

Sukkat Shalom

April 2012

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Scottish Charity No SC035678

Chairman: Gillian Raab, chair@eljc.org
Newsletter: Hannah Holtschneider, newsletter@eljc.org
Treasurer: Claudette Hudes, treasurer@eljc.org
Membership: Eva Wiseman, membership@eljc.org
Catering: Maureen Mackinnon catering@eljc.org

Community Phone: 0131 777 8024 Email info@eljc.org Web www.eljc.org

Events and Services

Date Sunday 1 April 2012

Event Choosing Judaism
Venue Usual location
Time 10:30am

Date Friday 6 April 2012

Event **Communal Seder** led by
Rabbi Mark Solomon.

Venue Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road
Time 6:45pm for 7:00pm

Date Friday 13 April 2012

Event Erev Shabbat Service
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 7:00pm

Date Friday 20 April 2012

Event Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Venue Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road
Time 6:15pm

Date Saturday 28 April 2012

Event Shabbat morning service and bar and bat mitzvah of Adam and Leora Wadler;
Rabbi Mark Solomon officiating
See also page 4.

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 10:30am

Date Sunday 29 April 2012

Event Spinoza
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace
Time 4:00pm

Date Friday 4 May 2012

Event Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Venue Marchmont St Giles, 1a Kilgraston Road
Time 7:00pm

Yom Hashoah Service

War memorial in Princes Street Gardens
19 April 2012
18:45pm

**Deadline for copy for May
2012 newsletter: 23 April**

ELJC support line

0131 208 1447



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.

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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.**

Jewish Calendar

Festivals begin on the evening before the day listed.

Pesach	7-14/4/2012
Shavuot	27-28/5/2012
9 Av	29/7/2012
Rosh Hashanah 5773	17-18/9/2012
Yom Kippur	26/9/2012



Liberal and Reform Rabbis Tell Lansley: Abandon Plans for NHS Changes

Ten Liberal rabbis, led by Birmingham Progressive Synagogue's Rabbi Dr Margaret Jacobi, have signed a letter calling on Health Secretary Andrew Lansley to abandon the plans in the Health and Social Care Bill to radically reshape the NHS.

The rabbis state their concerns that the plans will introduce competition, "making it easier for private health care providers to be engaged, meaning that there is a real risk that profit will come before health care. It is also foreseeable that priority will be given to more profitable areas of health care, with consequential neglect of vulnerable groups such as the elderly and the mentally ill."

The letter, also signed by ten Reform rabbis, has been delivered to Lansley at the Department of Health in Whitehall, and a copy has been sent to Prime Minister David Cameron.

The full text of the letter, and a list of signatories, can be found here: <http://liberaljudaism.org/news/502-liberal-and-reform-rabbis-tell-lansley-abandon-plans-for-nhs-changes.html>

Liberal Judaism Urges Members: Take Part in Equal Marriage Consultation

Liberal Judaism is urging all its members and friends to take part in the Government's Equal Civil Marriage Consultation, which was opened today by the Home Office:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/consultations/equal-civil-marriage/>

However, Liberal Judaism is very clear that the Consultation's proposals do not go far enough in one crucial respect because they do not propose any changes to marriages conducted on religious premises. For us this means that Liberal Rabbis will still be banned from officiating over same-sex marriages, and in this way, the two-tier discriminatory marriage system is perpetuated. Read more here: <http://liberaljudaism.org/news/508-liberal-judaism-urges-members-take-part-in-equal-marriage-consultation.html>

NOTE: The Scottish Parliament's consultation on equal marriage, now closed, does allow the possibility of religious marriage, where organisations permit it. Readers of this newsletter will be very aware of how active our members and our Rabbi have been in responding to the Scottish consultation.

Chairman's Word

Who would have thought that a passage on animal sacrifice would lead to an animated discussion from Liberal Jews? But that was exactly what happened at our Shabbat Morning Service in Columcille this month. Maurice Naftalin presented a D'var Torah on the Parasha Vayikra and read the section in Leviticus IV 21 onwards on the subject of the sin-offering. Maurice's web searches had failed to find much in the way of Jewish commentary on this text, though there was no shortage of Christian material. What Liberal Jewish sources he had found focussed mainly on the fact that Liberal Jews no longer considered that rules associated with the Temple, such as sacrifices or the laws pertaining to the Cohenim, had any relevance for today.

Perhaps it was this very difficulty that led to such interesting debate. After discussing the different types of sacrifice and proposing some of his own ideas, Maurice invited the congregation to provide their own ideas on what such a sacrifice of a sin-offering might mean now, or have meant in the times of the Temple. One suggestion for now was that a

sacrifice now might mean giving up certain kinds of food by obeying the laws of kashrut, so that this “giving away” might make you think of the deity every time you ate. Other justifications for the historical practice included food and status for the priests, as well as the fact that such sacrifices could involve feasts that would help community solidarity. I wish I could remember everything else that was proposed. But it certainly made for an interesting sermon and I hope we can find more difficult passages in future to inspire our members to respond.

We have a busy month coming up, with the seder near the start and the twins' Bar/Bat Mitzvah later in the month. On the weekend of the 20/22nd I will be attending the Liberal Judaism Biennial meeting in Gloucestershire. I have just finished making my choices from the huge menu of sessions available. I look forward to much more interesting debate and to reporting it to you next month.

Pesach 2012: 'The gifts of the four children'

There are three Bible readings in traditional synagogue services for Shabbat Ha-Chodesh, and they all have to do with sacrificing animals. The main reading from Leviticus details all the laws of sacrifice, while the special Torah reading for that Shabbat speaks of one particular sacrifice, the first Paschal Lamb, prepared for the last meal in Egypt, its blood to be painted on the doorposts and lintels to protect the Israelite houses from the plague of the death of the firstborn. The prophetic reading tells of the great Pesach sacrifice of King Josiah in the 7th century BCE. So whichever way you turn, lambs aren't safe.

We are already preparing for Pesach, the festival of spring, the festival of fresh grain and unleavened bread, the festival of new-born and short-lived lambs. It's the festival of a young nation just being liberated from slavery and discovering its identity as a people called by God. So it's not surprising that it's a festival centred on the young, the children seated at the Seder table with parents, grandparents, family and friends. The central commandment of Passover is “You shall tell your child on that day,” you shall pass on the story and the message to the next generation.

And the story we tell? It culminates in the death of the firstborn of Egypt, sacrificed so the Israelites can go free; of some children who die while others live. So many of our young and gifted still perish: the three little Jewish schoolchildren in Toulouse, the twelve-year-old Palestinian boy in Gaza a few weeks ago, the child-soldiers of Africa, and so many others around the world, young victims of old feuds.

One of the most beloved passages in the Haggadah is the one about the Four Children. It's a midrash, a rabbinic deep-reading, of four verses in the Torah that speak of parents telling their children the Passover story. In three of these verses the child asks first, but each time in different words, so the Rabbis deduced that these must be three different kinds of children, who ask different sorts of questions and need different sorts of answers – a very sound pedagogical approach. In one verse (Ex. 13:8), the parents just tell, without any question first.

Four children at the Seder, all presumably young, but are they gifted, and are they religious? The wise one is obviously gifted. He or she asks a long, complicated question and gets a detailed technical answer. But the others: a wicked child, a simple child, and a child who does not know to ask – they don't sound very gifted. OK, maybe one out of four isn't a bad percentage!

The Chacham, the wise youngster, asks, “What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgements, which the Eternal One our God has commanded you?” (Deut. 6:20) This is the approach of traditional, intellectual religion, seeking meaning and interpretation, proofs and arguments. But I want to include here also the other kind of wisdom, that goes beyond words to other kinds of spiritual experience, perhaps more emotional and corporeal, for the body has its wisdom too.

The Tam is the simple youngster, but simple doesn't mean stupid. Instead it means straightforward and upright. The Tam doesn't look within for meaning, but out at the world around, and cries out – Mah zot? “What is this?” (Ex. 13:14) What is this injustice, inequality, deprivation, discrimination and environmental degradation in the world around me, and what must I do about this mess? This is the religious person as social activist. The answer he/she is given focusses on God's liberating power, a power we too can bring into the world through our actions.

The Eyno yode'a lish'ol, who does not know to ask – this could mean the young people attracted to fundamentalism, to extreme forms of religion, where you don't ask questions but follow orders; where asking too many questions might get you into trouble – either outwardly in the authoritarian group or in your innermost self that craves only certainty. The Haggadah says: “You open for him.” Open up the texts and traditions of our faiths that offer alternatives, possibilities, different perspectives. If they can't ask the questions themselves, ask them questions that open up minds and hearts to a more compassionate, rounded religion.

I've skipped over the Rasha, the wicked one, who asks, “What does this service mean to you?” (Ex. 12:26) – to you and not to him/her. This is the young person who excludes him/herself from the community, who looks with scorn and incomprehension at religion and wants nothing to do with it. The Haggadah wants us to

reject the wicked youngster and say, "It's because of what God did for me, when I came out of Egypt." – For me, not for you: if you had been there you would not have been redeemed.

Like many of us nowadays, I find this traditional approach wanting. This young person might be looking at the world around, perhaps a bit naïvely, and seeing that religion causes hatred, division and conflict. This young person might be studying science and honestly questioning the need for a God to explain things. These young people might be girls in a community where religious authorities block the opportunities of women, or gay or lesbian teenagers told that their love is a sin. These "wicked" youngsters might be fired up with moral passion and social commitment. We need their critical voices because they challenge our pious assumptions and help to purify religion of its narrowness, its own particular self-worshipping idolatry, the sin of thinking we can pin God down to our own narrow categories.

The Haggadah says, "In every generation all people should see themselves as if they personally had come out of Egypt." The mystics interpret Egypt (Mitzrayim in Hebrew) as the narrowness within us. Perhaps the "wicked" youngsters would not have been redeemed from the slavery of narrowness – because they had already broken out by themselves.

(Edited excerpt from a sermon given by Rabbi Mark Solomon at the annual Jewish Christian Muslim Students' Conference, with the theme "Young, Gifted and Religious," Solingen, Germany, 24 March 2012)

Community Matters

Adam and Leora's Bar/Bat Mitzvah



The Lyons Wadler family will be celebrating the Bar/Bat Mitzvah of their twins Adam and Leora on Shabbat 28th April. They would like to invite everyone to join them at the service and for a buffet lunch after the service.

If you plan to come do please reply to Catherine (catherine@explicatrix.com) and Phil (wadler@inf.ed.ac.uk) to let them know, so that there will be plenty for everyone.

Visit to Dundee

On 10th March we held our Shabbat morning service in the Synagogue of the Dundee Hebrew Congregation. We had a congregation of between 30 and 40 consisting of our members who travelled from Perth & Kinross, Fife and from Edinburgh (mostly by train) as well as members of the Dundee Community. It was a real treat for us to be in a proper synagogue, and the Dundee shul has a very pleasant ambience, complete with side lighting falling on collections of seaside stones down the left side of the sanctuary (as shown here). The Dundee community provided us with a splendid lunch and we concluded the afternoon with a discussion of Talmud selections on drinking at Purim.



Sharon Levy, Chairman of the Dundee Congregation, has sent us these kind words after the visit: "Just a quick note to thank you for making the journey up to Dundee and for making the Shabbat such a special one for our congregations. I had so many comments regarding Rabbi Solomon - his wisdom & knowledge, his voice and his inclusive approach to the service were much appreciated by all. Those who stayed for the learning session found the text and the discussion both fascinating and insightful and we are VERY eager to have another joint event soon. Many thanks for the gift you left us and I hope there was enough food for lunch to go around. (He

need not have worried, there was plenty). We already had one student attending our BBQ, the following day and a number of people approached us to have more information about our future activities - which is great!"

Visit from Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

The Right Reverend David Arnott joined us for our Kabbalat Shabbat Service on 16th March in Marchmont St Giles Parish Church Centre. He and his wife Rosemary stayed on to share a communal meal with us. His visit was part of his visit to the Edinburgh presbytery during his year as moderator and we were also joined by other people from the Church. Some of us who had arrived early were a bit anxious that we would be hugely outnumbered, but our members all turned up at Jewish time (GMT + 10-15 minutes) and we even managed some pretty creditable singing despite the absence of Rabbi Mark Solomon.

The moderator left us a gift of this special candle and candlestick that he had made by a St Andrews craftsman as a memento of his visit to us. He told us how he had been approached by the Jewish Chronicle for comment after the recent visit of the Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, to the Scottish Parliament. The topic they wished him to comment on was the controversial remark (for some JC readers) that the Chief Rabbi enjoyed Christmas Carols! We certainly enjoyed the Moderator's visit and he told us that he enjoyed the food and wine (provided jointly by our members and by Marchmont St Giles) and our informal atmosphere.



Members' News

Illness and Recovery

We are sorry to hear that **Joy Northcott** has been diagnosed with breast cancer. The good news is that it does not seem to have spread elsewhere, but she will still have to undergo surgery and other treatments. Her surgery is planned for 11th April. If you would like to be kept up to date with her news please email husband Peter at p.g.bennett@btinternet.com. We wish Joy all the best for successful treatment and a quick recovery.

We are pleased that **Marianne Laszlo** and **Lisa Barcan** are both now well on the way to being fully recovered after their recent hospital stays.

Marianne Laszlo would like to express her gratitude to all those people who came to visit her in hospital and in her home. She says: "It is very gratifying to learn that there are many caring and helpful people in our Community. It meant a lot to me. Thank you all."

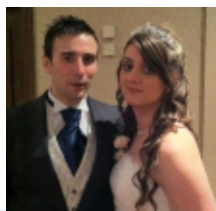
Mazal Tov

To **Saul Aryeh Kohn**, on two projects for this summer. He has an internship at the Palo Alto Observatory on "Planet formation or double stars? What is carving out the inner holes in circumstellar "transition" disks?"

He writes: I'm examining light from several stars that have disks of gas and dust around them. When holes form in this "shell" of matter, it could be due to several reasons. The most probable ones are: a) There are actually two stars inside the shell, not one. Their gravity tugs part of the shell away, making a hole. b) A big planet is forming inside the shell. It's ploughing through the matter, and making a hole. Whatever the reason is for each star I'll be able to build up data about each cause. Astronomers can then use the catalog of patterns to choose more easily what stars they want to investigate in future surveys, whatever they're interested in finding!

During his time there he will take a week off studying stars to study spirituality. He will travel to New Mexico to take part in an Interfaith event: "Home of Peace: A Spirituality for Change", Ghost Ranch, for young adults seeking inner and outer transformation in their lives and world. For details see <http://www.salvaterravision.org> under events.

All the best to **Anna Duncan** for her wedding to **Itamar Nitzan** that will be conducted to Rabbi Mark Solomon on 1st April. Anna is now our interfaith representative and will also represent us on the Edinburgh and Lothians Equality Council which we recently joined as a corporate member.



Congratulations to **Rebekah Grownovski's** eldest Grand-daughter, Stephanie, who was married to Simon on Saturday 24th March (see picture). We wish them every happiness for their future life together.

Thanks

To **Kat Angus** for standing in so competently to cover Hannah's maternity leave as newsletter editor. Also to **Eyal Poleg** who, for the last few years, has mailed out the newsletters for those people who receive it by post. We are delighted that **Peter Bennett** (Joy Northcott's husband) has agreed to take over this job.

We would also like to thank **Maureen Mackinnon** for all the work she has done for the community as a Council member and a catering organiser in recent years. Maureen has too many other commitments just now to be able to continue as a Council member, but she is of course still acting as our seder organiser this year, and hopes to help when she is able at future events.

Kiddush

We are delighted that **Ricky Hogg** has offered to organise sponsorship for Kiddushim after Shabbat morning services. The plan is that members will be sent messages ahead of special events, like birthdays or anniversaries, and be invited to contribute to a Kiddush after the service. We will be discussing just how this will be done, and what type of Kiddush people would like at our next council meeting. If any member has views on this do please email the chairman (chair@eljc.org) or leave a message on the community phone.

Events and Announcements

Beautiful pictures of 1950s Jewish Whitechapel



This picture of "Working in the 'schmutter' business" is just one of a whole series of great black and white photos published by the Mail Online. You can see the others at

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2101018/Rabbis-rags-rainy-Whitechapel-Stunning-photos-celebrate-Jewish-life-post-war-East-End.html>

or <http://tinyurl.com/854rbw5>

Jane Haining - A Celebration Service

We have received the following invitation from Dunscore Parish Church to represent the Jewish Community at a celebration service for Jane Haining, who some have called "Scotland's Oscar Schindler":

On 9th March 2010, a medal - 'Heroes of the Holocaust' - was presented by the then Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, on behalf of the British Government, to the family of Jane Haining in recognition of her services to humanity. The family has generously entrusted this medal to the safe-keeping of Dunscore Parish Church. To mark this great honour, Dunscore Church is organising a special service on Sunday 3rd June, followed by afternoon tea and a 'get-together' in the Village Hall.

You can read more about Jane at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Haining and at

<http://www.dunscore.org.uk/jane-haining.html>. Dunscore is a small village about 10 miles North of Dumfries. The family are very keen to have a Jewish representative or representatives attend the celebration. Dunscore is in beautiful countryside and you could even make a weekend of it by staying over in one of the farmhouse bed-and-breakfasts nearby. Please let me know if you would be able to represent us at the service.

Gillian Raab (chair@eljc.org).

The Service will take place at Dunscore Parish Church on Sunday 3rd June 2012 at 2pm.



Literary Society AGM

The Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society AGM will be held on Sunday 6 May at 8.00pm 4 Salisbury Road. This will be your chance to recommend speakers and ask for the topics you want to be covered and of course to stand for the committee / office bearer roles. If you have ideas for speakers or topics, but can't make the meeting, do email Micheline Brannan (michelinebrannan@msn.com) with your suggestions.

Library news and a Book Review

Our librarian (Jennifer Underwood, seen here) has reviewed a book she has been reading recently. We have a number of books on similar themes that you can borrow. They are all in the bookcase at the top of the stairs at the Columcille Centre, opposite our storage cupboard. Do visit it at any of the services we hold at Collumcille. If you want to borrow a book, please enter the information in the borrowing book and, as soon as possible, email Jenny (librarian@eljc.org) to let her know you have borrowed it.



You can find a list of our titles and information about them at <http://www.librarything.com/catalog/eljc>. The books at Columcille can be selected from the "Collections" tab at the top and if you click on "Tags" you can identify the type of book you might be interested in; for example "novels" or "Judaism". Do email Jenny (librarian@eljc.org) for more information, or if you have books you would like to donate to our library.

Blu Greenberg's "On women and Judaism: A view from tradition"

Blu Greenberg writes from the interesting feminist perspective of an Orthodox Jewish woman, raised in a traditional family. One might suggest that the two viewpoints are at the opposite ends of the spectrum, which is why her perspective is so fascinating.

The first chapter asks; "Is feminism good for the Jews?" In this, she looks at the ways that feminism could help shape the Halakhic laws of the future. The second chapter gives some more background to Blu's Orthodox upbringing and how this fits alongside her feminist leanings. This was particularly interesting as she describes some of the ways she was excluded from Jewish activities growing up. For instance, during Bar Mitzvah time for her male peers. Viewed from an outside position, these exclusions could be seen as unfair towards women. Certainly many non-Orthodox women strongly object to them. Blu argues however that she did not feel this way growing up, in fact she and her female friends felt a sense of relief that they were spared the public ordeal.

As the book progresses however, Blu details her growing discontent with the androcentric bias of Orthodox life. One notable example is the Halakhic position on divorce and the issuing of a get. Another is the lack of liturgical responsibilities placed on women. Blu argues that this system is imperfect for many reasons. For instance, single women, having no male partner through whom they could have vicarious experience of communal rituals, might struggle to feel fully part of the Jewish community.

In conclusion, I found this to be one of the more accessible books on feminism in Judaism whilst still remaining thought provoking. It highlighted quite a few areas in Orthodox culture for me to mull over. I must admit to generally believing that the Orthodox way of life tends to ignore and suppress the modern woman. Although this book did support my existing view to some extent, it also demonstrated to me that things are not quite so clear cut as this.

Jennifer Underwood

Being Jewish in Scotland Project - an invitation

Many of us have already taken part in this research project, filling in the survey form or taking part in interviews or discussions. You can read the interim report of the project on the SCoJec web site (http://www.scojec.org/news/2012/12iii_bjis_interim_report/interim_report.htm).



Congratulations to Leslie Mutch for being one of the winners of the prize draw. It is too late for the prize draw, but Fiona Frank is still interested in hearing from you. In particular she would like to hear from people who are Jewish but not members of any Jewish Community. She will be holding a Focus group in Edinburgh on the evening of Wednesday 9th May. It will be a chance to discuss with her and others with refreshments. If you are in this position and would like to attend please email or call Fiona (fiona@scojec.org 07779 206 522) for details.

Running for the Daisy Chain Trust

Alastair, the son of Community member Anne Young will be running the London Marathon on 22nd April. The Daisy Chain Trust is a charity which gives grants to children's organisations and which we supported at our 2010 Yom Kippur Appeal. If you wish to sponsor him you can send a cheque payable to The Daisy Chain Trust to: Anne Young, 11C Ettrick Road, Edinburgh EH10 5BJ, (to gift aid it please include your postcode). Or you can donate and see his picture online at www.virginmoneygiving.com/AlastairYoung1.

Purim 2012



We were thrilled to have our Rabbi Mark Solomon with us again for Purim this year. We had another animated Megillah reading with Mark reading from the scroll (which he kindly lent us for the occasion) and lots of us taking parts in the dramatised English translation. The sound of greggers and stamping shook the Marchmont St Giles Church Hall whenever the evil name of Haman was mentioned and cheers resounded to the name of Mordechai.



The Community excelled itself in fancy dress costumes this year, several lovely Esthers and a couple of nasty-faced Hamans. We are only sorry we did not manage to get more photos this year. Our only two are - the odd Arab couple on the left, and the Purim Wizard Lot-Caster and his Witchy wife. Helen and Stewart were splendid as Lion and Lion tamer but the lion must have escaped before we could shoot him.



Purim is a time when we should give gifts to the poor, known as mishloach manot (משלוח מנות), and this year we collected more than £100 for a local charity called the Rock Trust. The Rock Trust provides support and accommodation to young (16-25 year olds) homeless people (or those at risk of homelessness) in both Edinburgh and West Lothian area. It operates a number of house model types including shared living (with up to two other young people and a volunteer), single accommodation and mother and baby accommodation. They also provide mentoring and advice services and a drop-in Centre at their offices in Albany Street. For more details see <http://www.rocktrust.org>.

After the Megillah reading we all set off down to the Synagogue in Salisbury Road to join the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, who had just finished their own Megillah reading, for a joint Kiddush and Purimspiel. The latter was written by Nancy Lynner, who this year included Olympic and Jubilee themes. Vashti was too busy training to bother to perform for King Achashverosh for his Diamond Jubilee.



The director was Professor Phil Wadler, seen below in his costume as an entrant to the Shushan beauty competition. Musical accompaniment was by Norma Brodie. There were notable performances by Sophie Bleau as Haman, Melissa Wood (seen below with consort) as King Achashverosh, Jenny Underwood as Mordechai and many other talented members of both Sukkat Shalom and the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. Apologies for not being able to name everyone and their parts.



The evening concluded with an excellent Seudah with food provided by the Hebrew Congregation, and, of course, some drink for all who wished.

It was wonderful to have such a big crowd all together with people from both communities and, I think, some visitors. We hope we can have more enjoyable joint social events during the year.