



# Etrog

The Newsletter of Sukkat Shalom Edinburgh

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## **Word From the Sofa**

**Nick Silk**

As you all know, we currently have four co-chairs, and we take it in turns to write the “word from the sofa”. In February, due to what I will term an administrative error — not my first and I’m pretty sure it won’t be my last — I thought it was my turn to write the article for the last Etrog. It wasn’t! However by the time I knew this, I had already written something. I would be exaggerating if I said I thought it was that good that I really wanted to use exactly what I wrote a couple of months ago, but equally there are a few

*cont'd p.2*



## Diary

All services and discussions have been cancelled in physical form for the foreseeable future. Rabbi Mark Solomon will be conducting services remotely.

- **Erev Shabbat:** Friday at 7pm
- **Shabbat Morning Service:** Saturday at 11am
- **Havdalah:** Times get later each week in May and June, so please consult the weekly reminder

He will also conduct the following weekly discussion groups and classes:

### **Philosophy**

(currently *Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed*)

Mondays at 1pm

### **Tea & Talmud**

Thursdays at 12pm

### **Exploring Judaism**

Sundays at 11am



## Word From the Sofa

*cont'd*

Nick Silk

things I wrote that I do think are still relevant. So, if the rest of what you read sounds a bit dated – in particular you’ll see that the references are to events from the start of the year - it is! However, I hope that the references aside, it is still information you would like to hear.

Did you go to any of the Holocaust Memorial Day events in January? I went to a couple, including the one organised by the Edinburgh Interfaith Association (EIFA) where we heard from Inge Auerbacher, a lady who recounted her experiences of the Holocaust. The part of her talk that I keep remembering was her comment, which she made several times, that we all have to make choices in our lives and we should always try to “make right choices”. I don’t know about you but in these difficult times it can sometimes feel as if we are struggling to have much of an impact on our own lives, never mind on the wider world. But one thing that Inge reinforced during her talk was that we can all have an impact. It may be very small, but what we do is still important; we all have choices to make, and we can all try to make the best ones we can.

And on the topic of choices and impact, at the AGM a couple of months' ago there was, as was expected, some discussion about how we have been doing during the pandemic. We as Council thought that we have been doing OK, and everyone that spoke also agreed. It almost feels wrong that Covid has been 'good' for us. We have access to many more services, for which huge thanks go to Rabbi Mark, and it is clear that there are a lot of people who are able to attend services who would otherwise not be able to. We recognised a while ago that one of the challenges of returning back to normal will be that we need to have a blend of virtual and normal/in-person services. It might take us a while to get the right blend, but I'm sure that we will come up with something that is right for us. For more details, read **'Returning to Live Services?'** on page 17.

Another impact of Covid for us is that we have saved quite a lot of money, particularly since we are not having

to pay for venue hire. We had a significant excess in our last financial year; the first time for a good few years. As I say, it almost feels wrong that we should be benefitting from Covid, but one of the choices we made at the AGM is that we won't be increasing our membership fees this year. (And related to our fees, although not something new, I feel I should mention that one of the choices we made right at the start of our existence as Sukkat Shalom was that we won't ever stop anyone from being a member due to financial considerations. This is arguably the best choice we have ever made.) And to conclude on the subject of money, the surplus has allowed us to give some donations to various organisations with whom we work and who have not been as fortunate as we have with Covid.

At the AGM, we also touched on the subject of 'getting involved'. We had some good discussions on this, and you'll have seen in our last edition of Etrog that we've got two new

members of Council, Barrie and Kyla. However if you would like to 'do' something, please just say and we'll try and help make it happen. At our last Council meeting we agreed some plans to help get our Associate Members, most of whom are also members of the Exploring Judaism (conversion) group, involved and you can read more about that in Nancy Jones' article below. I was recently playing in a backgammon tournament run by Nottingham Liberal Synagogue (not because it's an open tournament but through my family). Are there any other backgammon players out there – or chess or whatever? If you fancy trying to organise something like this within our community, just say. We can ask for interest in one of our reminders and with a bit of luck it will take off.

I've mentioned Safeguarding in Etrog over the last few months and so a quick update is appropriate. We've updated our policy (the updated version is on the website) to include some of the practical things

associated with the policy, and in February, we had a training session on Safeguarding matters from the Liberal Judaism Safeguarding lead just for our Council and also Mor, as co-head of cheder. Becca, the LJ Safeguarding lead, had offered to run the session for us due to the number of people from Sukkat Shalom who had requested the training.

And my last 'update note'; I have previously mentioned that I was due to speak with the Executive Officer of Rene Cassin about how we could follow up on the letters many of us sent to our MPs and MSPs about the fate of the Uyghur people in China. Unfortunately Mia got Covid so we haven't yet managed to speak, but we've all seen some of the activity that has been going on recently in the UK Parliament in support of the Uyghur people. I would suggest that, in writing to our MPs, we have been a part, no matter how small, in helping to make the right choice.

# Online Presence

Carmen McPherson



Dear Friends,

We are trying to increase and improve our use of social media, particularly via Twitter and Facebook. We use this primarily to send out information week to week about services and events, but also hope to add additional content too. If you use either platform please consider following us, it makes such a difference.

You can find us on Twitter here: <https://twitter.com/SukkatShalom>

Our Facebook page is here: <http://bit.ly/eljc-facebook>

Many thanks, Carmen

*Readers will notice big changes to the look of both the print and email versions of this issue of Etrog. The newsletter team would like to say a big THANK YOU to Lexy Ray for all the work she's put into the new design and production process. Please let us know what you think of it!*

# Tragedy at Meron

Rabbi Mark Solomon

Lag Ba-Omer is the thirty-third day of the counting of the Omer, which commemorates the end of a plague that had decimated the disciples of Rabbi Akiva in the 2nd century CE. It is a minor festival that also marks the yahrzeit of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai. He was a disciple of Rabbi Akiva and one of the leading rabbis of the Mishnah. In the Middle Ages the belief arose that he was the author of the Zohar, a major work of Jewish mysticism. Every year, tens of thousands of pilgrims converge at his reputed tomb in Meron, in the Upper Galilee. As you will have seen in the news, a terrible disaster struck there on the eve of Lag Ba-Omer with dozens of people crushed to death and many injured due to overcrowding.

This dreadful news brought back for me the events of 1983, when I was in Israel studying at the yeshivah in Kfar Chabad, a Chasidic township near Tel Aviv. I left with a busload of other

bachurim (yeshivah students) about 1 a.m., arriving at Meron at about 4 AM. As a condition for going on the trip, we all had to do a one-hour stint trying to get the less religious (mainly Sefardi) pilgrims to put on tefillin. I volunteered for an early shift, to get the irksome chore out of the way. Afterwards I visited the tomb complex, where three-year-old Chasidic boys were getting their first ceremonial haircut (opshernish) beside the festive bonfires. In the building itself I was amused to see that the tomb was bisected by a wall. In one room, Sephardi men and women squeezed together and much arak was being drunk, while on the other side of the wall, black-hatted Chasidic men were reciting the mystical hymns in praise of Simeon bar Yochai. The crowds were just too oppressive for me to linger, so I wandered lonely up into the beautiful Galilean hills, covered in spring wildflowers, with hawks circling in the blue sky.

When the time came to leave I made my way back to where the buses were parked. The narrow walkway led through vendors' stalls of pious tourist tat and large Moroccan families having picnics under tents. I remember lots of goats. The crowd moving both ways, hemmed in on either side, was so thick that I felt myself being crushed and unable to move. I could barely breathe, and for a few minutes I thought I might die. It remains one of the scariest memories of my life.

So while the news of this disaster came as a shock, it was not really a surprise. Perhaps there have been safety measures over the years, and thankfully no such disaster has happened at Meron before. It was a terrible accident. It is sadly reminiscent, though, of stories of fatalities at religious pilgrimages of other religions, and reminds us that Judaism is not that different from other faiths, and that religious enthusiasm not tempered with concern for safety and welfare can be dangerous.

May the bereaved find comfort, and the injured healing, and may such a tragedy never happen again.



# Connie Dover's D'var Torah

Connie Dover

We were so pleased to be able to celebrate Connie Dover's Bat Mitzvah almost one year on from her original date of 25 April 2020. One great benefit of the continued restrictions was the 'far and wide' family representation by Zoom including grandparents from Stornoway, cousins and uncles and aunts (including 'greats') from areas around Boston, Washington and New York, and Texas. We were all moved and impressed by Connie's D'var Torah, reproduced here.



*Delivered by Connie Dover, daughter of Tim and Anna Dover and granddaughter of Charlie and Gillian Raab, at her Bat Mitzvah, 13 March 2021.*

Shabbat Shalom and welcome everybody.

The usual reading for this week is the very long double portion of Vayakhel Pekudey which finishes the book of Exodus. But we're not going to read all of that. Today is also a special shabbat which is called Shabbat ha-Chodesh, because it comes just before Rosh-Chodesh, the new moon of Nisan which starts tonight. So, I'm reading the extra portion for this shabbat which is Exodus 12 verses 1 to 20.

In this passage Moses prepares the Israelites for their liberation from slavery, which was due to happen two weeks later while the tenth plague was killing the firstborn throughout the land of Egypt. The chapter opens with God telling Moses and Aaron that Nisan would be the first of the Jewish months and every month would begin with a new moon, so it is the establishment of the Jewish lunar calendar. It also tells us how to prepare the paschal lamb for the first seder or Passover meal, which would be the night the Israelites left Egypt. I have enjoyed learning this portion as I have always enjoyed Passover and its traditions — and no I don't just mean the matzo ball soup. What I mean is that during the seder we imagine how it must have felt for the slaves leaving Egypt. We celebrate the freedom that the Israelites gained but we also realise how difficult it must have been to be slaves.

A major theme in this portion is the prohibition of eating leavened bread and the command to remove the leaven from your houses for the whole 7 days of Passover. This is such a serious matter that it says that anyone who eats leavened bread will be cut off from the congregation of Israel. The ancient Rabbis interpret this phrase not as being cut off from the community, but more as God cutting you off or cutting your life short. But that's not the way I read it. I think this means that if you don't follow the rules then you will be excluded from joining the services or even being part of the Jewish community anymore. Nowadays as Liberal Jews nobody would be excluded from the community for not following rules like these. Maybe when this passage was written Jewish communities lived close by each other, so if you didn't remove the leaven from your houses — or as my grandma would say 'hide it in Connie's room' — then the congregation that lived around you would notice that you were disrespecting God's wishes. They might even worry that this would affect them as well, being part of the same congregation.

Nowadays most people would find this a breach of privacy as I'm sure my papa could tell you all about being a professor of politics who specialises in privacy. I know that if somebody came into my house and started searching my kitchen for leaven, I would feel this was quite a serious invasion of my privacy. I think that in ancient Israel they probably lived close together the way people do in the Scottish Highlands or the Isle of Lewis where my other grandparents live. In close communities like those, everybody knows each other's business and can be found in each other's houses a lot of the time, so everybody feels responsible for everyone else. There is a famous Jewish saying by the ancient Rabbis 'all Israelites are guarantors for one another' so if 1 person sinned, everybody might suffer.

This pandemic is somewhat similar to the idea that there is a plague around us and that we have to wait inside to let it pass over us, and like Passover there are certain precautions that we must take to try and stop us catching the plague such as wearing face masks and using hand sanitiser, like the very specific instructions that God gives to Moses about the preparation for Pesach to prevent the plague affecting them. So in a sense we are all still responsible for one another.

Talking about responsibility, I want to thank everyone who is responsible for making this possible. So first I want to thank my parents and grandparents who have always encouraged me with my studies of being Jewish. I also want to thank Rabbi Mark who has organised this all and has helped me learn my Hebrew parts of this service alongside my mum who has helped me greatly with my Torah portion, and last but not least I want to thank you all for being here because if you weren't then this wouldn't be happening right now. Thank you.

# Associate Members: A Chance to Get Involved

Nancy Jones



Over the last year we've had many new associate members join us and Sukkat Shalom is now offering new ways for associate members to get involved with our community.

Firstly, a new volunteering programme is being launched where associate members can contribute their time and skills to supporting Sukkat Shalom and learning more about how our community works. Secondly, there will also be opportunities for associate members to get involved with the Sukkat Shalom Council and begin contributing their ideas. We're very excited to be working with associate members on this and are looking forward to working with more of you in the coming months.

If you have any questions or want to find out more please get in touch with Nick at [nicksilk@eljc.com](mailto:nicksilk@eljc.com).



***It is a tree of life to those who hold fast to it, and all who cling to it find happiness***



# Our New Torah Mantle

Katy Bromberg

The design for the Torah mantle, like the curtain and bimah cover, were inspired by the textiles of the Arts and Crafts and Trade Union movements.

As a set with the ark curtain and bimah cover, all of the plants which are used in the Sukkah are represented. The ark curtain has an etrog tree, the bimah cover has sprays of myrtle (hadass) and willow (aravah), and as the Torah is the centre of Judaism, the palm (lulav) which often represents the spine, is on the Torah cover.

The text is from Proverbs, 'It is a tree of life to those who hold fast to it, and all who cling to it find happiness' and twines around the lulav.

Torah mantles present a design challenge because of the way they are handled and the way they interact with the other Torah ornaments.

Unlike the ark curtain and bimah covers which are regular, fairly flat

shapes and seen in static positions during the service, the mantle is a rounded shape which is taken on and off during the service. Additionally, the most obvious decorative space is covered by the breastplate, so the remaining design should leave space for the breastplate and integrate it into the overall decoration. The Torah is held in the arms of members of the congregation, so I wanted the ribbons of text to echo the shapes that arms make as they hold the scrolls.

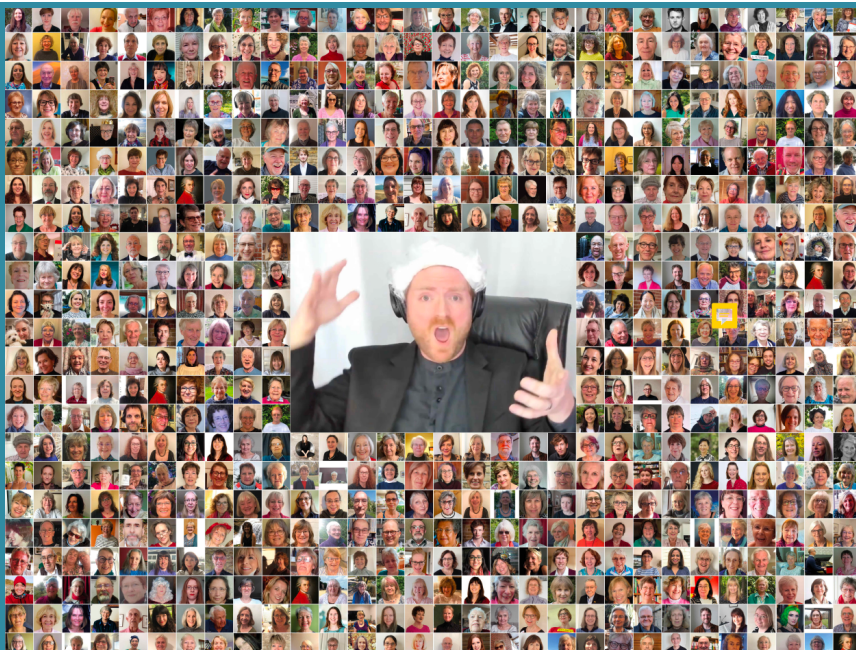
Finally, the decorations had to be both dynamic and strong enough to withstand frequent dressing and undressing. The text ribbons and lulav are hand stitched to the cover to allow movement and stability as they connect and pull away from the cover.

I have found it very interesting to create a complete set of fittings for the Torah, and I have learned quite a lot in the design and process of making. I'm taking a break while I consider the design for the High Holy Days set.



# Singing for My Sanity!

Rebekah Gronowski



*Singing in the Self  
Isolation Choir saved  
my Sanity!!*

*On Wednesday 31st March 2021, The Self-Isolation Choir performed the beautiful Requiem by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. No one met during this production and all voices were recorded at home and mixed in the studio.*

As some of you may know, I have been a professional musician for most of my working life and beyond. I was taught to play the piano at the age of six by my mother, who was a fine classical pianist. My father was also a pianist who loved all the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. At the age of 11 I joined my first choir, thus beginning a lifetime of enjoyment making music in its various forms.

I was trained as a professional musician, spending all my working life teaching music to children of all ages from kindergarten to college students. I spent many years conducting choirs and orchestras, including several children's productions, the most memorable being "Noye's Fludde" by Benjamin Britten. I also ran one of the local music centres.

I took up the 'cello at the age of thirty and this opened up another musical avenue for me. Eventually I was proficient enough to play in adult orchestras (having started playing in my school orchestras with the children). I joined two local orchestras and the local Bach Choir and was able to play in many concerts.

Fast forward twelve years — I found myself working in London. I was in my element! I joined four professional orchestras and remained in one of them after I left London, travelling down each weekend for rehearsals. While in London I was introduced to the “Come and Sing Messiah” concerts in the Royal Albert Hall, conducted by Sir David Willcocks, and I played 'cello in the orchestra. Much later this became The Really Big Chorus (TRBC) — more of which later.

Fast forward again to 1994 when I came to Edinburgh University. I joined the University Orchestra and Viol Consort. I spent a few years playing with them until my health prevented me playing — I had to stop playing both the 'cello and the piano. This was disastrous for me as it left not only a big gap in my musical life, it left a gap in my social life!

I was left with one option — to sing. I had a ready-made instrument which was always with me and I didn't have to carry it around! One of my professors at the university, and his wife, introduced me to The Really Big Chorus which performs in the Royal Albert Hall three or four times a year. They also have singing holidays, cruises, etc. as well as a Summer School. I went along with them; they live in London, so I stay with them every time I go down to sing. It's great fun and we have a musical house party for the whole weekend with picnics on the steps of the Albert Memorial. Then disaster struck. Covid-19 reared its ugly head and we were faced with lockdowns. All our concerts for



2020 were cancelled. We were bereft! What to do? I had been learning languages online all through 2020 and 2021 but this would not satisfy my need to make music.

Then, in January 2021, I came across a new choir – The Self Isolation Choir.

This was to transform my life in lockdown. All rehearsals and concerts are done online, mostly via YouTube and I joined in January. The choir has been going for several months, but I was in time to start rehearsals for their next concert which was to be Mozart's Requiem. This goes under the title of 'Requiems at Home' on YouTube.

For me, this was a golden opportunity to learn something new – to sing tenor. I had noticed in the last couple of years that my voice had been deepening but I hadn't had the nerve to try another part. This was my chance. We had our introductory full rehearsal with a very talented

young conductor who was a delight to work with. We then had sectional rehearsals on different days of the week at 5pm with a full rehearsal every Monday. We rehearsed for several weeks with a view to giving our concert on 6th March. This was then deferred to 31st March to coincide with the first birthday of the Self Isolation Choir. What an exciting and joyous time we all had – although none of us had ever met, it was like a real choir family.

All the concerts are on YouTube and may be accessed by anyone who wishes to watch them :

<http://bit.ly/self-isolation-choir>



## Returning to Live Services?

Gillian Raab

*On behalf of Sukkat Shalom Council*

For Sukkat Shalom there have been some positive aspects of the Covid-19 lockdown. Thanks to Zoom we have been holding more frequent events and services and people who have difficulty in getting to our live venues are able to attend. Even after lockdown **we are committed to continuing some Zoom services and events**. Just what form these will take and how they will affect Mark's visits to Edinburgh are still being discussed at our Council.

As most of you will know (though perhaps not those who have joined since March 2020) we have two main venues where we usually hold our services. Both of them also provide us with storage space. The first is [St Mark's Unitarian Church](#) on Castle Terrace where we hold our High Holy Day services and two services in each calendar month, one Erev Shabbat service on the second Friday of the month and one Shabbat morning service on the Shabbat after the fourth Friday of the month. On weekends when Rabbi Mark is visiting he will lead the service, but otherwise a member of the community will lead.

The second venue is the Community rooms attached to Marchmont St Giles Parish Church, adjacent to their Butterflies Cafe. We hold short early evening (6pm) services there on the Erev Shabbat of weekends when no other services are held. We often plan shared meals after services where everyone brings some food and/or drink to share.

St Mark's have no immediate plans for live services but are planning to survey their members about it. Marchmont St Giles have reopened for live services in their church as they did at the end of 2020. They have to comply with the guidelines, as described below. Butterflies café is also open for business as of 26th April 2021.

The current Scottish Government guidelines for places of Worship has recently been changed and the following are some relevant extracts:

- Communal services are now permitted, but physical distancing and strict hygiene safeguards must be maintained to minimise the risk of infection. Everyone should stay 2 metres apart and avoid face-to-face interaction as much as possible.
- There is now no limit on the number of people who can attend, except as it is restricted by the previous point
- Communal resources such as books, prayer mats and services sheets are removed from use. If single use alternatives are used these should be removed by the worshipper.
- The projection of voices, including shouting, is avoided.

- Congregational singing, both indoors and outdoors, should continue to be avoided at this time. Scientific studies indicate that it is the cumulative aerosol transmission from both those performing in and attending events that involve singing and the playing of wind and brass instruments, that is likely to create risk.
- Where it is essential to an act of worship for an individual to sing or chant indoors, one individual may do so behind a plexiglass screen without the need for a face covering to be worn. Any screen used should be cleaned regularly and extended physical distancing should be considered.
- If food or drink is offered after (or before) a service, this must be done in accordance with the [guidance for hospitality businesses](#). What is permitted will depend on the protection level which the place of worship is subject to. Note that places of worship are not eligible to apply reduced distancing of 1m. At all protection levels, worshippers must remain seated and be served in their place, and they must wear face-coverings (unless exempt) when not seated, for example arriving and departing or moving to toilets. 2m distancing must be maintained between people from different households, and groups of people eating at one table must not exceed the [current restrictions for the area](#). Those responsible for the place of worship should ensure that people do not mix between tables, and that physical distancing is maintained when moving from the service to where the hospitality is provided.

We are considering how these and other restrictions will affect our services and keep you all informed about any plans to reopen.



# Reflections on Vaccination

David Grant / Nick Silk

## Introduction from Nick Silk

Last month, my wife Kate and I went along to Ingliston to get our first covid vaccination. We were expecting to see a few friends and neighbours; I suspect that many of you will have been sharing vaccination dates with friends and certainly in Linlithgow the vaccinations seem to have been arranged by geographical area. And indeed we did see quite a few friends – it was the nearest thing we’ve had to a day out in ages! However what we weren’t expecting was to see someone we knew when we were actually getting the injection. After Kate and I had been directed to the vaccination booth, the vaccinator asked our names and then looked at us and said “I know you, don’t I?” And indeed we did; it was David Grant from the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation (EHC) who was giving us our vaccine. As we chatted and put the

world to rights, as you do (or at least certainly at our age!), David mentioned that he had written an article about his work as a vaccinator for the EHC magazine and asked if we would be interested in reading it. We were, and we did, and having read it I thought that other members of our community would be interested in reading it too. So, with David's permission, below is the article David wrote a couple of months ago:

The pandemic has caused many of us to confront our worst fears but has also brought out the best of our humanity. In the often quoted words of the Talmud (Sanhedrin 4.5) "He who saves a life, it is as if he has saved the whole world", and there are few interventions that save more lives than vaccination. Indeed the man who is known as the "father" of vaccination Edward Jenner (a medical graduate of St Andrews) is widely thought to have saved more lives than any other human being. When I reflect on the experience of volunteering as a vaccinator, I think

of the fragility of human life, but I also see a triumph of the human intellect. The genetic code of the covid19 virus was released by the Chinese Centre for Disease Control on Friday 10 th January 2020 and by the end of that weekend scientists in Oxford had already designed their vaccine. Work on the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine started in Mainz, Germany soon after and on 2 nd December the UK became the first country to license it, just 11 months from the sequencing of the viral genome and 7 months after the commencement of large scale clinical trials.

It is perhaps poignant that the CEO of Pfizer Albert Bourla is the son of Holocaust survivors from Thessaloniki, the five hundred year old Jewish community which was almost totally annihilated by the Nazis. His father Mois escaped the ghetto and spent the war in Athens living under a false identity whilst his mother Sara was sheltered by an older sister who had converted to Christianity. Speaking at a Holocaust

Memorial Day event earlier this year, Bourla recalled that his parents never expressed anger or hatred, rather they spoke of how lucky they were to be alive, and how we all needed to build on that feeling, celebrate life and move forward. In his own words, they “stared down hatred and built a life filled with love and joy” and saw their son grow up to become a distinguished scientist.

At the vaccination centre everything runs with military precision, unsurprisingly as it was set up by the military! As people approach my station I sense that some are apprehensive, a few emotional, most simply relieved and grateful to have reached this moment. For some, relief is tinged with sadness at the memory of the loss of a loved one, or by the realization that this is the first time they have felt the touch of another human being for almost a year. At the end of the day, as I step out into the cold night air, I have an impression that this experience is one that has brought the whole nation together. Every individual, rich or poor, humble or exalted, practitioner of any religion or none enters and leaves through the same doors and receives the same treatment. As our national poet Robert Burns so eloquently put it: “A Man’s a Man for A’That”.



# Sukkat Shalom Social

Kyla Reid

We'd like to invite members — established congregants and new arrivals — to join a Sukkat Shalom Social on zoom Wednesday 12 May 8-9pm. Come catch up with old friends and meet some new ahead of Shavuot! We'll have a bit of a discussion about the up coming holiday as an ice breaker, before moving smaller virtual “rooms” so folks can chat in smaller groups.

We're hoping to hold social meet ups (both virtual and, eventually, in person) every few months and, where possible, before holiday celebrations, so that members from across our community can mingle and meet friends old and new. Our second social will be on 2nd September — after the summer holidays and just before the High Holydays — so pencil it in your calendar!



# Our Second Pandemic Pesach

Sue Bard



“

***I used a pomegranate as it's the symbol of Kashgar, the city at the heart of the Uyghur lands, and its juice and seeds are widely used in food and drink across the region. I don't know if anyone other than me used one though!***

In the last Etrog, we reported our first pandemic Purim, which last year had been our final 'live' event. Now we are embarked on our second cycle of virtual festival celebrations. While this year's communal Seder night inevitably lacked the novelty of last year's, it was a wonderful occasion in which well over 100 people from the Edinburgh, Leicester, Manchester and Oxford Liberal Jewish communities participated. Rabbi Mark Solomon conducted the Seder with warmth and feeling using the LJ Haggadah B'chol



Dor Va-Dor (A Haggadah for All Generations) with participation from all generations.

It was moving to see the efforts that so many people, including those of us who live alone, had made to create Seder tables and Seder plates in their own homes. These did so much to add interest and atmosphere to our event, including Seder plates that replaced, or added to the traditional symbolic foods with others such as an orange, to remind us of oppression; an olive as a symbol of hope for a future peace between Israelis and Palestinians; a tomato, representing the exploited status – in some case not that far removed from slavery - of many fruit and vegetable pickers; a chilli, representing the threat of climate change.

Sukkat Shalom member Stephanie Mitchell may have created a new Seder plate symbol this year with the inclusion of pomegranates. Stephanie explained: *'I used a pomegranate as it's the symbol of Kashgar, the city at the heart of the Uyghur lands, and its juice and seeds are widely used in food and drink across the region. I don't know if anyone other than me used one though!'*

# Helen and Her Assistance Dog

Sue Bard

We're all familiar with the idea of guide dogs for visually impaired people, an idea that took off in Germany after World War 1 as a way of helping men who'd been blinded in combat regain independence. More recently, the concept of assistance dogs has developed for people with less obvious disabilities (though the term 'assistance dog' is now generally preferred to 'guide dog' for any disability).

Sukkat Shalom member Helen Ford has autism. Long an animal lover, she became interested in how an assistance dog might help her become more independent. While people tend to assume that the main function of assistance dogs for visually impaired people is to physically help them navigate journeys outside, the individuals themselves often rate the psychological and social benefits just as highly. Helen felt that an assistance dog could increase her confidence to go out alone and could reduce her anxiety in many situations as well as giving her the comfort and pleasure of companionship.

The Equality Act 2010 provides for people with disabilities to have the same right to services supplied by shops, banks, hotels, libraries, pubs, taxis, etc. as everyone else and service providers have to make



‘reasonable adjustments’ to accommodate people with assistance animals. This has helped to both familiarise the general public with their wider presence and Inspire people to consider how an assistance dog might help them.

While people with visual impairments who are interested in having an assistance dog have the support of big well-funded charities, this isn’t the case for people with other kinds of disabilities. Six months ago, Helen acquired a delightful standard poodle puppy, Teddy, who is currently undertaking his basic obedience training. Once this has been completed, Helen will follow an owner training course with him, supported by one of the small charities and organisations in this field, a process that will take at least another 10 months.

Teddy arrived in between Covid lockdowns, which has brought its own difficulties. However, Helen says Teddy has already brought her great joy and is making a big difference to her life.

# Interfaith News

Professor Joe Goldblatt

## Edinburgh Interfaith Association

### Interfaith Insights Weekly Podcast on Tuesdays at 1pm

Catch this weekly interview and discussion programme featuring representatives of different faith and non-faith groups co-hosted by Iain Stewart, Executive Director of EIFA, Professor Joe Goldblatt and Naismith Assad. The programme airs live on the EIFA Facebook page

<https://fb.watch/4SFZFopiuM/>



# Community Care and Support

In these difficult times, we are here for each other, so don't hesitate to ask for any help and support you may need, including simply the need to talk.

**OUR EXISTING CONFIDENTIAL CONTACT SYSTEM:** phone 0131 777 8024 or email [contact@eljc.org](mailto:contact@eljc.org) and one of the small group of people who respond to calls and emails will get back to you quickly.

**RABBI MARK SOLOMON** would like you to know that he's available on 07766 141315 and by e-mail at [marksolomon@btinternet.com](mailto:marksolomon@btinternet.com) if you'd like to talk to him.

**OUR WHATSAPP GROUP** allows people to be in direct contact with each other very quickly where help is needed. If you're not already on it and would like to be, text your mobile number to Sue Lieberman on 07939 014720 and ask to be part of the group.





## **Sukkat Shalom**

Scottish Charity Number SC035678

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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)

Co-chairs: Sue Bard, Maurice Naftalin. Gillian Raab and Nick Silk ([chair@eljc.org](mailto:chair@eljc.org))

Treasurer and Membership: Stefano Giossi ([membership@eljc.org](mailto:membership@eljc.org))

Secretary: Gillian Raab ([secretary@eljc.org](mailto:secretary@eljc.org))