

January – February 2019



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**Sukkat
Shalom**
Edinburgh Liberal
Jewish Community

**Scottish Charity
Number
SC 035678**

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Welcome to the first Etrog for 2019. You can see pictures of past events and notices about future ones. At the beginning of a new year we have several items where you could help the community by volunteering just a little of your time. We look forward to your support so as to share the load of organising the community. Already lots of you contribute - so thanks again to all of you.

Diary

January 2019			
Fri 4	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<u>Marchmont St Giles</u>
Fri 11	7:00 pm	Erev Shabbat service	<u>St. Marks Unitarian Church</u>
Fri 18	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<u>Marchmont St Giles</u>
Fri 25	6:30 pm	Tu B'shvat Seder, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	<u>Marchmont St Giles</u>
Sat 26	11:00 am	Shabbat service, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	<u>St. Marks Unitarian Church</u>
Sat 26	3:00 pm	Tea and Talmud	<u>St. Marks Unitarian Church</u>
Sun 27	4:00 pm	Discussion Group	<u>St. Marks Unitarian Church</u>
February 2019			
Fri 1	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<u>Marchmont St Giles</u>
Fri 8	7:00 pm	Erev Shabbat service, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	<u>St. Marks Unitarian Church</u>
Sat 9	3:00 pm	Tea and Talmud	<u>St. Marks Unitarian Church</u>
Sun 10	4:00 pm	Discussion Group	<u>St. Marks Unitarian Church</u>
Fri 15	6:00 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<u>Marchmont St Giles</u>
Sun 17	3:00 pm	Annual General Meeting	<u>St. Marks Unitarian Church</u>
Sat 23	11:00 am	Shabbat service	<u>St. Marks Unitarian Church</u>

Word from the Chair

It's a while since I've talked about discussions we've had at Council. Our November Council meeting covered a couple of what you might call strategic topics, which we followed up at the December meeting, and it feels appropriate to talk about them

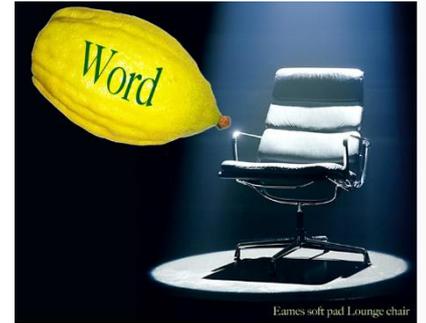
The first topic we covered was 'associate (or friends) membership'. This category of membership is common amongst

other Liberal Jewish congregations, and is available to non-Jews who wish to be – well, associated, or friends! – of the community. It is typically open to non-Jewish partners and in many cases to others who wish to be associated with the community. The discussion we had in November was whether we as Sukkat Shalom wish to create such a category. After some discussion, there was a significant majority of Council members in favour. What we agreed was that we would 'work up' a proposal for presenting to the AGM, since such a discussion is something that needs to be approved by the whole community.

The first stage of this 'work up' was to find out how other Liberal Jewish congregations operate associate membership, and at the December Council meeting we received the results of a survey which Stefano Giossi had conducted. Stefano contacted all the Liberal shuls asking about associate membership and of the 13 responses received, 11 have associate membership status open to non-Jews, while the other two allow non-Jews to be members of the community anyway. So it's clear that we are somewhat out of step with other Liberal communities – and indeed I've previously spoken to John Danzig, the Chair of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, on this topic, and John tells me that EHC have a friends membership category too. It's not that we should do something just because everyone else does, but it is useful to know what others do

We are now continuing the process of working up a detailed proposal to be considered and voted on at the AGM on Sunday 17th February. This detailed proposal will be included in the papers sent out prior to the AGM.

The second topic we discussed was succession planning, and specifically who will take over from me as Chair in 2020. As I said when I became Chair last year, it's my intention to be Chair for three years – subject of course to being elected at the AGM. This is still my intention, and while 2020 might seem far away, the AGM will be in February so it's only just over a year. Given that it is highly desirable for a future Chair to 'shadow' the current Chair, so that s/he has some idea



of what is required and what to do – or even not to do! – it is becoming quite important that we start thinking of who might stand for Chair in 2020. Having said that, we didn't come to any great conclusions, but it is something that we need to keep at the front of our minds.

There's one other topic that I want to mention, which we also discussed at the Council meetings, although not in as great a depth as the above two topics, and that's 'policy documents'. Personally I'm somewhat ambivalent about vision and mission statements, and I tend to think that if we don't know what our community is about, maybe we've lost it a bit. But as Chair, I've become more aware that it would be good having some brief documents just describing some of the important things we do, and more importantly, how we do them. As an example, if you look at our website there is information about cheder and when it meets. What we don't say though is who can actually attend cheder. So that it is clear to everyone, I think we should have something that says that it is children of members or prospective converts who are in the Exploring Judaism class who are eligible to attend. When I first started thinking about creating such policy documents, I wondered if it was becoming a bit too formal. I've come to the conclusion that it's as much about creating clarity as anything, so that everyone knows how we work. We agreed at Council that it would be good to put these documents on the website, so as they are developed, you should see them start to appear there.

I want to conclude by referring back to something I said in my last Word from the Chair, about how we support each other as a community. I was somewhat disappointed that no-one said anything to me about this, particularly as I have had feedback on other topics I've discussed in my WFTC. I do think it's an important topic, and I intend to raise it again at the AGM.

I hope you all had a good time over Chanukah (wasn't our cheder Chanukah party great? I've never been to a party where the kids are so engrossed in the activities that they're not all running around - see below) and here's hoping we all have a happy and prosperous 2019.

Nick Silk

Welcome to our new members

We're delighted to introduce new members, Nicole Hayes and Jacob Webber. They've both recently arrived in Edinburgh, though in Jacob's case not for the first time. We warmly welcome both of them and wish them all the best.

Nicole arrived from the US in September to start a one-year MSc in Applied Animal Behaviour and Animal Welfare at Edinburgh University's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies. One of the most established courses of its kind, Nicole chose it because of its emphasis on animal welfare. Nicole's particularly interested in how dogs get along with each other (or not), in the relationships between dogs and humans and in dog training. Once she's completed her MSc, Nicole intends to return to the US and establish a career as a dog behaviourist.



Nicole was born and brought up in Seattle and studied at the University of Washington. But she's no stranger to the UK. As she was growing up her father, an aerospace engineer, had frequent work stints in the UK. Nicole has fragmentary memories of a seven-month spell in Chester when she was three, overlaid by frequent subsequent month-long summer visits. She says that Chester, with its ancient Roman walls and evocative old town caused her to become 'history-obsessed'- an obsession she's looking forward to feeding while she's here.

Nicole's mother only discovered her own Jewish heritage as an adult and Nicole and her brother were brought up as secular Jews. However, at university, a course in 'Jews, Greeks and Romans' sparked Nicole's active practice of Judaism and she became a member of her local Reform Synagogue, Temple Beth Am. For Nicole, Sukkat Shalom is a bonus of her decision to study in Edinburgh and she's looking forward to getting involved. While she's excited and pleased to be here, there are things and people from home that she's missing, not least her girlfriend Jo, who's studying in Florida but hoping to visit Edinburgh in May.

Jacob just can't keep away from Edinburgh. He completed a degree in physics and music at the University of Edinburgh and stayed on to do an MSc on the application of computing to acoustics. He did escape to Cambridge for a year, but now he's happy to be back, embarked on a PhD on speech synthesis at the School of Informatics.



Originally from London, Jacob's family were members first of the North London Progressive Synagogue and when that closed, of Southgate Progressive Synagogue. Jacob says they attended 'when my parents could round as all up'. Jacob has come along to Sukkat Shalom before, but with the prospect now of a long stay in Edinburgh, decided it was time to become a member. Jacob plays the violin, though not as much now as he'd like (he used to be in the Edinburgh University Chamber Orchestra). He loves listening to music too, specially symphonies and concertos and is a keen follower of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Sue Bard

Chanukah party

games



candles



activities



and food (before the vultures landed)



Mitzvah Day with Edinburgh Direct Aid, 11/2018

Once again Sukkat Shalom joined forces with Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation to support the local charity Edinburgh Direct Aid (also this year one of our Kol Nidrei charities). EDA, founded in 1992 to counter ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia, supports the victims of warfare and natural disasters. Since 2013 its main activity has been helping the approximately 90,000 Syrian refugees who have fled over the border to the remote Lebanese town of Arsal, working in partnership with a Syrian organisation, Civil East Assembly (CEA) to do so. EDA provides humanitarian aid – clothes, shoes, school equipment, textile workshop equipment, etc. – that's collected, sorted and packed in Edinburgh and it supports education, employment and building programmes in Arsal. EDA is an all-volunteer charity: no-one is paid except local staff in destination countries.

This year, we donated clothes and helped out with sorting and packing boxes of clothes and other items to go on the next convoy from Edinburgh to Lebanon. The EDA warehouse is an impressively well-organised operation and the regular volunteers couldn't have been more helpful and friendly. It was a real pleasure and privilege to take part and interesting to learn something about the history of this great local organisation. Arsal is over 5000 ft. above sea level on the border with Syria, with bitterly cold winters, so the emphasis at this time of year was on getting warm winter clothing there.

The collection, sorting and packing is an ongoing process that takes place every Wednesday and Sunday from 11.00 am – 3.00 pm. If you'd like to help out on an occasional or regular basis, you can just turn up. Everyone's welcome and there's no need to let anyone know. The address is: EDA warehouse at 16a West Harbour Road, Edinburgh EH5 1PN <https://www.edinburghdirectaid.org/>

Sue Bard



We'd like your help at Sukkat Shalom services

Would you be able to help with our services? We're about to draw up the next six month's rota of people to be on the door greeting people as they arrive. This is a really important role, both in welcoming people and as a basic security check. Even if you're new to the community, or don't come to that many services, you can still volunteer – you'll get lots of support and help. It's a great way to help and to get familiar with the community. A lot of people helping means the tasks are shared.

Please email helpers@eljic.org if you want to volunteer.

Interested in finding out about our Chevra Kadisha?

Traditional Jewish law, halacha, defines what is permitted and what is forbidden for the dying, the dead, and the bereaved. Liberal Judaism is not prescriptive, viewing halacha as a guide rather than a mandate and within this framework, Sukkat Shalom will help people make decisions about rituals and observances that feel true to individual situations and relationships.

Sukkat Shalom, working with William Purves Funeral Directors, can provide a burial service for its members and, in certain situations, non-members. Where cremation has been chosen, this can also be arranged. This service is provided by a small group of members who form the Chevra Kadisha that makes or assists with all necessary arrangements, including taharah – the ritual washing and purification of the body - if this is required.

Sukkat Shalom member Ricky Hogg has been a key member of the group for several years but is now standing down and we're looking for someone to replace him. Funerals have been infrequent and, in this sense, the work of the group is not at all onerous. But when deaths do occur arranging for them becomes an immediate priority that needs to be carried out with sensitivity and efficiency. Ricky's role has consisted of supporting the bereaved and ensuring good communication between them, the funeral directors, Dean Cemetery and Rabbi Mark Solomon (if his services have been requested). It also includes maintaining a group of members of the community that can be called upon to assist with taharah.

Don't worry if you lack previous experience – there will be plenty of support available. If you're interested and would like to find out more about what's involved you can contact

Ricky on 07962 076017

Limmud comes to Scotland: November 2019

Edinburgh Jewish Cultural Centre SCIO is delighted that we are bringing together a group to organise a Scottish Limmud Day in Edinburgh in November 2019 (date and venue still tbc). Limmud's values – learning, expanding Jewish horizons, enabling connections, participation, empowerment, diversity and community – are very much in keeping with our own, and this will be a wonderful opportunity for the Jewish community in Scotland to explore our culture, traditions and future together.

Another key element of Limmud is volunteering, and we have formed a committee bringing people together from Edinburgh and Glasgow and further afield. We are still seeking volunteers to help with the organisation over the next 11 months and on the day itself, and we are also really keen to discover what everyone wants to get out of Limmud. Whether you want to volunteer, come along on the day or are just curious at this stage, we'd love to get your views: you can click [here](#) to complete a brief survey.

Click the following links if you want to know more about [Limmud](#) or [Edinburgh Jewish Cultural Centre](#). Or contact us at scotlandlimmud@gmail.com.

Janet Mundy

Tell us what you think about the new draft Siddur

As you know, Liberal Judaism produced a draft Siddur last year, as part of the process of developing a new prayer book for our movement. We used the draft prayer book for our Shabbat services for most of last year, and the idea was always that all communities would use the Siddur during 2018 and then provide feedback. The feedback will be collated, reviewed and used to determine how to progress the new Siddur. By the time you read this, we will have used the draft Siddur for the last time at our December Shabbat service. We have been asked to provide our feedback by the middle of January, under the headings:

- · Liturgical content
- · Language issues
- · Format issues
- · Miscellaneous

If you would like your views to be included in our feedback, there are two ways you can do this. One is to contact me directly – either by e-mail (to chair@eljc.org) or just speak with me! The other is to come to the erev Shabbat service on January 11th. After the service we'll be having a short discussion on the draft Siddur and collecting feedback. We need to send our feedback to Liberal Judaism by 13th January so be sure to contact me before then if you do want to provide feedback.

Nick Silk

Exciting new learning opportunities

Lehrhaus in the Clouds: on-line courses for Spring 2019 - Leo Baeck College

For communities such as ours that are small and a long way from London, the provision of live, interactive on-line courses such as these from Leo Baeck College offer fantastic access to a wide range of topics and academic specialists in a situation approximating a live tutorial. Numbers for each course are limited in order to preserve the tutorial setting. Back-up materials are provided and each session remains live for seven days after transmission, when it can be downloaded. For the first time, there are two Modern Hebrew courses, something that we get regular requests for.

For more information about these courses and about ZOOM, the on-line platform being used, click on the title links. Payment can be made on-line or by sending a cheque made payable to Leo Baeck College, or by phone using a credit/debit card. If you have any questions, you can contact Jarek: Lehrhaus@lbc.ac.uk, 020 8349 5600.

[Professor Melissa Raphael: Reflections on Women in Modern Jewish Philosophy, History and Art](#) - 4 week live ON-LINE course, Sunday 11.00am- 12.30pm, Dates: 3, 10, 17, 24 March 2019

Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris and Rabbi Robyn Ashworth-Steen: [Radically Re-Thinking the Exodus story](#) - 4 week live ON-LINE course, Thursday 7.30 - 9.00pm, Dates: 28 March, 4,11,18 April 2019

Miriam Edelman: [Introduction to Jewish Ethics: Torah of Money](#) - 4 week live ON-LINE course, Thursday 7.00 - 8.30pm, Dates: 7, 14, 21, 28 February 2019

Liat Aharonovich- [Modern Hebrew: Beginners](#) - 8-week ON-LINE course, Tuesday 5.30 - 7.30pm, Dates: 07 May- 25 June 2019

Liat Aharonovich- [Modern Hebrew: Intermediate](#) - 8-week ON-LINE course, Tuesday 3.15 - 5.15pm, Dates: 07 May- 25 June 2019

Boys' night out – back by popular demand!

We're organising another BNO – date and venue to be confirmed. Meet old friends and make new ones – especially if you're new to Sukkat Shalom. Contact Ricky Hogg on 07962076017 or rickyhogg7@gmail.com to book a place asap.

(NOTE: Women's night out details will follow shortly)

Scottish Symphony Orchestra Concert 10 February

15:00 Sun 10 Feb 2019 Usher Hall, Edinburgh

The main item in this concert is Mahler's first Symphony, It is part of the SSO's 'Composer Roots' project that will uncover the symphony's origins in Jewish folk music with the klezmer band She'Koyokh. To open, an effervescent Broadway overture by Mahler's great champion Leonard Bernstein and a magnificent rarity by a late-romantic master who shared Bernstein and Mahler's Jewish heritage. In Ernest Bloch's 'Schelomo', the solo cello is King Solomon, and its voice is his Song – by turns passionate, forthright, and uninhibitedly sensuous.

To book tickets and for further details see [here](#) or go to the Usher Hall box office,

Gica in Samos

Musician and Sukkat Shalom member Gica Loening is spending a mid-winter month on the Greek island of Samos, host to large numbers of refugees. There, she'll be working with the organisation Samos Volunteers, offering musicmaking activities at their Alpha Education Centre in the small town of Vathi, next to the refugee camp.

Conditions for the refugees on Samos are exceptionally bad as a result of the 2016 EU–Turkey deal, one of the results of which has been to trap large numbers of people on the Aegean islands in immensely overcrowded and inadequate conditions where they wait interminably for asylum assessment.

Samos Volunteers aims 'to bring humanity to (their) time on the island' through informal educational opportunities, psychosocial support, children's activities and an emergency laundry station. Gica will be reporting back in the next edition of Etrog. In the meantime, you can follow her blog, Gica in Samos <http://gicaloening.simplesite.com/>

You can also find out more about Samos Volunteers, and donate at <https://samosvolunteers.org/donations/> as well as visit their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/samosvolunteers/>

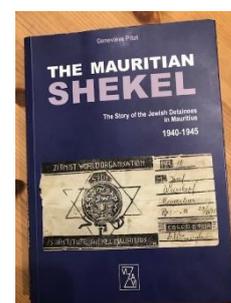
BOOK REVIEW *The Mauritian Shekel*

The story of the Jewish Detainees in Mauritius 1940 – 1945, by Genevieve Pitot.

Translated from French by Donna Edouard. Published by VIZAVI Editions, Port Louis, Mauritius (second edition 2017)

'If these people wittingly set out to break our laws, they must take their chance of where they get sent to. They have a simple remedy viz. to stay at home' (David Lloyd George, 30 September 1940)

In 1991, Genevieve Picot, a Mauritian then living in Germany, visited an exhibition in Berlin where she noticed the 1930s work of an artist called Anna Frank. The familiar signature on the drawings re-awakened Genevieve's memories of 1942 when a new art teacher, Madame Frank, appeared at her Mauritian school. After a year, the popular lessons stopped abruptly and Picot never saw her teacher again. Thinking back to this time, she became aware that although she and her classmates had been told that Madame Frank was one of many refugees who'd been 'saved' by the British, she knew nothing about them nor why they were in Mauritius, at that time a British colony.



'The Mauritian Shekel' is the result of Picot's resolve to find out and is both a story well-told and a work of scholarship. Picot sought out and interviewed survivors, had access to personal diaries and journals and conducted extensive archival research. She writes with warmth and empathy for the individuals concerned, but with a dispassionate consideration of the historical and contemporary context as she patiently disentangles the complicated story of how 1580 Jewish refugees attempting illegal emigration to Palestine from Nazi-occupied Europe ended up as detainees on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius.

Those refugees were mostly from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Danzig, a contingent organised by the controversial Viennese Jewish businessman Bernard Storfer who, from 1940, Adolf Eichmann charged with organising and financing illegal transports of Jews to Palestine from the Reich. Unlike the Zionist organisations active in Aliya Bet (illegal immigration to Palestine) that prioritised trained and committed young pioneers, Storfer took anyone who could scrape together the money. While the refugees included 300 young Czech Zionists, the rest were a diverse group that included secular, orthodox and reform Jews, rich and poor, old and young, Zionist and non-Zionist. Most of them outlived Storfer, who in 1943 was sent to Auschwitz where he was shot.

The prospective passengers gathered at Bratislava in December 1939 to embark on their epic journey down the Danube to Tulcea on the Black Sea where they would change from their river boats to the ocean-going *Atlantic* arriving in Haifa almost a year later in November 1940. It was an epic journey, full of delays and extreme privation. When the coal ran out, the ship continued its journey by the burning of partitions, doors, bunk beds, life-boats and all but one of the masts, eventually making its skeletal way to Haifa.

Throughout 1939 and 1940 the British Government imposed increasingly punitive measures to halt illegal immigration to Palestine. Long before it reached its destination, the *Atlantic* was explicitly targeted for the eventual exemplary deportation of its passengers from Palestine to 'somewhere' where they would be detained until the end of the war. There was debate as to where they should go. Detention in Great Britain was out of the question. Lloyd George, at the time Secretary of State for the Colonies, said, '*I can think of nothing to commend it! I can never agree to those people being brought to England on any terms temporary or otherwise.*' On the very day that the *Atlantic* began its Black Sea voyage, Mauritius was suggested.

On arrival in Haifa, the *Atlantic* passengers were indeed forcibly deported despite their extreme distress and resistance. Re-embarked on more seaworthy steamers, they set sail for Mauritius. The refugees never forgot the warmth of the welcome they received from the Mauritians themselves – from the dock workers who came on board to help with their luggage, bringing them oranges and lychees, to the people who lined the streets throwing flowers as they passed. But they were utterly shocked when they arrived at their destination to discover that far from being offered asylum, they were prisoners, the men separated from the women and children, and all living under guard. Since they had not been convicted of any offence, special legislation was needed to authorise their detention, which was on the grounds that 'they had entered or attempted to enter Palestine without being authorised to do so.' They were forbidden to

communicate with the outside world and denied the right to challenge the legality of their detention.

The detainees were to a large extent allowed to organise themselves, which they did with vigour, establishing orthodox and reform synagogues for the religiously observant (the majority were not), kosher and non-kosher kitchens, a school, adult education and cultural programmes, an orchestra, vegetable gardens and workshops where the tailors, seamstresses, shoemakers, tinsmiths, carpenters and mattress-makers among them supplied much of what was needed. During the second year, many restrictions were lifted, though they were later re-imposed. This was the year that Madame Anna Frank taught art at Genevieve Picot's school. The strict segregation of the sexes ended and approximations of family life allowed. Sixty children were born during the period of detainment and the rabbi officiated at numerous marriages.

On the liberation of the camp in 1945 all the refugees were taken to Palestine, where most opted to remain. Today there's a small Jewish community in Mauritius, the Island Hebrew Congregation. It does not include anyone connected to the detainees but does sterling work in keeping the memory of this episode alive.

Mauritians welcomed the refugees on their arrival, but the strict detention rules imposed for most of the time they were there meant that they disappeared from public awareness and faded from



memory once they'd left. I have lifelong friends in Mauritius and have spent time there but had never heard of this story until I came across it in 2017 in David Cesarani's *Final Solution: the fate of the Jews 1939 – 49*; nor had my friends heard of it. But when I visited them again in 2018, we went together to the multi-faith St Martin's Cemetery with its well-kept and peaceful Jewish cemetery shaded by a huge tamarind tree, where the 127 Jews who died during the period of detention lie.

Sue Bard

The Mauritian Shekel is available from online booksellers including Amazon at <https://www.amazon.co.uk>

Sukkat Shalom Contacts

Community Phone – 0131 777 8024

This phone number sends voicemail to members of the Contact Team

To reach the Care Team, call the Community Phone or email care@eljc.org

Contact Team – contact@eljc.org

Etrog Team – newsletter@eljc.org

Chair: Nick Silk

Treasurer: Andrew Yule

Secretary: Gillian Raab

Membership: Stefano Giossi

Scottish Charity SC035678