

# Sukkat Shalom

## May 2012

**Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community**

Scottish Charity No SC035678

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## Events and Services

### Date **Friday 4 May 2012**

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

### Date **Friday 11 May 2012**

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

### Date **Friday 18 May 2012**

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

### Date **Saturday 26 May 2012**

Event Shabbat Morning Service led by Rabbi Mark Solomon  
Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace  
Time 11am

### **Erev Shavuot Service**

led by **Rabbi Mark Solomon**, followed by cheesecake and discussion

**Saturday 26 May 2012, Columcille Centre,  
2 Newbattle Terrace  
7pm**

## 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.

### Date **Sunday 27 May 2012**

Event Choosing Judaism  
Venue Usual location  
Time 10:30am

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

### Date **Friday 1 June 2012**

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

## **Service at Newstead on 9 June 2012**

for details see p.5/6

## **Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society AGM**

**Sunday 6 May, 8pm, Marian Oppenheim Hall, 4  
Salisbury Road**

Please attend and prepare ideas for next session's events.

## **Deadline for copy for June 2012 newsletter: 24 May 2012**

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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.

9 Av	29.7.2012
Rosh Hashanah 5773	17.9.-18.9.2012
Yom Kippur	26.9.2012



The main event in the LJ calendar this last month was the Biennial Conference with the theme **Looking Backwards, Moving Forward**. Thus reports of it replace the LJ announcements here.

## Chairman's word

I am writing this in a state of mild exhaustion after spending last weekend at the Liberal Judaism Biennial. It was held in the sumptuous surroundings of Tortworth Court Hotel near the Cotswolds. Rabbi Pete Tobias, who in one sense was our founder Rabbi, organised it this year and the theme was

We started the weekend with an activity in which some of the Rabbis present took the part of characters from Jewish History. They read the appropriate bits of the Erev Shabbat service and then went round the dinner tables trying to convince us



that it was they who had contributed the most to Liberal Judaism today. Our Rabbi Mark Solomon was Simeon ben Gamaliel, the first century author of many famous Talmudic sayings. But the prize

went to retired Rabbi Harry Jacobi for his portrayal of Rabbi Abraham Geiger, often considered the founder of Liberal Judaism.

There was a full weekend of discussion sessions, services and of course the opportunity to meet people from other communities. It was interesting to compare what other communities saw as their problems and their successes. Many were in a very different setting from us, especially those in

and around London. The community that seemed to me to share characteristics with us to the greatest extent was the Dublin Liberal Community, although they have been established much longer (68 years) and have the legacy of their own building. It was interesting also to talk to the people from the Oxford Liberal Community who share a building with the Orthodox Community where they have both a strictly kosher kitchen, and a non-kosher kitchen to allow community members to share meals. I also had the pleasure of meeting our liaison officer from the LJ council, Dr Howard Cohen who is also a mohel. Following some negotiations over buying drinks I ended up owing him £10. He waived it but suggested that I should buy a lottery ticket for the community and donate the proceeds if I won. I'm not planning to do this, but I will wager it on some sort of bet with a healthier return, following advice from my son.

There were four times during the weekend when we could choose from a whole menu of discussions.

Claudette Hudes, our treasurer, who was there with her



husband Robbert, and I have each chosen to summarise one of the sessions we attended briefly for you. You will find them on page 3.

Liberal Rabbis are a varied and lively bunch. No fewer than three of them have had books published this year – all seeming to be very different from each other. I plan to read them and then donate them to the Sukkat Shalom library. Rabbi David Goldberg's book is entitled "*This is not the way Jews, Judaism and Israel*": It is not just about Israel, as the reviews of it have implied, but it is a critique of modern Progressive Judaism and very critical of the move in Liberal Judaism towards more Orthodox practices. He even argues that synagogues should just be Jewish cultural centres since none of us now believes in the God of the Torah. I am quoting here from a session he led at the conference where he may have been exaggerating his views.

Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah's book "*Trouble Making Judaism*" is equally iconoclastic, see Claudette's review of her session on page 3/4. I am sure there will be plenty for us to disagree with in both of these books, but also many stimulating ideas we may gain from them. Pete Tobias's book, "*Why am I here?*", on the other hand, is much more gentle. It elaborates and puts in context a selection from his many radio broadcasts. Those of us who know Pete will enjoy hearing his voice coming through its pages.

## Liberal Judaism Biennial Conference Sessions

### Rabbi Neil Janes: Including non-Jews in Prayer – Talmudic and Medieval reflections

*Reported by Gillian Raab*

This session started with a series of questions including “What do we mean by a non-Jew?” and “What do we mean by prayer? Communal or personal”. We established that it was Communal prayer we would be concerned with and that the non-Jews that we might be most likely to encounter regularly in our communities these days are those who are in the process of conversion and partners of Jewish members. Should such people be formally recognised in our communities by, for example, having the option of the status of associate membership? This is something we have discussed in our own community from time to time, but always come out against it based on the argument that it could prove divisive if some partners decided to take out associate status and others did not. We very much appreciate what many non-members do for our community. Some associate members of other communities who were at this discussion said how much they appreciated having a formal status within the community. If anyone reading this feels the same way, please get in touch with us.

Following the introduction we went on to discuss what the Talmud said on this issue. In particular we read from the Tractate Mishnah Berachot 7:1, which discusses the Grace After Meals. In particular, when we should say the Ziman (the introductory section of birkat hamazon). Traditionally this is only included when a minimum of three men have eaten together. Who should count in such a calculation? Of course we would not restrict it to men now and nobody disputed this. Several categories of person were discussed by the rabbis:

- the servant (included unless they have eaten less than an olive's worth),
- the Cuthean or Samaritan who at the time this was written had rather doubtful Jewish status and
- the Am Ha'araetz, the man of the land who was an ignoramus and did not keep to Jewish law including the tithing of his harvest.

There were many disputes among the Rabbis about this, but on the whole the Cuthean is regarded more favourably than the Am Ha'aretz, suggesting that how one behaves may be considered more important than formal status. Perhaps a message for us which we can continue to argue over. The session was very much in the tradition of our own Tea and Talmud sessions with Rabbi Mark, but with a larger group who brought a wider range of ideas to the discussion.

### Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah: Trouble-Making Judaism

*Reported by Claudette Hudes*

“What is Trouble-Making Judaism? It's Liberal Judaism with an edge. It's honouring the prophets who exhorted our forbears to pursue justice, and learning from the rabbis, who reconstructed Jewish life after the destruction of the Temple. It's about engaging with the experience of Jewish women past and present, troubling with Jewish texts, and struggling to make Jewish life more inclusive.”

This summary is what drew me to take part in the session. Rabbi Sarah made the distinction between trouble maker (trouble for trouble's sake) and troubled maker, one who is troubled and causes trouble to improve something. The session was divided into four main sessions:

1) The prophets were the ones who made trouble in the past. What should we be making trouble about? The following are some suggestions from the attendees.

- Children's education
- Critique/ liberal spin on traditions
- Who is a Jew?
- Social conscience, e.g. poverty
- Inclusive/accessible synagogues
- Better/worse relations with Orthodox
- Wider society - where do we fit?
- Israel

2) Being troubled and asking questions. Are we asking questions about the future? The following are some questions to consider from the attendees.

- Continuity of future generations
- Israel sowing seeds of own destruction
- Unbalanced view of Israeli and Palestinian actions
- How Liberal Jews are treated in Israel
- Rise in Haredi
- Connection of Liberal Judaism's big ideas and the smaller concerns of the communities
- Split in Jewish people
- Gender bias
- What to do with the children of mixed marriage
- Future of our synagogues
- Looking on fringes to engage people

3) Being troubled with Jewish inheritance. Rabbis totally re-invented Judaism. What will LJ change in the future?

Rabbi Sarah suggests that we need to re-invent Judaism... look at Liberal Judaism again. Liberal Judaism has decided that certain parts of the Torah are not read because they don't like them. Should we study these parts to see if we want to include them? Rabbi Sarah gave us a section of her 'Sex Lessons in the Torah' where she discusses Leviticus 18 - 20. LJ does not read Lev. 18 & 20; it only reads Lev. 19. Lev. 19 deals with the ban on incest. Lev. 18 & 20 goes into more detail about sexual taboos. Should we include Lev. 18 & 20 to make Lev. 19 stronger? We studied Leviticus 18:1-6 (from Acharey Mot) where it talks about only following God's laws and not taking with you laws of the land you came from nor following the laws of the land you are going to. A discussion followed with comments such as:

- Segregation - lack of integration of the Jewish people
- Undercurrent - fear of cultural difference, monotheism in polytheistic society
- God as dictator
- Orthodox don't follow rules and still think they are higher
- Be who you are where you are

4) Taking the Trouble

The discussions in the session were lively and gave a lot of food for thought. However without action nothing will change. I asked Rabbi Sarah what could we do. She said we should embrace the word Troubled Maker and engage in what it means to be a Jew for us. I think it would be really important to discuss what we want to be as a community. We may already be there ... but maybe not.

## Job Opportunities

The **Edinburgh and Lothians Equalities Council**, of which we are a member, is advertising two jobs. Full details are on the web but the closing date is 4th May, so check them out right away if you are interested.

- 1) Administrator (full-time)
- 2) Youth Development Officer (22.5 hours a week)

Full details of are available at: <http://www.elrec.org.uk/jobs.htm>

## Community Matters

### Members' News

#### Mazal Tov many times over this month

To **Anna Duncan** and **Itamar Nitzan** seen here at their wedding in the Royal Botanic Gardens on April 1st. This photo was taken by the talented young photographer Laura Crockatt. Anna can give you her details.



To **Alex Guilherme** on his successful interview with the Liberal Judaism Beit Din in London to have his Jewish status confirmed. Alex has been invited to Israel in July to give a talk at Yad Vashem on his research work on the correspondence between Martin Buber and Mahatma Gandhi in 1938/39.

To **Rebekah Gronowski** on the safe arrival of a baby boy to her younger grand-daughter, Charlotte, and Daniel on 16th April at 7lbs 10oz. He has been named Zachary Stephen [Stephen after his Grandfather]. Zachary means "Remembered by God" - he is truly a miracle baby who has been sent to the family.

To **Maureen and Ruairidh Mackinnon** on the birth of her grand-daughter Sophia Rose who arrived just before Pesach..

To **Nick Silk** and **Gillian Raab** who each received a Chairman's award for services to their community (this one) at the Liberal Judaism Biennial Conference last weekend.

### New Member

We are delighted to welcome Helen Sherbourne as a new member. Helen's partner Stewart Zollinger is attending the Choosing Judaism class. Helen works as a fundraiser for a children's charity and under her "Ideas for Sukkat Shalom" she says "I think there is a need to showcase Judaism to the general public and dispel some negative feelings (mostly due to the situation in Israel)". We very much look forward to hearing more of her ideas.

### Recovering from hospital stays

Two members have recently been in hospital. Ruzena Wood is recovering well at home and Joy Northcott is regaining her strength after her recent surgery. We wish Ruzena well again. Please do not phone or visit her for the time being, but you can find out how she is by emailing [rebekah.gronowski@gmail.com](mailto:rebekah.gronowski@gmail.com). To find out about Joy you can contact her husband Peter Bennett [p.g.bennett@btinternet.com](mailto:p.g.bennett@btinternet.com). (See also Peter Bennett's 'Swimathon' in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care on p.7) We will be signing get well cards for each of them at the service for Adam and Leora's Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

### Service at Newstead on 9 June 2012

Once again we are delighted to have a Shabbat service at Newstead, near Melrose, which is on 9 June. The service will start at 11am, will be led by Rabbi Mark, and will be held at Newstead Village Hall. As well as making all the arrangements, Isobel King will be providing us with a soup and snack lunch, after which there will be a trip to Melrose Abbey for those of us who wish to go. The Abbey is a 20 minute walk from Newstead, or an even shorter drive in the car! The entrance cost is £4.95 (concessions available) with a 10% discount if there are 11 or more of us. Historic Scotland members with their cards go free and do not count towards the 11! If you would like to go but do not have transport, contact Nick who will help arrange lifts and if you are going and have space in your car, please also let Nick know. Directions for anyone who has not been to Newstead before can be

obtained from Nick. Please remember that there is no parking immediately adjacent to the hall and all vehicles should be left at the east end of the village in the Health Board Offices car park - 2 minute walk away. And finally, even if you can't offer a lift, it would help Isobel with lunch if you could let Nick know you intend going. Thanks once again to Isobel for making the arrangements for what will no doubt be an enjoyable day.

Contact Nick by email at [nick\\_silk@btinternet.com](mailto:nick_silk@btinternet.com) or leave a message for him on the Community phone.

## Events and Announcements

### Crisis Appeal

*Please bring this to the attention of anyone with whom you have contact in the Glasgow area -*

**URGENT APPEAL from Positive Action in Housing** - 156 refused refugees are being made absolutely destitute on the streets of Glasgow and we need your help. Please go to the website <http://www.paih.org> to find out more.

As a wider Jewish community we understand what it means to be refugees, "strangers in a strange land", as many families were taken in and welcomed into the communities in Glasgow & Edinburgh in the past.

If you would like any further information about what you can do, please email [rebekah.gronowski@gmail.com](mailto:rebekah.gronowski@gmail.com) - there are many ways in which you can help - even writing an email and/or letter to politicians may help with this.

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### Being iJewish

by *Michael Hornsby*, Lublin, Poland.

The internet has undoubtedly brought many benefits. An unexpected one, perhaps, is that it allows you to participate in Jewish life at a distance. I am not talking emailing newsletters or notices here, I mean an online, interactive Jewish experience which is not limited by location. Such an opportunity is presented by Our Jewish Community (<http://www.ourjewishcommunity.org/>), an American-based online group which is connected to the Beth Adam congregation in Loveland, Ohio. The kehillah is run by Rabbis Laura Baum and Robert Barr, and in their own words, it offers 'an inclusive community, bold conversations, innovative Jewish resources, transformative voices, inspiring connections, rabbis who reject easy answers and much more ...' It works by the rabbis holding live webstreaming of services (the major Jewish festivals, including a weekly Kabbalat Shabbat service) during which online participants can interact with the rabbis and other internet users through their webcams, instant messaging or simply by watching. All such events are archived in order to allow people to access the services if they cannot log in at the time they are being held. Beth Adam is a humanistic congregation and this is reflected in the style of services presented (deist language is avoided and many traditional practices are not observed, e.g. the wearing of tallitot or kippot, or much use of Hebrew) but the congregation is nevertheless firmly rooted in Jewish tradition and engages meaningfully with questions pertinent to those of us who identify as Jewish in the 21st century. An interesting (and welcome) emphasis is placed on the use of Yiddish (alongside Hebrew), thus allowing many secular Jews to feel connected as well. Since moving to Poland, I have found the group to be a valuable connection to the wider Jewish community, on those occasions when I cannot be present at services at the Progressive Jewish community in Warsaw. I was honoured to be asked to be part of the reading of the Haggadah at this year's online seder, and I sent in a pre-recorded clip to be used on the second night. However, as I was in Fort William at the time and unable to get a good enough signal where I was staying, I missed out on the event. I know of at least one other ELJC member who found it difficult to connect to the event as well. However, this is not going to deter me and I remain committed to the concept of an interactive cyber-Judaism. For those of us far from centres of Jewish activity, or those of us who cannot leave the house for whatever reason, such a facility is an invaluable resource and reflects the changing circumstances of what it means to be committed to a modern, 21st century style of Judaism.

*See next page for more links to online resources*

## A collection of UK and sites providing video and audio services

Glasgow Reform Synagogue

<http://www.grs.org.uk/>

There are audio streams of several services. Follow the link to to listen live and you will find more recordings than appear on their front page, including a recent service for Holocaust Memorial day.

Alyth

<http://www.alyth.org.uk/>

[http://www.alyth.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=627&Itemid=107](http://www.alyth.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=627&Itemid=107)

Sha'arei Tsedek

<http://www.shaarei-tsedek.org.uk/>

[http://www.shaarei-tsedek.org.uk/J15/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=396&Itemid=198](http://www.shaarei-tsedek.org.uk/J15/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=396&Itemid=198)

West London Synagogue

<http://www.wls.org.uk/>

<http://www.wls.org.uk/broadcast>

Finchley Reform

<http://www.frsonline.org/WatchOnline/>

### And further afield in the USA

Sim Shalom Online Jewish Universalist Synagogue

<http://www.simshalom.com/>

Central Synagogue in New York <http://www.centralsynagogue.org/index.php/worship/multimedia/streaming/>

## Peter Bennett's 'Swimathon'

I'm taking on the swim of my life and have entered - in aid of Marie Curie - Swimathon Weekend 2012, the world's biggest fundraising swim.

A quick summary: I am 66, I am trying to swim 5000 metres (200 lengths of a 25-metre pool!), further than I have ever swum in my life before. Please take ten seconds at least to check out the details on the link below....

Check out my personal fundraising page to see why I am taking on this challenge:

<http://my.artezglobal.com/personalPage.aspx?registrationID=387488&langPref=en-CA>

From this page, you are able to make a secure online donation using your credit or debit card. It really is that simple and every penny counts!

Money raised by the Swimathon distance challenges for Marie Curie Cancer Care, will help support Marie Curie Nurses who provide free nursing care to people with terminal cancer and other terminal illnesses, in the place of their choice.

Thank you for your support.

## Facebook

We have recently learned about a Facebook group called "Jews in Scotland". At least one person has recently been in touch with us thanks to this page. It is an open group so everyone can see messages on it and can see who its members are. It was started by Elad Katz, who some of you may have met at Seders or at our Chanukah parties. He says that it has only recently taken off.

This made me ask if we should have a Facebook presence, and if so what sort. We have had a Facebook group for some time. It is a closed group and is not much used. I am no expert on Facebook and use it very little. But it seems to me it could be more useful for us to have a Facebook page rather than a group. Several other communities have one, e.g. Mark's other congregation the Manchester Liberal Jewish Community. I plan to bring this up at our Council meeting next week. If you have strong views on this or you would be willing to advise us on this question do please be in touch. *Gillian Raab* [chair@eljc.org](mailto:chair@eljc.org)



## Communal seder 5772/2012

We managed to squeeze 90 people into the Marchmont St Giles Church Hall for our communal seder,



led with his usual aplomb by Rabbi Mark Solomon. We celebrated our freedom from bondage but, many times we also reflected on the plight of those who are now still far from free.

As in the last two years we used the Liberal Judaism Haggadah (B'Chol Dor Va-Dor). We filled a cup for Elijah and also filled a cup of water to celebrate Miriam's role in the deliverance from Egypt and to remind us of the importance of water to our survival.

This year the LJ Haggadah was augmented by some readings by members of the Community including some readings from a New American Haggadah edited by Jonathan Safran Foer and with a translation by Nathan Englander (both contemporary novelists). This Haggadah has a whole series of Commentaries under different headings. Those under the heading **Playground** were written by the children's author Lemony Snicket and includes a section to let the kids get back at their parents by defining four kinds of parent.

Here is an extract:-



**The simple parent** does not grasp the concept of freedom. "There will be no macaroons until you eat all your brisket", says the simple parent at a dinner honoring the oppression of oppressed peoples."..In answer to such statements the wise child will role his eyes in the direction of the ceiling and declare "Let my people go!".

**The Parent Who is Unable to Enquire** has had too much wine and should be excused from the table.

Thanks to everyone who helped make the seder a success, especially Maureen Mackinnon for sorting out the bookings, everyone who brought the items for the seder plates, and the plates themselves and to Judith Stewart and her team from Butterflies Catering for preparing and serving the meal. Judith has perfected her kneidlach recipe and the staff were most helpful and understanding.