



**June  
2014**

**Sivan  
5774**

- 3** Erev Shavuot, Tikkun Leil Shavuot (Ark Studio 6.00 see p. 4) *Bring cheesecake*  
MSG (6.00) 7.00
- 6** Kabbalat Shabbat  
MSG 6.15
- 13** Erev Shabbat  
SMU *note venue* 7.00
- 20** Erev Shabbat (Linked to Pride Scotia Weekend)  
MSG 6.15
- 27** Erev Shabbat **Simchah:** see *Chair's Word*  
MSG 6.15
- 28** Shabbat Morning Service  
CC 11.00

**July**

**Tammuz**

- 4** Kabbalat Shabbat Service  
MSG 6.15
- 11** Erev Shabbat  
CC 7.00
- 12** Shabbat Morning Service  
*Newstead/Melrose: see p. 3*

## Venues

- CC** Columcille Centre  
2 Newbattle Terrace
- MSG** Marchmont St Giles  
1a Kilgraston Road
- SMU** St Mark's Unitarian  
7 Castle Terrace

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*Contributors' addresses are not published, so as to prevent them from being harvested from our website and used for spam. Contact Lulav contributors by using [contact.eljc.org](mailto:contact.eljc.org)*

**Community Phone** This phone number sends voicemail to members the **Contact Team** 0131 777 8024

**Urgent Support** Only for use in emergency; alerts the whole the Welfare Team 0131 208 1447

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**Website** [www.eljc.org](http://www.eljc.org)

<i>Chair/Lulav</i>	Norman Crane	<i>Treasurer</i>	Gillian Raab
<i>Admin/Lulav</i>	Catherine Lyons	<i>Membership</i>	Sharon Goldwater

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## Word from the Chair

The festival of Shavuot is almost with us, when we celebrate the giving of the Torah to Israel. Actually, we celebrate or affirm this every Shabbat, when we sing *Baruch shenatan Torah l'amo Israel bikdushato*. Blessed be the One who gave his (sorry!) Torah to his people Israel, in his holiness. In other liturgies, this sentence is sung not after the reading of the Torah but before it. There, it is preceded by a quotation from the book of Numbers:

Whenever the ark moved forward  
then Moses said 'Almighty, rise up! Let your enemies be scattered,  
let those who hate you flee before you.'

This is a very early Biblical passage with a limited view of the nature of God, which is why it has been omitted from our liturgy. But it is immediately followed by 'for Torah shall come out of Zion and the word of God from Jerusalem'. The language is militaristic, in stark contrast to the following verse, taken from Isaiah's vision of universal peace, when nations shall beat swords into ploughshares. Then Zion, the final resting place of the ark, becomes the place where a new revelation arises.

Just as our ancestors carried an ark on their way to the Promised Land, we are about to acquire our own portable ark, in which to house our scroll during services. It will look more dignified than our present arrangement. We have obtained some funding to build it from the NLPS Trust, as reported last month by Lauren Fox. A working group is pushing the project forward, and we are in the process of contacting makers. Lauren Fox and Katy Bromberg have taken the lead for design and commissioning. This is very much a project for and of the community, and we are all invited to contribute. Lauren and Katy are organising Ark Studio: community consultations. See p. 4.

The experience of the people at Mount Sinai is usually presented as an inner experience particular to each individual present. But what came next? What is there supposed to be between the moment of inner revelation and the arrival of the messianic era? In the account in Exodus that follows the giving of the Torah, there is a list of civil and criminal laws to establish a just society. Notable among them are protection for the vulnerable in society, particularly the needy and the stranger. So, one proceeds from the inner experience to external action.

Last Friday we attempted to raise our awareness of the plight of vulnerable groups in our society. After song and food we listened to two presentations. The first was by Martha Harding of the Scottish Refugee Council. She described for us the distinction between asylum seekers and refugees. Refugees are asylum seekers who have achieved refugee status, which is certainly not the end of their troubles.

For various reasons there are no asylum seekers in Edinburgh, but there are a number of refugees. We have obtained, from the Voluntary Action Fund, monies to help us provide cultural support and befriending, and help with English. I feel that in the aftermath of the UKIP results in the recent elections this is now even more urgent than it was before.

Our second presentation was given by Ewan Walker, who is the operations manager of the Central and North West Edinburgh Food Bank. He explained how food banks work and their relationship to the Trussell Trust. I am pleased to say that we have since given the Food Bank a cheque for £180, the profits of our Burns Night Ceilidh. You can read an interview with Ewan on p. 7.

Traditionally, now that period of the counting of the Omer is almost over, it is the season for weddings. We offer congratulations to Stewart Zollinger and Helen Sherbourne, who are getting married on 22 June, and Maurice (Mo) Shamash and Sarah Nisbet, who are getting married on 29 June. Mo and Sarah's families are hosting a kiddush for the congregation on Erev Shabbat, 27 June (see the diary, p. 1).

*Norman Crane*

## Welcome to the Shanko family

Welcome to new members (right to left) Desta (Des), Roman (Rome), and Theodros, and all good wishes for their move to a new house.

Des's older son is an anthropologist in Canada. He and Rome have three daughters, Judith, Josephine, and Georgina, and a son, Theodros, in Edinburgh. It's a small world; Judith went to school with Jenni Underwood, and Theodros is at Gillespie's, in the same year as Adam and Leora Wadler.

Des reports that the family is delighted to feel at home in our community.

*An article by Des about the experience of Jews from Ethiopia will appear in a future issue of Lulav.*



Melrose Abbey  
Wikimedia: Steve Collis/russavia

## An invitation to Melrose

On **12 July**, I once again I look forward to welcoming you all to Newstead, and a service in the village hall. For those of you who have not been here before: Newstead is the oldest continuously inhabited village in Scotland and was built long before the days of the motor car! Therefore, if you are the driver: please park at the east end of the village (in the Health Board Office car park). There is no parking adjacent to the hall, and the road is very narrow there even for off-loading more than one car at a time!

If anyone really cannot walk down the road to the hall, please let me know well in advance so that I can arrange with neighbours for you to use their drive way. Not all residents of the village (me included) have parking space with their houses.

The service will be at **11 am**, followed by a soup and cheese lunch. Please let me know beforehand of any special dietary requirements. In the afternoon there will be a guided tour with Ian Skinner around the site of Mailros Abbey and St Cuthbert's Chapel at Old Melrose. There is evidence that this was a

significant Christian site in the 4th and 5th centuries, so predates the Melrose Abbey and is sited a couple of miles from Newstead (in the opposite direction to modern Melrose!). The tour takes about 1 ½ hours, and the walk is over rough ground (so sensible footwear is recommended). After the walk there is a very good tea shop at Old Melrose, along with an antique furniture barn and a secondhand bookshop!

Now all we need is a fine day, and it should be a memorable occasion. If any of you have difficulties finding us on the day, my mobile telephone number is **07976 276 796**, but the telephone reception in the village hall can sometimes be patchy, so keep trying this number as I can pick up when I am outside the hall.

*Isobel King*

*Nick Silk is coordinating transport and keeping track of numbers to help Isobel with catering and the other activities of the day. **Contact Nick via the contact team** (phone or [web](#)) to say if you are going, if you need transport, and if you can offer transport.*

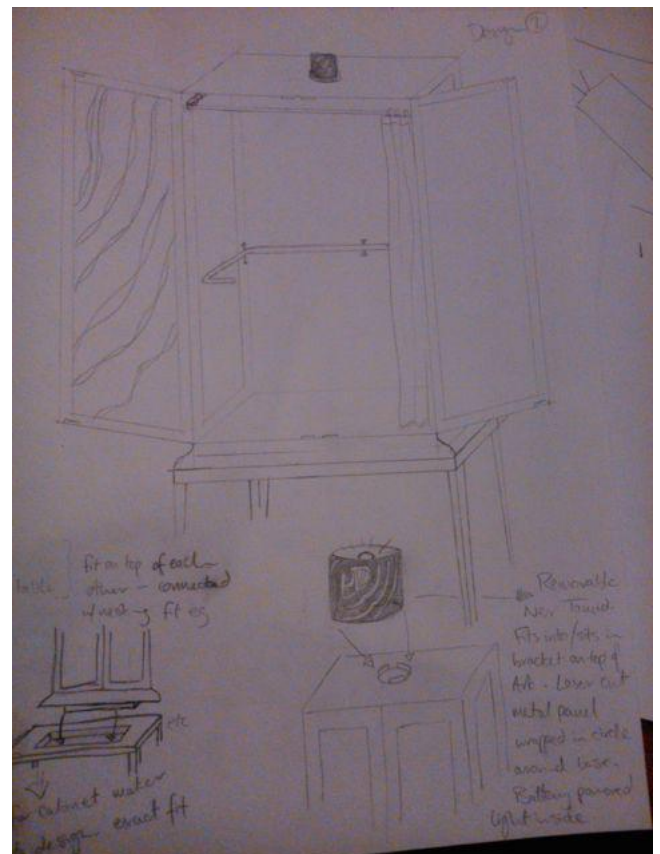
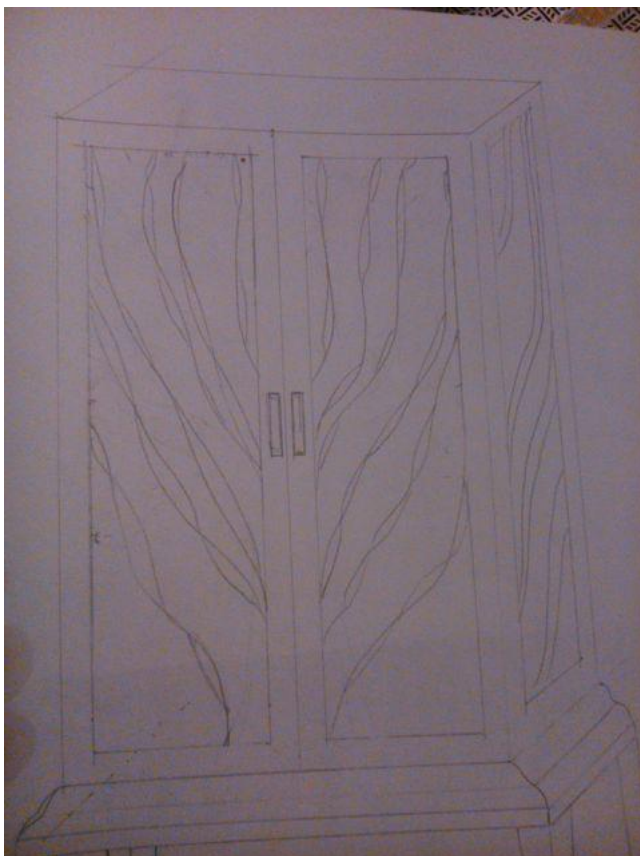
## Our ark begins to take shape

The working group convened recently in the comfortable surroundings of the Cameo bar. Katy Bromberg has now joined the group, and has been nominated by Lauren Fox to be the professional coordinator for the project. We are fortunate in having so many professional designers in our midst. Rebecca Wober, who got the project going, is an architect. Lauren, who coordinated our funding application to the NLPS Trust and is designing the panels of the ark, is an sculptor, and Katy, who describes herself as a colour junkie, is a maker who works in embroidered text.

All members of the community are invited to **Ark Studio** to contribute ideas to the design process and reflect on the design development so far. There will be two Ark Studio sessions led by Katy and Lauren.

**Tuesday 3 June 6 to 7pm** (before the Shavuot service).

**Saturday 21 June 4.30 to 5.30pm** during cheder (adults are very welcome to join in).



## Meeting for conversion candidates and mentors

If you are a candidate for conversion or a conversion mentor, please stay after the Erev Shabbat service on the **13 June** (at St Mark's Unitarian) for a meeting.

*Ricky Hogg*

## Welcome to Stewart Zollinger

At the Shabbat morning service on 24 May, we welcomed Stewart at his admission to Judaism ceremony and into formal membership of our community. Stewart's family celebrated with him in the form of abundant and glorious cakes. The bakers are shown here as kiddush was being prepared.

Double mazel tov to Stewart, and mazel tov to Helen! Stewart Zollinger and Helen Sherbourne are getting married on 22 June.



## It's a boy!

Mazel tov to Jonathan Raab and Faaiza Sheikh on the birth of their son Zain in London. Mazel tov to Gillian and Charlie Raab — a first grandson — and to all the family.



## Remembering Blanche: stone-setting

The Mundy family would like to invite readers to join us at the Dean Cemetery at 2.30 pm on **Tuesday 17 June** for Blanche's stone setting. We plan to follow this with a tea somewhere nearby (possibly the Botanics). Please can you let me know if you would like to join us for the tea. ([mundy.janet@gmail.com](mailto:mundy.janet@gmail.com) or leave a message on 0131 467 1872)

*Janet Mundy*

## Your Edinburgh Star needs you: family history and the First World War

The next issue of the Edinburgh Star will feature the the experiences of Edinburgh Jewish families during the First World War. If you have material to contribute, anecdotal or photographic, military or civilian, get in touch. We are looking for photographs to scan and memorabilia (e.g., medals or equipment) that we could photograph and describe. We can send someone to your house to photograph any material so you don't have to part with it. If any of your relatives experienced the conflict on the 'other' side we would find it particularly interesting to include information about their participation. The deadline for the material is the end of **July**.



Jewish Soldiers in front of the Graham Street Synagogue, Edinburgh, 1917  
Scottish Jewish Archives Centre

*Micheline Brannan, Editor, Edinburgh Star*

Contact Micheline on 0131 447 0818 or [michelinehbrannan@msn.com](mailto:michelinehbrannan@msn.com)

*The Jewish Museum in London has an exhibition exploring Jewish experience of the Great War; ends 10 August.*

## Cut-throat matters? Humane aspects of animal slaughter in antiquity

László Bartosiewicz, archaeozoologist at the University of Edinburgh, studies animal-human relationships using animal remains from archaeological excavations. Dr Bartosiewicz is presenting at Café Scientifique in June

In today's terms, a carcass is considered hazardous waste so that "properly" slaughtered animals must be killed swiftly and thoroughly bled-out. Ritual forms of slaughter (similarly to modern, western regulations) stress the importance of minimizing the animal's suffering. This concept seems rooted in the traditional Judeo-Christian-Moslem traditions of slaughtering animals, a task that was revolutionized by the wide availability of metal blades. In archaic times a different slaughtering technique developed by which the animal's blood circulation is disrupted by hand, through an opening cut into the victim's chest. This method has been observed independently in various cultural contexts around the world. Differing attitudes to modes of slaughter have often reflected major ideological differences throughout culture history. As ethnic and religious tensions between populations surfaced, the welfare of livestock to be killed often served as a way of demonstrating how civilized or uncivilized opposing groups were.



Preparation of a sacrifice. Marble, fragment of an architectural relief, first quarter of the 2nd century CE, Rome. Wikipedia/Jastrow

*Café Scientifique, 9 June 8.30pm, the Filmhouse Cafe/Bar*

## Make Poverty History nine years on: the developed world depends on food banks

Here we are, at the end of our Shabbat Morning service, July 2005, before we joined 225,000 others in the Meadows, as the G8 met in Gleneagles.

Make Poverty History targeted global trade inequity, crippling international debt, and climate change. According to the Trussell Trust, *there were fewer than 3000 food banks in the UK back then; there are now more than 128,000.*

In 2014 we have made a commitment to combat food poverty in Edinburgh. In May, the operations director of the main food-bank network in Edinburgh addressed our community. We asked Ewan Walker to explain why so many people in Edinburgh are hungry, and how the food-bank system works.



Photo: Nick Silk, 2005



Photo: Trussell Trust

The Edinburgh North West Foodbank is one of a number, all over the UK, supported by the Trussell Trust. According to the Trust the main cause of hunger is systemic delay in benefits payment; the second is low income in the face of rising food and energy prices; the third is reduction in benefits. *One Scottish child in five lives in poverty* (HMRC). Edinburgh is not typically a poor city, but *one in twenty of the very poorest Scots live here*, according to the SIMD data for 2012 (the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

Kids are hungry. What can we do? The Food Bank has a warehouse in Broomhouse. Six distribution centres, located centrally and in the Granton/Pilton area, are

open on different days. All of them need volunteers working 2–3 hour shifts. **If someone reading this is willing, the food bank could really do with an extra driver with a car**, who could help to deliver to the distribution centres. They provide a tow bar and a trailer.

Are food banks just another way to fatten the profits of the supermarkets? All credit is due to Tesco, who give the food bank 50p for every kilo of goods bought for donation. Shop at Tesco in South Queensferry or Corstorphine to help Tesco give more.

To find out more, and volunteer, visit [edinburghnw.foodbank.org.uk/get-involved](http://edinburghnw.foodbank.org.uk/get-involved). Email the food bank if you want to make a direct donation: [info@edinburghnw.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghnw.foodbank.org.uk).

### Food crisis shopping list (note that beans and soup are less scarce)

- UHT Milk (carton full fat)
- Fruit Juice (long life)
- Cereals (500g or 1Kg)
- Pasta Sauces
- Tinned Tomatoes
- Tinned Potatoes
- Rice or Pasta or Noodles (500g)
- Jam
- Biscuits or Chocolates
- Tinned Meat
- Tinned Fish
- Tinned Vegetables
- Tinned Fruit
- Tinned Rice Pudding
- Tinned Sponge Pudding
- Sugar (500g)
- Tea Bags (40 packs)
- Instant Coffee (Small Jar)

## Ricky and Jenni in Berkshire: the LJ Biennial, Day One

*Ricky* Friday morning and all set to go — meeting Jenni at Waverley station — but must go first and get my goodies from M&S to sustain me on the lengthy shlep.

**Jenni** Started my weekend by meeting Ricky bright and early at Waverley Station. I couldn't help but laugh at his 'two-weeks holiday' style suitcase and backpack! He was only staying one night! He claimed he needed the space for his hair dryer and hair products. I didn't believe him.

*Ricky* I borrowed my son Jason's trolley case and took my small backpack too, Why? because I needed it (one-night sleepover)! I could see by the way Jenni moved quite freely that perhaps a small bag of sorts would have been more practical. Oh — and Jenni was staying two nights. Due to the great interest and turnout for this year's Biennial, a number of us had to be decanted to the nearby Hilton Hotel. What a shame!

**Jenni** My first session, Emerging Leadership Network, kicked off at 5pm. It's a programme devised by Rabbi Charley Baginsky. This is the pilot year and it aims to support members of Liberal communities who are starting to take on leadership roles in their communities.

There was an interesting mix of people on the course. Some had recently taken on chair or vice-chair roles and others had recently stepped onto council. For myself, I have been on Council for around a year and am particularly keen on the social side of things. Our community demographic has changed in recent years; for instance, we have increasing numbers of young people and families, and I was interested to learn about what other communities were doing to engage with these groups.

*Ricky* We both hit the ground running with Jenni going to a leadership meeting and myself getting to grips with the choreography for the Morning Shabbat service of which I was to take part. There were a good few involved in this process, but Rabbi Neil Janes and Cantor Gershon Silins made the whole choreography so laid back that the nerves which were about to engulf me retreated; ever so slightly.

There was only time for a quick coffee before we all came together for the Erev Shabbat Service and what a gathering there was too. It was estimated that around 300 people had come for the Biennial this year. This service was so well attended that some families were sitting up against the wall near the back. Our old friend and Rabbi, Pete Tobias put together specific themes to each of the prayers. The title being "Generations of Prayer" flowing from creation through to redemption to the final promise of salvation, a very reflective Erev Shabbat. Thank you Pete!

**Jenni** The Erev Shabbat service that evening was unlike anything I have ever experienced. Those leading the service had planned an interesting recreation of the story of the roots of Liberal Judaism in the UK, woven into the usual Shabbat service. Something else unique (to me anyway) was the musical accompaniment to the service in the form of guitars and organs. I know there's mixed feelings on this but I felt it was very well done and it really enhanced my connection with the service.

*Ricky* We concluded the night with a wonderful evening meal. Excellent food and conversation were followed by a welcome speech from Danny Rich and a rousing rendition of Birkat Ha Mazon. There were still a few events going late into the night but by 10.30pm I was feeling rather weary, so it was off to bed. Not to lie and have a good sleep. Oh no! Rather to toss and turn and conjure up all the tragic ways I could mess up during the morning service.

**Jenni** We had a wonderful meal that evening with all the Biennial attendees — lots of great chat and swapping of stories. I could sense Ricky's impending nerves due to his Ba'alei Tefillah graduation the following morning however!

Ricky and Jenni continue separate accounts in the following pages.



## Joy and inspiration: Jenni's Biennial

*Jenni Underwood*

The Saturday and Sunday flew by in a bit of a blur. I had countless conversations with people, stuffed my mobile phone contact lists, full of people to link up with in the future, and attended some fascinating sessions.

One of the highlights for me was listening to Rabbi Jonah Pesner's keynote speech. Amongst other things, he encouraged us all to aim to make a difference in the world and try to tackle inequalities that we see on a grass-roots level.

On Saturday afternoon, I attended a brilliant session on *Millenials, Mixed-faith, Pride and Proselytes—Building an Inclusive Community: If Not Now, When?* led by Rabbi Janet Darley, Nicholas Jones, and Alice Alphandary. This turned into a spirited discussion and we all shared our stories of different things we had tried in our various communities to engage different groups. Interestingly, both Nicholas and Alice were around the same age as myself and had recently joined their community Council. I was inspired by some of the off-beat events they talked about, for instance, a *Use up all your Chametz* cocktails and nibbles party in preparation for Pesach! Our session discussions carried into the pub that evening and I plan to get in touch with them at a later date to chat more.

I attended the *Personal Journeys of Faith* workshop led by Rabbi Alexandra Wright on the Sunday, which turned out to be an extremely reflective and moving session. I was struck by the amount of converts at the weekend in general, and I welcomed the chance to explore this in greater detail. Having a non-Jewish partner (albeit a supportive and interested one), I was interested to hear how others deal with this whilst observing Jewish rituals in the home. I came away with some excellent suggestions. Rabbi Alexandra talked about a *I'm not Jewish but my partner is* session that she was hoping to run for mixed faith couples in her community.

The final highlight for me was attending the session led by musician Daniel Cainer and Rabbi Pete Tobias, who talked about pushing the boundaries of possibility for involving music with synagoue services. The extremely talented Daniel Cainer played some of his service, appropriate music, and I was brought to tears by the Yom Kippur song in particular. I can only imagine how powerful this would be on Yom Kippur itself. Music perhaps doesn't work for every service or every person, but I certainly found it helped me reflect.

All in all, the weekend was a real joy for me. I have spent the last couple of weeks chatting to the friends I made and contemplating the suggestions I received for things to plan in our Edinburgh community.



Shabbat Dinner is about to start: Jenni chatting to David Walsh from Leicester Progressive Jewish Congregation, who is seated on her left

## Honour and friendship: Ricky's Biennial

*Ricky Hogg*

Morning time: I made my way down for veggie breakfast, where I had a lovely catch-up with Rabbi Pete Tobias. After encouraging words from Pete, Jenni and myself and a few others headed in for the morning service starting promptly at 9.30am. (Promptly? Surely not!)

There was just enough time to quickly run through the what and where before we found ourselves up and seated on the bimah at 9.29am. Shock!

We, representatives of the last three cohorts of the *Ba'alei T'fillah* programme, were to introduce and lead the beginning of the service. I had the honour to welcome everyone and introduce cantor and choir in the singing of (Danny Maseng's) *Mah Tov*. What a grand sound! It really made you feel part of the blessing, singing loud, singing together.

I then went through the prayers and blessings, finishing on the *Y'sh'tabach*, It was over in a flash. I sat down while Alice took over, followed by Betty (graduates from the previous two programmes). We were all very honoured to be asked to participate in the Biennial Shabbat morning service. The whole experience is one I will personally hold dear. The service continued with a wonderful sermon given by Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein (President). Just after *Adon Olam* Rabbi Richard Jacobi introduced the graduates from the 2013 *Ba'alei Tefillah* programme and we were called up one at a time by Rabbi Danny Rich and Lucian Hudson to be given our graduation certificates. What can I say? A very moving event for all involved.

We were also privileged to hear Rabbi Jonah Pesner (Reform) give a magnificent uplifting keynote speech on community outreach and social responsibility with an interfaith angle. It was hard not to be influenced by his words; both positive and uplifting. We finished up for some welcome lunch around 1.30pm, over which I caught up with friends. We all made promises to keep in touch and to visit each other's communities in the not so distant future. What a fine adventure!

I really must mention the other highlight of the weekend trip, and that was getting to know Jenni that wee bit better. Jenni was attending the Biennial leadership workshops, of which she was ELJC representative. During our short journey I was struck, among other things, by her real enthusiasm and can-do attitude, which can only be of great benefit to our growing community.



Ricky formally becomes Ba'al Tefillah, with Rabbi Danny Rich, Chief Executive, left, and Lucian Hudson, Chairman, right.

## Achvat Amim: human-rights in Israel for 20-somethings

Karen Isaacs of Solidarity of Nations/Achvat Amim has emailed us about their Israel Programme, which is open to 21–28 year olds. The ideal applicant has been to Israel before and is familiar with the subject matter at hand.

Achvat Amim brings people together who are motivated to make real change. Partners include Rabbis for Human Rights. Achvat Amim connects participants to projects that aim to end racism, violence, and inequality to build a society based on Jewish core values: justice, equity, and peace. Applications for September close on **12 June**. See [www.achvatamim.org](http://www.achvatamim.org) and email Karen, [karen@achvatamim.org](mailto:karen@achvatamim.org).

## Fire in the forest: Lag b'Omer at Vogrie Country Park

Two Jews, three opinions? Not on this occasion, which saw a greater diversity of Jews in Scotland than had ever before gathered in one place. And all agreed that the day was a spectacular triumph.

We went foraging and picked wild herbs to compliment risotto cooked on a open fire, practised lighting fire with a flint, listened to woodland stories, made bows and shot arrows with them, made stars of David in willow, ate burgers and hotdogs, and watched a fire-juggling show. Some of the group davened among the trees.

Very many thanks to Fiona Frank, SCoJeC, and the Forestry Commission; also to the many volunteers who organised us and served food.



Julian the fire whisperer  
from Glasgow Reform Synagogue  
Photo: Steven Anson



Phil Wadler takes aim  
Photo: © Becky Duncan photography, under licence



Connie watches the fire juggling  
Photo: Gillian Raab



Photo: © Becky Duncan photography, under licence



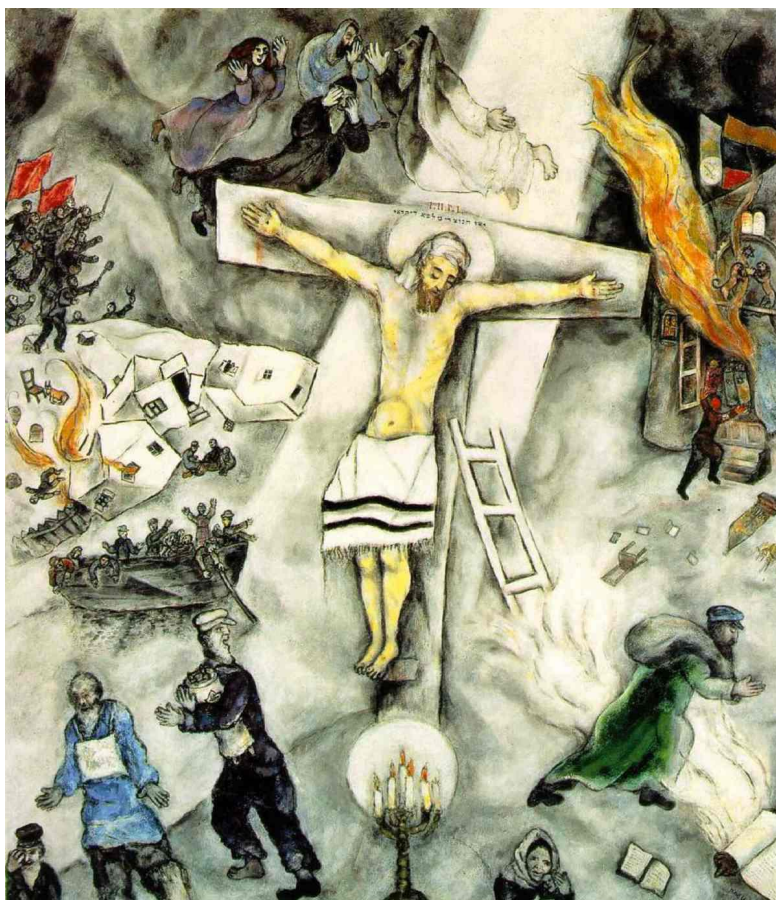
Photo: © Becky Duncan photography, under licence

## “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” A rabbi looks at Jesus

Rabbi Mark Solomon

*On Good Friday I was invited by Reverend Markus Dünzkofer, Rector of St John’s Episcopal Church in Princes Street, to give one of the seven sermons or “meditations” in the liturgy of Three Hours, structured around the seven last words of Jesus from the cross, in the different Gospel accounts. Ministers of different denominations — Roman Catholic, Church of Scotland, Church of England and Episcopal, as well as one laywoman — gave the other sermons, but I haven’t personally heard of a rabbi being invited to preach on Good Friday.*

It was a great privilege, but a daunting one, and although I rarely write out my sermons, on this occasion it had to be done. I have preached in a number of churches over the years, and in my position as Liberal Judaism’s Interfaith Consultant I engage in a lot of quite deep Jewish-Christian dialogue. The sermon that follows, however, is perhaps one of the most personal statements I have ever made on my response to the central figure of Christianity. A number of Sukkat Shalom members, and even one from Salisbury Road, came to listen on Good Friday. They didn’t seem too shocked, so I’m emboldened to share the full text of the sermon with the rest of of community.



White Crucifixion, Marc Chagall, 1938  
Art Institute of Chicago

A scandal to the Jews and a foolishness to the Gentiles;” that is how St Paul, at the beginning of his first letter to the Corinthians (1:23), describes the crucifixion of Jesus, or the preaching of the crucifixion. It could perhaps equally well describe my preaching here, on this day that commemorates the crucifixion, the most solemn day in your Christian calendar. For centuries of our uneasy, often painful, shared history, it would have seemed a scandal to Jews and a folly to Christians, indeed an impossibility and absurdity, for a rabbi to preach in church on Good Friday — perhaps even a health and safety violation! In 13th-century Germany, or 18th-century Poland, or 19th-century Russia, Jews might cower indoors on Good Friday, fearful that an incendiary preacher in the nearby church would whip up hatred against the “killers of Christ” and the mob would descend to wreak havoc in the Jewish Quarter. If it no longer seems absurd that I should address you here on Good Friday, or that Christian friends should have sat with the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community and shared our Passover meal last Monday evening, it is a testimony

to how far we have come in our journey together. It is a sign that we human beings can learn to outgrow hatred and live in harmony.

If the crucifixion itself seemed to be “A scandal to the Jews and a foolishness to the Gentiles”, the scandal, the stumbling block to faith, is summed up most powerfully in the Fourth Word from the cross that we have just read, “*Eli, Eli, lemah shevaktani*”, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Mat. 27:46, cf. Mk. 15:34) It is surely the most difficult of the Seven Last Words for faithful Christians: if Christ is God, how can he call out asking why God has abandoned him? Can God forsake God’s own self? Can God abandon God?

*A scandal to the Jews and a foolishness to the Gentiles*

This cry of abandonment is so shocking that even scholars of a sceptical bent, who sift every utterance attributed to Jesus in the Gospels to determine which of them he might really have said, agree that this cry must be genuine. This is no serene, saintly Jesus asking that his torturers be forgiven, promising paradise to the good thief, or seeing to the wellbeing of his mother and beloved disciple, but the raw, human, anguished cry of a dying man, the cry of every person asking why they suffer and God remains silent, why they are innocently killed and God takes no action.

Yet these are no random words of pain and loneliness but a quotation from Psalm 22. At this moment of deepest anguish, Mark and Matthew make Jesus quote Scripture, the Psalms of Israel, the great corporate prayer book of the Second Temple. And yet again, not quite, for Jesus does not quote the Psalm in Hebrew, “*Eli, Eli, lamah azavtani*”, but in vernacular Aramaic, “*lemah shevaktani*”; the language of the street, not the language of the synagogue. That too has a ring of authenticity about it, but forces us to ask the question: when Jesus quotes this Psalm, is it because these few, powerful words of Scripture come spontaneously to him in his hour of agony, or because he is applying the whole Psalm to his situation?

This latter, more traditional approach, is well summed up by Pope Benedict XVI in his book *Jesus of Nazareth* (2011, Part Two, p. 214):

Psalm 22 pervades the whole Passion story and points beyond it. The public humiliation, the mockery and shaking of heads by the scoffers, the pain, the terrible thirst, the piercing of Jesus’ hands and feet, the casting of lots for his garments — the whole Passion is, as it were, anticipated in the psalm. Yet when Jesus utters the opening words of the psalm, the whole of this great prayer is essentially already present — including the certainty of an answer to prayer, to be revealed in the Resurrection, in the gathering of the “great assembly”, and in the poor having their fill (cf. vv. 24–26). The cry of extreme anguish is at the same time the certainty of an answer from God, the certainty of salvation — not only for Jesus himself, but for “many”.

This is a beautiful, profound Christian response to Jesus’ cry; and the Psalmist’s faith that, eventually, “the poor shall eat and be satisfied,” resonates deeply with us in a world where the poor still starve in terrible numbers, and where, even in our prosperous country, food banks are stretched to the limit to provide for those left hungry by economic recession and government “austerity”. But I think the Reverend Markus Dünzkofer has invited me here today not to offer you the Pope’s meditation, but, however humbly and imperfectly, a Jewish rabbi’s meditation on this supreme Christian mystery.

I want to see in this moment, when my great Jewish brother Jesus is dying on the cruel Roman cross — nailed up there by the oppressive might of the Roman Empire as a rebel against Rome’s absolute power and Caesar’s divine pretensions — a simple, direct cry from the heart, drawn indeed from the Psalms, but shouted in the language of the people. It is the cry of every human being who feels abandoned and cannot understand why, if God is all-seeing, all-powerful and all-good, God does not intervene. Jesus here is the Son of Man, everyman and

everywoman, each of us in our moment of utter distress.

And yet I know that Jesus is more than that, not only to the eyes of later Christian faith but even in his own eyes and those of his disciples. I believe he was a man so imbued with the spirit of God, so possessed by a mystical vision of the unity of all being in God, that he experienced himself, and his friends experienced him, as one with God — an experience so potent and transformative that it gave birth to Christianity, and sustains the Church twenty-one centuries later.

Jesus also, I think, experienced himself as being at one with his people, the Jews, and suffering on their behalf. “It is expedient,” says the High Priest Caiaphas cynically, according to John (11:50), “that one man die for the people,” and perhaps Jesus agreed that he should be sacrificed as a rebel, a would-be Messiah, to Pilate’s imperialistic paranoia, to avert the real danger of a larger massacre in which many would die.

So if Jesus went willingly, knowingly to his death, as the Gospels all insist, how could he, at the last moment, utter such

a cry of abandonment? Did his sense of being filled with God desert him? Did his willingness to sacrifice himself for his people suddenly seem, as the death pangs took hold, to be a sacrifice too far, demanding a last minute reprieve by God? “We may not veil from ourselves,” wrote the theologian Rudolph Bultmann, “the possibility that he suffered a collapse.” (*The Primitive Christian Kerygma*, p. 24, quoted in Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 213.)

If he did suffer a collapse, a crisis of faith, does that not make Jesus all the more the true, complete human being that the Church affirms he is? Is it not a universal, essential part of our humanity to suffer an existential crisis, a dark night of the soul, in which our God, and our very sense of self, deserts us?

The ancient rabbis, who reconstructed Judaism after the fall of the Second Temple, coined the word *Shechinah*, the Indwelling, to express the Jewish sense of God’s presence in the world, dwelling in the Temple in the midst of the people. But when the Temple was destroyed, what happened to this holy, life-giving presence? Some said that the *Shechinah* left the earth, driven away by human sin and cruelty, and returned to heaven. Rabbi Akiva, though, expressed the more profound idea that, wherever the people went into exile, the *Shechinah*, God’s own presence, went with them. God too goes into exile — from God! God is so deeply and completely with us that the *Shechinah* shares our pain, our wandering, our sense of abandonment. Akiva’s brilliant disciple, Rabbi Meir, went so far as to teach that whenever any



Crucifixion, Emmanuel Levy, 1942  
Ben Uri Gallery

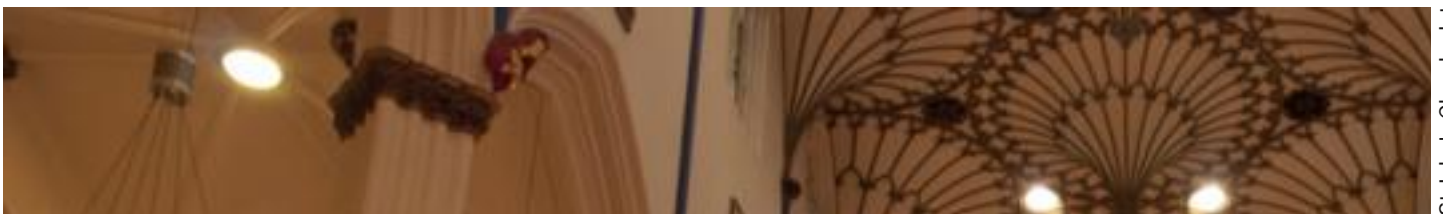
human being is in pain, the *Shechinah*, as it were, cries out, “My head hurts!” or “My arm hurts!” (*Mishnah Sanhedrin* 6:5) Many Jewish and Christian scholars nowadays see a deep kinship between Jesus as Emmanuel — “God with us” — in Christian faith, and the *Shechinah*, God’s indwelling, life-giving and suffering presence in Rabbinic Jewish belief.

What is it, though, that leads to God, Jesus, the *Shechinah*, crying out in pain and abandonment? What led to the crucifixion, to the Jewish exile? Jewish and Christian teachings respond with one voice: human sin. The Torah and the prophets constantly warn that unfaithfulness and injustice will lead to exile, and the Rabbis of the Talmud, reflecting on the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, lay the blame on *sin’at chinam*, causeless hatred among the people (*Babylonian Talmud*, Yoma 9b).

When we fail in love toward one another, and turn on one another with words of hatred, with cruelty, with racial prejudice, with brutality to women and children, with callousness towards our poorer brothers and sisters, with violence, then we drive God away. Above all, when we blasphemously invoke God to justify sectarian strife, religious bigotry, patriarchal power over women, homophobia and inequality, all “in the name of God,” then we drive God away from God, we drag the Divine Presence down into our own narrow hell of causeless hatred, and we make God cry out in pain, as it were, to God: “My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?”

Some of the Jewish bystanders, Matthew and Mark tell us, misinterpreted the word “Eli” and said, “This man is calling Elijah” — a mistake, but a wonderful mistake. Eli is, to this day, a popular shortening of the name Elijah, and perhaps it was not all that strange that some Jewish bystanders thought that Jesus was calling on the undying prophet to swing low in his fiery chariot and carry him up to heaven. Passover is a season when Elijah is very present in Jewish consciousness. On the Sabbath before Passover we read the last words of the last Hebrew prophet, Malachi: “Behold I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord, and he will turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents.” At the Seder meal on Passover evening we fill a “cup of Elijah” with wine and open the door in preparation for his advent. Although these customs date from long after the time of Jesus, it may be that Elijah’s mystical, undying, comforting presence was already “in the air” even among ancient Jews at Passover time. In Jewish folk imagination, Elijah wanders among us in disguise, ready to comfort and help, or to warn and instruct. In a way, Elijah’s ubiquity is a symbol of the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence herself, always among us, just out of sight.

*Deep calls to deep* When Elijah cried out in his own despair, when all seemed against him, God answered him in the “still, small voice”, in the sound of silence (I Kings 19:12). Even if Jesus, as the darkness of that afternoon deepened and his agony drew to its end, had no assurance that God would save him, his cry is still not in vain, just as our own cries of abandonment and frustration are not meaningless, for in them God is crying out to God: “Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.” (Ps. 42:8-9) God exiled within us cries out to God beyond us, in the very fabric of all being, and the cry echoes back, and calls forth the life-giving power of God out of exile, into freedom. As long as we can cry out against injustice, hatred, violence and meaninglessness, God lives in us, and we in God.



St John's Church, detail Photo: Chen Zhao