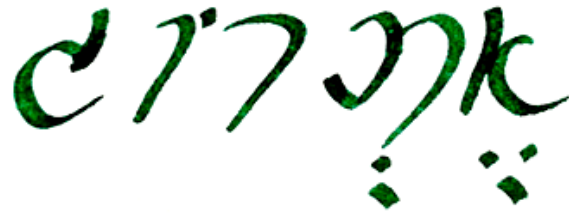




etrog



סוכות

February – March 2017
Shevat – Adar 5777

Sukkat Shalom Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community
Scottish Charity SC035678

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Diary

February 2017 / Shevat – Adar 5777				
Fri 3	Shevat 8	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St Giles
Fri 10	Shevat 15	7pm	Tu b'Shevat seder / erev Shabbat service, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon. This seder is advertised as part of the Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace, so we will have many visitors. During the seder we will be eating various types of fruits and nuts, and also a communal supper, so please bring a non-meat dish to share and if possible a bit extra for our guests!	Columcille Centre
Sat 11	Shevat 15	1:30pm	Tea & Talmud with Rabbi Mark Solomon Note change from usual time	Columcille Centre
Sun 12	Shevat 16	4pm	Philosophy discussion group, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	Columcille Centre
Fri 17	Shevat 22	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St Giles
Sat 25	Shevat 29	11am	Shabbat service	Columcille Centre
Sun 26	Shevat 30	3pm	AGM	St. Mark's, Castle Terrace
March 2017 / Adar – Nissan 5777				
Fri 3	Adar 6	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St Giles
Fri 10	Adar 13	7pm	Erev Shabbat service	Columcille Centre
Sun 12	Adar 14	3pm	Purim — details to be confirmed	Columcille Centre
Fri 17	Adar 20	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St Giles
Sat 25	Adar 27	11am	Shabbat service	Columcille Centre
Sun 26	Adar 28	4pm	Philosophy discussion group, led by Rabbi Mark Solomon	Columcille Centre
Fri 31	Nissan 5	6pm	Kabbalat Shabbat service	Marchmont St Giles

Joy Northcott z"l

We will meet to celebrate Joy's life
at 3:30pm on Friday 10th February
in the Conference Hall of the
Nicholson Square Methodist Church

Rabbi Mark and Rev Pat Betts (Peter's sister) will lead the celebration. All are welcome!

"Joy by name, joyous by nature": please wear bright colours—Joy didn't like black.

Light refreshments will be served afterwards.

AGM

Our AGM will be at 3pm on Sunday 26th February at St Mark's, Castle Terrace.

The agenda will be circulated by e-mail to members, at least 7 days before the meeting, along with links to various reports that will be presented at the AGM. Please let us know if you would like to have printed copies. We will be electing the office bearers and council members for the coming year and finishing with some socialising and refreshments.

As you will see below, this means that this edition of Etrog contains the final *Word from the Chair* from Norman. We wish him a well-earned respite, though we know he and Wendy will continue to contribute a huge amount to the community.

Final word from the chair

"To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.

A time to keep hold and a time to let go."

These words from Chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes resonate strongly with me at this time, for I am shortly to relinquish the Chairmanship of Sukkat Shalom and this is the final Word from the Chair composed by me as an individual. I have completed the four-year stint as Chairman that the Constitution of Sukkat Shalom allows. I have, of course, mixed feelings about this. I should like to quote the meditation at the bottom of page 182 in Siddur Lev Chadash:

"Eternal God, You know better than I know myself that I am growing older, and will someday be old(!) Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Make me thoughtful but not moody, helpful but not bossy. Keep my mind from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places, and talents in unexpected people. And

give me the grace to tell them."

I indeed feel very much that I am growing older and am ready to hand over responsibilities to my successor. I have done my best to follow the good counsel contained in the passage above. Whether or not I have done so successfully I leave to the judgement of others. I have been fortunate that the last four years have been exciting ones in the life of Sukkat Shalom. The Community has grown both in numbers and in the richness of its activities, which I am sure has had little to do with any activities on my part. I do not intend to rehearse at length the events of the last four years, which would be tedious. I shall instead refer to one or two aspects of this development.

One such is the strengthening of our relationships with other faith groups. Incidentally, the passage I have quoted from the Prayers and Readings on Various Themes section in our Siddur is taken from the Hodder book of Christian prayers, Hodder and Stoughton 1986 (© Tony Castle), attributed to a 17th century nun. It has become our custom to erect our Sukkah in the garden of Christ Church Morningside and hold our Sukkot services in the community centre there. This came about as a result of a conversation I had with Hugh Goddard, Director of the Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World through our active participation in meetings of the Edinburgh Interfaith Association

On the intra-Jewish front, we are developing closer and warmer links with Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation. We have been talking together about some form of joint Cheder/Education/Youth Work activities. Members of our two communities have been active together in the running of the Jewish Literary Society for a number of years. In addition the arrival on the Jewish scene in Edinburgh of the Jewish Dialogue has led to a flurry of joint activity which promises well for the future.

Within our community itself we have several important developments to which we can point. We have celebrated our 10th anniversary as an independent congregation. The celebration demanded a lot of hard work from many people. In the end it was an occasion enjoyed by everyone: it gave us the feeling that we had now arrived. One of its highlights was the induction of our portable ark. This has for me at least made us feel less like an itinerant band that has to pack up and go after each meeting. This is particularly so because although portable it has thus far only been moved once a year. We are fortunate that a highly skilled member of our Community has designed and made curtains for the Ark as well as other textiles to enhance the visual aspect of our worship.

I have deliberately not named the person concerned because I could and should have mentioned by name a number of other people who have played a substantial role in the working of the Community in the last four years. One of the factors in my relief at handing over the Chairmanship is that I can no longer remember names, events and tasks to be done as I did when I started. It would therefore be invidious to mention the name of some individuals and leave out the names of others. What I should say is that I have received a great deal of help from many people in carrying out the tasks that fall to the Chairman of the Community. They

know who they are and I thank them humbly and wholeheartedly. All that remains is for me to say Farewell to the Chair and Long Live the Chair!

Norman Crane

A warm welcome to Blandine and Gareth

Gareth Owen and Blandine Connor are well-kent faces at Sukkat Shalom. But we welcome them now as members of our community on the completion of their conversion to Judaism.

Gareth was born and brought up in South Wales in Llansamlet, Swansea and he wonders whether there's Jewish ancestry on the Welsh side of his family, with its recurrence of Hebrew Bible names (one of which, Mordecai, Gareth has chosen for himself). He remembers an early interest in Judaism sparked by the close Jewish friend of one of his aunts and later by several visits to synagogues from secondary school as part of a religious studies programme. For Gareth, the death of his grandfather prompted important questions and his interest in Judaism grew. Gareth studied theoretical physics at undergraduate and postgraduate level, first at the University of Swansea and then at the University of Sussex. As a student in Brighton, he sometimes visited the Reform Synagogue and when he came to Edinburgh in 2012 to take up his first job (as a software developer with ION) he started attending Sukkat Shalom services and events and reading widely about Judaism, eventually joining Rabbi Mark's Choosing Judaism group.



Gareth has found himself very attracted by the profusion of ideas, opinions and debate within Judaism – 'there's always more to learn and think about'- and appreciates the warmth of the welcome that Sukkat Shalom extended to him. Gareth is looking forward to continuing being an active member of the community and says 'Judaism shows people how to approach life. It's helped me find something I was looking for.'

Blandine comes originally from Brittany and until she was nine lived in a small village near Brest. Her parents divorced and then Blandine moved with her mother to Paris. Brought up a Roman Catholic, from an early age Blandine felt at odds with the Church's attitude to divorce, which impacted directly on her family, and as she grew older, with other aspects of its teaching. In Paris, she came into direct contact with Jewish people and in her late teens formed a close friendship with a young Jewish woman and describes herself as having been strongly drawn to Judaism, liking its 'rationality' and the acceptance of debate.



At 26, Blandine, now an accountant, moved to Scotland (via Dublin). It was here that she started seriously to follow up her earlier interest in Judaism. Initially, she made contact with the Reform Synagogue in Glasgow who pointed her in the direction of Sukkat Shalom, as she was living in Bathgate and working in Edinburgh. In 2013, at the same time as Gareth, she joined the Choosing Judaism Group. By this time, Blandine had also met and married a Scot, Sam, and they have both been moved by the welcome and support that has been extended to him, as a non-Jew, as well as to her. Blandine has developed a deep emotional attachment to Judaism, loving the festivals – especially Succoth and its connection to nature. She has been profoundly moved by the process of gaining her Certificate of Admission at the Liberal Judaism Beit Din and by her Admission Ceremony at Sukkat Shalom, and is looking forward to her future as a Jew.

Purimspiel Call—Director Needed!

Purim is 12th March this year, and will be upon us before we know it.

Last year's multi-talented King Achashverosh (Philip Michaelson) has written a cracking script for this year's Purimspiel and Gica Loening, well-known musician and Sukkat Shalom member, is providing lively music. We need someone to step forward to direct and organise it. If you are interested, please contact Phil Wadler, treasurer@elj.org. We promise it won't take up too



much of your time and we can guarantee you'll enjoy it. If no one steps forward it will still happen, but be undirected and unorganised! Be the one to bring order to chaos.

Sukkat Shalom Sings

Sukkat Shalom has a number of talented and experienced singers. There are also many of us who would love to sing during Shabbat and High Holy Day services but have never felt able to do so – often the result of early and thoughtless judgements on our ability. It doesn't have to be like that! Last summer, in preparation for High Holy Days, we invited anyone who was interested to come along to a oneday singing workshop. Sue Lieberman and Melissa Eisenberg organised an inspirational day with Mich Sampson, Director of Music at Finchley Reform Synagogue and experienced performer, choir conductor and workshop leader. With help and support from Mich, we followed this day up with a number of half-day sessions of our own. We are now applying for a grant from the NLPS Trust for Progressive Judaism to build on this foundation with a series of one-day workshops which would be led by Mich, for both Shabbat and High Holy Day music, interspersed with linked practice sessions with Rabbi Mark

Solomon. We won't know the result of our grant application until the last week in April. However, we have gone ahead and booked provisional dates for Mich to come to Edinburgh.

Mich's workshops will be on the following dates, from 10.30 – 4.00:

SUNDAY 14 MAY

SUNDAY 18 JUNE

SUNDAY 23 JULY

SUNDAY 13 AUGUST

MONDAY 28 AUGUST

Rabbi Mark Solomon has kindly offered to lead a singing practice during his Edinburgh weekends, usually from 3.00 – 4.00 before the Philosophy Group on Sunday afternoons at Columcille from May onwards.

We hope that many members will come along – the workshops will be free, there will be no limit on numbers, no age restrictions, and everyone—whether or not you have ever sung before—is welcome. You do not have to be able to read Hebrew, or music. All you need is enthusiasm and commitment. So note the dates, keep your fingers crossed that our grant application is successful and we'll keep you informed.

—and please help our grant application to succeed by expressing your interest in writing, by text or email, to Sue Bard: susanbard3@gmail.com, 07811 409914

Mitzvah Day 2016



It's 5.30 on Sunday, 27th November—Mitzvah Day—and I've just come back from an exhausting but highly rewarding day alongside 30 Jewish volunteers, and many others, sorting. In Edinburgh, we chose to support Re-Act, a not-for-profit international humanitarian aid project working to help bring vital supplies and support to displaced refugees across Europe. This is a fantastic organisation with values true to those behind Mitzvah Day. We have a responsibility to help those who are suffering through no fault of

their own, and the plight of refugees in the 21st century, particularly at present in Syria, reminds us of the horrors of the 20th century for Jews. Just as Jews were desperate that the world should not turn their back then, so are today's refugees desperate now. We made that link as well for the Cheder children, most of whom were too young to volunteer on the day but instead heard from two speakers: Francoise Robertson, who talked about her experiences of coming to the UK as a refugee when a baby, and Lydia, a student who spent a week working at the Calais camp before it closed and talked about how she befriended young refugees, helping them learn to speak English.

Re-Act organises collections every month in Edinburgh (and in other Scottish towns and cities) and recruits volunteers to work 3-hour shifts to take in donations and to sort them into different categories for women, men, children and babies, plus toiletries, camping equipment, toys etc. It is a never-ending process, for as quickly as the bags are sorted, more donations come in. By half way through the day, we were told that we had already sorted 210 sacks ready for delivery to a camp in Thessalonika, Greece, and there were still nearly 400 to go!

We were delighted that so many Mitzvah Day volunteers joined in, aged from 12 to at least half a century older! Everyone worked really hard, but we were able to snatch conversations with other volunteers as well as a family of refugees from Syria, who volunteer with the charity themselves, but also benefit from some of the donations. They were at the heart of what Mitzvah Day, and Re-Act, are all about, and we were very honoured to have been a part of it. We hope some of us will be able to continue to help Re-Act (see www.re-act.scot, or follow them on Facebook). In the meantime, many thanks to everyone who volunteered their time on the day, and also to those who donated items.

Janet Mundy



RE-ACT
REFUGEE ACTION SCOTLAND

Supporting Refugees Campaign: Update

As I've reported in previous issues of Etrog, we launched our Supporting Refugees initiative at Passover last year. When we first set up our campaign, we did so in the expectation that we would be able to participate in a UK-wide campaign to sponsor a refugee family to settle in Britain. At the time the government hadn't published details of the sponsorship scheme, but we had expected that we would provide both financial support and also practical support, the latter at a level that that we would be able to undertake within our community.

Now that the details of the scheme have become clear, it is apparent that the level of practical support expected is at a much higher level than we thought. For example, where we had thought that help with housing would be available to the family, it now appears that we would be expected to find and make arrangements for housing the family. Unfortunately we don't have the institutional structure necessary, either in terms of personnel or financial turnover. So, we could only achieve sponsor status by joining with other communities.

Given the above, we have reluctantly had to conclude that ELJC will not be able to take on the sponsorship of a family on its own. I have been in contact with all those who have donated or pledged money to advise them of this decision, and we will either refund the donations, or

forward them onto a charity that helps refugees. Within the community, we hope that members will continue to support refugees, either through other initiatives such as the volunteering many of us did on Mitzvah Day with Re-Act, or on an individual basis.

Thank you to all of you who have supported this initiative, and I can only conclude by saying that, while I do believe the decision we've taken is the only realistic option available, I'm really sorry that we have not been able to help as a community in the way we had envisaged.

Nick Silk

Tapestry of Heritage: Our Story (Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association)

This project aims to collect and present data on the history of different faith communities in Edinburgh through written and oral histories, filmed interviews, and pictures from the past. Submissions can be made through <http://www.ourstoryeifa.org> where people can write about their own personal histories, knowledge on the history of their community, and photos if they so wish. Please look at the website and, if you're so inclined, have your say.

Our Beautiful Bimah Cover

I was very pleased to be able to deliver the latest instalment in the set of Ark Furnishings at the High Holy Days. Each piece takes between six and nine months to create, from design through prototypes, assembly and finishing.

Following on from the etrog design of the Ark curtain, the bimah cover design is based on the sprays of myrtle (hadass) and willow (aravah) that are found in the lulav. After the stems were made, using a variety of plaiting and knotting methods, I cut, by hand, approximately 750 individual leaves, stiffened, and shaped them to provide a feeling of movement and naturalism.



Once dry, they were stitched by hand to the stem, and additional machine and hand embroidery was added.



The banner, which reads

spread over us the shelter of Your peace

was woven between the stems. Seed-shaped eyelets were hand-embroidered (then ripped out and re-embroidered after I decided I didn't like the colour) over the whole cloth to remind us that even as we transform our borrowed spaces with the Ark and furnishings, we must allow glimpses of our wider environment to peek through.



Katy Bromberg

Edinburgh Interfaith Association News

As I write this, our annual Holocaust Memorial Day service is approaching. By the time you see this, it will very likely have taken place at Drummond Community High School. I am hopeful that, as with previous years, the event will be extremely successful and moving and will have been supported by a good presence from ELJC.

As you will know from elsewhere in this newsletter, our community will be holding our Tu B'Shevat seder on Friday, February 10th. This is always a very pleasant and enjoyable celebration and I was delighted when Norman approached me to invite members of the EIFA Board. We have had confirmation of at least 12 visitors from other communities to share the evening with us.

There are two other important forward dates to flag-up:

- International Women's Day celebrations planned for Sunday March 12th (details tba). Following this, EIFA will be holding its third annual Peace Walk on Sunday, May 28th. Each year the walk starts in the centre of town and passes diverse places of worship along the way to its terminating venue. This year, in recognition of our Jews in Edinburgh Bicentenary, it has been agreed that the walk will terminate at Salisbury Road synagogue where we and Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation will jointly host a short Peace Service followed by a reception. Again a very enjoyable and inter-connecting event and one that I hope will be well-supported by the Jewish community. Do please put both these dates in your diaries.

– In addition, the regular community meal events will continue. These are usually held on the first Monday of every month but dates and venues do sometimes vary so check the EIFA website page (www.eifa.org.uk) or Facebook EIFA for details.

Finally, I would like to highlight that EIFA continues to operate under considerable financial pressure as a result of the significant 2016/17 funding cut. It is extremely important that all of us who wish to see a continuation and development of Interfaith work in Edinburgh do what we can to support the organisation. I am, therefore, particularly grateful and appreciative that as a community we have decided to adopt EIFA this year as one of our Kol Nidre appeal recipients. Many thanks to all for this!

If you are not already on the EIFA mailing list and would like to hear more speedily about EIFA activity and events just enter your name and email address on [this EIFA web page](#).

Stew Green

Sukkat Shalom Triumphs!

The Sukkat Shalom team upheld the honour of our community at the annual quiz at the Jewish Community Centre on Salisbury Road on 29th January. Here the winning team triumphantly brandish their prizes: a bar of soap for each member. We had rabbinical approval too: according to Rabbi Mark, it was a clean win!



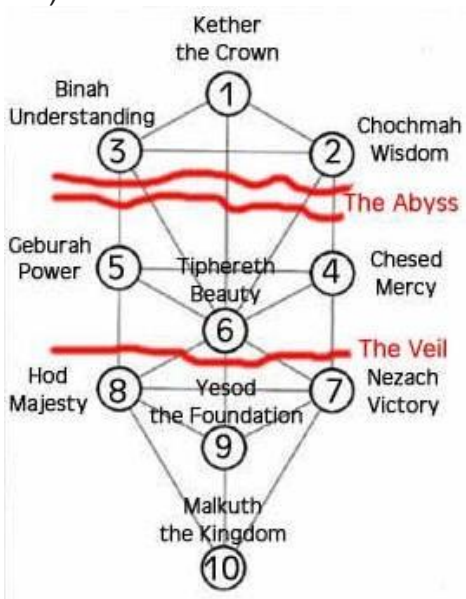
Two Hundred Years of Scottish Jewry

2017 marks the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of the first formal Jewish community in Edinburgh. Celebratory events for this exciting J200 anniversary. The Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society, of which I have put

Sunday, 11th June 2017: "Among Others: 200 years of Jewish Lives in Edinburgh". A celebratory event by Ellen Galford. Venue: The Netherbow; time: evening. Sunday 13th and Wednesday 23rd August 2017: A celebration of Jewish life in Edinburgh. Details of these and other events will be publicised during the spring.
Sue Lieberman

The meaning of Tipheret

The word *Tipheret* means beauty, splendour, magnificence, grandeur, glory, or honour, and features in such expressions as, "She was an ornament to her country", or, "The road you are now embarking on will not add honour to you" ('Alcaly' - Hebrew to English dictionary 1965 ed.)



Specifically Tipheret is the name given to the central sephira or sphere on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. The English word, sphere, appears to be derived from the Greek, *sphaira*.

As may be seen from the figure, Tipheret sits on the central pillar of the Tree between the concepts of mercy or compassion (Chesed) and strict judgment (Gevurah). It is seen as unifying or balancing these. Rabbinic tradition associates the patriarchs with various spheres. Chesed is personified by Abraham, Geburah by Isaac, and Tipheret by Jacob

.Philip Michaelson

Tiphereth in Edinburgh

In 2004 we started to look seriously for somewhere our daughter Annie (then aged 22) would be able to live independently from me and her father. A long and often depressing search ended when we came upon Tiphereth, an intentional community in Edinburgh whose members include adults with learning disabilities. Tiphereth, which has been Annie's home for five years now, belongs to the international Camphill Movement and is one of ten Camphill communities in Scotland.

The founder of the Camphill movement was Karl Konig, a Jewish convert to Christianity and one of a number of followers of Rudolf Steiner, who fled Austria in 1938. This group of refugees, some of whom were Jewish, were welcomed in Scotland where they established a

community at Camphill House near Aberdeen that included children with learning disabilities.

The name 'Tiphereth' meant nothing to me at the time – other than being difficult to spell and to remember. But my mother was delighted at the community's Hebrew name, which she told me meant 'beauty' and 'glory'. That did seem to express something of the quality of the place and also my feelings on finding it. People whom I asked at Tiphereth did not know how it had got its name, or what the name meant, or indeed that it had a meaning. However, especially since I joined Sukkat Shalom two years ago, its name and the link that it makes between this Christian community and Judaism has held significance for me.

My curiosity about how Tiphereth got its name remained, to be satisfied in researching this article. Tiphereth was founded by a couple called Ann and Eric Hoyland, who lived there until 2003 (Ann is no longer alive). When the community celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2013, Ann wrote a detailed and fascinating account of how Tiphereth had come about, including how it got its name:

We needed a name. Eric had been reading about the Kabbalah, the central tenet of which is called 'Tiphereth' which means on different levels 'harmony' and the connection of the earthly with the heavenly. This seemed to be very fitting for what we hoped to achieve. And so 'Tiphereth' was born."

The Camphill Movement's roots are in anthroposophy, an explicitly Christian mystical philosophy developed by Rudolf Steiner, based on a belief in the objective existence of a spiritual world that is accessible by direct experience. Kabbalah was the name given to the Jewish mystical movement that arose in the late 12th century, reaching the height of its 'classical' phase at the end of the 13th century with the appearance of the Zohar, the main and widely influential book of Kabbalah. The kabbalists believed that all visible reality was rooted in and the result of a divine world, a world that they imagined through the doctrine of the sephiroth (see above), one of which was 'tipheret'.

I am happy that in the 21st century, Tiphereth continues to flourish in the foothills of the Pentlands, fulfilling the aspirations of the name that Ann and Eric Hoyland gave it.

Sue Bard

Sukkot in Belgrade

I hadn't planned to spend Sukkot in Belgrade. I went for a professional peer weekend with Group Analytic therapists from Serbia and the surrounding countries, and it had not occurred to me to look for a Jewish community there. It was an amazing and wonderful surprise to find out what I had nearly missed



As it turned out, one of the group members was Jewish. Vida is possibly the only Jewish Group Analyst in Serbia - and she had read my book, so we had an immediate connection. She is, however, far from being the only Jew in Belgrade, and before the weekend was over she had undertaken to take me and my companion (we were staying for a few days) to visit the synagogue and the small Jewish museum. Monday lunchtime saw us being welcomed by the slightly riotous group of members of Sukkat Shalom Belgrade enjoying the post-service cakes, juice and gossip in their sukkah. On Wednesday we spent half the day meeting staff and volunteers at the museum, being shown round its exhibits, and being valuably educated in the history of the Jewish community in this far-flung part of Europe. Belgrade has many fine examples of Central European architecture like the one housing the Jewish Museum, shown here.

Jewish settlements in the Balkans go back to Roman times. The earliest Jews here, known as “Romaniot”, have left anecdotal history but no physical remains. It is known that they came and settled by sea and land trade routes. Documented settlement began in the tenth century but the biggest upsurge in population came after the Expulsion from Spain, as a result of which the Balkan Jewish population became primarily Sephardic. Today, Sephardic surnames are still prominent. Jews settled and built synagogues throughout the Balkans: in Belgrade, Skopje (now in Macedonia), Sarajevo (in Bosnia), Split (in Croatia), Novi Sad (in Serbia) and many other small towns. As the Balkans increasingly fell under the rulership of Austria-Hungary, in the 18th and 19th centuries, Ashkenazi Jews began moving in from Hungary, Galicia and Lithuania.

Because of its geo-political position, Balkan history has been hugely affected by nationalist struggles against two major empires. After centuries of oscillating control between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, Croatia and Bosnia were annexed by the Habsburgs in the late 18th century, while by the mid-19th century, Serbia had gained its independence from the Ottomans and formed its own kingdom. This history has been, as we know, a major factor in twentieth century world history; however, as nationalist sentiment shifted from struggles against empires to questions of self-determination against a pan-Yugoslavia, it also had a more specific impact on Jewish history locally.

Relevant to this is an ancient divide. In the year 395, the Roman Empire split between Rome and Byzantium, with the latter subsequently becoming the capital under the Emperor Constantine. Centuries later, this divide was reflected in the way Christianity evolved in the Balkans. Croatia remained Roman Catholic and looked west to Rome; Serbia became part of the Orthodox Church and looked east to Constantinople until that, too, fell. These religious differences played into twentieth-century politics and the fate of



Jews. The museum curator is shown here in front of historic map of Jewish settlement in the Balkans.



At the beginning of World War Two, there were about 30,000 Jews in Serbia, plus many others in the surrounding countries. By 1945 two-thirds of Serbia's Jews had been killed. In Croatia, where the Fascist-nationalist Ustaše collaborated actively with the Nazis, the Jewish population (as well as that of the Roma) was nearly annihilated, mainly in the puppet state's own concentration/extermination camp system at Jasenovac. Jasenovac is a grim

name in the Balkans: over half a million people were murdered there in ways so violent that even some Nazis commented.

The complexity of Balkan politics led to different war experiences. Catholic Croatia aligned itself with the Axis powers, taking over Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most of Serbia, like Greece, was occupied by the Italians until 1943, when the Germans invaded. Northern Serbia (Vojvodina) was under Hungarian rule until 1944, and south-east Serbia was given to Bulgaria. These different patterns of Axis rule led to different outcomes for Jews at different times. Jews in Vojvodina, for example, escaped deportation until 1944, when the Germans also took over Hungary. Jewish fate in Serbia was also affected by political affiliations there. Soviet-allied Tito led the Partisans in a bitter war of resistance against the Germans, and this helped Jews. Those who could fought with the Partisans. Others were helped because, ideologically opposed to fascism, Serbs were more inclined to help Jews. Many Jews who survived (including Vida's own relatives) did so because they were hidden, in some cases for two or more years.

The postwar Serb Jewish population of around 10,000 declined further during the wars of the 1990s, when many Jews left Serbia for Israel. Serb Jews identify with Serbia, a country that has generally been kinder to them than others in the region; but they live with the deep paradox that their country is now indelibly linked in the European mind with violent nationalism and ethnic cleansing. They recall with anguish the two-month-long NATO bombings of Belgrade in 1996. Reuben, the director of the Federation of Jewish communities, told us, "You only have to live through this once for it to leave a mark."

Today the community in Belgrade numbers about 3,000. Sukkat Shalom Belgrade is a mainstream orthodox community in a modest building, shown here, in the centre of Belgrade. Out of the three prewar synagogues in Belgrade, this one survived, ironically because the Nazis commandeered it to use as a brothel. It was reconsecrated after the war. Separately, the community has a cultural and



educational centre in a handsome building dating from the 1920s.

Mixed marriages are a longstanding feature in the Balkans, and the Jewish community is no different. Synagogue membership has a strong element of mixed parentage and/or mixed descent; as the rabbi told us, "We have a Hitlerian approach to Jewish membership. If one grandparent was enough for the Nazis, it's enough for us."

The shul has the usual security outside. "What are people afraid of here?" I asked Vida. "The government", she replied. I noticed the absence of reference to terrorist attack. Perhaps, given recent history, there is an understandable concern about aggressive ethnic or dictatorial rule. Or perhaps Jews always have to be afraid of something. For now, I rest in the pleasure of having unexpectedly met some lovely and welcoming people in a part of the world still living under its own shadow.

Sue Lieberman

Windows for Peace

On 21 December Rutie Atsmon, founder of Windows for Peace (WfP), gave a memorable talk about the work of this NGO. Coexistence between Jews and Palestinians has never been more relevant or difficult. Rutie's talk—sobering yet uplifting—was delivered with clarity, poise and utter integrity



Since 1991 WfP has brought together young Palestinians from both sides of the Green Line and young Israeli Jews in long-term educational programmes designed to promote mutual understanding and to make a lasting change to attitudes, perceptions and behaviour. Through joint study of their respective histories, young members of all communities learn to listen to each other, develop a wider perspective on their situation than that offered by the media, and acquire the skills they will need to negotiate a troubled reality as adults. The enduring hope is that by developing a richer understanding of one another's lives, the young graduates of Windows will 'make a difference towards justice and equality'. Many will recall the hugely successful summer schools in Edinburgh which Judith Sischy organised in support of WfP some years ago

Rutie focused on recent developments, explaining how WfP remained resilient in the face of increasing tension and violence, including the most recent conflict in Gaza. New media had been embraced and a multi-lingual blog produced. Through workshops, study events (for teachers and families as well as for the young participants), intra-community visits and judicious use of social media, WfP still had a strong presence. Several of its recent graduates had moved on to study for the professions, notably law, teaching and journalism. Use this link to find out more: <http://www.win-peace.org/>

Rutie's colleague at this talk was a young Arab Israeli, who gave us a rare insight into her educational experience, her work at Windows, and her hopes for the future. It was moving to listen to her unshakable commitment to the ideals of WfP.

Many tough challenges lie ahead; some were probed in questions from the audience. How can WfP reach the more conservative religious communities, both Jewish and Muslim; and disadvantaged families? What would help to preserve gender balance in the programme? What was the right response to the challenge posed by increasing orthodoxy on all sides and hard line rhetoric? How did WfP deal with the trauma experienced by young people as they learned, often for the first time, about the history of their neighbours? Was army service compatible with the learning acquired in WfP? In the era of 'post-truth', how would WfP preserve its careful probing of historical facts? How does WfP counter the accusation of "normalising" the Occupation?

We were dismayed to learn that another colleague, a young Palestinian woman from the Occupied Territories, had been denied a visitor's visa by the UK Government. But Rutie managed to bring a video presentation made by her. It was a riveting 4 minutes: a forceful plea at top speed and in elegant English for peace, co-existence, justice and human rights

Now, more than ever, is the time to support WfP. Do it here: <http://windowsforpeaceuk.org/donate/>. And when the time comes, support the next WfP summer school in Edinburgh!

Roma Menlowe

For me, the best moment of Rutie's altogether wonderful presentation came when she was asked how she finds the energy and determination to continue with the work of Windows in the desperately unfavourable conditions of Israel/Palestine today. She turned to the young woman beside her, and such a look of affection passed between them that it was hardly necessary to hear her answer: that it is the young people themselves that give her the strength to carry on.

Maurice Naftalin

Windows for Peace does amazing work in building long-term relationships amongst bright young people within Jewish and Muslim communities, Israelis and Palestinians, who otherwise would have no opportunity for encounter. By engaging with each other, they build their self-confidence, as well as their confidence in their ability to find humanity through their future encounters across these divides. Their work with youth, and especially with young women, gives the participants in this movement potent force, both to counter common stereotypes that play to the fears of many on either side, and also to promote knowledge about the conditions for a slow, but reliable, change at the grassroots level. This kind of long-term peacebuilding is all the more important at this time where events at the geopolitical level seem so unpredictable, and steps in official types of negotiations are, similarly, so difficult to place expectations upon. As much as the present sense of continuing crisis at this institutional level seems so all-consuming, the 'windows' created by the Israeli-Palestinian relationships also demonstrate a counter-reality. Windows for Peace have a good number of dedicated supporters in Edinburgh, willing to bring the support of a range of institutions behind a repeat summer school here.

What the visiting speakers from Windows for Peace managed to show us is that their activity is premised on a very realistic and practical approach, which can make a difference. On the Palestinian side, it is spreading its reach into some otherwise very difficult contexts on the ground by virtue of its carefully crafted approach to peacebuilding and dialogue. On the Israeli side, they were able to show that two key limits to their reach lie not in a turn to the right or a lack of interest in building a new future with Palestinians, but rather in the range of other opportunities available to them, and their recognition of the heavy charge involved in engaging face-to-face with Palestinians holding to narratives so different from their own. The personal qualities and commitments of those able to take up this work, on both sides, represent a real hope for the future.

George Willkes

Activity at the cheder



Cheder teachers Adam Budd, Daniel Hershon and Yonathan Eisenberg and parent Ronen Barzel help with craft activities for Chanukah at the last session for 2016..