

Sukkat Shalom

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community

Scottish Charity No SC035678

liberal judaism

Events & Services

Date **Friday November 6th**

Event **Erev Shabbat Service** followed by **Chavurah supper**

Venue Columcille Centre, 3 Newbattle Terrace

Time 7 pm

Our usual Friday night supper after the service. All welcome, especially young people. Do come and bring some food or drink to share (no meat or shellfish please).

Date **Friday November 13th**

Event **Short Kabbalat Shabbat Service**

Venue Marchmont St Giles Church Centre
1a Kilgraston Road

Time 6.15 pm

Rabbi Mark Solomon will be visiting the weekend of 20/22nd and leading the service and the activities listed below.

Date **Friday November 20th**

Event **Spinoza discussion group**

Time evening

Details will be circulated to those signed up nearer the time. Please contact Maurice Naftalin (maurice@morninglight.co.uk) if you would like to be added to the list.

Date **Saturday November 21st**

Event **Shabbat morning service**

Venue Columcille Centre

Time 11am

Event **Tea and Talmud**

Venue Columcille Centre

Time 3pm

Date **Sunday November 22nd**

Event **Choosing Judaism class**

Time 10.30 am Usual venue

Event **Learning torah cantillation**

Time afternoon

Details will be circulated to those signed up. Please contact Kristi Long for information and to be added to the list (kristilong66@yahoo.com).

November 2009

Chair: Gillian Raab, chair@eljc.org

Secretary: Nancy Warren, secretary@eljc.org

Newsletter: Editorial team newsletter@eljc.org

Treasurer: Jonathan Broadie, treasurer@eljc.org

Membership: Joe Goldblatt, membership@eljc.org

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Events & Services

Date **Friday November 27th**

Event **Short Kabbalat Shabbat Service**

Venue Marchmont St Giles Church Centre

Time 6.15 pm

Date **Friday December 4th**

Event **Erev Shabbat Service**

Venue Columcille Centre

Time 7 pm

Date **Friday December 11th**

Event: Chanukah Party

Venue: Columcille Centre

Time 6.00--9.00pm

Everyone is invited! A festive occasion for all to enjoy, and we are looking forward to having lots of children. Please bring along your chanukiah and dreidels. Phil will take his traditional turn as latke cook. As usual for our family suppers, please bring along a non-meat dish to share. If you'd like to show up early to help with decorations, please let Phil know--if no one volunteers, we may not have many decorations! Phil Wadler, wadler@inf.ed.ac.uk 0131447 4276.



Date **Weekend of 18/20th December**

The end of Chanukah. Rabbi Mark will be visiting this weekend and we will be having our usual series of events and services including a morning service on Shabbat Chanukah (the 8th day).



**Jewish Calendar for
November 2009**

17/18th November - Rosh
Chodesh Kislev

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**Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society
Session 2009/10 5770**

All meetings will take place in the Synagogue Hall, Salisbury Road at 7.30pm with tea and refreshments from 7pm

You can become a member at the opening meeting or pay for individual talks.

**Sunday 8th November
Antony Lerman
*The end of Antisemitism?***

Used to describe most perceived manifestations of hostility to Jews today, the term 'the new antisemitism' has become widely accepted and very popular. This stems from a concerted effort to redefine the term antisemitism by some who are engaged in monitoring, researching and combating it. Has this simply brought up-to-date our understanding of what antisemitism is today or has it rendered the term meaningless?

The speaker is the former Director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. Prior to that he was Chief Executive of Hanadiv Charitable Foundation, a major grant-making trust supporting Jewish life in Europe. He is currently writing a book which reflects on his experience of Zionism and Israel, and he contributes a weekly article to the Guardian's Comment is Free website.

**Sunday November 22nd
J. David Simons**

The author will talk about and read from his novel, "**The Credit Draper**", which paints a vivid picture of Jewish life in Glasgow and of how Jews fared in the Gorbals and even in rural Scotland in the earliest decades of the Twentieth Century. This is a fascinating novel, with great characters and an exciting plot that reflects the difficulties and tragedies of our immigrant population as well as occasional triumphs such as in business and even on the field of football. David will reflect on his inspirations for the book, elaborate on some of his themes and reveal the secrets behind his research. He will also give us a foretaste of his current work which has evolved from one of the main characters in "The Credit Draper".

**Sunday 13th December
Eyal Poleg**

From Warriors to Martyrs and Back Again: The Maccabees in Medieval Judaism and Christianity

After lighting the third candle of Chanukah we will follow the story of the Maccabees from their origins to unexpected places in Christian theology, Jewish lamentations and medieval manuscripts. After their memory has all but been eradicated in the Mishna and Talmud, the story of Judah and his brothers found an unlikely shelter among Christian communities, who saw the Maccabees as a mirror to their own life, dying and fighting in the name of Christ. Generations later, on the eve of the First Crusade, the Maccabees were recalled by both Jews and Christians: Christian armies saw themselves as the New Maccabees, marching to war on the Saracens, while Jewish communities, suffering from these very same armies, alluded time and again to episodes from the Books of Maccabees. Ending with their incorporation to the Zionistic canon, the story of the Maccabees, oscillating between warriors and martyrs, Jews and Christians, will demonstrate how at times of tolerance and persecutions, the two religions engaged in a unique and unending dialogue.

Dr. Eyal Poleg is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for the History of the Book, University of Edinburgh, working on the Medieval and early modern Bible.

Jewish Book Group

Meets monthly in members' homes usually on Monday evenings. Interested in lively discussions of books of Jewish interest and even occasional play readings? Contact Gillian (chair@eljc.org).

Kol Nidre Appeal

Donations to our three charities (Jewish Care Scotland Physicians for Human Rights and the LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing) are going well and on course to meet or exceed our last year's total.



If you have not already contributed there is still time to send in your donation to

Jonathan Broadie,
26 Charterhall Road
Edinburgh EH9 3HP,
payable to Sukkat
Shalom, Edinburgh,

Mitzvah day Sunday 15th November

Join the community in a day of volunteering - suitable for all age groups! Plans for the day are still being finalised, but let us know you are interested and we will keep you in the loop. The day will be city-centre based, and will involve rolling up our sleeves and doing something really worthwhile for the wider Edinburgh community.

To register interest, and for more information contact Lauren: laurenfox@hotmail.com, 07737 425880.

Soul Train Kosher Ceilidh Saturday 21st November 2009 7.30 pm

Edinburgh University Chaplaincy Centre
Entrance in Bristo Square

A Concert of Jewish Folk Music - Jewish soul music, Chassidic rock, Israeli songs and music Performed by a group of 3 musicians from Israel Kosher light refreshments available. There will be a soft drinks bar only so that under 14s can come along too!

Ticket price: **Free** - donations welcome

Edinburgh Interfaith Association - monthly community meal Monday (2nd November) - St John's Church, Princes Street

Cooking will start around 5pm and we should be eating by 6:15pm. Food is always vegetarian but please advise about any other dietary requirements (vegan, wheat free etc). Please bring along anyone you feel would enjoy the meal.

Tom Lea 0131 228 8146 e. tom@eifa.org.uk

The following events are part of
Interfaith week

22nd to 29th November

www.eifa.org.uk

Wednesday November 18th Nicolson Square Church **Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group** "Violence Against Women" PC Cath Duguid

Saturday 21st November Interfaith vigil for peace, 20 Polwarth Crescent.
Contact 0131 229 7229, 07767474650
vigilforpeace@compassion.org.uk

Sunday 22nd November 6pm Annandale Street Mosque, Conversation on Faith Life and Work, Bashir Maan, and Rev Ewan Aitken.

Monday 23rd 6pm Community meal, taster of the regular event. See details for 2/11 above.

Wednesday 25th November Faith and belief in Edinburgh, launch of photography exhibition, Telford College.

Thursday 26th November Lecture on "Pluralism" Right Rev Brian Smith, Bishop of Edinburgh 7pm St John's Church, Princes Street.

Sunday 29th November Talk and discussion on "Symbols Objects and Rituals" St Marks' Unitarian Church, 11am

Sunday 29th November Meet your Sikh Neighbour, 1.30pm Guru Nanak Gardwara Community Centre, 1 Sherrif Brae, Leith

Sunday 29th November 7pm St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, 61 York Place, The Big Interfaith Quiz. To enter as a team or an individual contact Tom Lea

0131 228 8146 e. tom@eifa.org.uk

Tuesday 1st December 6.30pm "Remember, Reflect, React" World Aids Day event with music from Loud and Proud, Scotland's LGBT choir.



The Great Judaism Conundrum

I don't know if the rumblings have reached Edinburgh, but today it's all over the London airwaves. The JFS case has arrived at the Supreme Court, and the highest judges in the land will now hear submissions on a question that has stumped Jews and Gentiles alike for centuries: are we a race or a religion, or a bit of both, or something else again?

JFS is a state-funded school in London, modern orthodox in stance and deferring to the authority of the Chief Rabbi, which denied a place to a boy whose whose mother had converted under Reform auspices. In a ruling that sent shock waves through the Jewish community earlier in the year, the Court of Appeal ruled that, to deny a place to a child on the grounds of maternal status, amounted to racial discrimination, and ordered that the school replace its entrance criteria with a purely religious test. Accordingly, as the new school year approached in the autumn, rabbis were asked to verify that families had attended synagogue a requisite number of times, or satisfied some other standard of communal or religious involvement.

While most of the Jewish community, including the Reform movement, reacted with shock and horror to the Appeal Court's judgement, Rabbi Danny Rich, the Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism, cautiously welcomed the decision, and laid out the Liberal view that "Judaism is primarily transmitted culturally and through example and influence," not simply by virtue of pedigree and a rabbinic stamp of *kashrut*. I doubt that we would join the judges in labelling the JFS policy racial discrimination, but discrimination there certainly was.

A radio talk-show host was grappling, when I happened to tune in yesterday, with the question of how the Jewish concept of matrilineal descent, as the prime test of belonging, differs from the BNP's absurd ideas about indigenous Britons descended from ice-age natives of these islands, aired recently on Question Time. Eventually he was persuaded that the possibility of conversion – analogous to immigration – means that there is no essential racial test to Jewishness. The fact that there are Ethiopian, Chinese and Nordic Jews,

among others, is sufficient proof that Jews are not a race in any biological sense. There is still the uncomfortable reality, though, that conversion is usually made difficult, and converts often treated with suspicion. One Jewish man who rang in even voiced the oft-heard prejudice that, conversion notwithstanding, you need to be born into the tribe to be really Jewish.

Judaism flourishes by questioning, and being able to live with the challenge of multiple answers, so it is right that we resist oversimplified dichotomies: descent *or* conversion, nature *or* nurture, race *or* culture. Part of me cheers, though, at the thought that we can't rest on our ancestral laurels, and assume that just having the right mother, or even, in Liberal Judaism, the right father, gives us an automatic ticket to the members' stand. We need to do Jewish things, learn Jewish texts, maybe even think Jewish thoughts and grapple with Jewish questions – whatever that might mean – to be worthy of the great and complex heritage of the prophets, sages, philosophers, mystics, scientists and sceptics that we call Judaism. Above all, we need to challenge prejudice wherever it exists, and first within our own community, so that Judaism can flourish ethically, and the Jewish Free School become truly free.

Mark L Solomon

Chairman's word

Following the High Holydays we have a respite from festivals for a bit. As Mark reminded us last shabbat service, Chesvan is the only month in the Jewish year without a single festival. Having spent most of my working life in education the Jewish calendar has always seemed to be a better reflection of my year than the secular one. And this holds for my work in the garden too, when it is now that we prepare everything for the next season.

At council, too, we are busy taking things forward for the coming year. We are planning services and events for next year (see back page) and taking things forward in for the future. Items on our agenda include premises, a new logo, website redesign, a new Erev Shabbat service booklet and plans for next Pesach, to name but a few. If you have views on any of these issues, or anything else please do not hesitate to contact me.

Gillian Raab

“For Our Freedom and For Yours”



Marek Edelman, who died earlier this month, fought in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and became its leader. The uprising is memorable for the courage and determination with which untrained and poorly-armed Jewish fighters held off the most formidable fighting machine in Europe. It inspired uprisings in other ghettos and in death camps, and became a symbol of resistance to tyranny.

Edelman was orphaned at 12 in pre-war Warsaw (his date of birth is uncertain – 1919 or 1922). In 1939 he joined the youth organisation of the Bund (the Jewish socialist workers movement). From the establishment of the Ghetto in November 1940, conditions continually worsened until, in the summer of 1942, the deportations started. Politically committed Jews, both of Right and Left, began to organise, alongside the cultural and political activity of the ghetto, for armed resistance.

By the end of 1942 two-thirds of the 400,000 Jews originally sealed in the Ghetto had been deported to the death camps. The myth of “Jewish reservations in the East” was fading, and the Jewish Fighting Organisation (ZOB) had begun active resistance, sometimes liberating deportation parties. Edelman wrote “for the first time, German plans were frustrated. For the first time the halo of omnipotence and invincibility was torn from the Germans' heads. For the first time the Jew in the street realized that it was possible to do something against the Germans' will and power.”

By April 1943 the Germans had realised that to empty the Ghetto would require a full-scale attack, with artillery and tanks. Astonishingly, their first attack was repulsed completely, and the battle to subdue the ghetto, which they had

thought would take three days, instead lasted nearly a month. In the end they could succeed only by burning the Ghetto to the ground.

Edelman himself, who had taken command of the ZOB during the battle, escaped via the sewers and survived to take part in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. His loyalty to the Polish people was reflected in the last manifesto of the ZOB:

“We are well aware that you have been witnessing breathlessly, with broken hearts, with tears of compassion, with horror and enthusiasm, the war that we have been waging against every brutal occupier these past few days. Every doorstep in the Ghetto has become a stronghold and shall remain a fortress until the end! It is a fight for our freedom as well as yours!”

He never left Poland, even when post-war anti-semitism divided him from his family. “Warsaw is my city. ... Someone has to stay here with all those who died”, he said. His commitment to life was expressed through his work as a noted cardiologist. “God wants to dim the candle's light, and I have to shield it quick, before he notices,” he said.

He remained politically active, supporting Solidarnosc and serving for a period as a member of the Polish parliament. In the 1990s he reproached those who repeat “Never Again” while ignoring continuing atrocities in Bosnia. In 2002 he wrote an open letter to Palestinian groups calling on them in comradely terms to change their tactics and seek a compromise with Israel.

You may not have heard of Marek Edelman before this – his beliefs made him an inconvenient hero, often left out of accounts of Jewish resistance. Instead, he should be remembered as foremost among freedom fighters, one whose Jewish heritage and terrible experiences combined to inspire him to a lasting commitment for life and against injustice and oppression wherever he saw them.

Maurice Naftalin

Stew Green reports on what an independent Scotland might mean for minority communities

In August 2007 the Scottish Government initiated a National Conversation on the future constitutional options for Scotland with publication of the white paper "*Choosing Scotland's Future*". The current phase of the Conversation aims to ensure that the people of Scotland feel well-enough informed to exercise their choice as they go into a referendum on independence – currently due to take place in 2010.

On 30th September, I attended one of the key events in the series: *Scotland's Future and Ethnic Minority Communities Conference*. This event, attended by the first minister, was intended to be the final public meeting on this subject for minority ethnic communities and followed-on from a number of smaller earlier regional events.

As well as being Jewish I am also Irish-born of Irish parents. I have therefore always felt myself to be – and sometimes been made to feel - a minority in society. As a result, minority ethnic identity and associated issues have always been close to my heart. So I was motivated to attend both for personal interest and to see what relevance or implications there might be for us as a Liberal Jewish community.

It was a very interesting morning consisting for the first half of a key note address by Alex Salmond followed by a question and answer session, and then in the second half of four themed workshops: constitutional reform (two workshops); immigration & foreign policy; and race equality. I attended the latter.

Clearly these public meetings are designed to serve a dual purpose: firstly, to hear key groups' interests and wishes for inclusion in any proposed changes to the constitutional arrangements. However secondly and perhaps more importantly to the administration, those of a cynical bent may suggest, they provide an opportunity to reassure, influence and prepare the ground for a positive vote on the independence option.


Alex Salmond offered a very interesting, salient and indeed persuasive argument for independence. Particular points highlighted of relevance to this audience were the need for Scotland to have its own equality legislation, immigration & asylum legislation and foreign policy.

What came across strongly to me through the morning was Scotland's favourable position in respect of minority groups, integration and immigration in particular. It may well be that an independent Scotland would have even more to offer minority communities such as ourselves. However, I am also aware how much the prevailing attitudes, culture, legislative framework etc. within society are shaped and dictated by social circumstances, ideology and in particular, the direction taken by the political administration of the moment. It is encouraging to remind ourselves that unlike England, there is currently no BNP representation at any level in Scotland.

To this extent, it seems to me the independence question while certainly not irrelevant, might inadvertently pull something of a veil over the real issue. In other words, while it may well be that minority communities would be better supported and protected within an independent Scotland created in the current climate, there is nothing to say that that climate will necessarily continue to prevail. Indeed it is possible to imagine that in a worst case (heaven forbid) there might one day be an administration or social conditions that lead to a reversal of the situation as it exists today.

In short, I came away from the conference energised and uplifted but also aware that independence or no independence, we all need to stay informed of developments, supportive of those who propose progressive policies in all areas and especially for minority groups and vigilant to the ever-present danger of changing circumstances and / or political expediency eroding the current generally positive direction of travel within our society.

Stew Green
October 2009



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Reminder – LJ Biennial Weekend

The LJ Biennial Weekend is taking place on 16-18 April 2010 in Bristol.

This year, the workshops at the Biennial Weekend will explore the realities of living our lives as 21st Century Jews. Under "Living in the Modern World" we'll explore the new face of our families and ways of integrating our family members of different or no religion into our celebrations. We look at ways of celebrating our life-cycle events which take into account new family structures. Full details are available on the LJ website at <http://www.liberaljudaism.org/biennial>.

Discounted rates are available for bookings before 31st January and there are subsidised places for the under 40s.

Seems like a long way from Scotland?

Yes but:

If you book now you can fly Easyjet to Bristol airport, just a 15 minute taxi ride away, for under £50.

and it is a great place

Totworth Hall a wonderful Edwardian house with 4 star facilities, extensive grounds and a spa. Full childrens' programme for the under 8s, or separate weekend for older children..


and our Rabbi will be there to make you feel at home.

LJ Family Star in Chanukah Book

A new children's book about Chanukah, featuring a Liberal Jewish family from Brighton & Hove Progressive Synagogue, has been published by the writer Cath Senker. The book is from a range of new titles focusing on celebrations from the world's major religions. You can order a copy from amazon.co.uk or go direct to the publisher, Franklin Watts, to find out more.

Hair-raising Fundraising for Israeli Children with Cancer

Zichron Menachem is the Israeli charity for children with cancer, providing immediate, practical and long-term solutions to a wide range of problems. One of the ways they help



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is by encouraging people to donate hair to be made into wigs. Liberal Judaism's PR/Communications Officer, Alexandra, has been growing her hair for the last 8 months and will finally have it cut off on 25th November. She also needs to raise at least £180 for the charity so if you feel you can help, please visit justgiving.com/Alex-Hair, contact alexandra@liberaljudaism.org or call 020 7631 9831. No donation too big or too small!

LJ has new chairman

At the AGM in October Nigel Cole stood down as chairman of Liberal Judaism after four years in the post. Lucian Hudson was elected as the new chairman. Now working as a consultant Lucian has held many posts in government and industry, most recently as director of communications in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Leo Baeck College Free course if you sign up in time



A new initiative from Leo Baeck College brings us a six-session chanukah programme using Skype which will be free to all members of the progressive movements in the UK. But it is limited to only 12 participants on a first-come, first-served basis.

Times are 8-9pm on
8/12 Judaism and Hellenic Culture
9/12 Chanukah what we say and sing
10/12 Christmas/Chanukah dilemmas
15/12 The December Dilemma
16/12 A woman certainly lights
17/12 Rewriting history - is it ever acceptable?

To sign up contact
gaby.rupp@lbc.ac.uk

Dates for 2010

Several people have requested that we have our service dates for next year posted ahead of time. So here are the provisional dates for the first half of 2010, There is always the possibility that we may have to change them nearer the time, though we will try not to.

Our regular schedule is as follows:-

First Friday of each Calendar month

Erev shabbat service

The shabbat morning 2 weeks after this

Shabbat morning service

Weekends when no other service

Short kabbalat shabbat service

January 2010

Fri 2 Erev Shabbat

Wkend 15/17 Rabbi visiting Shabbat morning

Sat 29 Tu biShevat

February 2010

Fri 5 Erev Shabbat

Sun 14 Limmud Glasgow

Wkend 20/22 Rabbi visiting Shabbat morning

27/28 Purim - details later

March 2010

Fri 5 Erev Shabbat

Wkend 26/28 Rabbi visiting Shabbat morning

Mon 29 1st Seder - Rabbi Mark to lead

April 2010

Fri 2nd Erev Shabbat

Sat 17th Shabbat morning service

Wkend 23/25 Rabbi visiting
change from usual schedule

May 2010

Fri 7th Erev Shabbat

Wkend 21/22 Rabbi visiting Shabbat morning service

June 2010

Fri 4th Erev Shabbat

Wkend 19/20 Rabbi visiting Shabbat morning service

ELJC SUPPORT LINE:

07904 813162



Use this number if you have an emergency and really need to speak to someone. It goes to one of our members. Otherwise please leave a message on our usual number (see page 1) and we will respond as soon as possible.

Biblical Tales - by children

- The Jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with the unsympathetic Genitals.
- The Egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterwards, Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the ten amendments
- The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.
- The seventh commandment is "Thou shalt not admit adultery."
- Moses died before he ever reached Canada.
- Then Joshua led the Hebrews in the battle of Geritol.
- David was a Hebrew king skilled at playing the liar. He fought with the Finklesteins, a race of people who lived in Biblical times.
- Solomon, one of David's sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.
- Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.
- Jesus enunciated the Golden Rule, which says to do one to others before they do one to you.
- It was a miracle when Jesus rose 'from the dead and managed to get the tombstone off the entrance.
- The Epistles were the wives of the Apostles.
- St Paul cavorted to Christianity. He preached the holy acrimony, which is another name for marriage.
- Most religions teach us to have only one spouse. This is called monotony.

Many thanks to Sue Lieberman for this.

Newsletter editor

Thanks to Jamie Shearer-Bromfield for his work as newsletter editor.. Unfortunately he is not now able to continue and this newsletter has been put together as a group effort managed by the chairman. Thanks to everyone who has helped out this month. We plan to make this a more formal arrangement in future, so if you feel you could help in any aspect please contact us (newsletter@eljc.org).