

Sukkat Shalom MAY 2011

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Scottish Charity No SC035678

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Events and Services

Date **Friday 6 May**

Event Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Venue Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road
Time 6.15pm

Date **Friday 13 May**

Event Erev Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Mark Solomon, followed by communal supper (please bring a non-meat dish to share)
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 7pm

Saturday 14 May

Joint Shabbat with Glasgow Reform Synagogue

Shabbat morning service led by both *Rabbi Mark Solomon* and *Rabbi Nancy Morris*, followed by lunch and afternoon sessions on the theme of the environment.

Could those of you who are going to Glasgow let Nick Silk (nick_silk@btinternet.com) know

- * if you have any spare seats and if so how many,
- * if you don't have any spare places,
- * if you need a lift.

ELJC support line

07904 813162



Use this number if you have an emergency and really need to speak to someone. It goes to one of our members. Otherwise please leave a message on the community phone and we will respond as soon as possible.

Date **Sunday 15 May**

Event Choosing Judaism
Venue usual location
Time 10.30am

Event Cantillation

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 3pm

Event Spinoza

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 4pm

Date **Friday 20 May**

Event Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Venue Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road
Time 6.15pm

Date **Saturday 28 May**

Event Shabbat Service
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 11am

Date **Friday 3 June**

Event Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Venue Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road
Time 6.15pm

Contents

Page 2	<i>Future dates, Liberal Judaism</i>
Page 3 and 4	<i>Chairman's words and Taste of Torah by Rabbi Mark Solomon</i>
Page 5 and 6	<i>Community Matters</i>
Page 7	<i>Events and announcements</i>
Page 8	<i>Wiener library</i>

Future Dates

Our regular schedule is as follows:

Our **Erev Shabbat service** will be on the **SECOND** Friday of each calendar month and our **Shabbat morning service** on the Saturday after the **FOURTH** Friday.

These services take place in the **Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace.**

Fri 3 June	Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Tue 7 June	Erev Shavuot Service
Fri 10 June	Erev Shabbat Service
Fri 17 June	Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Sat 25 June	Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Mark Solomon Tea & Talmud
Sun 16 June	Choosing Judaism Cantillation Spinoza

Jewish Calendar

Yom HaShoah	1 May 2011
Yom HaAtzmaut	10 May 2011
Shavuot	8 June 2011
Rosh Hashanah	5772 29 September 2011
Yom Kippur	8 October 2011
Sukkot	13 October
Simchat Torah	21 October



Kulanu seminar – Powerful and inspiring

Liberal Judaism's first ever Disability Inclusion Seminar has been hailed as a huge success by those who participated. Twenty-six people from around the UK came to the day-long session titled Kulanu, meaning 'All of Us', which was held at Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue (NPLS) on Sunday April 10. Many of those in attendance gave moving testimonies of their personal experience of living with disability within Jewish communities, both Orthodox and Progressive. There was also involvement from charitable organisations including Jami, Dash and The Judith Trust. The group developed an initial action plan to take things forward and agreed to meet regularly in the future. The programme includes

establishing disability awareness training for Liberal Judaism's rabbinic and lay leadership, a virtual forum where disabled people can share experiences and practical guides for congregations on creating welcoming and inclusive communities. To find out more about Kulanu, contact Leon Charikar on l.charikar@liberaljudaism.org

The Y-Word: Kick it Out!

The Y-Word, a film tackling anti-Semitism in football starring Frank Lampard and Ledley King, was launched last week. The film, has been written and produced by David and Ivor Baddiel, in conjunction with Kick It Out, football's equality and inclusion campaign, Maccabi GB, Community Security Trust, The Shoresh Foundation and Fahrenheit Films. To watch it online visit www.kickitout.org

A day to enjoy our Judaism

What is a Liberal Jew to do in a year when there is no Biennial Weekend? Enjoy the same stimulation and wonderfully warm atmosphere, condensed into a Day of Celebration on Sunday 22 May, at The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, St John's Wood Study and creativity are the day's twin themes. The Day of Celebration is a must for engaged Jews, their families and friends (non-members are welcome). Speakers include Daniel Finkelstein OBE, Jo Coburn and Lee Montagu.

If you have questions about the event, please email Liberal Judaism's deputy chair, Dr Amanda Grant: a.grant@liberaljudaism.org. Cost: £6 for adults, £1 for under-18s or full-time students.

Sign Up for Weekly D'var Torah from students and guest contributors.

Based on the parashah and written by rabbinic students and faculty staff, this can come to you every Thursday by e-mail, in preparation for Shabbat. To receive the weekly D'var Torah by email, please register on the Leo Baeck College website www.lbc.ac.uk (the registration box is on the home page). Alternatively you can read the weekly D'var Torah on our website.

Chairman's Words

Some environmental thoughts

Environmental issues are high on our agenda just now and the contents of this newsletter reflect this. In Rabbi Mark's article on Shavuot below he suggests a hierarchy of principles for ethical eating and questions the relative ethics of fair trade versus reducing food-miles. On 14th May many of us will be traveling to Glasgow and there should be no shortage of topics to debate.

Unfortunately I will not be with you on the 14th as I will be visiting family in Toronto on that weekend. But, so as not to miss out entirely, I have been reading a series of essays borrowed from one of our members (*Ecology and the Human Spirit*, Edited by Ellen Bernstein, Jewish Lights Publication). The one I found most interesting was an introduction to environmental ideas put forward by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heshel, and in particular this quotation:

"Our age is one in which usefulness is thought to be the chief merit of nature; in which the attainment of power, the utilization of its resources is taken to be the chief purpose of man indeed become a primarily a tool-making animal, and the world is now a gigantic tool-box for the satisfaction of his needs." ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESHEL, *God in Search of Man*.

The essay discusses Heshel's thesis that we should move away from an anthropocentric view that sees man as the centre of creation towards a theocentric one, This chimes also with some discussions we have recently had in council meetings about how our prayerbook often presents a God with what seem like human qualities. I would like to read some of Heshel's work for myself, and by saying so here I hope it will mean that I really do get round to it. Toronto even has the Heshel School, named after him and dedicated to environmental principles, so I should be able to find something in their bookshops, I look forward to hearing reports of your discussions when I am back later in the month. *Gillian Raab, Chairman*

The Taste of Torah

The first of two pieces on Shavuot by Rabbi Mark Solomon (second to follow next month)

With Pesach behind us we have begun the Counting of the Omer, our countdown to Shavuot and the celebration of the giving of the Torah. "Why is Shavuot the best Yom Tov?" asked Reverend Gluck, rhetorically, and went on to answer the old riddle, "Because on Pesach you can eat where you like, but you can't eat what you like; on Sukkot you can eat what you like, but not where you like – you're supposed to eat your meals in the sukkah. Only on Shavuot can you eat whatever you like, wherever you like."

Reverend Gluck, as all knew him, was the much loved chazzan (cantor) of the Great Synagogue in Sydney, and his generous figure bore witness that his interest in food went beyond pious conundrums – not surprising if one had tasted Mrs Gluck's mouth-watering Hungarian-Jewish cuisine, as I was lucky enough to do nearly every Shabbat for much of my youth. Writing this Shavuot-themed article a couple of weeks after Pesach, the subject of food came naturally to mind, and food has been much in the news in recent years, from the rising price of comestibles in our supermarkets to persistent worries about a looming global food crisis.

But back to our festival for a moment. Even though the answer to Rev. Gluck's riddle is that on Shavuot you can eat anything (anything kosher, of course!) custom has it that one should eat dairy foods, like cheese cake or blintzes, or the cheesy noodle kugel my mother used to make. The origins of the custom, as so often, are lost in the mists of ancient afternoon snoozes, but a consultation of the classic Hasidic work *Ta'amey Ha-Minhagim* (Reasons for the Customs) by Abraham Sperling, published in Lvov in 1896, reveals no less than six theories, some of them too fanciful and convoluted to bear description. The best known, but scarcely logical, reason given, is that, having just received the Torah with its new dietary restrictions on the first Shavuot, the Israelites had no kosher meat or utensils ready, and so decided to be purely milchig. More bizarre still is the reason based on a verse in Psalm 68, referring to a "mountain of gavnunim." The latter word, which the midrash

applies to Mt. Sinai, appears nowhere else in the Bible, and really means “piled up in peaks”, but it sounds a bit like *gevinah*, which means cheese! Another reason is that the Torah, whose giving we celebrate, is likened midrashically to milk and honey, on the basis of the verse “Milk and honey are under your tongue.” (Song of Songs 4:11) A kabbalistic idea is that the white of milk symbolises the divine quality of *chesed*, lovingkindness, expressed in God’s self-revelation. Loveliest of all is the explanation, given in the name of the holy R. Pinchas of Koretz, that milk is the food of infants, and in learning Torah we should be as humble as children, since Torah takes hold only where there is modesty.

The Biblical scholar Theodore Gaster, in his 1955 book *Festivals of the Jewish Year*, notes the fanciful, post facto character of such explanations, and suggests that

In reality, cheese and dairy dishes are eaten at this time because the festival has a pastoral as well as an agricultural significance. Thus, at the analogous Scottish celebration of Beltane, on May 1, dairy dishes are commonly consumed, and churning and cheese-making are a common feature of Spring harvest-festivals in many parts of the world. In Macedonia, for instance, the Sunday before Lent is known as “Cheese Sunday”; in several districts of Germany cheese and dairy dishes are (or were) standard fare at Whitsun.

The point of customs, though, is not so much their origins, fascinating as they may be, but the symbolic and emotional load we place on them. Taking nourishment is a fundamental activity of life, and giving or sharing food is a powerful expression of love. It’s surely no accident that, in the wilderness infancy story of the Jewish people, both Torah and manna come down from heaven, spiritual and physical food together. In olden days, when little children were taken to cheder for the first time, to start learning their letters, they were given small cakes with verses from the Torah iced on them, so that they could literally taste and enjoy the words. Another custom was to smear honey on the first letters of the alef-bet primer, and let the children lick the letters and see how sweet they were.

For adults, balancing Torah study with bread on the table might not have been so easy, but the Rabbinic perspective was summed up by the sage Eleazar ben Azariah in the saying *im eyn kemach eyn Torah; im eyn Torah eyn kemach* – “If there is no flour there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no flour.” (Mishnah, Avot 3:17) We need physical health and strength to lead an intellectual and moral life, but without thought and right action, food would fail.

In a world of climate change and desertification, where ever more food-growing acres are swallowed up in cultivating biofuel crops and animal fodder to feed our insatiable desire for meat, so that the price of staple foods is rising beyond the ability of some countries to sustain, there is a real concern that hunger may lead to social unrest and food riots. Thought and right action are urgently needed.

Closer to home we worry about the ethics of eating, and many Liberal communities, including *Sukkat Shalom*, have signed up to the Fair Trade undertaking. This raises interesting ethical questions. At one discussion I took part in the question was posed, whether we should be more concerned about “food miles” – buying fair trade produce may mean transporting it from distant continents, so is it perhaps more responsible to source food locally, for the sake of the environment?

It seemed to me that giving priority to the issue of food miles over fair trade would be detrimental to the welfare of the poor people of other countries. I proposed a fourfold scale of ethical duties with regard to eating:

- i. Ethical duty to ourselves, that is, survival, which would include healthy eating;
- ii. Ethical duty to other people, whom we should pay fairly for producing our food;
- iii. Ethical duty to animals, which should not be raised or treated in a cruel way;
- iv. Ethical duty to the wider environment, which could include issues like food miles and packaging.

Shavuot, with its traditions of the all-night study session and cheesecake eating (some synagogues hold cheesecake competitions) is truly a feast for the mind and soul, as well as the body. As one of our morning prayers says: “May the words of Torah taste sweet to us and to all Israel.” Or as the Book of Common Prayer puts it, let us “read, mark, learn and inwardly digest.” Bon appetit!

Community Matters

Thank you!

I would like to thank everyone who has telephoned me with messages and all who have sent me cards, letters and emails with such kind messages of sympathy, condolence and support on the recent death of my son, Steve. Your messages have meant so much to me and have been really appreciated. They have also shown me how many true and sincere friends I have within the Community. Many people have supported me in other ways and I thank them also.

My family and I are slowly coming to terms with our loss - we are all handling it in our very different ways, but are comforted in knowing that he is now at peace and no longer suffering. Thank you all for your support,
Rebekah

Community seder report

The communal seder on April 18th was a great success. About 60 people gathered to hear the story of the Exodus told according to the interpretation of Liberal Judaism's haggadah, B'chol Dor Va-Dor. Rabbi Mark expounded for us on difficult points, posed questions and helped us with the answers, and in a fit of enthusiasm even found his own Afikoman! A seder should be both serious and fun, and a lot of the fun should come from the songs at the end. This year, for a finale, Rabbi Mark led a completely brilliant rendition of "Who Knows One?" that set as high a standard for silliness as the service set for seriousness. That's just how it should be!

Photography policy

In response to recent queries from members the Council discussed what our policy should be as to when photography was appropriate at our events. This rang a faint bell in some of our memories and Kristi Long dug into the archives to find that we had published the following in the January 2009 newsletter:

"The Council has discussed and agreed a photography policy. Photography during community events is fine except during religious services. "

This remains our policy because we feel that we should be participating not taking pictures during religious rituals. Recently we may not have been enforcing the policy as strictly as perhaps we should, so we hope we will have your cooperation in doing so in future. It is good to have photographs as mementos of events and there are ways in which we can have them without interrupting services or other rituals. For example a Bar/Bat Mitzvah picture could be taken reading from the scroll outside the time of the service. Chanukah Candles could be photographed after we have said the b'ruchah. At a seder pictures could be taken during the meal. We are only sorry that none we know of were taken at the community seder this year. If anyone has some we would be very happy to have them for the newsletter or the web site.

Children of Shatila theatre group



This group from the refugee camp in Beirut presented Croak, the King and a Change in the Weather at the Scottish Storytelling centre in early April. Croak is the story of a greedy and self-centred King, whose indulgent lifestyle in the luxury of his sealed-off palace is at the expense of his downtrodden subjects outside. The play was developed during the writer Peter Mortimer's stay in the camp. The young people in the group made him change the ending of the story during the development of the play to make him repent, rather than meet a sticky end. The design was striking with the cast often arranged in tableaux. Adam and Leora Wadler (seen above with members of the cast) were impressed by the poise and dignity of the cast and by the fact that they were able to perform in a foreign language. After the play a short film was shown that showed the cramped alleyways of their homes.

Community Matters (continued)

Members' directory

Almost all members have replied to Eva, our membership secretary, with details of the information about them that will be included in the membership. We are about to make a new one which we will be posting to all members in the next few weeks.

As well as members details the old membership directory contains information about the Community and about Jewish life in Edinburgh and Scotland. We need to update much of it from the old one published two years ago and this is an opportunity to change what we included by adding new material or removing things which people feel to be redundant. The information in the directory has also been used to send information about the community to new members, so we have kept certain things up to date. The current information pages can be accessed on the web site at http://www.eljc.org/directory_pages_2011.pdf.

We would welcome suggestions as to how these pages might be changed in the new version. Also if any member would be able to help us with the design of the booklet.

Please email membership@eljc.org with suggestions or offers of help.

Website names and faces



How often do you see a face, know the person but can't put a name to them? You might like to get in touch with someone you have met in shul, remember their face but not their name. Most people have a greater facility for remembering faces than remembering names. Our web master, Maurice Naftalin, is definitely in this group. In case you have forgotten the face that goes with this name, here he is on the left. He noticed something at the Quaker Meeting House that could help him to get over this problem. On the wall of the library there is a notice board where small photos of all the members of the Edinburgh Quakers are displayed. Maurice has suggested that although we do not have a wall ourselves we could have a virtual wall by putting a set of photos like this on the private section of our web site. This would only be available to those who have been approved to log on to the site and have a password. Most of our members already have

a password and if they forget it their password can be reset immediately via an email that will be sent to them.

Maurice would like to make this virtual wall for our community. If you would be willing to help Maurice by having your photo on the virtual wall then please email it to him at webmaster@eljc.org.

Sad news

We are very sorry to have heard via the social work department of Jewish care of the very recent death of our former member Wayne Russell who has recently been living in Dundee. Those of us who knew Wayne will remember him as a charming quiet young man who was very serious about his commitment to Judaism. Shalom l'vrechah, may he rest in peace.

Events and Announcements

Pride Scotia

Date: Saturday 7th May
 Time: assemble between noon and 1p.m.
 Location: outside Edinburgh Council HQ, 4 East Market St

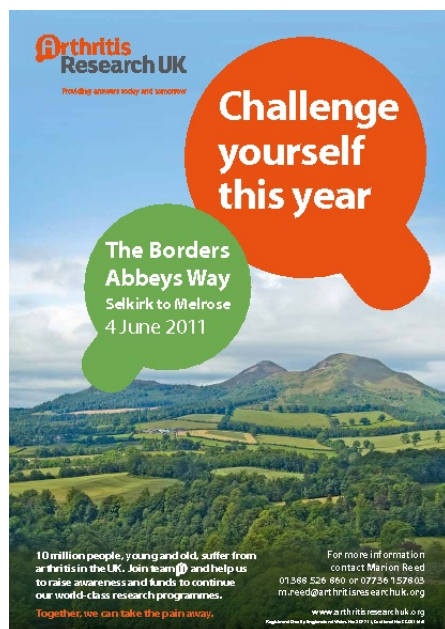


Scotland's celebration of support for our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender sisters and brothers. We'll join together with members of other liberal faith communities to affirm that we fully support Equal Marriage for all couple regardless of their sexual orientation. Come and help to make a strong statement that ours is a faith community which stands for equality and where being gay just isn't an issue. You'll find us carrying a large banner with the words "Faith Communities Support Equal Marriage" (see it at last year's Pride above).

A recent report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Scotland suggests that there is an opportunity for Scotland to lead the way in promoting this. The report – Equal Access to Marriage: Ending the segregation of same-sex couples and transgender people in Scotland – is an excellent examination of the issues, of public and religious attitudes towards equal marriage, and international comparisons. It includes 12 clear and strong recommendations to introduce equality in marriage and civil partnership law in Scotland. It calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward legislation for equal marriage after the May 2011 Scottish Parliament election. http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/Scotland/Projects_and_Campaigns/pdf_final_2.pdf

Edinburgh WIZO

Annual Afternoon Tea will be held this year at Kate and Ronnie Goodwin's, 2 Mayfield Gardens on Sunday 22nd May at 3.30 till 6pm. £10 pp (big children £5 and little ones free!!) There will be a tombola and we hope it will all take place in the garden, weather permitting. There is a table in the dining room for those who can't manage steps and stairs.



Border Abbeys Way Challenge

Saturday 4th June, a ten mile walk through beautiful Borders countryside from Selkirk to Melrose. It is a sponsored and guided walk 10 mile walk in aid of Arthritis Research. To take part you need to sign up in advance by completing an application form. The form and other details can be found at the web site

http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/get_involved/events/our_events/the_borders_abbey_way.aspx

Don't be put off by the fact that the web site gives the date as 5th June. The correct date is Saturday 4th.

Those of you who came to our service in Newstead last year will recognize the scenery. Sukkat Shalom member Isobel King is the secretary of the Melrose Branch of Arthritis Research who will be serving teas at the Melrose Rugby club to those who have completed the walk.

Windows for Peace (UK)

The latest newsletter from Windows for Peace (UK) can be accessed at

<http://www.windowsforpeaceuk.org/Newsletter%2011%20-%20May%202011%20web%20quality.pdf>

We supported this charity as part of our Kol Nidre appeal last year after some of us met with the Israeli and Palestinian young people who were attending a workshop in Edinburgh. Windows for Peace (UK) has new projects that involve promoting dialogue between Muslim and Jewish students at schools and universities in the UK.

Heritage Lottery Fund announces £475,000 grant to The Wiener Library

The Wiener Library Institute of Contemporary History

The Wiener Library is to open up its collections and increase public engagement, thanks in part to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The confirmed grant of £475,000 to the Wiener Library, Britain's largest archive on the Holocaust and Nazi era, is to expand the Library's public engagement and will enable the Library to appoint 3 new members of staff focusing on learning, engagement and outreach, as well as creating a new exhibition area in the Library's new building at 29 Russell Square in the heart of academic London. More public programming, a temporary exhibition programme, volunteer opportunities and an improved website will be launched later in the year, following the building's opening in September 2011.

These initiatives will place the Library and its collections at the heart of Holocaust education in the UK. The Library will encourage people from all communities to engage with the history of the Holocaust and with the many challenges it poses in the 21st century.

Sue Bowers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for London, said: "The Wiener Library is one of the key memory-keepers for periods in history such as the Holocaust. We look forward to the collections being more widely available later this year to help this most important of legacies to be learnt from by future generations".

For more information on the Library and its work, please visit www.wienerlibrary.co.uk.

