

# Sukkat Shalom

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Scottish Charity No SC035678

Sukkat Shalom is a constituent of liberal judaism

## October 2009

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### EVENTS & SERVICES

Please note - there will NOT be an Erev Shabbat service on Friday 2nd October.

Date                      Saturday 3rd October



Event                      Sukkot (Tabernacles)  
Time                      11 am

Please come from 9am to help build and decorate the sukkah. Contributions of food or drink in it will be very welcome too.

Date                      Friday 9th October



Event                      Simchat Torah  
Time                      6.30pm

#### Informal Kabbalat Shabbat Services

Dates                      23rd, 30th October

Time                      6:15 pm

Join us for a short, informal service to welcome Shabbat.

Date                      Saturday 17th October



Event                      Shabbat Service  
Time                      11 am  
Led by Rabbi Mark Solomon

### EVENTS & SERVICES

Saturday 17th October: also at St Mark's starting at 3pm. Tea & Talmud

Sunday 18th October: Choosing Judaism class 10.30am, usual venue.

Date                      Friday, 6th November  
Event                      Erev Shabbat Service  
Time                      7 pm

**Jewish Calendar for October 2009**  
13 Tishri - 13 Cheshvan 5770

2nd/3rd October - Sukkot  
6th Oct.- Rabbi Israel Abrahams, z"l 1925  
9th/10th October - Simchat Torah  
17th October - Blessing for Cheshvan  
18th/19th October - Rosh Chodesh  
23rd Oct. Prof. J. B. Segal, Z"l 2003

**Sadly**, the new LBC Diary has ceased to provide meditations.

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**25th Oct. - British Summer Time ends**



**Remember to put your clocks BACK by 1 hour before bed on Saturday - and get that extra hour of slumber!**

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**COMMUNITY AND MEMBERS' NEWS**  
**ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES**  
**FOR SUKKAT SHALOM MEMBERS**

**Reading & Understanding  
the Prayer Book**

A chance to improve your knowledge and understanding of the prayer book. A community course to begin towards the end of October. No prior knowledge will be assumed except the letters of the Aleph Bet (more or less). For further details please contact Norman Crane on - 0131 552 5732.

**Torah Cantillation Class Starting Soon**

If you've ever wanted to learn to chant the Torah, here's your chance. Rabbi Mark has agreed to teach a group of us on his visits to Edinburgh. We plan to meet monthly, probably starting in October. Dates and times are being arranged. For information, contact Kristi Long at [kristilong66@yahoo.com](mailto:kristilong66@yahoo.com) or 0131-466-9356.



**Sunday, November 15th** is Mitzvah Day, a national day of Jewish volunteering. We have signed up for this and we are planning to organize events jointly with volunteers from the Edinburgh Hebrew congregation, but we are still sorting out plans for suitable activities.. If you have ideas about activities we or would like to sign up as a volunteer then please email Lauren ([laurenfox@hotmail.com](mailto:laurenfox@hotmail.com)) . To see what other communities did last year visit the web-site: [mitzvahday.org.uk](http://mitzvahday.org.uk). More details on the plans will be in our next newsletter with advance notice in the mid-month reminder.

**Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society**

Opening meeting on the evening of Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November Anthony Lerman will talk on Anti-semitism. Full details of this meeting and the rest of the programme will be in our next newsletter.

**Michael Hornsby moves on**

Michael Hornsby is leaving Scotland for a post lecturing in Celtic Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland. We all wish Michael every success and happiness in his new life.



Michael wrote to Gillian, saying

“New Year was a bitter sweet experience yesterday - I so enjoyed celebrating it with such a nice, open, friendly community and am sad I am leaving. ELJC is one of the most welcoming communities that I have ever belonged to. It must be the Scottish flavour to the community that makes it such a "stable" one. Not to mention the international dimension too. And Rabbi Mark. I can only hope the progressive community in Warsaw can follow such a hard act!”

**Editor's Note:** It seems so many years ago that I met Michael London, indeed I seem to recall we both sat on the same shul Council.

I am, of course, happy that we will now have our very own Polish and Eastern European reporter on existing Newsletter budgets!!! We are not the BBC!



**Limmud comes to Scotland**

**February 14th** is the day when Limmud will come to Glasgow. For those who are new to Limmud, it is a very lively day full of open and inclusive Jewish discussions, activities, music and food. Visit the Limmud web site (<http://www.limmud.org/>) or ask someone who has been before about it. We will have further information in newsletters nearer the

## Kol Nidre Appeal

For a community of our size we have always been proud of the amount that members have donated to the charities we have nominated for our High Holyday appeal, so I hope this year will be no exception. We have selected three charities all of which we are confident will put our contribution to good use to assist those in need of help. Your donations will be divided equally between these three.

**Our local Jewish charity** is Jewish Care Scotland. ([www.icarescot.org](http://www.icarescot.org)), based in Glasgow, but providing support to vulnerable people all over Scotland. In particular their team of social workers works with older people, especially those with no family support and people with chronic or progressive illnesses, disabilities or mental health problems. They have provided very sympathetic support to some of our members in recent years when there was a real need for help. The kind of support they provide seems like an extended family, there to help and reassure those people who have problems that they, or their own families cannot overcome.

**Our local non-Jewish charity** is the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Centre for Health and Wellbeing) .website: [www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk). This is a unique initiative to promote the health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people living in, working in and travelling to Edinburgh. The centre runs events, workshops and courses promoting healthy lifestyles and supporting LGBT communities, provide a wide range of information on health and LGBT topics, and support community groups. It has been distressing to read in the news about a recent rise in homophobic attacks and murders in the UK, and I am sure we were all horrified by the murder of two members of Tel Aviv's gay

community in August this year. As liberal Jews we support the needs for a tolerant and pluralistic society and deplore homophobia. Although the centre has core funding from the NHS it has little in the way of spare funds for special initiatives and activities. A contribution from us could make it possible for them to provide significant improvements in the services that attract people to the centre. One centre user is quoted as saying *"The Centre provides a place where you can be yourself and meet others in a relaxed environment. It's important to have somewhere where you know you are not going to face homophobia / transphobia. It offers something for everyone, with lots of fun activities and groups!"*

**Finally**, for the second year running, we are supporting an Israeli and human rights charity, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel.; website : <http://www.phr.org.il/>. This group of Israeli physicians runs health clinics for the most disadvantaged citizens of Israel and the occupied territories. As of today they run five projects: the Occupied Territories Project, the Prisoners and Detainees Project, the Migrant Workers and Refugees Project, the Project for the Unrecognized Villages of the Negev, and the Residents of Israel Project. In addition, they run a mobile clinic in the Occupied Territories, and an open clinic in Tel Aviv that provides services for all within Israel who have no legal status and therefore no health insurance. Sadly, with recent attempts to reach a settlement by President Obama seeming to founder, there is as much need for health care for members of these groups as was the case last year. We can only hope that by the end of 5770 things may improve.

**Please send cheques**, made out to "Sukkat Shalom Edinburgh", to Jonathan Broadie. Thanks!

## **Chairman's Word**

### **Looking back and forward**

The year 5769 has been an eventful one for us. We have lost our two oldest members (zichronam livrachah) but we have also had three births to our members (Mazel Tov to the parents). The ratio of births to deaths is often used as an index of growth or decline of a Jewish community. We are well ahead of the game with an index of 1.5, though with my statistical hat on I should warn you that based on these numbers it is hardly a reliable indicator. When I took over as chairman it was in the anticipation of having to bid farewell soon to Rabbi Mark Solomon and seek other rabbinic support. But as you should all know he is now our part-time rabbi and we look forward to his visiting us more regularly.

But these days of awe between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are not so much a time for congratulating ourselves as a time to look back at what we could have done better and could change in future. Are we welcoming enough to single people? Shuls are often criticised for being too family focused, but we had always thought ourselves the exception,. Could we be more aware of people who are on their own? Perhaps single members could be encouraged to express their needs or suggest things we could do.

We are now just five years old. Five years is an important time in the life of a child, as it is in our organisation. The charmed life of an infant is over, and we need to get serious about growing up. There are many important decisions ahead that we need to take together. You will have seen from our last newsletter that we are seeking more settled premises. In the last year there have been several occasions when our bookings have not been honoured and we have had to change the location of services at the last

minute resulting in several members going to the wrong venue and missing the service. This search for a home has proved to be one where many people have strong and opposing views on the various premises we currently use, or may use in future. If you take two Jews and get three opinions then how many opinions will you get from our 15 council members or even more from our 60 plus ordinary members? We are currently looking at various options for holding our monthly Erev Shabbat and Shabbat morning services. We hope to be able to continue to hold the short Kaballat Shabbat services at Marchmont St Giles Church Centre where we have been made so welcome for these services and the cheder over the past 16 months. Let us hope that we can resolve all these issues as we move into 5770 and that we can continue to grow in size and community spirit.

## **The Pastoral Patch**

### *The editor's introduction*

The theme this month is Sukkot also called festival of Tabernacles. Over the years my relationship with this festival has become many layered. Leviticus 23:42-45 "You shall live in booths (sukkot) seven days, All citizens in Israel shall live in booths, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

What though, when sukkot does not commemorate the end of the wandering in the desert. Where do our frail, the elderly, the disabled, the ill, the single and the vulnerable fit in? Left straggling behind in the desert to succumb to the heat? Less noticed because they can't get to things? Vulnerability comes in many shapes and forms and modern society often compounds the "problem". The deserts are just different!



This month we have a Pastoral Patch blessing from our newly appointed part-time rabbi, the much respected Mark Solomon.

### **Home and Away**

Amongst Christians there is an old custom of celebrating one's name-day, that is, the feast day of the saint for whom one is named. Churches often observe their patronal festival, so St Mark's, where we have held our High Holy Day services, might celebrate St Mark's day on April 25th, while Columcille, even though it's not a church, might remember St Columba on 9th June.

Jews don't have such a practice, probably because we don't canonise saints or pray for human intercession. If we did, I suppose Sukkot would be the annual feast for ELJC, since we are also blessed with the Hebrew name Sukkat Shalom – Tabernacle of Peace – chosen, I believe, by Rabbi Pete Tobias. The actual phrase *sukkat shalom* comes from the Hashkivenu prayer of the daily evening service, which asks God to spread over us the shelter of Your peace," but the image almost certainly derives from the building of the sukkah, the frail harvest booth that, since at least the 5th century BCE, symbolises divine protection during the forty years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness.

The phrase *sukkat shalom* is curious, since it is almost an oxymoron. One the one hand, a sukkah is by nature impermanent,

vulnerable to the elements, a symbol of wandering and homelessness. Shalom, on the other hand, means peace and wholeness, and implies a settled, stable state of being. The tabernacle of peace, then, sums up the creative tension of Jewish history, for it is condition of the wanderer to dream of a permanent haven but a permanent haven can all too easily turn into a trap, a prison.

Our people's record is one of wandering in search of a promised land, followed by exile, and return, then exile again, and return again in our own time. The prophet Amos, contemplating the vicissitudes he foresaw, predicts that God "will raise up again the fallen sukkah of David" (Amos 9:11), expressing both the frailty of the Jewish (and human) condition, and the longing for restoration and peace.

The sukkah reminds us that life is a journey towards an unknown destination. The message of Sukkot is never to take our prosperity for granted – an apt message in these unstable times, when respected banks have tumbled and brought chaos to the lives of many. The amazing creation and survival of Israel seems to fulfil age-old dreams of a homeland, but we must not grow complacent and arrogant or lose the adaptable spirit of the nomad.

Meanwhile back in Edinburgh the theme of wandering in search of a home is very much to the fore, as the congregation considers whether to seek more permanent premises - even though it is only 5 years, not forty, since the journey began in earnest. Our peregrinations between Columcille, St Mark's and elsewhere demand flexibility, imagination, co-operation, coordination and great energy, especially of a few highly dedicated members. To have a shul of our own is a

worthy and wonderful aspiration, but should not diminish that energy and flexibility. As we seek the shalom of a settled home, may we keep the Sukkot spirit alive. May God's Tabernacle of Peace shelter all people, here, in Israel and throughout the world.

**Rabbi Mark L Solomon**

*Liberal Judaism Interfaith Consultant and part-time rabbi of Sukkat Shalom, Edinburgh*

## Tashlich, Rosh Hashanah 5770

Tashlich, the ritual throwing away of sins led by Rabbi Mark at the Water of Leith. Photos by Michael Hornsby



Many thanks to all who contributed this month. Items for publication are welcomed, as are responses to items published. The deadline for the November newsletter will be Friday 23rd OCTOBER. Please email all contributions to [newsletter@eljc.org](mailto:newsletter@eljc.org).

Anticipated Deadlines:

December: 20th November

January : 25th December

## Interfaith

### Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group

Next meeting is on the **21st of October** has the theme of 'Valuing Older People in our Faith Communities' and our guest speaker will be one of the women from Faith in Older People project in Edinburgh.

**November 19th** will be about 'Violence Against Women'.

**December 9th** will be one where we bring our Favourite Poem/Song to Share' with the other women.

All meetings take place at Nicolson Square Church (unless advised otherwise) with vegetarian finger buffet at 7.00 p.m.

Further information on our website <http://www.edinwig.org.uk>

### The Scottish Rainbow Covenant

The recently established Scottish Rainbow Covenant, set up as a first steps initiative for Scottish LGBT Jews has had a good response. It is now listed on the Scojec website and the Scottish LGTB Forum. [scottish.rainbowcovenant@googlemail.com](mailto:scottish.rainbowcovenant@googlemail.com)

### Wisdom from Other Traditions

#### Columcille's Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I can not change  
Courage to change the things I can  
And the wisdom to know the difference.

### ELJC SUPPORT LINE:

**07904 813162**



If you or your family are stuck in a hole or are in a bad place, dealing with illness etc and need a bit of Jewish support then Alice says "**Phone me**". An answer when you need help from your Scottish FULLY inclusive Jewish Community.



# liberal judaism

## Liberal Judaism Biennial Weekend 2010 -

*“Liberal Judaism:  
With You Every Step of the Way”*

### **Bookings are now open!**

Booking for the 2010 Biennial Weekend, taking place between Friday 16th – Sunday 18th April, has now opened and we have received a set of booking forms, you may have picked one up at the High Holyday services. The venue for the weekend looks very splendid. Although the location (near Bristol) might seem to be a disincentive, there are two Easyjet flights a day from Edinburgh to Bristol at very modest prices. There is sponsorship for a limited available for people under 40, but you will need to apply soon, and possibly for others who would not be able to afford it. For further details pick up a leaflet at a service or go to [www.liberaljudaism.org/biennial](http://www.liberaljudaism.org/biennial)

### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) are responsible for coordinating events around the country on 27th January, and can provide free campaign packs, The HMDT are also pleased to announce the launch of a new education website. Suitable for Primary, Secondary and Post-16 educators across the curriculum, assemblies, case studies and lesson plans and activities have been produced and are now available to download free of charge from their website [hmd.org.uk](http://hmd.org.uk).

## **Our Crowd** **by Joe Goldblatt**

This month *Our Crowd* shines the Sukkat Shalom spotlight on our newsletter editor, Jamie Shearer-Bromfield.

*What is your favorite Jewish holiday?* Yom Kippur.

*Why did you choose this one from among all of the Jewish holidays?* Its repetitive soul searching appeals to my contemplative spirituality; of me as an individual, and the collective Jewish community reflecting on how we can all fail to manifest the Divine and serve even our own community if we let complacency and indifference creep in. I ask at this time are we as a community remotely as embracing and open, even if we like to think we are, as the Eternal's gates on Yom Kippur?

*What is your favorite Jewish food?* Fruit cholent, gefilte fish, pickled herring, roast goose with apples, and chicken soup with matzo balls! I chose these foods because Ashkenazi food seems more suited to Scotland, but I just love homely Jewish northern food!

*What is your favorite Jewish memory?* My favourite Jewish memory is probably seeing my idea of a Manchester Liberal Jewish community come into being, even if it needs a bit of life support. Aron Sterk will do that!. He is a reluctant but natural, spiritual and open leader for this community if he will take up the challenge.

*What is your funniest Jewish memory?* My funniest memory is arriving late for Erev Shabbat at home base BKY – just as the community was bowing and singing the welcome of the Sabbath bride. There was much laughter all round as I walked through the open doors! I just blushed!

*What do you like best about Sukkat Shalom?* That it is a gathered and friendly Scottish Jewish community and the only Liberal Jewish community north of Manchester. It is a community of immense potential that I hope will be fulfilled.

*Tell us a secret about you?* Despite my often heart on sleeve ways, I am paradoxically an intensely private person. I have, however, few secrets, and such as exist are mainly between me and my God. Some know that I live with HIV/Aids, but as personal trivia, no one will be aware that I issued the vehicle registration marks for the film "Trainspotting".

*What is your favorite Jewish song?* Kol Nidre! Jewish songs, however, are the songs of life, so I have to admit Louis Armstrong's "Wonderful World" has travelled with and yes, sustained me through life from my earliest years, even when evidence suggests otherwise! It is to me then, a truly Jewish song.

*Who are your favorite Jewish artists?* Sam Tabak, Marc Chagall, Leonard Bernstein (esp. Kaddish- Symp. No 3, finale), Bette Midler, Neil Diamond, Albert Einstein, Tony Kushner(Angels in America), Simon & Garfunkel (The Boxer), and Goldie Hawn.

*If you could have dinner with a few Jewish celebrities, whom would you invite?* Celebrity is such a trivial thing. I don't do celebrity or Jewish parochialism. I would much rather raise a quiet shabbat glass of thanksgiving when Gilad Shalit is safe and sound back at home with his family.

May he be sustained in his captivity by the prayers of the whole House of Israel. That is my hope for our New Year of 5770 until he is free. We have to defend ourselves and our right to exist - and even when action troubles us, I know most of us want a compassionate and mutually respectful

co-existence with our fellow human beings in a land we have to share.

*What are your favorite travel destinations?* These include The Isle of Skye, the Greek Islands, and Texas in the U.S.A.

*How would you describe your Judaic experience?* My experience is part of the journey we all go through in life. It has been of both great joy and deep sadness, of arrivals and departures, of faith and doubt, of vision struggling with the cozy (in self and others). Being a Liberal Jew is not a label of convenience or inaction, or God reduced to a theoretical abstraction. Rather, for me it is a strident declaration of a vision for the future of Judaism; of a compassionate expression of God in a changing world. I don't believe there is room for complacency. In the midst of all that, the word "survival" gets stronger, even though it gets more difficult. I give thanks for my lovely Irish Greyhound, Ash, who keeps me grounded.

*When you think of Sukkat Shalom what comes to mind?* A motley collection of interesting and friendly people in a community at a crossroads increasingly aware of the need to settle down and develop not just within itself, but also its potentially major role in the future of Jewish life in Scotland.

