



Etrog

The Newsletter of Sukkat Shalom Edinburgh

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Word From the Sofa

Maurice Naftalin

On the day that I write this, the Scottish government has announced a date for ending all major legal Covid restrictions. Although we should know better by now than to make predictions about this pandemic, it appears that it may be drawing to a close in Scotland, for the moment at least. The days of complete lockdown, in the spring of last year, seem a long time ago — if, that is, you're one of the lucky ones. Not so for the families of the estimated 35,000 UK care home residents who died in the first two months of the pandemic.

cont'd p.2



Diary

Services and discussions are continuing remotely in the immediate future (but see ***Future Plans for Our Services*** on p.14 for future plans)

Services

Erev Shabbat

Friday at 7pm

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday at 11am

Havdalah

Please consult the weekly reminder times.

Study Sessions

Philosophy

(currently *Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed*)

Mondays at 1pm

Tea & Talmud

Thursdays at 12pm

Exploring Judaism

Sundays at 11am



Word From the Sofa

cont'd

Maurice Naftalin

They still await an explanation of this deadly disaster. Part of that explanation is widely known: Covid-positive people were discharged from hospital into care homes without any testing. Discovering exactly how that came to happen is important, but the bigger underlying story is already well known: the health and care sectors are seen as quite separate, so that the problems of one can be solved at the expense of the other.

Perhaps it's an image problem that we tend to see health and social care so differently: it's hard to imagine a social care equivalent to *Holby City* or *Casualty*. It's certainly not because we

need one more than the other: virtually everyone will at some point have caring responsibilities, or will have a family member who needs care or — sooner or later — will need to be cared for themselves. Yet, although we're told repeatedly that social care is on the point of collapse and politicians repeatedly vow to fix the problem — most recently, Boris Johnson on the steps of Downing Street after the 2019 election — nothing ever seems to happen. At least, that's what I thought until two weeks ago. I didn't realise that because social care is a devolved issue, Scotland and England have been moving in quite different directions. I'm only a little wiser now, so you'll be

relieved to hear that I don't propose to educate you in the detailed differences. But you should know about the publication in February of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland.

This review, commissioned by the Scottish Government and produced in only five months, is ambitious and wide-ranging. The panel listened to a wide range of people and organisations representing those providing, receiving, and funding care (without forgetting the 700,000 unpaid Scottish carers). Their report makes the case for a National Care Service, which would have parity with the National Health Service. It would set national standards for care and be accountable to government, which could no longer rely on local authorities to take the blame for cuts in funding. Establishing a National Care Service may sound like a bureaucratic change, but in fact it would be part of a shift of perspective to seeing social care support as an investment rather than a cost, enabling

capabilities rather than managing need, starting from a basis of human rights and only then seeking the right financial mechanism to enable them.

This complex and difficult policy area may seem remote, but actually what's decided will have an impact on almost all of us personally at one or several points in our lives. The Scottish Government has promised to act on the report, without so far setting a timetable. After what I've learned, I shall certainly be watching their progress!

Finally, on a lighter note, for the all-important classic question: Is It Good For the Jews? Well, although none of the panel appears to be Jewish, the final summary of the report ends with these words: "If not now, when? If not this way, how? And if not us — who?" So it seems that, somehow or other, Jewish wisdom guided their conclusions: divine inspiration in action!

Three Life Events

Sue Bard

Significant events in the lives of three members of our community: Isak Hershon's Bar-Mitzvah, Marloes Schoonheim's admission to Judaism, and Willem Steele's confirmation of Jewish status are recounted here, all of them strongly connected to the Netherlands. Many of our members travel long, circuitous and demanding routes to Judaism, and our community is enriched by the special qualities of character and experience they bring and the way in which they make us think about what it means to be Jewish.

I would like to thank Marloes for the work that she put into 'My Story' and for the hours that Willem and his devoted son Gareth spent together articulating his 'Hundred Year Journey' to make it accessible to us, and to others in the future. Isak Hershon is only 14, and was born and has been brought up as a Jew. But for him and his family his Bar-Mitzvah, as well as being a personal, family and communal event, was a time to investigate, reflect on and connect with being Jewish at another time, in another place.



Isak's Bar-Mitzvah: 12 June 2021, 2 Tammuz 5781

Sue Bard

Mazal tov to Isak, his parents Lorraine and Dan, his brothers Elkan, Abel and Elias and all their family.



Watch the video, 'The 16th Train' here: <https://vimeo.com/563627481>

We were delighted to celebrate the Bar-Mitzvah of Isak Hershon, to listen to Isak chant his portion from Parashat Korach with such skill and confidence and to enjoy the participation of the whole Hershon family in such a musical, beautiful and moving service, including Isak's guitar rendition of Debbie Freedman's 'And the youth shall see visions'.

In preparation for his Bar-Mitzvah, Isak 'twinned' himself with another Isak, from Amsterdam. The Hershons went to the Netherlands in 2019, visiting Westerbork, the site of the former transit camp that now houses a museum,

exhibitions and archives memorialising the estimated 97,000 Jews who from 1942 — 1944 were deported from there to Auschwitz, Sobibor and Bergen-Belsen. In the archives, Isak Hershon found Isak Engelder whose name and birthday he shares.

Instead of preparing a d'var Torah, Isak and his mother, Lorraine, made a transfixing short video, 'The 16th Train'. Narrated by Isak, it tells the story and ultimate fate of a long-established Jewish family in the Netherlands under Nazi occupation.

Marloes' Story

Marloes Schoonheim

Marloes (left) and Marjan



Ever since I attended my first Sukkat Shalom online service, in April 2020, I have felt very welcome. I met so many friendly people, became an (associate) member, enjoyed the interactive services and very quickly felt part of the community. It was extraordinary to experience this level of inclusion — as a person without a Jewish background, in the process of converting, living in the Netherlands. Now that I've been with the Liberal Judaism Beit Din I can imagine people wondering — what brought me to Judaism, why did I convert in the UK (instead of in the Netherlands), and am I planning to stay with Sukkat Shalom?

Twenty-eight years ago I was asked to perform — playing the harp — in a benefit concert for the rebuilding of the local synagogue. Before that time I had had no contact with the local Jewish community at all. One of the other performers at the concert was a modern-Orthodox Hazzan from Israel. Provokingly I told him I had lost my Christian faith since nobody was able to answer my questions about the bible. He invited me for lunch — he was temporarily based in the Netherlands — and I got to ask all my questions. He clearly enjoyed our discussion and encouraged me to come up with more questions. I was fascinated with the fact that Judaism stimulates critical thinking, the sources of Jewish practice and thought, the theology behind his answers and — to be honest — the delicious Israeli lunch. The Hazzan told me I could convert to Judaism, and suggested to start studying. In the months that followed, I read a stack of books. Whether the topic was Jewish religion, history, culture, or the Jewish people: it felt familiar, as if I had discovered the puzzle I was a piece of. When I contacted the Hazzan again, it turned out that he had gone back to Israel. I got in touch with the Dutch Liberal Jewish community. With two

rabbis I had very pleasant conversations; a third made it clear I was not welcome. My only option was to contact an orthodox community — and I found one that received me with open arms.

That's how I started an orthodox giur at the age of 19. I became part of a community, shared in its joys and sorrows, attended regular services and celebrated holidays. I lived with a Dutch-Jewish family and copied their daily, traditional lifestyle. I spent every Shabbat with a member of the community, a mentor who decided what I was reading and which Jewish practice I was to add to my gentile life. I tried to find alternative sources of information about Judaism, but this was quite a challenge — which is hard to imagine now that we have the Internet. In the only Jewish bookstore in the Netherlands I asked, crimson-faced, for a book about Judaism and homosexuality. The book “Like Bread on the Seder Plate” was ordered for me from the US. It turned out to be just as optimistic about being Jewish and queer as the title suggests. I came out and my orthodox giur came to an end, two-and-a-half years after it had started. I was told that it would be impossible to be

both queer and Jewish — and I felt I didn't have a choice but to let go of my Jewish life. I recognise myself in an article Rabbi Mark wrote around that time, for the 1995 publication *Jewish Explorations of Sexuality*: “Many Jewish lesbians and gay men sacrifice one aspect of their being to the perceived demands of the other.” I felt heartbroken about leaving the community, and I felt I had failed its members, myself, and God.

Years went by and I met and married Marjan, the love of my life and my wife for over 17 years now. We moved to the States, lived in Taiwan, France and Switzerland. I kept attending services wherever we lived and was offered conversion — but a Dutch rabbi warned me that such a conversion was not likely to be accepted in the Netherlands. I had almost become resigned to the idea that I would remain a gentile interested in Judaism when Marjan and I visited Tel Aviv. I saw an advertisement for a Kabbalat Shabbat service led by a female rabbi who first did an hour of yoga with her congregants. I saw another advertisement for a humanistic synagogue. I realised Judaism had always been much more diverse than I had realised. And that there probably

was space even for me. Back in the Netherlands I contacted the rabbi of Beit Ha'Chidush, a progressive Beit Ha'Chidush, a progressive community in Amsterdam. A wonderful diverse community, it's the only one in the Netherlands that welcomes converts in a relationship with someone who is not Jewish nor wants to convert — and it's allied with Liberal Judaism UK. That's how I got in touch with Rabbi Mark, whom I visited in London in 2019 - an unforgettable experience. He showed me around in the Montagu centre and he gave me an entire list of books to read about Jewish feminism and on being Jewish and queer. At the Jewish film festival, I saw the documentary about Mark, and met his partner Lobo. I realised I had a lot of books, films and podcasts to enjoy on diversity in Judaism.

In this process coronavirus had one very positive effect for me: the fact that all social gatherings went online. I could attend Rabbi Mark's classes on Exploring Judaism — in addition to the giur classes offered in Amsterdam. I was able to attend Sukkat Shalom services, get to know members, learned new prayers and melodies, and enjoyed the singing of

Rabbi Mark, Leon, Phyllis, Naomi and others. I became familiar with Siddur Lev Chadash which is now my go-to prayerbook. I attended Liberal Judaism's Biennial Weekend and enjoyed so many sessions — in particular the one on Liberal Jewish Liturgy with Rabbi Mark. I also started learning how to leyn with Mich Sampson. By being the only movement that welcomes Dutch converts in an interfaith relationship, Liberal Judaism offers people like me a community, wonderful services, and lots of opportunities for learning.

On June 10th I appeared before the Liberal Judaism Beit Din. After more than 28 years, my journey has come to an end and I'm finally home. I understand from my Dutch rabbi that if I ever want to join a liberal community in the Netherlands, my Liberal Judaism conversion is recognised — but my membership of a Dutch community would have to be evaluated by a rabbi first. It won't be necessary: I have Sukkat Shalom and I hope I can contribute to the community that has made me feel so welcome! All I need is Internet, and an occasional ferry to Newcastle.

Journey

Sue Bard

In the first Etrog of 2021, we published the story of Willem Steele's extraordinary menorah:

eljc.org/newsletter/January2021.pdf

That story included allusions to Willem's unusual path to Sukkat Shalom, a story that began 100 years ago, in 1921, in the small town of Krabbendijk in the Dutch province of Zeeland. This was the year that Adriaan Verhage, who was apprenticed to his shoemaker father, married Johanna Kodde. Adriaan's father set the young couple up in business about 12 miles away in Kruiningen — at a distance, because of the scandal of Johanna's pregnancy. Adriaan and Johanna were Willem's Opa (grandfather) and Oma (grandmother); his mother was Cathalina, born in 1925, the second of their five children.

Adriaan's and Johanna's families were both Jewish, friendly with the few other Jewish families living in Krabbendijk, lighting candles on Friday nights, but doing little else. There was no synagogue and nothing that could be described as a



community. In Kruiningen, Adriaan and Johanna were the only Jews; they too continued to light their candles. Willem describes it as a 'low level attachment to Judaism'.

After Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and as his anti-Semitic policies became more evident and explicit, these families, like many others in the Netherlands, decided to merge into their local Christian communities. The minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Kruiningen became a family friend and helped in this process, providing forged baptism certificates. The Friday night candles became Sunday night candles. Willem's mother, Cathalina, still quite a young child and wanting to be like everyone else, knew that she was Jewish, but thought of

herself as Christian, which she continued to do as an adult.

After the Netherlands was occupied by the Nazis in 1940, the family in Kruiningen had two unwelcome guests billeted on them: Dieter, a WW1 veteran, the other a young member of the Nazi Party, referred to by the family as 'the serpent'. Cathalina's older brother, Adrie, was taken as forced labor to German ammunition factories, surviving the war to walk the 500 miles back to Kruiningen from Chemnitz. Opa (Adriaan) became an active member of the Resistance.

Liberation came in 1944, and with it, a new lodger for the family — William Steele, originally from Cumbria — who, lying about his age, had joined the army in 1939 as a 16-year-old. He was made welcome by the whole family, arriving with a 'compo pack' containing various long unheard-of luxuries, including cigarettes, chocolate, biscuits and sweets. He and Cathalina got on like a house on fire and married in 1946. They went to the UK, settling in Buckinghamshire, where Billy worked as a fireman. In 1948, their only child, William (Willem) was born.

Willem grew up close to his Dutch family, staying with them every summer throughout the 50s. 'Hidden in plain sight', the whole family had survived the war and the children, Adrie, Cathalina, Piet, Lien and Jacobus all established successful lives. While, in retrospect, there were signs of Judaism — candle lighting (that had reverted to Friday nights); the menorah that Cathalina kept in a cupboard; Willem's memory of being called 'Moshe' as a young child; the pro-Israel stance of the whole family — it was never made explicit. This didn't happen until 1967, when Opa and Willem (aged 18) were discussing the Six Day War. He said 'didn't we do well?'. Willem said 'You mean we're Jewish?' 'Yes, we're Jewish' Opa replied. For Willem 'it was as if a cloud had lifted and everything clicked into place'.

From that time on, Willem felt Jewish, and presented himself as Jewish, but as he puts it, 'didn't do much with it', having no Jewish friends and no community. In 1974/75 he went to Israel, spending several months on Kibbutz Beit Alfa in the Beit She'an Valley in Lower Galilee, a formative experience for him. From that time, Willem's Jewish expression took a secular, pro-Zionist

form. His agnosticism accommodated this, but was also a questioning space that did not go away, and in which he eventually recognized himself as a 'believer' who, as he put it 'would like to see if I could become a proper Jew'.

The question Willem was left with was one of which branch of Judaism to go for? He read '*The nine questions people ask about Judaism*' by Dennis Prager and Joe Telushkin and Pete Tobias's book '*Liberal Judaism: A Judaism for the Twenty-First Century*'. He felt this showed him the way, and so it was Liberal Judaism that he chose.

And then there was COVID. Willem's wife Jane is a Jehovah's Witness. Willem was impressed with the creative way in which the Witnesses had responded to the pandemic, all their services going immediately online 'with software called Zoom'. Wondering whether progressive Judaism might be doing something similar, Willem googled 'Liberal Judaism', refining his search to include 'zoom' and 'lo and behold, someone

called Mark Solomon popped up!' and put Willem in touch with Sukkat Shalom.

Willem said 'The people at Sukkat Shalom were immensely friendly, helpful and inviting. They even encouraged me to participate in services.'

Initially, Willem was just looking to attend services, but was encouraged that Rabbi Mark 'thought this old mongrel was worth bringing in from the cold'. Since then, he has been a regular attender at services, at the weekly 'Exploring Judaism' sessions as well as the Philosophy and Talmud classes. He is also learning Biblical Hebrew through The Ark education programme. On 10th February 2021, his Jewish status was confirmed by the Liberal Beit Din

Willem says: 'Here I am. I'm happy. I feel as if I've come home. It was a hundred-year journey. 1921- 2021'

Willem's son, Gareth Steele, has now built his father his own website. You can find out more about Willem's story there.

Home page: moshe.skynetdevlin.uk

The full 100 year story: moshe.skynetdevlin.uk/my-story

Project menorah story: moshe.skynetdevlin.uk/menorah

In Memoriam Sonia Elam

Sue Bard, based on Rabbi Mark's eulogy

We were sad to hear of the death of Sonia Elam, mother of Michael, a valued member of our community. Sonia's funeral on 2 June at Oakvale Service Room was attended by members of her family, including many of her 11 grandchildren, joined by friends from Sukkat Shalom afterwards at Dean Cemetery. Rabbi Mark Solomon gave testament to Sonia's active, colourful but also difficult and restive life. Many of us had met Sonia, always in high spirits, at communal seders or breaking the fast at La Piazza restaurant, or at the memorable Burns Night supper at Salisbury Road synagogue in 2018 where she — like all of us there — delighted in hearing Michael declaim *Tam O'Shanter* to a large and appreciative audience.

Sonia's birth father, Ted Woolf, was a Russian Jew from the East End of London, while her mother Margaret Zylberberg or Cameron was a Scot from a Romany background. Sonia was adopted as a young child by a Catholic family and baptised into that faith. Brought up in Oakley, Fife, on leaving school she worked in Edinburgh at Duncan's Chocolate factory, and



Sonia with Rikki, 11 and Michael (right), 8

at Burton's biscuit factory. After a spell as a dinner lady at Dollar Academy in Clackmannanshire, she moved to London. There she lived with her birth father and his family, and worked on the buses both as a driver and conductor. Much later in her life, in Edinburgh, just after devolution, she took to the buses again, becoming a tour guide on the city's open-topped buses.

In 1967, Sonia married Richard Elam. They had four children, Anne-Marie, Richard, Michael and Sarah-Jane. Richard was a heavy machine operator who worked on the lengthy construction of the A9. As new sections started, the family moved with the job, going further and further north, living in caravans in different places, the children changing schools as they went.

Sonia always dreamed of being a writer and wrote poetry throughout her life, publishing a book of her own poems 'Chasing the Wind.' After her marriage to Richard ended, her subsequent relationship and continuing friendship with John Finlayson, an investigative reporter with the *Sunday Mail* gave her the encouragement and the way in to working as a freelance reporter with *The*

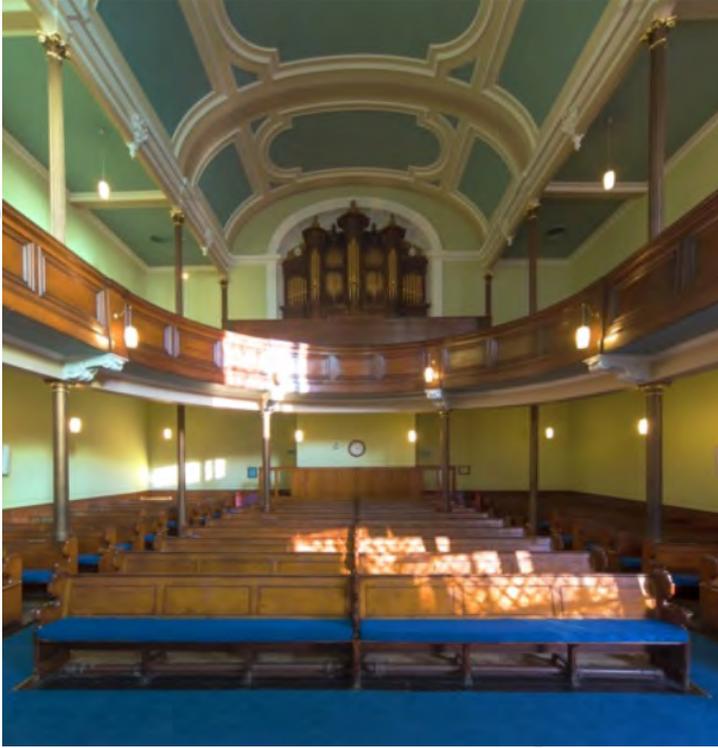
Daily Record in Glasgow. During the miners' strike of 1984, Sonia got *Valleyview* off the ground; a free community newspaper for residents of the Fife mining village of High Valleyfield, and later on, when Sonia moved to Edinburgh, she worked as a local reporter with *Wester Hailes Sentinel*.

Sonia and her children continued to flit from one house and one neighbourhood to another. She never stopped moving. For the last ten years of her life, with her health and mobility declining, it tired her out, but she couldn't break the habit of a lifetime. During her last 18 months Sonia needed a lot of support and eventually moved to a nursing home. Michael and his partner Mandy continued to give her loving care throughout this time.

Sonia was buried on a beautiful day in the presence of family and friends in Sukkat Shalom's green and sheltered corner of Dean Cemetery, near Sonia's birthplace, and a point from which you can see across the Firth of Forth to Fife, where she grew up.

Going Live: Future Plans for Our Services

Nick Silk



St Marks Unitarian Church

In the last edition of Etrog, Gillian reported that our plans for services were still being developed but that we were committed to holding both in-person and on-line/Zoom services. While that is still very much our plan, we have put a bit more flesh on the bones in terms of what this will look like, albeit that our plans will, I'm sure, continue to evolve as restrictions themselves change, be they government-imposed or indeed based on the plans that St Mark's and Marchmont St. Giles have in place.

So, what do we think our service schedule will look like? Our thoughts at the moment are:

- We will hold two erev Shabbat services and one Shabbat service each month by Zoom. These will be the same format as our current on-line services, and all other things being equal Rabbi Mark will lead at least one and hopefully two of these each month.
- For our in-person services, we will hold one kabbalat Shabbat, one erev Shabbat and one Shabbat morning service each month. The Shabbat morning service will be led by Rabbi Mark.
- We hope to be able to stream the in-person services. But if you saw the recent Ark synagogue services we joined, please don't be disappointed with ours. We're not going to aim for anything like the level of technical excellence that they achieved. To confirm, these will be streamed and not interactive. We are hoping to hold our first in-person services from mid-August and we will be looking to stream these services.

It should be stressed that while this is what we are planning, we also expect that we will have to change things, particularly as we get used to the format. Also, while we will have Rabbi Mark visiting us once a month, as has always been the case, the exact date within the month when Rabbi Mark does come to Edinburgh will not always be the fourth weekend of the month due to Rabbi Mark's other commitments.

Lastly, we continue to liaise with the Leicester and Manchester communities and it is quite likely that some of the services that we have planned will be held jointly with our friends from these communities.

I hope that this has helped explain our thinking, and below is a table which summarises our plans, albeit I am aware that I may be confusing you more than helping explain things!

*If you do have any thoughts on what our services should look like, please do get in touch with me (nicksilk@eljc.org) or Maurice (mauricenaftalin@eljc.org). And please consider joining in to help us. We always welcome new service leaders, and right now we **really** need people to join the streaming team. Our many remote members are depending on you! No technical knowledge needed, just a willingness to learn.*

	1st Weekend	2nd Weekend	3rd Weekend	4th Weekend	5th Weekend
Erev / Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Zoom	In Person	In Person	Zoom	In Person
Shabbat Service		Zoom		In Person	

TERUAH!

Kol Nidrei Appeal 2021, 5781/5782



Sue Bard

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. We always try to support smaller charities with low administration costs where a relatively small amount of money can make a big difference. Every penny contributed goes to our designated charities. Last year, we were pleased that despite the hardship that we know many of our members were experiencing and the absence of physical visitors to our HHD services, our small community managed to raise a record sum of £4280. Let's beat that this year!



We would welcome your suggestions for charities to support this year. Please send these to contact@eljc.org with a few lines about the charity and why you're suggesting it. **Please send your suggestions by 31 July.**

Especially for our newer members, here are a few examples of charities we've supported in the past.

Meketa

meketa.org.uk

British charity that supports families in Ethiopia of Jewish origin who have been unable to emigrate to Israel.

Jewish Care Scotland

jcarescot.org.uk

Charity providing a wide range of care and support services for Jewish people in Scotland.

Edinburgh Direct Aid

edinburghdirectaid.org

Since 2013, supporting many thousands of Syrian refugees who escaped over the border into Lebanon.

Hand in Hand

handinhandk12.org/about

Builds inclusion and equality between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel through a growing network of bilingual, integrated schools and communities.

World Jewish Relief

worldjewishrelief.org

British Jewish community's international humanitarian agency.

From Our Cheder

Gila Holliman / Mor Kandlik Eltanani

The Sukkat Shalom Cheder children enjoyed the last sessions of our first entirely online year. We finished the year with a celebration of the children and teachers. All were very grateful to the community for the wonderful gifts of water bottles with our Hebrew names — the kids have enjoyed bringing these to school to show their friends. We are starting to work on planning for 2021-22 — the plan is to stay online for the regular sessions, with the hope of adding some in-person holiday celebrations if circumstances improve. Mor and Gila would like to reiterate their thanks to the other parents and the wider community for their support in maintaining — and growing! — the Cheder this year and look forward to seeing how this continues to develop after the summer.



Interfaith News

Nick Silk

I attended the Scottish Interfaith COP26 planning meeting at the end of May. It is clear that there will be a lot of interfaith activity, obviously focused in and around Glasgow, but it sounds as if there will be activity in Edinburgh too so hopefully we will be able to get involved. I'm sure that EIFA (Edinburgh Interfaith Association) would be pleased to have some help; so if you're interested I can put you in touch with them.

Remembering Srebrenica



This year Remembering Srebrenica Week is 4th – 11th July. The theme for the week is ‘Rebuilding Lives’, honouring the two million people who were displaced during the genocide and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in the 1990s and who sought refuge all over the world, with approximately 10,000 Bosnians coming to the UK.

Last year I heard Jane Drapkin, a member of The Ark Synagogue, give

an immensely powerful and moving sermon there based on last year’s theme, ‘Every Action Matters’, documenting how the actions that one town in Bosnia took protected its multi-ethnic citizens from ethnic cleansing and genocide. The message of this sermon is as strong and as relevant today as it was a year ago and it has stayed in my mind. Thank you to Jane and to The Ark Synagogue for permitting us to publish it.

Sue Bard

Srebrenica Sermon Friday 10th July 2020 — Jane Drapkin

As you've been contemplating coming out of lockdown over the past week or so, maybe by going to the pub, having a haircut or even watching a film at the cinema, you might like to spare a thought for the 8,372 men and boys who were murdered 25 years ago in the town of Srebrenica, not by a medical virus, but by the virus of hatred, persecution and radicalisation. These men and boys were murdered by Serbian forces, who killed them because they were Bosnian Muslims.

Their lockdown had been three years of sheltering in the town of Srebrenica, many of them having fled their homes in surrounding towns and villages, seeking protection from the United Nations to prevent them being “ethnically cleansed.” When the UN left Srebrenica, the Serbian forces moved in. Women and girls were taken by bus out of the area and allowed to go to safe territory. Many of the men and boys tried to escape, but 8,372 were caught, and murdered in cold blood. An event that is often described as the worst atrocity on European soil since the second world war.

This horrific event was, sadly, only one of many atrocities committed during the Bosnian war. This war brought concentration camps once again to European soil, the use of rape and gender-based violence as a weapon of war, the coining of the term ‘ethnic cleansing’, and murders, massacres and destruction of property, perpetrated on civilians, purely because of their ethnic identity.

Tomorrow, Saturday 11th July, marks the official commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide, and is a time to remember the 8,372 men and boys murdered, and to think about their sisters, daughters, wives and mothers who still mourn for them. It is also a day to remember the victims of the other horrific atrocities that took place during this war; a war that was so close to us geographically and so close to us historically — just 25 years ago — and, chillingly, so close to us as Jews in terms of shared collective experience.

But tomorrow is also a day for making a commitment. Every year the organisation ***Remembering Srebrenica***

provides a theme for the commemoration of the genocide and all those murdered. In previous years we have been challenged to carry out ‘Acts of Courage’ and to ‘Bridge the Divide’. This year’s theme is ‘Every Action Matters’.

To me, this is not so much a challenge to rise to, but a statement of fact — a reminder of something that deep down we already know. During the past few months we have had it drummed into us that every action that each of us takes will have an impact on either stopping, or perpetuating, the spread of coronavirus.

But when it comes to the virus of persecution, hatred, intolerance and discrimination the challenge is perhaps not so much about accepting that every action matters, but is about identifying what that action could be. How can we, as individuals, take an action that will make any difference against such huge forces of evil, particularly when these forces are militarily armed?

Well, amazingly, there is an example of a

community in Bosnia where everyone did take action and did resist the forces of evil that engulfed the rest of their country.

The City of Tuzla sits in the north-east of Bosnia. In 1991 it had a population of just over 130,000 and its population was multi-ethnic; just over half the population were Muslim, and nearly 20% each of Serbian and Croat, with most of the remainder being the offspring of mixed marriages and describing themselves as Yugoslavian. Throughout the war, no ethnic cleansing took place in Tuzla. The city authorities, led by Mayor Beslagic, who was later nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, were united in their vision of maintaining Tuzla as a multi-ethnic city, where everyone was safe, regardless of their ethnicity. This wasn’t just an aspiration; this vision drove every decision they made, every speech they delivered, and every action they took.

Tuzla had a long and fierce sense of social identity, of being a united, multi-ethnic community that proudly celebrated its diversity.

During the war, with ethnic hatred rising all around them, the authorities were careful that no language was used that could fuel nationalism or ethnic hatred within Tuzla. The city, being predominantly Muslim, came under attack from Serbian forces. But Serbian civilians living in Tuzla continued living as equals amongst their friends and neighbours.

Every public institution was required to maintain a multi-ethnic workforce. The police even increased their ethnic diversity during the war and continued to maintain the rule of law throughout the city, dealing with crime as criminal activities, not ethnically driven acts.

Every business, every factory, every organisation, not only had a multi-ethnic workforce, but made sure their goods and services were available and accessible to people of all ethnicities.

The people of Tuzla celebrated each other's religious events. They learnt the

dates and times of day for each other's celebrations, and the correct language to greet each other. And they not only came together to eat each other's food on these special occasions, but they actually learnt how to cook the relevant food for each other's festivals or events, often preparing the food together.

All sports clubs, professional bodies, educational establishments and community groups were multi-ethnic. Other than for religious activities, no single-ethnicity groups were allowed.

And people lived amongst each other; they didn't live in segregated areas according to their ethnic identity. They saw each other going about their daily lives, just like their own daily lives.

And when events did happen that could have triggered an ethnically driven response, the city responded to make sure this didn't happen.

Shelling of Orthodox Church by Bosnian Serb forces

Early on in the war, the Orthodox Church in Tuzla was badly damaged by a shell fired by Serbian forces. The Mayor immediately called on all the workers who were involved in repairs across the city to come and help repair the church. He said, “*this church belongs to all of the citizens of Tuzla and we cannot allow anyone from outside to destroy it*”. In other words, this wasn’t something that just affected part of Tuzlan society; if it affected some people from the city, it affected everyone. The workers, of all ethnicities, met the Mayor’s request and repaired the Church, even working through the night, under spotlights, hence potentially putting themselves in danger by drawing the attention of the Serb forces.

Receiving displaced people — 70,000 by end 1993 (>50% increase in population).

During the war, Tuzla, because it was known to be safe, received large numbers of displaced people, mostly Muslims who had suffered at the hands of Serbian forces, so understandably there was some strong anti-Serb sentiment amongst them. The authorities and the people of Tuzla made it clear that the displaced people were welcome, and received support from Tuzlans of all ethnicities, given roofs over their heads and food to eat, but radicalisation, divisive language and acts of revenge were not tolerated. If they stayed, they bought into the multi-ethnic identity of the city. Most accepted. Some couldn’t and left.

Shelling killing 71 young people and injuring 240 others, 25 May 1995

A very sad day for Tuzlans was 25th May 1995, when 71 young people were killed and 240 others injured by shelling in the city centre — at a spot where typically children and young teenagers would gather. The young people were from all ethnicities. Very quickly the Mayor, the parents of those killed, and religious leaders decided that the young people would all be buried together, regardless of religious or ethnic background. They had lived together, played together, died together and would be buried together. The funeral, which was led jointly by leaders from all three religions was not well publicised and was held at 4am so as not to attract the attention of the Serb forces. Even so, several thousand Tuzlans attended the ceremony.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ds-QLCENPw8

I'd like now to share with you the words of a second-generation survivor, whose family suffered terribly during the Bosnian war, but who also shares actions that individuals took that saved her father's and her grandfather's life. She is Amra Mujkanovic, a Scottish Bosnian.

As we say Kaddish in a moment, I'd like to invite you to think about the 8,372 men and boys murdered at Srebrenica, and all those that suffered during the Bosnian war, and all those that are suffering today, because of an aspect of their identity.

And whilst you remember these victims of persecution and genocide, I hope

that you might draw inspiration from the people of Tuzla who prevented ethnic hatred from taking root in their city, not by a single decree from their leaders or by some quirk of fate or stroke of luck, but because they knew that every action they took had an impact on the people around them, that what they said, what they thought and what they did, mattered.

In the same way that we have each been taking actions every day to stop the spread of coronavirus, when it comes to stopping the spread of the virus hatred, discrimination and persecution, every action really does matter.

Campaigning for the Uyghurs – What Now?

Nick Silk

As I've mentioned in previous editions of Etrog, and as many of you know, we participated in Human Rights Shabbat at the end of last year, organised by the Rene Cassin organisation, where we wrote to our MPs and MSPs to highlight the plight of the Uyghur people in China. While many of us got good responses back from our MPs and MSPs, and we've all seen the highlighting of their plight, Rene Cassin, in co-ordination with other organisations, are now starting another campaign whereby they are using the 2022 winter Olympic Games, which Beijing is hosting, to further highlight the plight of the Uyghur at the hands of the Chinese government.

Full details of the campaign, and further links, can be found on the Rene Cassin website:

<https://www.renecassin.org/2022-beijing-winter-olympics-genocide-games/>

What are we being asked to do? At the present time we are being asked to write to major sponsors of the 2022 Olympics asking them to either

reconsider their sponsorship or to use their position to highlight the plight of the Uyghur. There is an on-line letter to the CEO of Airbnb that we are asked to sign, and we are further asked to send e-mails to the CEOs of Coca-Cola, Toyota UK, Visa and Procter & Gamble, using the e-mail to the Airbnb CEO as a template. If you go to the above link for Rene Cassin, you will see details of the campaign, how to sign the on-line letter, and e-mail addresses for the other CEOs.

I would ask that you to go to the website and take part in this campaign, and I would also ask that you let me know if you do e-mail the CEOs and particularly if you receive any response, so that I can update the Rene Cassin Organisation.

Lastly, you may have seen that SCoJeC organised a talk in the middle of June about the plight of the Uyghur. I'm hoping to talk with SCoJeC and hopefully we will be able to liaise to help increase the profile and help, in some small way, the plight of the Uyghur people.

Liberal Jews for Justice in Israel Palestine

Sue Bard

Liberal Jews for Justice in Israel Palestine is a new grassroots network of Jews within Liberal Judaism committed to social justice and the application of universal human rights to Jews and Palestinians in Palestine Israel. We aim to promote discussion within Liberal Judaism in local communities, and nationally, on the subject of Israel/Palestine, in line with our values and ethics.

LJJIP is open to members and affiliates of Liberal synagogues; already, through word of mouth, the network has gained members from six Liberal synagogues across the UK, including Edinburgh and Leicester. LJJIP has been welcomed in principle by Rabbi Charley Baginsky, CEO of Liberal Judaism.

Read our Statement of Intent here <http://t.ly/wsfh> and for more information contact us on info@ljjip.org



The Windermere Children

Gillian Raab



In 1945, thanks to the generosity of Leonard Montefiore, over 732 children who had survived the Nazi death camps were flown to the UK, sitting on the floor of Lancaster bombers. They were settled in different parts of the UK. One group, including the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn, were hosted in Polton House in Midlothian. The largest group of over 300 children were housed in the staff quarters of a former flying boat factory close to Lake Windermere in the Lake District. This picture shows one group of children photographed in Prague before they left for the UK.

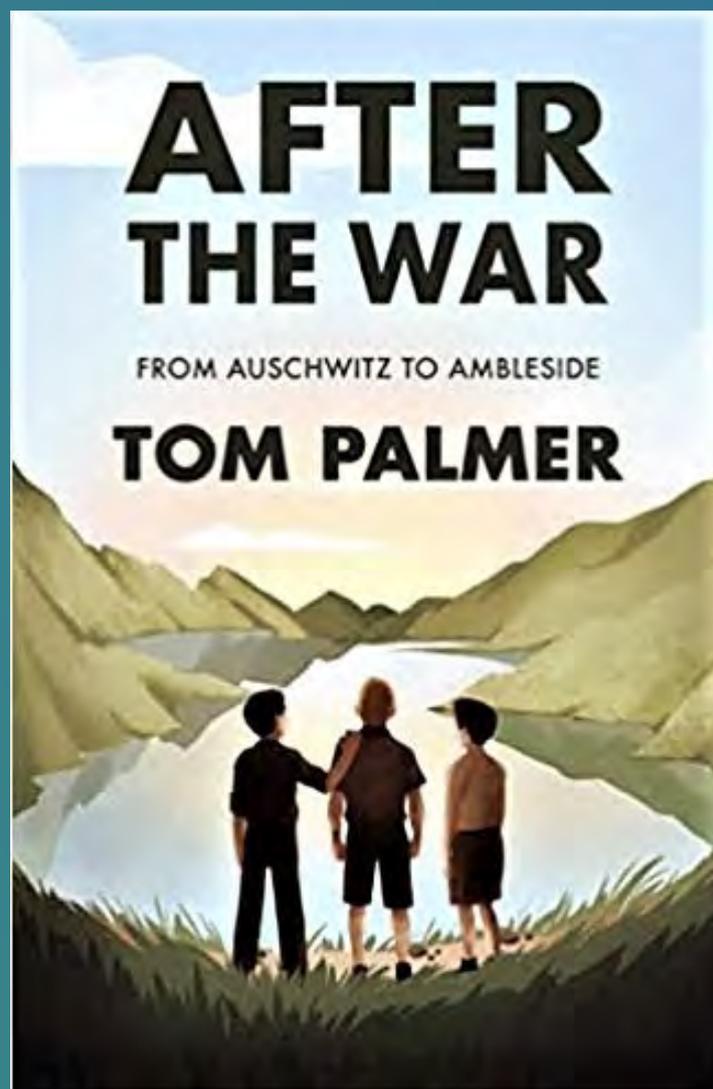
The historian Sir Martin Gilbert has written an account of these children's lives: *The Boys*, now available as a Kindle edition for only £1.99. It uses the children's testimonies about their childhood in Eastern Europe, their experiences in the camps and their lives in the UK. The care they received on arriving here helped them to rebuild their lives. Many of them had no other relatives here and their bonds with each other continued throughout their lives.

Although the buildings by Lake Windermere are no longer standing

where ‘the boys’ (including a few girls) lived, local people have worked to remember their story. The Lake District Holocaust Project (LDHP) has a permanent exhibition, ‘From Auschwitz to Ambleside’, on the first floor of Windermere Library and their website (ldhp.org.uk) will tell you more. As well as remembering the past, the LDHP aims to look to the future by combating racism and intolerance.

Tom Palmer had written a novel for children — *After the War* — about the children, suitable for reading age 8+. The book has already been shortlisted for several book awards. Without the help of LDHP, Tom would not have been able to even begin the book. Tom is doing a sponsored endurance canoe paddle, cycle ride and run to raise money for the Windermere Trust. To support him see:

www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/lakedistrictholocaustproject



People of the Book/Zoom

Oliver Davidson Richards



Back in 2019, I saw a notice on the LJ website offering Biblical Hebrew classes online. As someone who at the time could just about mumble their way through a service on a good day (mostly by relying on a combination of transliteration and rote learning) I thought it was worth a shot. I then received all the details and signed up to something I had never heard of called Zoom for the first time. Who knew back then what a vital role Zoom would play in our lives now!

At this point, I was a relative newcomer to Jewish communal life, having only reached out to Sukkat Shalom a year before. Over the year I had steadily accumulated knowledge and understanding from Rabbi Mark and fellow members of the community. I had become a member by observing, participating and by learning, both in formal class settings and through informal interactions. However I still harboured a strong sense that I was a novice or beginner. I knew most of the basics and could give some explanations to my curious flatmate or friends. To people outside of the Jewish community I could come across as reasonably knowledgeable, but inside I still felt some form of barrier or that I was impeded in some way by not knowing enough or not having been brought up with a strong Jewish education.

Signing up for this class meant I was finally doing something about one of my bigger insecurities: Jews are often described as the People of the Book, but I could barely read Hebrew! As someone who has always been fairly academic this was jarring. I have a few degrees under my belt, I work as a lawyer regularly appearing in court – standing

up and speaking in front of others is something I can normally do without too much anxiety. But at services I was tentatively mumbling through, ideally towards the side or back of the room. This experience catapulted me back to being a nervous primary school pupil — a situation I hadn't experienced for nearly 20 years.

During services I would look around and wonder if I would ever be able to come close to navigating the Siddur and prayers with the same ease as more established members. Would I ever be a full member of the community? By signing up I hoped to address those insecurities that simmered away each time I fumbled my words.

At the first class I saw several faces on the screen and as we introduced ourselves I was delighted to realise the broad range of class members. We varied in age, geography but most importantly for me in terms of our backgrounds and prior Jewish experience. Some were longstanding members of their communities whereas others were in the process of becoming Jewish. My inexperience and Jewish life

thus far (or lack thereof) did not make me stand out. Whatever our journeys had been up to this point we all shared a desire to learn and engage.

So every week I rushed home from work (although these days generally it is only a change from the desk to the sofa) to log in to Zoom. Slowly but surely I learned, each time gaining in confidence and fluency. Not only that but each week I learnt something new about that week's Parsha we were translating, slowly accumulating a broader understanding of the words we have read over the centuries and how we can derive meaning that resonates for us. Whoever coined the phrase "the devil is in the detail" in my mind certainly was not Jewish — for me these details have led me to accumulate moments of insight that have brought a depth to my Jewish understanding and connection that I was not expecting and am immensely grateful for.

It has been nearly 2 years since that initial class, and I think I am correct in writing that most of the original class are still logging in each week. I can only speak to why I have carried on, for me it

is not just the opportunity to learn but also to come together virtually each week creating our own community.

Since then having classes online has gone from an innovation to a necessity due to COVID-19. My weekly class also became a necessity for me, an anchor of previous normal life that remained unchanged despite the drastic restrictions now in place. But this also meant that everything was now online and two important barriers disappeared. The first one is geography, with its issues of travel times and cost. Now up in Edinburgh I have the same range of opportunities to engage in Jewish learning as anyone living inside or in close proximity to the M25. The second barrier might not apply to everyone reading this, but perhaps almost as important for me was the intimidation of having to physically enter a space that I doubted I belonged in. I think particularly as someone who did not grow up Jewish there is a lingering anxiety that you need to explain or justify your presence/interest and that your answer might not pass muster. Instead, all I had to do now was fill out the registration details and click the link at the appointed time.

Since the first lockdown began, I have been a reasonably regular attendee at Jewish events, whether that be classes with Sukkat Shalom and the Lit in Edinburgh, the Ark Synagogue, Liberal Judaism, Limmud, or JW3. In doing so not only have I gained a deeper understanding of Judaism in its broadest sense but I have also begun to shed the inhibition I felt in a notion I imposed on myself as “not quite Jewish enough”.

I recently finished a fascinating course on Jewish Peoplehood run by Rabbi Lea of the Ark and Rabbi Emma Gottlieb of Temple Israel in Cape Town. In typical Jewish fashion, almost every concept the course utilises was argued with some vigour, but I will borrow two. The first is a Judaism of Being, focusing on a more ethnic understanding of once born a Jew always a Jew. The second is a Judaism of Becoming which defines us by what we do. By engaging in the unprecedented opportunities now only a click away I have found the second to be profoundly rewarding and turned me into an enthusiastic and more confident member of the Jewish community.

Community Care and Support

In these difficult times, we are 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 0131 777 8024 or email contact@eljc.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 by e-mail at marksolomon@btinternet.com if you'd like to talk to him.

OUR WHATSAPP GROUP allows people to be in direct contact with each other very quickly where help is needed. If you're not already on it and would like to be, text your mobile number to Sue Lieberman on 07939 014720 and ask to be part of the group.





Sukkat Shalom

Scottish Charity Number SC035678

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

Co-chairs: Sue Bard, Maurice Naftalin. Gillian Raab and Nick Silk (chair@eljc.org)

Treasurer and Membership: Stefano Giossi (membership@eljc.org)

Secretary: Gillian Raab (secretary@eljc.org)