

Sukkat Shalom

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Scottish Charity No SC035678

Sukkat Shalom is a constituent of liberal judaism

EVENTS & SERVICES

Date Friday 2nd January
Event **Erev Shabbat Service**
Venue **Columcille Centre,
Newbattle Terrace**
Time **7 pm**

Erev Shabbat service led by Rabbi Mark, including the baby blessing of Isabella, daughter of Vanessa Brodrick and Rael Almeleh. Service followed by family supper—please bring a non-meat dish to share.

Tea and Talmud will meet on **Saturday, 3rd January** at 1pm at Columcille Centre. Please bring a non-meat dish to share for lunch. The **Choosing Judaism** class will meet on **Sunday, 4th January** in the morning.

Kabbalat Shabbat Services

Dates **9th, 23rd & 30th January**
Venue **Marchmont - St Giles
1a Kilgraston Road**
Time **6:15 pm, finishing by 7pm**

Date Saturday 17th January
Event **Shabbat Service**
Venue **Columcille Centre,
Newbattle Terrace**
Time **11 am**

We will be commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day in our Shabbat service on 17th January. Any contributions to the service are welcomed, please get in touch with Lauren Fox to contribute a reading, poem, idea, etc. We hope to see you there.

Date Friday, 6th February
Event **Erev Shabbat Service**
Venue **Columcille Centre
Newbattle Terrace**
Time **7 pm**

January 2009

Chairman: Maurice Naftalin, chair@eljc.org
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EVENTS & SERVICES

Sunday 8th February – The 'tent' team are visiting Edinburgh and will be conducting a variety of events, as follows:

Lunch for young adults

Tu b'shvat seder at 4pm at Columcille (for all members, especially the kids!)



Join us for an Israeli-style Tu b'shvat with Noa, LJ's shlichah and Avivit from 'tent'

Since the establishment of the state of Israel, Tu b'shvat has been a holiday that has reconnected the Jewish people to the land of Israel. In the progressive movement and in modern Israel an environmental element has been emphasised and we take a deeper look at how we can love, learn and respect the land that sustains us.

Jewish Calendar for January 2009

26th January - Rosh Hodesh Shevat

(a summary of forthcoming ELJC events can always be found at <http://eljc.org/calendar>)

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News from the Council

The new **members directory** is nearly complete. Copies will be printed and mailed to all members early in 2009. Thanks to all who returned their information forms, and to Gillian Raab for all the work she's put in on the directory.

In reponse to recent queries, the Council discussed and agreed a **photography policy**. Photography during community events is fine except during religious services.

Events around Edinburgh

The next meeting of the **Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society** will be 1st February. Margaret Brearley will speak on *Nazism and Nature: Some Roots of the Holocaust*. The event, which is open to all, will take place at Salisbury Road, with tea at 7pm and the lecture at 7:30.

The **Edinburgh Jewish Community Centre** will be holding a Burns Supper on 25th January. For information, contact Joyce Sperber on 666 1425 or j.sperber@yahoo.com

Interfaith Events

Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association 20th Anniversary Year Keynote Launch Lecture
with

The Rt. Hon. **Alex Salmond** MSP, First Minister of Scotland

Venue: St John's Church, Edinburgh
(corner of Princes St and Lothian Rd.)

Thursday 22nd January 2009 – 7.15pm
Admission Free. For Tickets: 0131 228 8146 or email info@eifa.org.uk

City of Edinburgh Holocaust Memorial Day Civic Commemoration

THEME: STAND UP TO HATRED

Keynote Speaker
Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp
Child Survivor
President of World Union for Progressive Judaism – European Region
C100 member of World Economic Forum

Also: Music, Song, Poetry, Silence, Spoken Word, Reflection with pupils of Edinburgh schools and others.

Venue: St Thomas Aquinas High School

Monday 26th January 2009 – 7.15pm
Admission Free, by invitation only.
For Tickets: 0131 228 8146 or email info@eifa.org.uk

Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group

21st January, 'Servants of God' at Nicolson Square, starting with food.

18th February, visit to the Synagogue in Salisbury Road, ending with refreshments provided by the Synagogue.

Both events start at 7pm. For more information, contact Rebekah Gronowski.

Cheder Report

Our cheder goes from strength to strength! Last month we were pleased to welcome Daniel and Benjamin Staal to class which means that we now we have 7 regularly attending young members in the cheder group. And, starting in the new year, we will be welcoming Olga Pietrula as our eighth and latest member.

Also last month we held a small party at Stew & Gina's to celebrate the kids' great achievement in leading the September Erev Shabbat service for the community. The party was a big success and everyone enjoyed a communal viewing of the film 'Sixty Six' (well recommended if you haven't already seen it).

Thanks to a generous offer from Leo Baeck College, Dept. of Jewish Education, we have recently acquired a large 'hamper' of books and resources at a very low price. The resources will be very useful for future work and have arrived at a very timely stage in the cheder's life. Thanks go to Gillian Raab for coordinating the application for this as well as our response to an invitation to apply for funds through a joint initiative offered by Leo Baeck in collaboration with UJIA. Gillian has kindly (but temporarily she says!) stepped-in to help co-ordinate the cheder parents with our organisation / decision making. This is a very useful and welcome function since the cheder growth has increasingly been making our informal consensus model of decision making somewhat unwieldy and lengthy.

With the increasing numbers and ability spread, we have also been taking steps to restructure the classes so as to better meet all the children's needs. Shani Zour continues to do very good work with the children and we are very grateful to her for all her efforts. From the start of next month Shani's work will be enhanced by creation of a second class which will be led by Norman Crane. Norman has recently joined the community from Manchester and has extensive cheder teaching / management experience. We will now split each 2-hour

session in two with Norman spending the first part of each session working with the children who are beginners in Hebrew while in parallel, Shani will work with those a bit further along the Hebrew path. After the break both groups will combine and work together on a joint themed session relating for example to Torah / bible stories, spirituality, moral / ethical issues etc.

We intend that this joint session will also include arts, crafts and music and so we are also looking for occasional volunteers to help with this section of the class.

Cheder currently meets on Saturday afternoons from 4pm to 6pm. Next term we will be meeting in the very pleasant surroundings of the new community centre attached to Marchmont St Giles church. The dates will be: Jan 17th & 31st; Feb 14th & 28th; Mar 14th & 28th. We would of course be delighted to hear from interested parents of any prospective members. This would be a great time to join as we now have beginners of different ages. Please contact Gillian Raab, Catherine Lyons or myself (Stew Green) to find out more.

Stew Green

Advance Notice — AGM

In the past, the ELJC AGM has usually been held in January. However, this year Rabbi Danny Rich, Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism, is interested in joining us for our AGM and taking a service during the weekend. The Council is working with LJ to find a suitable date, which is likely to be the first weekend in March (6th – 8th). This date satisfies the requirements of our constitution. Details will be forthcoming, so keep an eye on the newsletter for information about date, venue and how to submit items for consideration at the AGM.

Our Crowd!

By Joe Goldblatt

This month Our Crowd introduces Nadine Cossette. Nadine and her lovely family live in the Marchmont section of Edinburgh. She is a psychiatric doctor.

Q: What is your favourite Jewish holiday?

A: My favourite Jewish holiday is Purim. I chose this holiday above all others because I love how it brings out such a sense of fun in so many people, especially the residents at a Jewish nursing home I once worked at.

Q: What is your favourite Jewish food?

A: My favourite Jewish food is Hamantaschen! I chose this food because The Open Window Bakery was on my way to work when we lived in Toronto – their hamantaschen got me through many long days. (I know I should say chicken soup but I'm not really a big fan...).

Q: What is your favourite Jewish memory?

A: My favourite Jewish memory is: my wedding (Nadine is married to Dr. Adam Budd of Edinburgh University), my children's baby naming ceremonies (Yael and Sophie), sitting in shul one sunny Shabbat morning and deciding to name my daughter Yael, and lots of important Jewish people in my life.

Q: What do you like best about ELJC?

A: What I like best about ELJC is that ELJC is very thoughtful about everything that the community does, which is very important.

Q: Tell us a secret about you.

A: Here's one thing most ELJC community members may not know about me that I wish to share: I used to be one of the only non-Jewish psychiatrists at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto (before I converted). Now I'm one of the only Jewish psychiatrists in Edinburgh.

Q: Do you have a favourite Jewish song:

A: One of my most favourite Jewish songs is: I Write the Songs by Barry Manilow.

Q: Who are our favourite Jewish composers:

A: My favourite Jewish composers, artists, entertainers or authors include: Amos Oz

Q: If you could have dinner with some famous Jewish celebrities, who would you invite?

A: I would invite Amos Oz (I'll stick with just one, perhaps it will increase my chances.)

Q: Where do you like to travel?

A: From Edinburgh we have struck on a week-in-Paris en route to a week-in-Israel which is a marvelous combination. Our most frequent travel destination is "Jewish-Christmas" in Palm Beach, Florida: a very very Jewish experience!

Q: What has your personal journey to Judaism been like?

A: Well, first of all I actually was turned away by three rabbis before someone agreed to my conversion! It's not just a myth! But my journey can best be described as challenging and rewarding, and it has added a lovely dimension to our family life.

Q: When you think of ELJC, what words come to mind?

A: When I think of ELJC, in my opinion, our community may be described as follows: an open and evolving community.



Chair's Word

Kristi (our newsletter editor) told me the other day that there are 70,000 Polish people in the Lothians – that's a tenth of the population! If, like me, you grew up during the Cold War, you might share my sense of the strangeness of this—that a country that used to be characterised by distance and inaccessibility, at least in a political sense, is just a few hours away for Poles working here. Likewise, towns like Cra-cow, which the Naftalin family visited last month, are popular for Britons as a weekend tourist destination (it's a very good one, too!)

While there we visited Auschwitz, where I found the gap between image and reality wider still. I realised that I had always understood Auschwitz not as a place but as a name for the very worst, indeed far beyond the worst, that you can imagine. Those feelings made a sharp contrast with the reality of Auschwitz itself; its desolation actually seems calm—until you see images, like those on the website remember.org, which set scenes of the camps as they are now beside images of the same places in wartime. The one place that for me truly conveyed its history was the cellar of the notorious Block 11. To be there, even when it is brightly lit and crowded with visitors, is to feel touched by the horrors that took place there.

The number of visitors to Auschwitz is amazing (and encouraging): more than a million people come every year, and the number grows all the time. Like our family, they come to understand better what happened there, and to strengthen their resolve to prevent it from ever happening again. I thought about this after our visit. If we mean it seriously when we say “never again”, we must be sure that we can recognise what we intend to resist. Visiting Auschwitz would make you think that to recognise another Shoah would be easy: this was unlike anything that had happened before, especially in its use of all the technical and bureaucratic machinery of the modern state in its attempt to obliterate entire peoples and cultures, ours foremost among them. Surely nothing like this, in its scale and horror, could happen unobserved or unopposed?

If only that were true! A long, long roll-call tells us otherwise: Kampuchea, Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Darfur, the Congo, and many others. Different as these mass killings are from one

another, and different as the conflicts are in which they took place, what they have in common is exactly what we mean when we say “never again”: not a particular mechanism or ideology, but mass enslavement and mass murder itself. In preventing this, the world is a long way short of “never again”. Even in terms of numbers, the Shoah does not stand alone; similar numbers have died over the last decade in the Congo war. And we have to accept that in many of these conflicts, our governments have assented to and sometimes participated in these crimes; for example, half a million children under five died in Iraq as a result of the pre-2003 sanctions—deaths that would now be forgotten but for the American Secretary of State's calm remark that “we think the price is worth it”.

So in saying “never again”, we are falling at the first hurdle—we can hardly resist what we aren't even aware of. How can we awaken to injustice on this scale? One aspect is common to all these killings, different as they are in other respects: dehumanisation of the opponent. Once you define the Other as less than fully human, you are only a short step from finding “rational” justification for *any* actions you take against them.

Writing in the newsletter of a religious community, it would be good to say that religion is an antidote to such injustice. Unfortunately we know all too well how false this is: crimes committed in the name of religion are the stuff of the daily headlines. And though the headlines don't mostly focus on Judaism, we ourselves can hardly be complacent when the Prime Minister of Israel uses the word “pogrom” to describe the actions of religious Jews in Hebron and, even as I write, his government is inflicting dreadful collective punishment on the unfortunate inhabitants of the Gaza Strip.

The good news for us is that our tradition does in fact contain the antidote to injustice and mass persecution. The voices of Torah and of the prophets repeatedly enjoin us to deep respect for the Other. Although we dutifully repeat the commandment, “You shall not oppress the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt”, it can be for us much more than a formula; it can be a deep truth. If we listen to these voices from our tradition, we can look forward to saying “never again”—and know we really mean it.

Maurice Naftalin

Anat's Letter from Jerusalem

Some time ago ELJC member Anat Kamenka moved to Israel and she still keeps in touch with our community. Starting this month, Anat will send us periodic letters and updates from Jerusalem.

Being Jewish is both easier and more demanding in Israel. For most secular or liberal Israelis the shul they don't attend is still an Orthodox one, or, especially on holidays or national occasions, the western wall- the Kotel. The male minyan is more significant in Israel, as are various forms of women's minyans, and generally Israeli life is markedly more sociable and communitarian than that of the UK as the whole nation sees itself as one community — more or less.

Jerusalem is unusual in its high proportion of religious people, so much so that recent municipal elections focussed partly on "whose Jerusalem?" — religious or secular, Jewish or 3 Abrahamic faiths sharing, separation or building links. Israelis are voting with their mortgages and house prices and moving west towards Tel Aviv to various very nice satellite towns like Modiin. We voted in a secular mayor, but one pledged to unite all the citizens, foster east-west transport links and equal opportunities and also important generate real employment including hi-tech industry. The new mayor is a sabra called Nir Barakat and we'll see how he does. He also happens to be a career politician with Kadimah, the centre-left alternative to Labour headed nationally by Tsipi Livni . I'm sure that's enough politics!

News includes renewed shelling of Sderot, an Israeli town near Gaza, and also disturbances in Hebron. News of Arab attacks within Israel rarely gets UK coverage, which is why I recommend the Israeli embassy website for news of events in Israel, or of course main Israeli newspaper websites if accessible.

it is now definitely cold here (12 C) and as Israelis rarely dress for cold or heat homes/offices for real cold weather it tends to feel a bit colder, especially in evenings. Trees and flowers are still in bloom but despite good spell of rain there is still a water shortage and we need more rain — so some Scottish-style downpours will be appreciated.

A bit more on religion. All shades of Judaism are here, mostly highly visible, incredibly tolerant of each other. Kosher food is easy to find, and as well as co-op supermarkets, Machnei Yehudah, the central Jerusalem market, is still good and virtually an added tourist attraction too. Excellent independent tour guides lead guided walks explaining to Israelis and tourists the history of

west Jerusalem and the old city, many fascinating places and areas, each a page in Jewish and Israeli history. Many suburbanites come back to visit family roots in this way.


Har-El's weekly shiur is currently Rash's commentary on the Torah for the weekly parashah, ably set out by R. Ada and a good time is had by all. Israelis tend to argue more in shiurim — a reminder that talmud torah was a group learning/brain sharpening exercise. For those who want to prepare for a class by studying Rashi, he can be easily encountered in translation in the standard Orthodox Hertz or Soncino chumash, but there's much to be said for the added something of studying in a group and learning from each other as well as the rabbi of course. Another recent class on prayer was fascinating, covering the development of the siddur from Torah times to today and its main prayers and the point of prayer, with some lovely sung prayers led by cantor Evan.

There's a lot of Israeli popular and religious music, and for me singing prayers is definitely an added experience often beautiful and good exercise too! Like news, Israeli music may not be so accessible in the UK, and the choice is staggering. Perhaps Jewish websites can help. Israeli film and tv are also of a high standard. I tend to like golden oldies in Israeli music and film but what strikes me most is the sheer wealth of talent when a group of Jews get together to put on a show.

Education is possibly more of a problem. There is a secular/religious divide, there are good schools and more problematic ones and there are bright and less bright students and school fees!!! Israelis have always paid(even for state education, books and other costs are paid by parents) unlike in the UK, and there is a growing private/religious sector which still gets state subsidies — a bone of contention with secular parents.

Big changes I notice between Jerusalem in 1958,'68,'88 and 2008 is firstly sheer size, and new buildings covering the famous hills, which are still beautiful. There's also the more noticeably multicultural look of the city, including the new '90s immigrants from Russia, the Ethiopian, French, South American, and the whole 'kibbutz glyot' still in process of absorption in this wonderful, peaceful, hard-working, good tempered city .

Regards,
Anat Kamenka



liberal judaism

A seminar for all who say : I'M JEWISH, MY PARTNER ISN'T

The seminar offers you the opportunity to talk about your situation, discuss any issues that you may face and explore the various issues open to you. It will be led by members of Community Outreach, a joint Reform and Liberal Judaism project.


Sunday 11th January 2009, 2.30 pm -5.45 pm
at the Sternberg Centre, 80 East End Road ,
Finchley, London N3 2SY

Entry is open to everyone, whether or not you are synagogue members and is for both the Jewish and non-Jewish partners alike - all are welcome. There is a charge of £2.50 per person. There will also be a parallel workshop for parents whose children are in mixed-faith relationships.

You can just turn up on the day, although it helps gauge numbers if you call in advance : 01628-671058 or email : rabromain@aol.com

Pe'ah Fund

In defiance of the credit crunch Liberal Rabbis have committed to contributing 1% of their annual salaries to a new 'Pe'ah Fund' which will assist individuals or groups who are hit by the credit crunch and cannot access financial support elsewhere. The fund also includes a 'skills bank' comprised of people willing to offer their time and skills to help people in need as a result of the financial crisis. Please consider donating either money or skills to the Pe'ah Fund by contacting Rabbi Danny Rich directly on d.rich@liberaljudaism.org. Applications from those in need can be made via a Liberal rabbi. For more information go to lj-peah.blogspot.com.



liberal judaism

Making Your Community Welcoming (LBC conferences)

The Leo Baeck College Department of Jewish Education is hosting two conferences on the subject of making your community welcoming. The College would like to encourage not only educators, but also lay leaders, adult learners and anyone involved in making the community welcoming, to attend. Victor Kaufman , Liberal Judaims's Community Youth Projects Manager will be delivering a session looking at leadership skills in the February conference. The first conference is on 11th January 2009 in Manchester and the second is on 15th February at the Sternberg Centre. Brochures and application forms: are available from the Leo Baeck College website, www.lbc.ac.uk.

Petition to Support Netzer South Africa

Netzer South Africa (the South African Progressive Jewish youth movement) has been prohibited from having full access to the campuses of one of the country's networks of Jewish day schools. The South African Union of Progressive Judaism (a member of the WUPJ) is asking Progressive Jews everywhere for their support in demanding that the schools allow full access to Netzer. More information is available at <http://tinyurl.com/saupjp>

World Jewish Relief Congo Crisis Appeal

More than 250,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in and around the city of Goma to escape fighting between Government and rebel troops. Your donations are needed urgently. Please donate to the WJR Congo Crisis Appeal by calling 020 8736 1250 or visit www.wjr.org.uk/congo

Chanukah Party at ELJC

Our annual Chanukah party took place on the first night of Chanukah, 21st December at Columcille Centre. There was a good turnout, with lots of children, and everyone had a good time.



Photos by Joe Goldblatt

ELJC Support Group
07904 813162

Welcome to Our New Members

Rael and Vanessa Almeleh and baby daughter Isabella. Isabella's baby blessing will be on 2nd January.

A Note from the Editor

As we're about to enter 2009, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank a number of people who make it possible to get the newsletter to you. Huge thanks are due to one of our new members, Jamie Shearer-Bromfield, who has taken over the job of printing and mailing the paper copies for me. Gillian Raab provides membership lists and mailing labels and liaison with the Literary Society, and Nick Silk provides the service information. Maurice Naftalin proofreads and handles the electronic mailing. Joe Goldblatt is writing the Our Crowd column, Stewart Green contributes material on the cheder and Rebekah Gronowski on interfaith activities. Other members of the Council have chipped in with ideas, input and articles, and members of the community have written features on issues of interest to them.

As you can see, it's a group effort, and all of these contributions are valuable. If you're interested in contributing to the newsletter, don't be shy!

The Exchange

Do you have something you'd like to buy, sell, trade? Want to announce an achievement, or just share a bit of news with others in the community? Send contributions for the Members' Exchange to the editor at newsletter@eljc.org.

Many thanks to all who contributed this month. Items for publication are welcomed, as are responses to items published. The deadline for the next newsletter will be **Friday, 16th January**. Please email all contributions to newsletter@eljc.org.