

SUKKAT SHALOM

EDINBURGH LIBERAL JEWISH COMMUNITY

MARCH 2005

וּפְרוּס עֲלֵינוּ סִבַּת שְׁלוֹמֶךָ
sukkat shalom - shelter of peace



www.eljc.org

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Shalom!

Spring brings new growth and change. We are saying 'Goodbye and good luck' to Rachel Savage, as she and Michael move to London. Rachel will be sorely missed in Edinburgh and we wish her all the best in her new beginnings. With Rachel's departure there is an opening in the Cheder team. **Please contact us if you are interested in finding out more about what is involved as a Cheder teacher.**

It is also time for me to step down as the newsletter editor and next month's April edition will be my last issue. I hope you have found the newsletters useful and enjoyed reading them. **If you would like the newsletter to continue please do step forward to take on the mantle. Contact: newsletter@eljc.org**

We warmly greet Rabbi Aaron Goldstein as he joins us again at the end of this month for our Purim celebrations. See page 3 for details.

This newsletter includes an enclosure with details of the 2005 Cheder. We are delighted to welcome back Rabbi Pete Tobias to lead the family service. We need help in organising this too - please see notice on page 4.

Thanks to all who have contributed to this and past newsletters. Contributions are welcomed for the April newsletter by Friday 18 March.

Regards, Hannah

Condolences and best wishes to Ricky Hogg and the family on the death of his mother. Ricky, we wish you a long life.

No injustice in this world is suffered alone. No matter how quiet or hidden the suffering, how silent the afflicted, there is One who not only knows of it but likewise feels the pain. There are lives of quiet desperation but no lives of solitary desperation, for all suffering is shared
Rabbi David Wolpe, 'Healer of Shattered Hearts'

Community Events

FRI 4 MAR, 7pm – Erev Shabbat service & family supper, Macdonald Road Library

First time at this recently refurbished venue. The library is on the corner of MacDonald Road and Leith Walk. Please bring a contribution to the supper - something vegetarian that doesn't need reheating.

WED 9 MAR, 7.30pm – Religious affairs committee, venue tbc

All Sukkat Shalom members welcome: please let Nick Silk know if you would like to come.

SUN 13 MAR, 3pm – Cheder, venue tbc

Purim play rehearsal.

THURS 17 MAR, 7.30pm – Council meeting, venue tbc

All Sukkat Shalom members welcome: please let us know if you intend to come.

Please note – no Shabbat service on 19th March

THURS 24 MAR, 7pm – Purim party & play, St Columba's Church Hall, 14 Johnstone Terrace

Come play with us and meet Hymie Pottok and the Megillah of Fire! See notice on **p. 4**.

FRI 25 MAR, 7pm – Erev Shabbat & Purim service, Homeroyal House, 2 Chalmers Crescent

Rabbi Aaron Goldstein will lead the service. Please arrive in good time; if you are early press "5" then "4" then "call".

SAT 26 MAR, 11am – Shabbat service, lunch & study, St Columba's Church Hall, 14 Johnstone Terrace

Torah service and study with Rabbi A. Goldstein. Includes a separate singing session with some alternative tunes! Please bring a cold vegetarian dish.

Please note – no Cheder on the weekend of 26-27th March

*** PLEASE DISPOSE OF THIS NEWSLETTER RESPONSIBLY ***

Other Events

Jewish Parent-Toddler Group, Sun 6 March

Stephanie Brickman writes: Miriam, Josh and I all went along to the Jewish Play Group at Salisbury Road a few weeks ago and were welcomed most warmly. There are lots of toys and room and we met some very nice people. It all culminated in a percussive singalong featuring various Israeli folk songs and a rousing Hava Nagila.

The group meets at the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Centre. All welcome at next meeting on Sun 6 Mar, 10am - 12 noon. *Please contact: Shari 0131 667 304*

Quiz night, 6 March

The Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation are holding a quiz night at the Salisbury Road centre. *For more information please contact: Doreen Bowman, 0131 339 7557 or bowman@onetel.net.uk*

Talk: Which way now? Reflections of a Jewish teacher, Sun 13 Mar

Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society event. Claire Singerman, Senior Teacher at Hutchesons' Grammar School, challenges conventional beliefs on education, religion and the future of our community. 8pm in the Marian Oppenheim Hall, Salisbury Rd. *For further information see www.eljs.org*

Glasgow Limmud, Sun 20 Mar – Jewish Journey

Join Limmud for a trip back through time, in the form of a coach tour around Glasgow. Pre-booking required. Please contact: Fiona Brodie, 0141 638 2023 or fionabrodie@aol.com

Talk: Jacob's Gift. Sun 3 Apr

Jonathan Freedland will talk about his new book, *Jacob's Gift* - the moving story of three members of his own family, going back several generations, but also an inquiry into wider and urgent questions of Jewish identity and the universal business of belonging.

Exhibition: Where do you come from? Stories of the new Scots. Until 31 March

Experiences of immigrant communities, organised by young immigrants in Edinburgh. Includes a contribution from Sukkat Shalom and profile on Ida Skubiejska. At the Museum of Scotland, Chambers St.

Events (continued)

Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace 2005

As I write the festival is in full flow and continues until 6 March. At 10am on **Thurs 3 March** Rabbi Nancy Morris will be leading prayers for peace as part of 'A day of meditation, prayer and reflection for world peace'. 9.15am - 5pm, £30/£20, St George's West Church, 58 Shandwick Place.

Other events during the festival include:

Wed 2 Mar: Meet the storytellers, University Chaplaincy, 2 - 4.30, admission free

Thu 3 Mar: Arabic coffee evening with music and arts activities. 6pm, National Library of Scotland, admission free

Thu 3 Mar: Lecture: Spiritual approaches to Middle East Peace. 6pm, McEwan Hall, Teviot Place

Fri 4 Mar - Sat 5 Mar: 2-day conference - Middle Eastern spirituality and peace: talks, workshops, readings, plenaries, music, dance and storytelling from Bah'i, Christian, Ismaili, Jewish, Muslim, Subud, Sufi and Zoroastrian traditions. 9.30 - 5.30, St. George's West Church, £50/£30 per day

Sun 6 Mar: Mindful peace walk, led by Sangha of Thich Nhat Hanh; Four workshops on Middle Eastern dance; Tour to Rosslyn chapel; Langar community meal; Festival closing concert with Latif Bolat - Healing sounds of ancient Turkey

For full details of times, prices and venues, please see www.eial.org or contact Neill Walker at njwalker3001@hotmail.com or 0131 331 4469

The Festival Ethos:

'The Festival affirms the diversity contained within the religious and spiritual traditions of the Middle East, as well as these here in Scotland, in justice and equality. The Festival takes no fixed position on any political, ethical or cultural question. We intend rather to create a forum in which we can listen to one another more deeply and learn with a more open mind and heart. The emphasis of the Festival is on spirituality, and on spiritual, cultural, and educational approaches to peace and understanding.'

Welfare Committee News

I am pleased to tell you that the community now has a functioning Welfare Committee consisting of Colette Lamb, Lisa Barcan, Maureen MacKinnon, Philippa Levinson, Ricky Hogg, Stewart Green (Convenor) and Sue Lieberman.

The group has now formally met twice and has started putting some ideas into place around meeting the welfare needs in our community. We thought that in the short term at least, we would focus on identifying the most important needs to respond to. As a result, we have come up with the following three key areas:

- a) Provision of a 'welfare support line' telephone contact number for members to call in the case of illness or other welfare/personal need. A need for additional help can affect anyone at any time, but those who live alone and have no immediate support locally are likely to be particularly vulnerable. It is hoped that the support line will provide a reliable, flexible and rapid way for members to contact the welfare group if/when the need arises.
- b) Arrangement of lifts/transport to community services and events for those whose age or health make it difficult to get there under their own steam
- c) Development of increased telephone and visiting contact for those in our community who would benefit from some additional social interaction.

The current position on each of these areas is as follows: Firstly, I am very pleased to announce that Ricky has kindly agreed to be the main first point of contact for the new welfare support line. We are currently in the process of acquiring a dedicated telephone number which we will be able to divert through to Ricky or to another member of the team when Ricky is not available. We will publicise the number as soon as it is available. In the meantime, a big thank-you to Ricky for kindly offering to front this.

I myself have taken on the role of co-ordinating lifts for those whose age or health means they have difficulty accessing events without assistance. If you fall into this category or indeed, if you are a car driver and would be willing to provide an occasional lift to a community event please contact me and let me know.

In terms of the contact side, we would particularly like to hear from anyone who would be willing to give a small amount of time to give an occasional, but regular, phone call or visit to one of our more isolated or vulnerable members. If you would like to discuss this further please contact any of the welfare group.

Getting all of this off the ground seems more than enough for the immediate future. In the longer term however, we are planning to conduct an informal but more extensive, survey of member needs. In the meantime however, please do contact us if you have any particular comments, queries or ideas or indeed, if you would like to contribute in some way to the work of the team (all offers of help will be gratefully received!). You can reach us by e-mailing welfare@eljc.org or by contacting any of the committee members personally. Thanks.

Stewart

Rabbi Aaron's Visit - Purim

We now have a timetable for Rabbi Aaron's visit on the Purim weekend.

Thu 24 Mar:

6.30pm: Purim Play and service, St. Columba's Church Hall, 14 Johnstone Terrace

Afterwards Rabbi Aaron will lead a joint Talmud Torah & Adult Education class, venue t.b.a.

Fri 25 Mar:

10am: Walk in the Botanic Gardens with Rabbi Aaron. Especially aimed at families with younger children (up to 10). Meet at the gates at 10am. Bad weather alternatives: the Botanics cafe and hothouses!

2pm: Barmitzvah class

4pm onwards: Individual "surgeries". Please get in touch if you would like to speak to Aaron

7pm: Erev Shabbat service, Homeroyal House, 2 Chalmers Crescent

Sat 26 Mar:

11am: Service, followed by lunch (please bring a contribution) and songs - old and new!

Notices

Happy Birthday!

Mazel Tov to **Rohan Green**, who celebrates his **7th** birthday on 21 March

Farewell

Congratulations to Rachel and Michael Savage as they set off for pastures new. You will be missed!

Situations vacant

Wanted: motivational **editor** for popular local newsletter! Position available from April onwards

Wanted: enthusiastic volunteer to join the **cheder** team. Position available immediately.

If you are interested, or would like further information on either position, please contact any member of the council.

Make Poverty History

We are starting to make plans for 2nd July (the day of the great rally in Edinburgh around the G8 meeting). We will be inviting top figures from the RSGB and Liberal Judaism to a service on that day, from which we will go out to join the creation of the human "white band" around Edinburgh. To support **Make Poverty History**, you can get your own white band now, from Oxfam shops or online from www.makepovertyhistory.org

Sukkat Shalom Seder 2005, Sat 23 April

Bookings are now being taken for the 2005 seder - please see the enclosed booking form for further information. We are pleased to announce that the seder will again be led by Rabbi Pete Tobias.

Siddurim

We are delighted to announce that the community now has five communal siddurim (prayer-books) for use by visitors (or absent-minded members!) in services. We are very grateful to Harry Riffkin for this kind donation.

And for non-forgetful members, we still have a supply of the fine leather-bound edition of *Siddur Lev Chadash* for sale at £20. This is a limited supply: the replacement will be a reprint of the ordinary hardbacked edition, at the same price.

Festival cheer

Hymie Pottok and the Megillah of Fire

There's intrigue, satire, magic and mystery in the second Sukkat Shalom Purim play starring some of the bravest members of the community. It may be funny, it may be audible, it may be entertaining! It definitely must not be missed. Thursday 24 March 7pm, St Columba's Church Hall, Johnston Terrace.

Wimpels - a cheder project

Gillian Raab writes:

When Rachel asked me to do a project on Wimpels for the cheder I wondered if she had gone meshuggah. What had nuns' headgear to do with Judaism? I checked the internet for 'wimple' and it confirmed my view. But I had the spelling wrong. I should have tried 'wimpel'.

A wimpel is the name for the binder that is used to hold the torah scroll together. In nineteenth century Europe there was a tradition that a mother would make a wimple, decorated with embroidery or painting and including the child's hebrew name, from the swaddling cloth used to hold a baby boy at his bris. This would then be used at the boy's bar mitzvah. Wimpels were also made in honour of weddings and kept by families to bring to the synagogue on special occasions.

This tradition has been revived in the US recently, not only for boys and it is not just the mother who makes them. Our children made their own at a recent cheder, painted on strips of linen, and every one did an excellent job with their Hebrew names own special interests illustrated.

Help with the Seder!

Volunteers urgently needed to help join the group organising the seder.

In particular with one or more of the following:-

1. Provide a car to assist with transport of things to Inch house
2. Food preparation on the day (a Saturday)
3. To prepare and bring along dishes
4. To join a small planning committee that will probably meet just once.

Please contact the membership secretary (membership@eljic.org) or call the community phone with offers of help.

Rabbi Aaron writes

Dazed & Confused

Purim is such a bizarre *chag* (festival). My mind is constantly reeling at Purim. It reeled as a child when I was overwhelmed by the excitement of dressing-up, the potential of winning prizes next to my usual stage-fright (unjustified because no one ever trusted me with remembering lines!). It reeled as a late teenager when it was the one festival when alcohol was allowed - even encouraged - in abundance. It reeled as a more serious young adult realising for the first time the full import of the final chapters of the Megillah which were always conveniently missed out in our sanitized shul retellings: blood-thirsty revenge as we are told that thousands are slaughtered. Still sort of a young adult, I find my self reeling once more, this time at my new found knowledge that according to the Rabbis, Purim will be the only festival along with Shabbat to survive.

This festival which only scraped into the Canon, was given authenticity by the Rabbis who suggested that all the *chagim* will be cancelled in the messianic future, except for Purim, of which Scripture explicitly states, "These Purim days will not pass away from among the Jews, and their memory will not cease amid their descendents (Esth 9:28)."

I can just about handle this idea, as the Rabbinic idea of the messianic era is one I put down to fantasy rather than fully subscribing to it. But imagine my surprise to find that Purim has, according to the Gerer Rebbe, mystically become the third festival of revelation. On Shavuot the original written Torah was revealed; because its lights were too great for mortals to bear, the tablets had to be broken. Yom Kippur is the day of the second tablets, the Torah as restored by human participation in the revelatory event; it is thus the source of the oral Torah. So far I can understand where the Rebbe was going but...Purim hints at a third level, the revelation of a Torah beyond rules and statutes, Torah as the Tree of Life itself. This Torah is purely mystical, it is the name of God. That which was before the beginning and will finally be revealed only at the end.

My intoxication was in danger of getting on top of me but wait, what is that about a third way for Torah, one of no rules or statutes. This I can understand. The Megillah to me is the ultimate in dysfunction. It is also the ultimate of real life. An amoral world. A ruling power who rules by

expediency. Two examples of peoples that would like to obliterate the other. The use of sexual eroticism, gluttony and drunkardness as tools for moving forward a selfish cause.

Purim and *Yom Kippur* are aligned in name but also in date. Thank God for Yom Kippur that brings us home and into the safety of ourselves. But then, thank God for the realities of Purim, mad perhaps but definitely real, no need for 'reeling' this year. I can see bits of me in the characters and I can certainly see our world in the Megillah story. However, that reality is not without hope. For part of Purim is about realities and realisation. When we are that aware of what our world looks like it that much easier to want to change it and seek ways to do that. Perhaps this Purim may be a new awakening that may even lead to a crescendo on July 2 in Edinburgh.

Rabbi Aaron Goldstein

AGM Report

Our AGM on 30th January was well-attended - almost half the community turned out! - and cheerful, as we reviewed a very successful launch year and looked forward a year of consolidating our achievements as a stable independent community. Whereas a year ago we didn't know if we could even survive independently, the achievements of the year have shown the solid foundations of the community in the trust and mutual confidence we have in one another. New challenges arise from our new position: representation on communal and inter-communal bodies, issues of security, and issues of communication within the community. But the foundations are good.

We regretfully accepted some resignations: Rachel Savage as cheder co-ordinator, and Ricky Hogg as secretary, though he will remain on the council. Liz Goring, Phil Wadler, Colette Lamb, and Rebekah Gronowsky have left the council. We thanked everyone for their work and welcomed Harry Riffkin on to the council.

In recognition of the new level of services that the community is providing, the AGM agreed to increase the membership fee to £200 (unwaged £10). Hardship problems will be handled in strict confidence. Also, we made some amendments to the constitution and we decided to investigate the issue of associate status. The minutes are available on request, or at www.eljc.org/organisation.

Maurice