If the soup is very thick, add a little stock or hot water. Serve sprinkled with pine nuts and the reserved mint leaves.

## BABY AUBERGINE & ROASTED PEPPER SALAD

### Kate Silk said:

I made half the quantity in the recipe but there was plenty for Nick and me to have it as a starter for two meals. It was equally good cold the second night. I couldn't get baby aubergines so used two small aubergines and sliced them as the recipe suggested. As using slices they cooked quicker than the recipe stated. Dressing tasted really nice, but I think my Greek yoghurt was thicker than the one they used, as not as easy to spread out on the plate and over the aubergine and peppers as they suggested in the recipe. Would make this again.



#### *Serves: 6-8*

1 kg (2 lb) baby aubergines  
2-3 tbsp olive oil  
fine sea salt  
4 roasted red peppers, about half a jar

#### *For the dressing:*

225 ml (8 fl oz) Greek yoghurt  
1 large clove garlic  
1 tsp ground cumin  
2 tbsp finely chopped  
coriander or flat-leaf parsley  
1 tbsp chopped fresh oregano  
1 tsp thin honey  
¼ tsp sea salt  
15 grinds black pepper

#### *To serve*

50 g (2 oz) toasted pine nuts  
1 tbsp pomegranate seeds  
1 tbsp chopped flat-leaf parsley  
extra virgin olive oil

Set the grill to high with the oven rack 8-10 cm (3-4") below the element. Halve the baby aubergines lengthways, or cut regular sized ones into 1.5 cm (½") diagonal slices. Arrange on a grill pan, brush generously with the oil on all sides, including the skin, and sprinkle both sides lightly with salt. Grill for 10-15 minutes until golden brown on one side, then turn the Slices over and grill for another 10-15 minutes, until the second side is golden brown and the flesh is meltingly soft and creamy. Keep a close eye on the aubergines while grilling so they don't burn.

Remove from the grill and cover lightly with foil. To make the dressing, put the yoghurt in a bowl, add the garlic, peeled and crushed in a press, followed by the rest of the dressing ingredients, and whisk together with a fork until

evenly mixed. Drain the roasted peppers from their liquid and slice them thickly. Spread a quarter of the dressing in the centre of a large plate or shallow serving dish. Add a third of the aubergines, then a third of the peppers. Build up two more layers in the same way, ending with the remaining dressing. Sprinkle with the pine nuts, pomegranate seeds and herbs, then finish with a generous drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Serve at room temperature.

## FRESH PEACH CROSTATA

### Kate Silk said:

This tasted quite nice as not too sweet, but the pastry was a bit heavy - guess this is due to the wholemeal spelt flour. It was easy to make. I cooked mine on baking paper but put it on a baking tray (no mention of this in recipe). The cooked tart was quite fragile, so I had to be careful getting off baking paper and onto a plate. Nick preferred the first recipe!

*Serves 6 -8*  
*For the pastry*  
1 egg  
2 tsp lemon juice  
1-2 tbsp cold water  
125 g (4 oz) cold butter  
85 g (3 oz) spelt flour  
140 g (5 oz) plain flour  
2 tsp caster sugar  
*For the filling*  
4 ripe peaches or nectarines  
1 tbsp spelt flour  
1 tbsp freshly squeezed orange juice  
1 tsp soft brown sugar  
squeeze of lemon juice  
*To glaze*  
1-2 tsp low-sugar apricot conserve  
squeeze of lemon juice

Separate the egg. Reserve the white for glazing the pastry, and whisk the yolk, water and lemon juice together. Cut the cold butter into small cubes, then put the flour, sugar and butter into a food processor and pulse until it resembles fine crumbs. Add the yolk mixture through the feed-tube and process until it looks like a moist crumble, about 10 seconds.



Turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead gently with your fingertips to remove any cracks. Flatten into a disk, wrap in clingfilm

or foil and chill for 20 minutes and up to 24 hours, or freeze until needed. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas 6. Cut the unpeeled fruit into 2 cm ( $\frac{3}{4}$ "

– if the stone clings to the flesh, just cut around it so you have 4 large pieces of fruit, then into slices. Mix the fruit with the rest of the filling ingredients. Lay the chilled pastry on a large sheet of baking paper, cover with a large sheet of clingfilm and roll out into a 30 cm (12") disc – this stops it sticking to the rolling pin without having to use extra flour. Peel off the clingfilm – if the pastry has become too soft and sticky to separate from the clingfilm, pop it into the freezer for 5-10 minutes, then try again.

Pile the fruit in the centre of the pastry, leaving a 4 cm ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ " margin clear of fruit around the circumference. Bring the pastry margin in, pleating it to create a circular enclosure that leaves most of the filling exposed. Using the side of your hand, coax the outer edge of the crostata into a neat circle. Whisk the egg white until frothy then brush it over the exposed pastry. Bake for 20 minutes, then reduce the heat to 190°C/Gas 5 and bake for a further 15 minutes or until the pastry is a rich golden brown. Transfer the crostata to a cooling rack, leave for 5 minutes then slide the paper out from underneath – this stops the underside becoming soggy. Warm the apricot conserve with the lemon juice until liquidy, then lightly glaze the pastry and exposed fruit.

## Aberdeen Jewish Community calls for recipes

Do you have a recipe that has a special meaning for you or your family, or a recipe that has a story attached to it? If you do, Aberdeen Jewish Community, would love to hear from you. They're collecting recipes and stories for a kosher cookbook to raise much needed funds for their community and all contributions will be credited.

Recipes should be sent to Evan at [studentliaison.asjcc@gmail.com](mailto:studentliaison.asjcc@gmail.com)

## Food and the Spanish Inquisition

From the 10th to the 14th century Spanish Jews had enjoyed a golden age of intellectual and material freedom under Muslim rule. However, from the end of the 14th century, under Christian rule, ill-feeling towards Jews began to increase. Jews were confined to ghettos (aljamas or juderias), and forced to wear identifying badges. Jewish neighbourhoods were burned down and Jews were massacred. There were also many instances of forced conversion to Christianity. However, this last tactic created a further problem for Catholic authorities. Instead of Jews being readily identifiable and segregated from Catholic society, many of these "new Christians", or conversos, were still secretly practising Judaism, or "Judaising". This led in 1478 to the founding of the Spanish Inquisition, whose mission it was to find these heretics.

The Spanish Inquisition was well acquainted with Jewish law and customs of the time, and food often played an important part of the evidence against the accused. The records collected by the Inquisition provide an excellent window into medieval Spanish Jewish life. Investigations focused on avoidance of certain foods, such as pork, shellfish and rabbits, the preparation of food for Shabbat, koshering of meat and what was eaten in relation to Jewish and Christian calendars.

For example, a family who were observed fasting on Yom Kippur, or having a festive meal on Rosh Hashana would fall under suspicion. Eating boiled eggs after funerals, and matzah and bitter herbs at Pesach, were similarly well known to the Inquisition. If converso families did not adhere to Christian food practices then they could fall under suspicion. For example, in 1504 Aldonza Lenez served cheese to some labourers during lent, which was used as evidence against her at her trial. As cheese and meat were allowed during lent to those in poor health, many conversos claimed to be ill. Franco Nunez defended himself at his trial by claiming to have a venereal disease!

One of the most common practices mentioned in Inquisitorial trials was the preparation of slow cooked stews on Fridays, called adafinas or hamim, which could be enjoyed warm on Shabbat when cooking is forbidden. This method of cooking was described by witnesses at

many trials. Eating other foods that did not require cooking, such as cold cuts of meat, or salads, could also be considered evidence of Judaizing.

There were also specific ingredients associated with Jews. These included aubergines, chickpeas, chard and meatballs. Initially the aubergine, introduced to Spain by Muslims, was eaten mainly by Muslims and Jews, but even after its incorporation into Christian Spanish cuisine, it was strongly associated with Jews. In addition to its relevance as evidence in Inquisition trials, aubergines were a popular motif in satirical court poems targeting conversos. For example: 'At this Jewish wedding party bristly pig was not consumed; not one single scaleless fish went down the gullet of the groom; instead an eggplant casserole with saffron and Swiss chard...' (Rodrigo Cota). Similarly, the old-Christian poet Roman taunts converso poets: 'Sing about your stacks of money, make your rhymes out of your riches, sing of chickpeas fat and sunny... sing stuffed chicken necks, a treat that you consume on Friday night...'. Contemporary Muslim and Christian sources disdain chickpeas as food for the poor, however they were particularly common in Shabbat stews and feature in the testimony of many inquisition trials.

Conversos were well aware of the potential consequences of being convicted of Judaizing. Some of these consequences included house arrest, seizure of property, public whipping, and being burned alive. This is not to mention the lengthy imprisonments and torture which were often a part of investigations. As such, conversos found many ways to conceal their Judaizing. Chuletas are a type of pork chop, however Jewish 'chuletas' referred to a French toast style dish which could be prepared with a remarkable resemblance to pork chops. Families would throw pork fat on their fires to create a convincing aroma, and then presumably eat their chuletas where curious neighbours would be able to see that they were good Christians.

After the expulsion in 1492 there were officially no Jews in Spain. This made Jewish practice for remaining converso families increasingly difficult and secretive, and many laws and customs were forgotten over the generations. Ironically the excellent records that the Inquisition kept on Sephardic Jewish practice became useful to later generations in reconstructing their Judaism, even up to the present day.

## **Lizy Smith**

Sources (and recipes):

'A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews' by David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson, published by St Martins Griffin (available cheaply on Kindle).

The Converso Cookbook (website) by Ana Gomez-

Bravo <https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/converso-cookbook-home/>

Interviews with Genie Milgrom, author of 'Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers: Unique Recipes and Stories from the Times of the Crypto-Jews during the Spanish Inquisition'



## Sukkat Shalom Contacts

### Community Phone – 0131 777 8024

This phone number sends voicemail to members of the Contact Team

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