

# Sukkat Shalom

February 2013

## Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Scottish Charity No SC035678

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## Events and Services

### Date **Friday 1 February 2013**

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

### Date **Friday 8 February 2013**

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

### Date **Friday 15 February 2013**

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

### **AGM**

#### **Sunday 17 February 2013, 3:30pm**

Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace

Do come and let us know how you would like to see the community develop. Everyone is welcome to attend, though only members will be able to vote. Members of the Choosing Judaism class will be especially welcome.

### Date **Saturday 23 February 2013**

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

### Event **Megillah Reading and Purimspiel**

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace  
Time 5:30pm  
Come and join the fun. Bring some Hamentashen or other refreshments to share. See page 3 for details.  
**Bring graggers and come in fancy dress.**

### Date **Sunday 24 February 2013**

Event Choosing Judaism  
Venue Usual Location  
Time 10:30am

### Event **Tea & Talmud**

Venue Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace  
Time 4pm

### Date **Friday 1 March 2013**

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

### Date **Friday 8 March 2013**

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

**Deadline for copy for March 2013 newsletter: 21 February**

## ELJC support line

**0131 208 1447**



Use this number if you have an emergency and really need to speak to someone. It goes to one of our members. Otherwise please leave a message on the community phone and we will respond as soon as possible.

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## Future Dates

Our regular schedule is as follows:

Our **Erev Shabbat** service will be on the **SECOND** Friday of each calendar month and our **Shabbat morning service** on the Saturday after the **FOURTH** Friday.

These services take place in the **Columcille Centre, 2 Newbattle Terrace.**

## Jewish Calendar

Festivals begin on the evening before the day listed.

Tu B'Shevat	26.1.2013
Purim	24.2.2013
Pesach	26.3.-2.4.2013
Shavuot	16.-16.5.2013
9 Av	16.7.2013
Rosh Hashanah	5.-6.9.2013
Yom Kippur	14.9.2013
Sukkot	19.-25.9.2013
Simchat Torah	26.9.2013
Hanukah	28.11.-5.12.2013



## Hebrew Crash Course, 8-10 March

Do you want to learn to read Hebrew or improve your fluency and understanding?

Then book your place on the Hebrew Crash Course Weekend! Might be very suitable for members of the Choosing Judaism course.

For more information call Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue (01923 822 592) or email [admin@npls.org.uk](mailto:admin@npls.org.uk).



## YAMIM come to Edinburgh

On Purim (see page 3) we will be joined by a group of young people from the National Youth Movement who will be spending a weekend here.

## Response to Sukkat Shalom letter

In the January newsletter we reported on correspondence from the Council to Rabbi Danny Rich and Julian Hudson, respectively Chief Executive and Chairman of Liberal Judaism. The context was the council's concern about a letter of support for Operation Pillar of Defense which they had signed, along with other UK Communal leaders. We have received a reply which includes the following:

*"...having concluded that on this occasion the rockets were being fired by Hamas (rather than a splinter group), that Israel had a right to respond to such provocation and that Israel's response was targeted to military personnel and sites, I chose to sign the letter which did not express everything I might have wanted to say. ... My second letter (printed in our December newsletter) called for an immediate cease fire."*

The full text of the response can be viewed on our web site. There is a link to it on the Values page of the website: <http://www.eljc.org/index.php/our-values>.

## Chairman's final word

This will be my last chance to write this piece for the Sukkat Shalom Newsletter, so it seems like a good time to review what has gone well and what not so well over the last four years. But before I get into this, I'd like to say a few words of thanks all the members who have supported the community, and supported me in particular, during my time as chairman. I will not mention any names, but it has been great to have so many people willing to help out in emergencies and to help to calm me down when things seemed to be going wrong.

### **So let's start with the successes**

- We have had a service every weekend (barring a few weekends in the summer) .
- Our Rabbi has led our High Holyday services every year to a large crowd of members and visitors.
- More people are participating in leading services and reading from the Scroll.
- The singing at services has improved a lot, even when Rabbi Mark is not here.
- Our newsletter has appeared without fail every month.
- Our cheder goes from strength to strength with keen students and inspiring teachers.

- We have welcomed many new members to our community.
- Rabbi Mark Solomon continues to be an inspiration to us in so many ways both at his visits and at other times.
- Adult education, Talmud group, philosophy group and Hebrew reading classes have expanded.
- Our website has been expanded to allow more people to submit items.
- We have become a SCIO to conform with new Charitable regulations.

#### And then the ups and downs

- We now have quite a good collection of books for both children and adults, but we have as yet to work out how these could best be made available to people who might like to borrow.
- We made a start at getting involved in social media by having a Facebook page, but this is no longer maintained.
- Our relations with the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation involved three joint Purim events and a highly successful Burns Night two years ago. But things seem less warm at present, not through our initiative.
- Social events have been intermittent. We should try to have more.

#### And the downs

- Our lack of our own premises continues to be a barrier to the smooth running of the community. There has been much written but so far little in the way of action.
- Our finances are not as healthy as they should be. We are still well in the black, but with the cost of everything increasing, especially rents for premises, we will need to take care of this.

So you can see that there are more ups than downs. I have every expectation that when the new Council takes over this later this month we will be able to address some of the downs.

Almost everything in Sukkat Shalom is carried out by the voluntary work of our members. The Shul Council coordinates things and holds meetings about every 6 to 8 weeks. These are generally focused and also sociable and good natured. We almost always arrive at decisions by consensus, though of course there are differing views. If you would consider joining the Council please be in touch with me ([chair@eljc.org](mailto:chair@eljc.org)) or

any council member, before the AGM on 17th February.

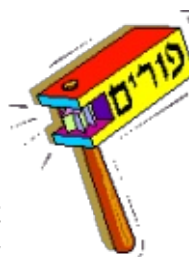
I look forward to seeing you there.

**Gillian Raab**  
Chairman

## Community Matters

### Purim

This year our Purim celebrations will all be taking place in the Columcile Centre on Erev Purim, **Saturday 23rd February**. Although we are sorry not to be sharing it with the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation (as in previous years) it will give us a chance to set the timings just the way we want them. That way even our youngest ones can take part and we will finish early enough for anyone who fancies to continue the Purim tradition by repairing to a local hostelry for more liquid refreshment.



#### The timetable for the evening is as follows:-

5.30 pm Arrive and partake of refreshments – **please bring some Hamentashen** or any other contributions (no meat or seafood) to share and perhaps **something to drink**.

6.00 pm Fancy dress parade

6.30 pm (approx) Havdalah followed by Rabbi Mark Solomon's special Megillah reading (bits from the scroll interspersed with dramatic scenes – you can take part).

7.00 pm (approx) Our own Purimspiel written and directed by Jenny Underwood.

The Purimspiel script is finished and rehearsals are about to begin. Some people are already signed up, but some extra Purimspielers could be fitted in. I believe that the parts of Haman and Alex Salmond may still be up for grabs. To take part (there will only be a few rehearsals) do contact Jennifer Underwood ([jennifer.underwood@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jennifer.underwood@hotmail.co.uk)).



We are planning to have the Cheder children join in the final chorus.

## AGM

This will be at the Columcille Centre on Sunday 17th February at 3.30 pm. Members will receive their papers before the meeting. Refreshments will be available after the AGM.

## PESACH

We will be holding our community seder, as usual, on the first night of Pesach (Monday 25th March) at Marchmont St Giles Church Centre. Judith from Butterflies Catering will be providing the meal. Details of costs etc. are being finalised and the booking form will be available on the web site shortly. Details will go to members along with the AGM papers.

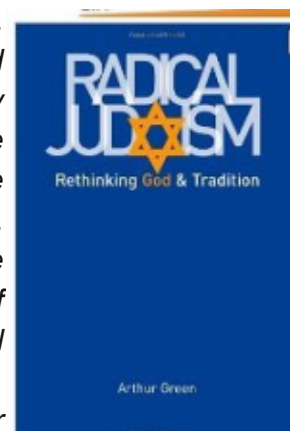
## PHILOSOPHY DISCUSSION GROUP

The group has finally completed their study of Spinoza's Ethics and it is time to move on to something else. As an interlude before the next major task (perhaps Maimonides?) it has been decided to spend the next few sessions (next one on 24th March) discussing a very recent book called ***Radical Judaism: Rethinking God and Tradition***, by **Arthur Green**. Here is the introductory paragraph of the a review of it in the *Jewish Review of Books*:

*In recent years, the movement variously known as Jewish Spirituality, Jewish Renewal, and Neo-Hasidism has surged forth from independent prayer groups and study-based communities into the mainstream liberal synagogues. Along the way, it has helped pry the Holocaust and Israel from their central place in American Jewish identity. A decade ago the philosopher Michael Morgan made an important observation about the movement's serious commitment to religious experience and traditional ritual practices, and apparent disinterest in theological questions. "These trends point to God, the divine and especially to questions about our access to transcendence or our experience of God," which "should point to the notion of divine revelation and compel us to a careful reconsideration of it, [but] I do not see much activity of this sort."*

*For a while, at least, it apparently sufficed if God was merely hummable. Now Arthur Green, a distinguished scholar of kabbalistic and Hasidic thought, former dean of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and current rector of the Rabbinical School at Hebrew College, has provided a systematic theology for the movement of which he has as much claim as anybody to be the intellectual leader. In Radical Judaism: Rethinking God and Tradition, Green presents us with a Judaism built on the familiar three pillars of God, Torah, and Israel. But the closer we look, the less familiar they turn out to be.....*

You can read the full review at <http://www.jewishreviewofbooks.com/publications/detail/hidden-master>.



Is Radical Judaism different from Liberal Judaism, and if so how? Do come and join the discussion. The book is available at Amazon, both new and 2nd hand. Some of us have copies we may be willing to share. Just email us at [info@eljc.org](mailto:info@eljc.org) to arrange to borrow one. The discussion groups will be much more worthwhile if you have managed to read the book – but of course you would be welcome to come even if you have not read it.

## Israel Human Rights Trip

Plans for the trip are moving forward at last. We have travel and accommodation arrangements in place, and a firm overall price for the trip. We even have people signed up for it—nine of us at the current count.

**In brief:** we are going on 16th May for ten days, our lodgings are ranked #2 by TripAdvisor for all Jerusalem B&Bs, and we have an itinerary that will combine social, political, and tourist activities. And all this comes in at the bargain price of £750 (plus meals and extras) There's still room for more people, so book quickly before the air fares head skyward. This is an unrepeatable chance to visit Israel, get the inside story about human rights, and to support the organisations working to promote them.

**Full details** are on the website at <http://goo.gl/K7bv9>; please take a look, then get in touch with me with any questions you may have. **Maurice Naftalin** ([webmaster@eljc.org](mailto:webmaster@eljc.org)).

## Events and Announcements

### Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society <http://ejls.org>

8.00pm, *Marian Oppenheim Hall, Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, 4 Salisbury Road.*

#### **February 03rd 2013: Norman Crane: "The Book of Judith: A Tale of Gender, Sex and Politics"**

Norman is a pillar of Sukkat Shalom. He has an MA in Jewish studies from Manchester and a passionate interest in all things Jewish. With the title above, we are looking forward to something a bit spicy!

#### **March 10th 2013: Dr Daniel Davies: "Why is everyone a Maimonidean?"**

Daniel teaches at Leo Baeck College, and is part of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit. Some texts that are basic to the Jewish tradition seem to be subject to constant struggle. Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed is one of those texts. This talk will consider some of the reasons.

### Edinburgh Jewish Community Centre Film Evening, 17.2.

#### **Keeping the Faith**

*Ben Stiller, Jenna Elfman and Edward Norton star in this funny romantic comedy. Two single, successful, extremely popular guys have been best friends forever. They are about to be reunited with their other best childhood buddy, Anna. Anna's re-entry into their lives turns this old circle of friends into a love triangle - a very complicated one at that, because Jake is a rabbi and Brian is a priest...*



**Community Centre, 4A Salisbury Road, 7.00pm**

Light buffet supper included (prior to film screening) and tea/coffee/biscuits afterwards.

Recommended minimum donation: £12 adults; students/children £8

Please help us plan our catering: If you are hoping to attend please phone Steven (above) or Joyce on 666 1425 or [j.sperber@yahoo.com](mailto:j.sperber@yahoo.com) with your name,

address, phone number, and the number of tickets required. Please also send this information with a cheque made out to 'Jewish Community Centre' to Betsy Dorfman, 163/7 The Maltings, Slateford Road, Edinburgh EH14 1PD by 10th February 2013.

If you or anyone you know needs a lift contact Steven Hyams on 445 3740 to arrange.

### Public Event

**Wednesday 6 February, 7-8:30pm,  
Martin Hall, New College.**

*'The Abrahamic Religions: the prospects for their inter-relations'*

**Edward Kessler MBE, The Woolf Institute, Cambridge.**

Arranged by the Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World for UN Interfaith Harmony Week, in association with the Edinburgh Three Faiths Forum and the Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association.

### Scottish Government Same-Sex Marriage Consultation

In December Scotland became the first part of the United Kingdom to publish draft legislation to allow same-sex marriage.

The Scottish Government is currently running a public consultation on the draft 'Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill' with proposals relating to marriage, gender recognition, education, fostering, free speech, and employment law.

One of the questions asked is

#### **Question 7 – Religious & belief marriage**

*I agree with the proposals for authorising religious and belief celebrants who wish to solemnise same-sex marriage. These proposals will protect and extend religious freedom by allowing religious and belief bodies to conduct same-sex marriages if they wish to do so.*

Both Liberal Judaism and the Movement for Reform Judaism would come into that category. Do consider submitting an individual response by 20th March.

Details of the proposed legislation and how to respond are at:

<http://www.equalmarriage.org.uk/consultation>

## Public Lectures

### Edinburgh Research Network in Jewish Studies

<http://jewishstudies.div.ed.ac.uk/>

**Monday 11 February 2013, 5:15pm, Lecture Room 1, New College**

***'The Renaissance of the Jews?'***

**Stephen S. Bowd, Reader in European History, 1500-1800, University of Edinburgh**



Renaissance humanists, who cultivated a knowledge of classical languages and history, responded to the ancient Hebrews and their Jewish descendants with a mixture of fascination and disgust. In this lecture Dr Bowd will show how some humanists worked to read and translate Hebrew scriptural texts or recover and promote the mystical tradition of the Kabbalah in the name of Christianity, while others integrated Hebrew history into their narratives of ancient empires and demonstrated how ancient wisdom was held by the Hebrews. Drawing on a wide range of published and unpublished texts Dr Bowd will consider the nature of Jewish-Christian relations in Italy and suggest how a modern understanding of the Renaissance may be challenged by this new evidence.

**No charge, but please book your place at <http://edinburgh-university-141.eventbrite.co.uk/>**

**Monday 11 March 2013, 5:15pm, Lecture Room 1, New College**

***'Teaching the Abrahamic Religions: A Subversive Enterprise?'***

**Guy Stroumsa, Professor of the Study of the Abrahamic Religions, University of Oxford**

Contrary to appearances, the concept of the "Abrahamic religions" is a very recent invention, which stems from the legitimate desire to include the new Muslim populations into European societies. Can a concept useful for interfaith relations also be of real epistemic value for the scholarly study of religions? The lecture will seek to identify the conditions in which such a transformation is possible, and will as well emphasize its dangers and pitfalls. It will seek to offer new approaches to the historical and comparative study of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.



**No charge, but please book your place at <http://edinburgh-university-142.eventbrite.co.uk/>**

**Tuesday 12 March 2013, 5:15pm, Lecture Room 1, New College**

***'The Andalusian connection: Muslim and Jewish Thinkers in Islamic Spain'***

**Sarah Stroumsa, The Alice and Jack Ormut Professor of Arabic Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

The period between the tenth and twelfth centuries in the Iberian Peninsula was marked by cultural effervescence. Al-Andalus (the Arabic name for Islamic Spain) owes much of this effervescence to its multicultural and highly sophisticated society. Jewish and Muslim philosophical works, which developed in this period, are the product of a common philosophical legacy, integrated into the two religious traditions and expressed in the same language, Arabic. The study of the two traditions together, as tightly interconnected, allows us to better understand each one of them. It also allows us to explain some peculiarities of the history of philosophy and religious thought in al-Andalus, which set it apart from its counterpart in the Islamic Orient.



**No charge, but please book your place at <http://edinburgh-university-143.eventbrite.co.uk/>**

## Letter from Gabby Goodman

Hello Sukkat Shalom,

Some of you might remember me from my time in Edinburgh as a foreign exchange student in 2011, when I spent almost every Kabbalat Shabbat at Sukkat Shalom. I am currently living in Jerusalem studying at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, on a year program.

I am writing to spread the word about my running in the Jerusalem half-marathon in just a few weeks! I have been running since I was 12, and have finally decided to really do something with it. I am training with my good friend Kayla Higgins, who is also a student at Pardes and my downstairs neighbor. She and I are raising money for a cause that we are both very proud to be supporting: SHALVA Jerusalem, the Association for Mentally and Physically Challenged Children in Israel. SHALVA provides free services and a strong support system to families who have children with disabilities from the child's infancy to his or her young adulthood. Children are admitted to the program on a first-come-first serve basis regardless of ethnicity, religion, or financial status. The donations are all through an online profile. Although Kayla is the one with an official profile with the SHALVA team, meeting the fundraising goal for the organization will be a team effort. Here is her profile: [http://www.run4shalva.org/view\\_profile.php?id=624](http://www.run4shalva.org/view_profile.php?id=624). I also invite you to take a look at the organization's website at [www.shalva.org](http://www.shalva.org). Any help is very very welcome, and we really appreciate it! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [goodman.gabby@gmail.com](mailto:goodman.gabby@gmail.com).



## Fanaticism by Gary Dickson

Amos Oz, the Israeli novelist, has written a series of essays entitled 'How to Cure a Fanatic. Israel and Palestine: Between Right and Right.' In place of corpses on both sides, Oz advocates a two state solution – a territorial divorce 'like the peaceful divorce between Czechs and Slovaks'; with borders negotiated; and a just outcome for the Palestinian refugees. Hopefully, Palestinians and Israelis will not 'spend hundreds of years butchering one another in the time-honoured European tradition'. Oz makes a rational case, while the same cannot be said of the leadership on either side. It's a pity, but Oz's hopes seem foredoomed.



Fanaticus originally meant inspired by a divinity, enthusiastic (as in possessed by a god). In the Middle Ages it was a pagan. Gradually, it became a God – drunk ecstatic, overbrimming with religious zeal. Nowadays it is the zealot of any imaginable or unimaginable cause.

Oz knows that 'fanaticism begins at home'. From reading the classic 'The Authoritarian Personality' by T W Adorno – a post-WWII book about the psychodynamics of fascistic anti-semitism – he would understand that an 'authoritarian parent-child relationship may well culminate in rigidity in personal life as well as in attitudes to religion and social issues'. Consequently, personal malformation and 'irrational hostility' generate a fanatical socio-religious outlook.

Wonderfully captured in 'The True Believer' by the selftaught Eric Hoffer is the social dimension of fanaticism. The fanatic 'alone knows the innermost craving of the masses'. 'The blindness of the fanatic is a source of strength (he sees no obstacles)'. And guess who remains when the cause is lost forever? Think of neo-Nazis; think of Russian neo-Communists. Think of the true believers in Festinger's 'When Prophecy Fails', who, after their apocalyptic date has passed and nothing happens, remain steadfast because their total selfhood was invested in the prophecy.

Oz warns us: 'be very careful; fanaticism is extremely catching, more contagious than any virus'. Yet, according to Oz, there is a remedy for all kinds of fanaticism. It lies in reading great (but not hate) literature, from which we gain tolerance of other points of view, a sense of humour and an empathetic imagination. Easier said than done. Sadly, Oz's cure seems the stuff of dreams.

Fanaticism may be incurable.

*NOTE: This piece first appeared in the Diary section of the Scottish Review, January 2013*