



1. April – May 2017

Nissan – Sivan 5777

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## Diary

<b>April 2017 / Nissan – Iyar 5777</b>				
Fri 7	Nissan 12	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Mon 10	Nissan 15	6:15pm	Erev Pesach – community Seder. For details and to book, please go to <a href="http://eljc.org/community-seder">http://eljc.org/community-seder</a>	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Fri 14	Nissan 19	7pm	Erev Shabbat service	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Fri 21	Nissan 26	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Fri 28	Iyar 3	7pm	Erev Shabbat meditative service, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	<a href="#">Christ Church Morningside</a>
Sat 29	Iyar 3	11am	Shabbat service, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Sat 29	Iyar 3	3pm	Tea & Talmud	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Sun 30	Iyar 4	4pm	Philosophy discussion group	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
<b>May 2017 / Iyar – Sivan 5777</b>				
Fri 5	Iyar 10	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Fri 12	Iyar 17	7pm	Erev Shabbat service	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Fri 19	Iyar 24	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Sat 27	Sivan 2	11am	Shabbat service, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon, together with the cheder children	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Sat 27	Sivan 2	3pm	Tea and Talmud	<a href="#">Marchmont St Giles</a>
Sun 28	Sivan 3	4pm	Philosophy discussion group	<a href="#">Columcille Centre</a>
Tue 30	Sivan 6	7:30pm	Shavuoth seder	<a href="#">Christ Church Morningside</a>

## "Fiddler on the Roof" Performance at the Kings Theatre

Edinburgh Music Theatre are performing the masterpiece of musical theatre, "Fiddler on the Roof", at the Kings Theatre from 5th to 8th April. Evening performances are at 7.30pm and there will be a matinee at 2.30pm on Saturday 8th.

To purchase tickets visit the [King's Theatre web site](#) or call at the box office.

Immediately following the evening performance on Saturday 8th April, members of the cast will return to the stage to discuss how rehearsing and performing in Fiddler on the Roof has helped them learn about Judaism and Jewish culture. They will also answer questions from the audience.

Professor Joe Goldblatt has served as a consultant for this production and various members of the Jewish community have provided ritual objects, costumes and other information.



## Word from our new chair

Hello!

**For those of you who weren't at last month's AGM, you may not be aware that we now have a new Chair of our community – me! It feels like I should start off my first 'word from the Chair' with a bit about me.** I was born in Nottingham in the (very early) 1960's where my family were members of Nottingham Liberal Synagogue. Dad was, amongst other things, Chairman of the shul and my Mum & Dad and two sisters and their families are still actively involved. After going to Birmingham University where I met Kate (we've now been married over 30 years), we gradually moved north and settled in Linlithgow in 1987. **We have two sons, Andrew & David who, I'm pleased to say, are both members of ELJC. Since moving to Linlithgow I've been active in Progressive Judaism. I was Secretary and then Chairman of Glasgow Reform Synagogue, and I'm a founder member of ELJC.**



**Like most of us, I don't seem to have that much spare time, but when I'm not doing shul things or working – I work for Heineken, now in food safety and regulatory matters, but the much better bit is that I was the head brewer for four years at the (now demolished) Fountain brewery in Edinburgh – I go and watch Livingston Football Club. I'm as happy talking about sport as I am about religious matters – so advance notice that future 'words from the Chair' will not be as learned as were Norman's.**

At the AGM, as well as my being elected as the new Chair, we had some new members elected onto Council. Since all of us on Council are elected to run our community for the benefit of all of us, it feels appropriate just to confirm who else was elected at the AGM:

**Treasurer** – Phil Wadler

**Secretary** – Gillian Raab

**Council members** – Sue Bard, Jonathan Broadie, Marjory Broadie, Katy Bromberg, Norman Crane, Helen Ford, Ricky Hogg, Bob Lerman, Maurice Naftalin, Gareth Owen, Rebecca Wober

As I say, we have all been elected to help run our community, so if you do have any thoughts **about how we're doing, please do let us know.**

My first duty as the new Chair was to propose to the AGM that we increase our membership fees by 10%. The proposal was accepted with no votes against. **I'm sure that no-one** who voted in favour took the decision lightly. I mention this for several reasons. I believe that one of the reasons we are incurring higher costs is because we continue to expand as a community and are doing more things. In particular we received a report at the AGM about our cheder, which now has over 25 children registered. This is fantastic, and I am writing this article the day after our Purim festivities – it was great seeing all the children participating in our Purimspiel, all of them in fancy dress. Long may it continue to be the case that our cheder continues to thrive and increase in numbers.

Another reason for mentioning the fees is to note that, in order for us to minimise future increases, we can do two things. We can, and will, look at where we spend our money. But also, the more money we get in, the better it is. So, do you have any ideas for fundraising? Any proposals (well, within reason!) are okay, and I will do as much as I can to **support you if you do have something you'd like to progress.**

**I'm very conscious that I have now mentioned fees several times.** It is therefore right that I emphasise one of the core principles of our community. That **is that we don't preclude anyone** from being a member of our community, or from joining in any activities, on financial grounds.

And finally, but most importantly, I know I speak on behalf of all of us when I say thanks to Norman for everything he has done for us in his role as Chair over the last four years. **Norman's contribution** to our community was recognised at the AGM where, together with many expressions of thanks, he was presented with a set of Lewis Chess piece

bookends. As many of you know Norman is a great lover of books, and these were something that Norman certainly seemed to appreciate. Be that as it may, Norman is continuing his activities with the Choosing Judaism class, with teaching Hebrew, and he has already volunteered to help co-ordinate **this year's seder**. I hope that somewhere along the line, Norman, you manage to get a bit of a rest now that you have stood down.



**Nick Silk**

Editor's note: You can also spot Nick disguised as an elf later in this newsletter

## Tu 'Shevat Seder: 10 February 2017/15 SHEVAT 5777

This year, our Tu b'Shevat seder, led with vivacity and warmth by Rabbi Mark Solomon, formed part of the Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, and we were delighted that so many people from other faith organisations came and enjoyed it with us. As well as the seder constituents - pomegranates, nuts, olives, dates, plums, apples, figs, grapes, raspberries, wine and grape juice- we shared a magnificent communal supper. Thank you everyone who came and contributed.



## New members: Tim Aitman and Megan Rowley

After a lifetime living and working in the south east of England, Tim and Megan have taken the giant stride of moving to Scotland, a move that they are so far relishing. For both of them this has also meant their **first change of shul membership, as Tim's parents** Gaby and Irene Aitman, were founder members of Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue and this was where Megan converted to Judaism almost thirty years ago.



Megan and Tim are both physicians and Tim came to Edinburgh in 2014 to take up a Chair in Molecular Pathology and Genetics, primarily to establish and lead the **Scottish Genome Project. It's difficult to exaggerate the significance of this project,** which links genetic data from sequenced genomes with clinical information to bring about a new order of precision and success in the diagnosis and treatment of many human conditions, and Tim is inspired and excited by his work. Family life was conducted at long-distance until last year, when Megan, **who's a haematologist,** took up the post of Consultant in Transfusion Medicine with the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service, where she focuses on making sure that the blood given so generously by Scottish blood donors is used safely and wisely for the benefit of patients.

Tim and Megan have two children, Bethany (26) and Joshua (23) who approve of **their parents' move north. They like visiting as often as their busy lives allow, and** appreciate having their parents together under the same roof again!

Megan and Tim are enjoying Sukkat Shalom – **specially the recent Tu b'Shvat** seder – and want to get involved in any practical ways that they can. Megan tells me that **Tim has a lovely singing voice and Tim tells me that Megan's a great cook** – both welcome attributes. **One of them, I can't remember which, says 'I think we'll be here forever now'.**

Sue Bard

## Purim Festivities: 12 March 2017 /14 Adar 5777

Thanks to Philip Michaelson (who was also the narrator) this year we had an up-to-the-minute Purimspiel script featuring Rump/Achasuerus/Xerxes scarily played by Phil Wadler. Other parts were taken by Charlie Raab (Mordechai), Maurice Naftalin (Advisor), Rebcca Wober (Vashti), Melissa Eisenberg (Esther) and Norman Crane (Haman). Solly and Rose were memorable as our perennial character, Morag the Cow. Thank you to Gillian Raab without whom it would definitely not have happened.



The afternoon was also marked by a lively reading of Megillat Esther—a dramatised and abridged version prepared earlier by Rabbi Mark Solomon—and a wonderful fancy-dress show. Our new chair, Nick Silk, showed his mettle in his first public test by awarding prizes to everyone. Thank you to all the Cheder parents and children for their active participation. It was very good to have so many children there.



The array of hamantaschen was impressive and inventive. If there had been a hamantaschen prize it would probably have gone to Paul McPhail's Nutella-filled chocolate ones.



## Civic reception for Edinburgh's Jewish Community

**On Wednesday 1st March, Edinburgh's Lord Provost,** the Rt Hon.

Donald Wilson, hosted a special reception to mark 200 years of organised Jewish life in Edinburgh. The event was extremely well attended with representatives from across all walks of Jewish life as well as members of many other faith and civic organisations. There were a number of meaningful contributions from the Jewish community. Norman Crane, (standing in for our newly elected chair Nick who was unfortunately unwell) gave an excellent short speech on

behalf of Sukkat Shalom with virtually no warning or preparation. Probably the highlight of the evening was Hannah Holtschneider's wonderful verbal walk through the 200-year history (reproduced below). All in all, an excellent, memorable and very enjoyable start to this special year.

Stew Green



### Hannah Holtschneider's address

Thank you, Lord and Lady Provost, for the opportunity to say a few words about the history of the Jewish community of Edinburgh at this celebration of its 200th anniversary.

Imagine the following scene in 1825: a procession of community dignitaries, Jewish and non-Jewish, slowly moving up Calton Hill behind the funeral cortège carrying the remains of one Heyman Lyon (1748-1825), dentist, chiropodist and corn operator. Lyon purchased the burial plot on Calton Hill in 1795, before the founding of a synagogue community in the city, and before the establishment of a Jewish cemetery. The former was to follow in 1817 with the establishment of a room for communal worship near Nicolson Street, the latter in 1819 in Braid Place, Sciennes. And yet, Lyon was buried on Calton Hill.

Heyman Lyon was born in Germany and had come, via London, to Edinburgh some time before 1794. He was an illustrious personality; his major work on 'Corns of the Feet' (Spinae Pedum) is a curious tractate which, according to Lionel Daiches, is written 'in a style of almost ludicrous pomposity and in a quasi-latinated gobbledegook with the obvious intention of conveying to the reader the professional learning and depth of scholarship of the author'. [1] It is directed at the medical schools of Scotland which had refused to grant Lyon a degree on account of the lowly status his art as a corn operator held in their eyes. Moderate wealth and the fact that there were no restrictions in Scotland on where Jews could live, work, worship, and bury their dead had allowed him to purchase a single burial plot on a prominent, but at that time still rather bare, Edinburgh landmark.



There is no way of knowing whether his funeral was attended by many people, nor where they hailed from, and whether any city dignitaries were part of this imagined procession. I would like to think so, because it does mark the cordial, appreciative, and supportive relationship the Jewish community of Edinburgh has enjoyed, and continues to, enjoy with the City Council. Since 1911, the Lord Provost has visited the synagogue every year for a Civic Service.

Jews are one of the oldest immigrant communities in modern Scotland. And while it would be too much to claim that there is no history of antisemitism in Scotland, there is no history of discrimination against Jews owning property and land, accessing all forms of education, and taking up all professions. Hence from its earliest manifestations, Jews in Scotland have lived in a society affording equal opportunities. And so, the city of Edinburgh can look back onto 200 years of Jewish history in which Jewish migrants to the city have been able to establish themselves as a community alongside others, and have become part of the city's fabric and part of the fabric of Scottish life. The joke from the middle of the twentieth century 'What is the difference between a garment worker and a doctor? Answer: One generation', can easily be applied to Edinburgh, where many Jews moved from immigrant occupations as itinerant traders, tailors, and factory workers into the professions within one generation.

At its largest, the Jewish population of Edinburgh numbered around 2,000 people, and, in the years leading up to World War I until the end of World War II, Jewish life was at its most vibrant from the Bridges down to the South Side. Lionel Daiches paints the following portrait of the community he remembers from his childhood:

**"They were devout observers and regular supporters of the synagogue; they worshipped at the Graham Street Synagogue and the Central Synagogue in Richmond Street. They bore themselves with dignity and were respected by their neighbours. Most of them were foreign born immigrants from Lithuania and other parts of the Russian empire; they arrived in Edinburgh and starting with little or nothing succeeded in establishing a modestly successful living, educated their children and managed to integrate themselves in the life of the general community. A few became rich. But not very many.**

**They lived mostly in the South Side of Edinburgh in the area around about Nicolson Street, Summerhall Square and Hope Park Terrace. Quite a number of families lived in Buccleuch Street and some of the most active among them, related to each other, lived in number 33, a tenement which was affectionately referred to by its residents as Drei und Dreissig. Few realised at the time that the Scots-Yiddish speaking parents in Drei und Dreissig would produce doctors, scientists and men of learning whose names have now become famous in the English-speaking world.[2]"**

The Jewish Chronicle commented in 1911 that the diversity of Edinburgh's Jews was held together by a cultural institution:

"the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society, which has done good work in cementing the community together. It is one of the oldest literary societies in the provinces, and its list of lecturers reads like a page from 'Who's Who.'[3]"

Cementing the community together, indeed, was an occupation which dominated the religious and cultural leadership at the turn of the century. Edinburgh's Jews long held the reputation of a community which enjoys a good deal of conflict. Here is what the Jewish Chronicle had to say about this in July 1911:

"Today the Edinburgh community is comparatively a small one, but it is, to quote Kipling, a terror *for its size*. ... *The Edinburgh Jews, comprising some two thousand souls, pray in four synagogues*. [Graham Street (the anglicised community), North Richmond Street (the 'greener shul', namely that of the recent immigrants), Caledonian Crescent in Dalry (for the Jews working *in the rubber works*), and *Livingstone Hall*] ... *But synagogal dynasties in Edinburgh have such a knack of being suddenly overthrown, and communal revolutions are so frequent, that by the time these words appear in print there may be no synagogues in Edinburgh, or there may be half a dozen.*"

For the purpose of uniting a community comprised of Jews who had arrived in the early- to mid-nineteenth century from Germany and Western Europe with those who arrived between 1880 and 1914 mainly from the Lithuanian part of the Russian Empire, the communities jointly called Rabbi Dr Salis Daiches of Sunderland to become Minister to the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. The rabbi, experienced in bridging the gap between resident and immigrant through his service in Sunderland and before that in Hull, agreed to serve the community with the condition that the community agree to make every effort to unite.

And thus, from 1919 onwards, the name Daiches is closely associated both with the Jewish community and the city of Edinburgh. Not only did Rabbi Salis Daiches manage to unite the community and instigate the building of Salisbury Road Synagogue which was consecrated in 1932, his children, particularly Lionel and David, and his grandchildren, notably Jenni, have become household names in Edinburgh and beyond.

While the Jewish population of Edinburgh declined in the decades following World War II to about 1,000 people at present, Jewish life in Edinburgh continues. Today, Edinburgh boasts two religious Jewish communities: the orthodox Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation remains rooted in the city's South Side; Sukkat Shalom Liberal Jewish Community, fully established in 2005, enjoys the hospitality of three Christian congregations for its worship and community activities. In addition, the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society is still thriving – the only one of its kind left in Scotland – offering a forum for Jewish-related topics uniting religious and secular Jewish (and non-Jewish) residents. And, continuing the reception of Jewish refugees from continental

Europe, the city and universities are again attracting Jewish migrants who may or may not wish to associate religiously.

Edinburgh Jewish Dialogue, a new initiative which brings together everyone in the city who identifies as Jewish, is actively pursuing a programme of events and activities to forge a healthy and vibrant Jewish future in Edinburgh at a time when the real numbers of Jews living in the city is declining and a significant part of the community is aging. There is much energy among Edinburgh's Jews and a commitment to see the community survive and thrive for another two centuries at least.

Thank you very much.

[1] Lionel Daiches, Edinburgh Star 3, 1989, 22f.

[2] Lionel Daiches, The Edinburgh Star 5, March 1990, 37.

[3] JC 14.7.1911.

## Interfaith news of two exciting events

### **'Religion, Violence and Politics', Thursday 27 April, 7pm at Annandale Mosque, 43-45 Annandale Street EH7 4AZ**

Jolyon Mitchell . Professor of Communications, Arts and Religion and Director of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh, will be a main speaker at this event, with another still to be confirmed. A former BBC World Service producer and journalist, he has written and lectured widely on issues relating to communications, violence and peace-building.

### **Peace Walk, Sunday May 28, 1.45pm for a 2pm departure from St Mary's RC Cathedral at 61 York Place EH1 3JD (by John Lewis)**

This walk is part of our Bicentenary Celebrations , marking 200 years of organised Jewish life in Edinburgh. The walk will finish at the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation synagogue at 4 Salisbury Rd, EH16 5AB, where Sukkat Shalom and EHC will jointly host a short peace service and a reception.

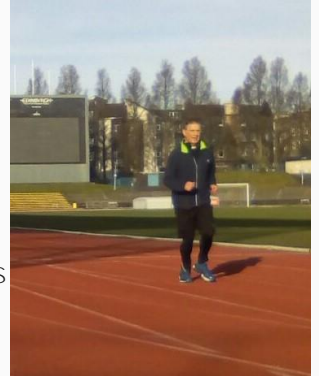
Stew Green

# Stew Green's surprising fundraising effort

*Sue Bard interviews him*

*Sue:* Hi Stew, I understand you are planning a fund-raiser for Edinburgh Interfaith Association. Why now?

*Stew:* **Yes, that's right.** As I approach my 65th birthday without ever having done a fund-raiser, I have decided to try something ambitious in order to raise some much-needed cash for EIFA. You'll be aware that EIFA is pretty strapped as a result of last year's Scottish Government cuts. From that point of view, our community's adoption of the organisation for our Kol Nidre appeal was very timely and welcome. The funding application for the next three years has just been submitted but the criteria are tight and the process very competitive so we await the outcome with some concern. In the meantime, I have decided to do something myself to try and contribute.



*Sue:* So what are you planning to do?

*Stew:* Hitherto, my main exercise in life has consisted of jogging regularly, but very slowly, on the roads around our house. I have done this for over 30 years - always the same boring route. Latterly the slow jog has been getting slower. I have never sprinted, other than for the bus. By contrast, many Etrog readers will know that Rohan, my 19 year-old son, is a competitive sprinter with Edinburgh Athletic Club. His Personal Best for 200 metres currently stands at a very respectable 23.01 seconds! **Don't laugh, but for this exercise I am setting myself a target of completing 200m in under twice Rohan's best time.** In other words, to see if I can do it in less than 46 seconds.

*Sue:* **Wow that's different, and** it certainly sounds ambitious. How hard do you think it might be?

*Stew:* It will definitely be hard. **So far, I've been twice to the track to see what might be possible.** The good news is that it seems I can survive 200m without suffering a heart attack. The challenge will be in getting under 46 seconds on the day. And if I am able to clear this, then by how much? **Starting to run at this age is tough when you really haven't done it before. And fitness** notwithstanding, I now have a few muscle niggles and some arthritis in my toes to contend with, not to mention having had two angioplasties in the past (blah blah).

*Sue:* Impressive! So what will be the mechanics of it? Presumably your timing will need to be witnessed or authenticated in some way?

*Stew:* **Yes, exactly. To do this I will join Scottish Athletics (SA) as an 'unattached' member.** This means that I don't belong to any athletic club. As an SA member I will then be able to enter an official 'open' event where results are electronically timed and officially recorded.

*Sue:* Do you know where and when you plan to do it?

*Stew:* **Not yet, but I'm hoping there will be a suitable meeting in May that I can go for.** This will give me a couple of months for training. Hopefully long enough to get ready but not too long that something may go wrong.

*Sue:* How can people help?

*Stew:* I will be setting up a JustGiving page and all donations will be very welcome. I will circulate the details when I have them together with info on the meeting I am targeting just in case anyone is

interested and free to come along and support – it will most likely be a mid-week evening either in Falkirk or Livingston. Other than that please just send out positive vibes that I stay well and injury free and that the weather is kind on the day!

*Sue:* Well a group outing to cheer you on would be fun. We can take our Purim graggers. Seriously though, good for you—**it's a great idea and a great cause.**

**Stew:** Thank you.

Stew is the Jewish Community Rep on the EIFA Board

## Holocaust memorial Day, Edinburgh 2017

On 25th January Drummond Community High School, in partnership with Edinburgh Interfaith Association, hosted an evening of readings, personal reflections and musical performances on the theme of remembrance.

The two guest speakers were Umutesi Stewart, Survivor of the Rwandan Genocide (and wife of Ian Stewart from Edinburgh Interfaith Association) and Saskia Tepe, Daughter of Brigitte Langer, Holocaust survivor. Umutesi lost 40 members of her family in the genocide and only escaped the killers by hiding under banana trees in the fields. Saskia compared the experiences of herself and her mother to those of present day refugees. The speakers are seen here along with Ian Stewart.



## Sue Lieberman at the Freud Museum

On Holocaust Memorial Day this year, Sukkat Shalom member and psychotherapist Sue Lieberman was invited to discuss her book, *After Genocide – How Ordinary Jews Face the Holocaust*, with Geoffrey Cantor, Professor Emeritus of the History of Science at the University of Leeds and Honorary Senior Research Associate at UCL. In her thought-provoking book, Sue explores how Jews with no direct family involvement in the Holocaust carry its emotional and psychological legacy.

Sue was honoured to be invited to speak on this occasion in Freud's own home in London, where he spent the last year of his life after fleeing the Anschluss (many members of Freud's own family, including his sisters, were subsequently killed in the Holocaust). Immediately before the event, Sue was interviewed by a film-maker who specialises in films about the Holocaust and survivor memory.

Despite the event taking place on a Friday night, more than 40 people, including a number of the Second Generation, came to hear and discuss with Sue. As it was HMD, the session began with lighting a Yahrzeit candle (the only casualty here was Sue's thumbnail, as she inexpertly tried to light the candle with a cigarette lighter; no one had any matches).

The atmosphere during the session was, Sue says, exceptionally reflective and engaged. Everyone who spoke in the Q&A asked considered questions and gave thoughtful responses to Sue's answers, and there was no lack of questions. It was further evidence of how the Holocaust continues to echo in people's minds and experiences.

## Book Review: *Faith without Fear*

by Rabbi Michael J Harris Published by Valentine Mitchell, OUP 2016

A few months ago people attending the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society had the pleasure of hearing Rabbi Harris speak about his book. He spoke cogently and good-humouredly about the issues he deals with in his book, which are challenging for Jews today, not only those he terms Modern Orthodox.

It was a very interesting and worthwhile experience to go on to read the book, with its scholarly grasp of the wide range of rabbinical opinions on the ideas he examines. A notable feature of Rabbi Harris is the openness he displays towards the opinions of those with whom he disagrees. He is at pains to present Judaism over the centuries as a many-stranded, not monolithic, religion, a rich heritage, while declaring himself as a Modern Orthodox, and therefore likely to privilege certain strands of Judaism over others. His concern as we read the book is to establish a position on the various problems the modern world poses which is in keeping with tradition as well as intellectually and ethically acceptable to a modern Jew.

He starts by explaining that the fear of the title does not refer to fear of heaven, which we should all have, but to the courage needed to face the challenge of the modern world and take necessary changes while remaining faithful to traditional Judaism in its essentials. He defines what he means by Modern Orthodoxy and differentiates it from Haredi Orthodoxy, or what most of us would probably term Ultra-Orthodoxy, in its various forms. The key difference for Rabbi Harris is to combine a full commitment to traditional Judaism with an openness and willingness to engage critically with the modern world, rather than ignoring it as the Haredi attempt to do. He asserts the right of Modern Orthodoxy to be as much a legitimate heir to pre-modern (before the Enlightenment) traditional Judaism as the Haredi. He points out various ways in which Judaism has changed over the centuries and refutes Haredi attempts to claim to be sole heirs, unchanging, by pointing out ways in which they have added non-traditional elements.

All this, like the whole book, emerges from a wealth of detail of rabbinical opinion and rulings, all given their due before Rabbi Harris offers his own opinion. It is a fascinating peek into the rabbinical mind at work which cannot be done justice in a review such as this. We see Rabbi Harris negotiating his way surefootedly round the complexities of rabbinic opinions and sources, with, apparently an internal compass which enables him to find the route which leads to the acceptable ruling according to the principles he always has in mind.

For the purpose of this book Rabbi Harris selects topics which are, he says, important but remain

unresolved in the Modern Orthodox community. Of these, many Jews find the idea of the chosenness of Jews uncomfortable. The chapter on this topic offers help with what this does and does not mean. The chapter on the role and status of women in Judaism is, I am sure, of particular interest to a lot of people. He examines the traditional sources for rulings of what women can and cannot do and **neatly disposes of ideas on women's essential difference from** men, whether it be their inferiority, in intellect, or superiority, spiritually; but all apparently meaning they are excluded from full participation in their religion. He embraces feminism, displaying an acknowledgement and a willing acceptance of the way in which the role and status of women has changed in modern society and keen to help their place in Judaism change accordingly. I am given to understand that as Rabbi of Hampstead Synagogue he puts some of his beliefs into practice.

Rabbi Harris is of course, speaking as a Modern Orthodox rabbi. For some less traditional, less tied to Halakha forms of Judaism like ours this battle has been won. It is nevertheless interesting to see that there are some traditional precedents for some of our practices. He does refer to the Conservative movement, which, though progressive, retains more links with halakha than we do. He describes them as in many ways similar to Modern Orthodox, but less so.

As a member of a Liberal congregation, I found much to fascinate in this book, but also much that was uncomfortable. I was left with a lot of questions. I was admiring of the work of Rabbi Harris in grappling with the modern world, at the same time that I felt impatience at the slowness of the process of change. In accordance with halakha, aware that there are issues that from an ethical point of view urgently need to be dealt with, Rabbi Harris himself refers to the need not to change things so quickly that traditional Jews feel they have lost touch with traditional Judaism. What is traditional authentic Judaism? Rabbi Harris seems to be sure, and there are areas he refers to as non-essential, arising out of a particular time and society, which can be changed, and others which are essential and unchangeable, such as the laws of family and purity. It may be my ignorance that makes me unable to see why these are more essential than some other laws. I was also confronted with the question of authenticity in a form of Judaism which has changed so much. How do we as Liberal Jews decide what can and should be changed?

Wendy Crane

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## Sukkat Shalom Contacts

*Community Phone – 0131 777 8024*

This phone number sends voicemail to members of the Contact Team

To reach the Care Team, call the Community Phone or email [care@eljc.org](mailto:care@eljc.org)

Contact Team – [contact@eljc.org](mailto:contact@eljc.org)

Etrog Team – [newsletter@eljc.org](mailto:newsletter@eljc.org)

Chair: Norman Crane

Treasurer: Phil Wadler

Membership: Sharon Goldwater

*Scottish Charity SC035678*