

# SUKKAT SHALOM EDINBURGH

EDINBURGH LIBERAL JEWISH COMMUNITY

## NOVEMBER 2004



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

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## Shalom!

Welcome to the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community newsletter.

The list of events in this month's newsletter demonstrates that there's plenty to keep you busy, including our first regular Torah service, a Sukkat Shalom kiddush in Glasgow, a 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party, advance notice of Chanukah celebrations and news of births. As Nick Silk mentions in his report on Succot and Simchat Torah services, we are certainly continuing the Jewish tradition here in Edinburgh.

Sukkat Shalom now has an **interactive discussion noticeboard** on the website, [www.eljc.org](http://www.eljc.org) (follow the link for "discussion"). The forum is a fantastic way to keep abreast of news and participate in discussions. For example, there's a notice asking if there is interest in **adult Hebrew lessons**. To express interest post a reply! The forum is password protected for security – contact Maurice to get a password.

The forum will clearly be of greatest value to our community if we actively use it, so I hope you'll log on and check it out!

Thanks to all who have contributed to this newsletter. Contributions to the December newsletter are welcomed by **Monday 22 November** (earlier submissions also accepted!) at [ssedin\\_news@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ssedin_news@yahoo.co.uk).

*Regards, Hannah*

*Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it –Confucius*

## Events

**FRI 5 NOV, 7pm – Erev Shabbat service  
Christ Church Centre, 6a Morningside Road  
(Holy Corner), Morningside**

With family supper. Please bring along a cold dish, there will also be a microwave available.

**SUN 7 NOV, 10am – Edinburgh Jewish  
community Parent-Toddler group**

Please see notice on page 2.

**SUN 14 NOV, 3pm – Cheder**

The venue will be confirmed to cheder parents. Please see notice on page 2.

**THURS 18 NOV, 7.30pm – Council meeting  
5 Derby Street**

All Sukkat Shalom members welcome to attend: please tell Gordon or Liz if you intend to come.

**SAT 20 NOV, 11am – Shabbat service  
St Columba's Church Hall (by the Castle),  
14 Johnstone Terrace**

Our first regular Torah service!

**SUN 21 NOV, 3pm – Birthday Party! Quaker  
Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace**

Celebrate Ida's 90<sup>th</sup> in style! See page 3.

**SUN 28 NOV, 3pm – Cheder**

Adult members of the community needed to talk about their experiences of Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Please see notice on page 2.

**THURS 2 DEC, 7.30pm – Council of  
Christians and Jews**

Please see notice on page 3.

**FRI 3 DEC, 7pm – Erev Shabbat service  
Homeroyal House, 2 Chalmers Crescent**

Please arrive in good time; if you are early press "5" then "4" then "call".

**SAT 11 DEC – Sukkat Shalom visit to  
Glasgow New Synagogue**

Please see notice on page 2.

**SUN 12 DEC, afternoon – Cheder / Chanukah  
Service and Party**

Details will be in the December newsletter and on the website.

## Notices

### Cheder report

The 2004/5 Cheder year started with a well-attended first session on 3 October. Nine children aged 5 to 11 attended. The Cheder is studying the theme of the Jewish life cycle. This year the Cheder, which will meet fortnightly, is being split into groups by age. Stephanie Brickman is working with the younger children while Rachel Savage works with the older group. Hebrew is also being taught for the first time this year. Cheder takes place on Sunday afternoons; forthcoming Cheder dates are: 14 and 28 November and 12 December. For more information, contact Rachel Savage [rbgsavage@gmail.com](mailto:rbgsavage@gmail.com) or 554 3837.

### Want to help with the Cheder?

We need adult members of the community to talk about their experiences of Jewish life cycle events. Later in the academic year, two Cheder lessons will involve panels of adult members talking to the children about what particular life cycle events have meant to them. One panel, on **Bar/Bat Mitzvah**, will take place on the afternoon of Sunday 28 November. The other, on **conversion**, will be on 1 May. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah and/or conversion can be a recent event or longer ago. It would be good for the children to talk to people with a range of different experiences in progressive and more traditional Jewish communities. Don't be shy! Contact Rachel Savage [rbgsavage@gmail.com](mailto:rbgsavage@gmail.com), 554 3837.

### Parent-Toddler group

The Edinburgh Jewish community Parent-Toddler group held its first gathering on 10 October at the Salisbury Road Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Community Centre. About a dozen children, accompanied by their parents, participated. The meeting was a great success with the little ones, with plenty of toys to play with and a group sing-along capping off the morning. The next meeting is **7 November** (10.00am–12.00noon) at the Hebrew Congregation Community Centre (4 Salisbury Road). Members of Sukkat Shalom Edinburgh are invited to take part. For information, please contact either Shari Cohn-Simmen (tel: 667 3047; [shari.cohn@ed.ac.uk](mailto:shari.cohn@ed.ac.uk)) or Avery Meiksin (tel: 447 5883; [aam@roe.ac.uk](mailto:aam@roe.ac.uk)). A small donation will be requested to cover the cost of snacks.

### Can you help identify a Hebrew scroll?

*Stephanie writes:* I had a phone call from a gentleman asking all about Torah scrolls and what they looked like, having seen the article in the *Evening News* about ours. I asked into the background of his interest and to my astonishment he said "Because I think I've got one"! He would like someone to look at it and verify that it is indeed a Torah. Would anyone be interested in doing that? We are setting up a meeting with him in the University. Please contact Sukkat Shalom if you can help.

### BBC Documentary

*Cassian Hall, a Scottish television producer, writes:*

"We are currently researching a three part documentary for the BBC on the immigrant communities of Scotland. I was very interested to discover the website of your particular organisation and thought that within your community there must surely be contributors to the programme. The first programme looks at the Jewish, Lithuanian and Irish communities. The scope of the programme covers not only first generation experiences of arrival in Scotland, but also hopefully the experiences of second and third generation Jewish peoples in Scotland. The idea is that we show not only the fascinating and often dramatic stories of immigration, but also the vibrant, contemporary side of the culture - and its evolution after arrival. We are looking for contributors who can tell us their stories and experiences from within the community. I was interested in your group as you seem to have created a great positive and energetic Jewish community. I think it would be great if we could find a way to illustrate that experience within the programme. Also we hope that when we are looking at personal experiences from many years ago, we may have some sort of archive material (photos and film). Where we are looking at contemporary experience it would be good to film that experience, be it a successful business, a community project or a religious celebration.

I would very much like to talk to you further about the film, and as I myself am Edinburgh based, it would be great to meet members of the community."

*Have you got a story to tell? We'd love to hear from you!*

## (Even more) Events & Notices

### Happy Birthdays!

Sukkat Shalom wish  
**Ida Skubieski**  
and  
**Rachel Savage**  
very Happy Birthdays



### New arrivals!

Mazel Tov to Rachel and Andrew Montague on the birth of Layla on Saturday 16th October

and

congratulations to Ruth (Naftalin) Hendery on the birth of a new grandson, Jack.

### Help us celebrate a special birthday!!

Recently Ida inscribed the final letter to complete the Sukkat Shalom scroll in recognition of her standing as our oldest member. Sukkat Shalom would like to gather to celebrate Ida's 90th birthday and we hope you will join us for her party at 3pm on Sunday 21st November at the Quaker Meeting House on Victoria Terrace.

All offers of help with homebaking and in organising the event are welcomed!

Please contact Rebekah Gronowski:  
[Rebekah@v21.me.uk](mailto:Rebekah@v21.me.uk)

### Hebrew congregation's Chanukah dinner

Sukkat Shalom are invited to the Hebrew congregation's Chanukah dinner at the Salisbury Road community centre on Saturday 18 December. For further details, please contact Doreen Bowman: [bowman@onetel.com](mailto:bowman@onetel.com).

### Limmud conference 2004

Yes, it's that time of the year already! There's something for everyone at the annual Limmud conference, which will take place from Sunday 26 December to Thursday 30 December.

For further information or to book your place please see [www.limmud.org](http://www.limmud.org) or write to:  
Limmud, Lancaster House, 105 Brook Road, London NW2 7BZ (tel: 020 8438 6555).

### Sponsored Kiddush in Glasgow

We decided at the last council meeting to make a community visit to Glasgow one Shabbat, with as many people going as possible to say "thank you" to GNS by sponsoring a kiddush. If we all chip in it could be a really good one! The date we have agreed is December 11th. At the next council meeting we will discuss hiring a minibus. If we do, details will be in the December newsletter and on the website.

### Christ Church Morningside – Sukkat Shalom representative for 23 November?

On Tuesday 23rd Nov at 7.30pm, Christ Church Morningside are having a service to mark the installation of their new Rector. They have been in contact to find out if we could send along a representative from the community. As we intend to use their premises in the future (and from a PR point of view), it would be good to have representation as would send out the message that the Liberal Jewish Community are a presence in Edinburgh. (A big plus for anyone who is interested... there is food afterwards - yum!)

Please let Ricky know if you would like to attend as soon as possible, as the invitation will need to be posted out to you. We only need one representative.

### The Council of Christians and Jews

The CCJ 2004-5 programme is now available. The next two Edinburgh events are:

**Thursday 2 December, 7.30pm:** Dr Margaret Brearley, Honorary Advisor on the Holocaust to the Archbishop's Council of the Chair of the Church of England and is Chairman of Daphna WIZO in London. She will also be speaking ti Edinburgh WIZO on 1 December.

**Thursday 3 February, 7.30pm:** *The Theology of the Land* - debate, Professor David Fergusson (Professor of Divinity, New College) and Rabbi David Rose. Hear different points of view and share in a discussion on the interpretation of Biblical promises.

Both meetings will be held at 4 Salisbury Road and are followed with tea and biscuits – no charge is made but donations are welcomed. Help with transport is available.

For further details please contact:  
[MichelineHBrannan@msn.com](mailto:MichelineHBrannan@msn.com) or [www.ccj.com](http://www.ccj.com)

## Notices continued...

### LJY-Netzer weekend

There is a Nechalim and Mayanot weekend for 12–14 year olds, on 19–21 November in Birmingham. For further details please contact Maurice.

### Friends of Progressive Judaism in Israel and Europe

*Jane Greenfield – Chairman of “The Friends” – writes:*

If you are anything like I used to be when there was mention of “The Friends” at any meeting, I just switched off. Well, I really had very little idea of what they did. I knew they raised money for Israel and Europe; it was in the name after all, but had I no idea how.

When I was Chairman of Southgate Progressive Synagogue I attended a “Friends” AGM and to my surprise thought this committed group of people do a really great job. After all, to raise in the region of £34000 in one year is no mean feat. It would be quite something if our shuls could do that with all their manpower, yet this little enthusiastic band managed to do it on their own.

Before I knew what had happened I was asked to join the committee. Did I say yes, or was that someone else called Jane? And then as if that wasn't enough I ended up as Chairman! Well I must admit that I am still on a huge learning curve, but it's getting better all the time.

The “Friends” are the only group that raise money exclusively for Progressive communities in Israel and Europe. We never recover more than the associated costs and don't have costly offices to maintain.

Currently, we have a Bar/Batmitzvah project running that we are in the course of introducing into all the LJ religion schools. The aim is to help as many underprivileged 13 year olds as possible to celebrate the most important of life cycle events. Without the help of the “Friends”, many families could not afford for their children to be Bar/Batmitzvah.

Get to know more about what we do by making contact with us. We would be delighted to hear from you. You can call me on 020 8440 3538 or [jane.greenfield@lineone.net](mailto:jane.greenfield@lineone.net)

## Funnies

### The davening dog

Hymie walks into his synagogue with a dog. The shammass immediately comes up to him and says, "This is a House of Worship, Hymie, you know you can't bring a dog in here."

"What do you mean I can't?" says Hymie, "Look at him, he's a Jewish dog."

The shammass then notices that the dog has a tallis bag round its neck. Hymie says to the dog, "Benjamin, daven for me."

The dog stands on his back legs and says, "Woof woof, woof," then opens the tallis bag, takes out a kippa and puts it on his head, exactly in between its ears. "Woof, woof," says the dog who then pulls out a tallis and puts it round his neck. "Woof, woof, woof," says the dog who then takes out a siddur and starts to pray, rocking from side to side.

"That's brilliant," says the shammass, "totally incredible. You must get him on TV and the movies and you could make millions."

"You speak to him then," says Hymie, "he wants to be a doctor."

### Daniel in the lion's den

Daniel is a Jewish actor who's so down and out that he's ready to accept any part that comes along. One day he sees an advert in the Jewish Chronicle, ACTOR NEEDED TO PLAY A GORILLA. The employer turns out to be the local zoo who have spent so much renovating the grounds and improving the habitat that they can't afford the gorilla they need. Until they can get more funding, they've decided to use an actor in a gorilla suit. Needing the money, Daniel takes the job.

At first, he feels not only dishonest by fooling the customers but also undignified in the ape suit, stared at by crowds who watch his every move. But after a few days on the job, he begins to be amused by all the attention and starts to put on a show for the spectators - hanging upside-down from the branches, swinging on vines, climbing up cage walls and roaring whilst beating his chest. Soon, Daniel is drawing a sizable crowd.

One day, when Daniel is swinging on a vine to show off to some children, his hand slips and he flies over the wall into the lion's den. Terrified, Daniel backs up as far as he can from the approaching lion, covers his eyes with his paws and starts to pray aloud, "Shma Yisrael Ado-nai Elokeinu Adonai Echad."

The lion opens its powerful jaws and roars, "Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va'ed."

"Be quiet you two schmucks," mutters a panda from a third cage. "You'll get us all fired."

## Reports

### Succoth and Simchat Torah services

After the great success of our High Holyday services, we had our Succoth and Simchat Torah services soon afterwards. This is not unusual – in fact, Succoth and Simchat Torah occur soon afterwards every year!! For various reasons – particularly that we were struggling to get a suitable venue – we held our Succoth service on the third evening of the festival, which was also an Erev Shabbat service. The service was held at St Columba's and as is now traditional – well, this was at least the second year – Gordon put up the scaffolding (sounds more impressive than string!!) for the succah in the garden at the back of the hall. We had allowed ourselves a couple of hours to build the succah but it was all complete within an hour and once again I think we did a fine job. We had plenty of greenery and fruit, and while I don't know that it would have provided accommodation for the duration of Succoth in Edinburgh in October, it served us well.

The Succoth service itself was pretty well attended. I personally had wondered how many people would attend the service after the 'rigours' of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but while I didn't count I'm sure we had over 30 people. Since it was a Shabbat, we were able to use the normal Erev Shabbat prayer books for the majority of the service.

As ever, Succoth was quickly followed by Simchat Torah, and the following Wednesday evening we had our service at the Friends' Meeting House. As seems to be the way, without any great amount of planning, the accompaniments of the service were provided by members of the community – so for Simchat Torah we had lots of sweets. Considering how many sweets there were at the start of the evening, I think most of the children would have been able to set up a tuck shop at their schools the next day. Either that or they wouldn't have been at school the next day if they ate them all themselves. Anyway, the service went really well and much fun was had by all. Several people mentioned that this was the first time they had been to a Simchat Torah service for years, and how they had enjoyed it. For my part, being in the position of taking the service, I was able – for this one service anyway – to make up the rules, which was that everyone had to join in with the singing. I don't know why, but this seemed to cause great amusement amongst some members when I lead by

example but did I worry? No! We were there to enjoy ourselves, and I did. So, I think that's another tradition we now have, although maybe someone will 'get to me' before next year. The other highlight of the service was being able to use our scroll and parade it round. I think some of us were a bit nervous about how it would stand up to the rigours of Simchat Torah, and we certainly had to be careful when we were rolling it, but it was fine, and it was really good to be able to parade it round knowing that it belongs to our community.

We've got our scroll, we're holding the services – yes, I think we can confidently say that we are continuing our Jewish tradition here in Edinburgh.

*Nick Silk*

### Council meeting

The Council met for the first time on 7 October. Full minutes are available via the website ([www.eljc.org](http://www.eljc.org)).

Working groups were set up, with the following convenors:

**Burial** – G Barclay; **cheder** – R Savage; **scroll** – G Raab; **welfare** – S Green and S Lieberman; **religious affairs** – N Silk

The following individuals were appointed:

**PR** – Stephanie Brickman  
**Membership Secretary** – Gillian Raab  
**Security** – Gordon Barclay, deputy – Marjorie Broadie  
**Newsletter Editor** – Hannah Kenner  
**Handbook Editor** – Gordon Barclay  
**Edinburgh Interfaith** – Stewart Green  
**Social/Fundraising** – People to be asked to volunteer to run specific events via the newsletter.  
**Archivist** – Ida Skubieski

We discussed representation to Liberal Judaism, the Board of Deputies, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, and the Scottish Parliament cross-party grouping, but we don't yet have enough information to appoint anyone.

Council meetings will be held every third Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. All members of the community are welcome to attend and speak.

## Letters

I am sorry that Avery Meiksin (October newsletter) is disappointed about our choice of charities to support via the Kol Nidre Appeal. He feels that it was inappropriate to give support to "Windows for Peace", as a political organisation. I disagree: I think you will find that it specifically says it is NOT political in its aims – I have looked very carefully at their website and find, to the contrary, that by its very nature it cannot be political. To quote from their website:

"We are Jews and Palestinians from both sides of the Green Line working together to promote acquaintance, understanding and reconciliation between both peoples through educational programs, media and art. *Windows is a non-profit organization and not affiliated with any political body.* Our activity is based on voluntary work and funded mostly by donations." (My emphasis)

In fact, I fail to see how organisations striving to develop peace and reconciliation, whether it be between Muslims, Arabs, Palestinians, Jews and Israelis in Israel or between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, can possibly be labelled as 'politically-orientated'! Too often we hear of the strife and disruption going on in troubled areas, we do NOT hear enough of the good being done by organisation such as 'Windows for Peace', or the orchestra of Arab and Jewish young musicians founded by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim – initiatives that help to promote understanding between Arab and Jewish children.

As a Liberal Jewish community we should be helping to support these initiatives. OK, we may be seen to be 'sticking our necks out' and 'making waves' – I think we should be doing just that! I think we should be seen as a forward-looking Jewish Community in embracing all the ethical approaches to peace-building in the world – and giving to organisations such as these in part of those ethics.

Avery suggests instituting a Tisha B'Av appeal as an alternative to using the Kol Nidre appeal for political causes. It seems odd to suggest a memorial day that is little observed by the non-Orthodox, and I certainly would not be happy if our community was to support any politically-orientated body – the essence of what we are about should be totally divorced from politics. You cannot build bridges from a political standpoint! Bridge-building is about reconciling two sides of an argument – in order to do that we must remain neutral. We may have personal political views on issues, but if we are to work effectively for Tikkun Olam then we must be sympathetic to all sides of the arguments and seek a way of reconciling the two.

Many of our community have either lived in Israel and seen it first hand or have family living there now – we are all concerned about Israeli politics and how the rest of the world see this – we can only try to improve things by what little we can do.

I want to thank Avery for highlighting this issue. In the spirit of Shalom/Salaam,

**Rebekah Gronowski**

Dear Hannah

Avery Meiksin raises some interesting points in his letter. I should reply because the "Windows for Peace" (Wfp) donation was originally my proposal. I have two main points of difference with him.

First, let me take his main argument head on, that WfP is associated with people who hold political views we may not like. Though I disagree with him on the detail of what he says (I have written about this on the forum), he is right in principle: the WfP website says

"Among WfP members there are people who support a two-state solution and others that would prefer to live in one state. There are Zionists and anti-Zionists, supporters and objectors to the right of return etc. Windows is not about reaching an agreement – it's about an active listening to each other and a real attempt to understand."

So should we label WfP as "political" (i.e. unsuitable) because it admits to political differences among its members? I would reply "no" to this question. WfP is only being open about differences of view which exist within all Israeli organisations to which we might contribute. And this is good – we can't praise Israel as an open democracy and at the same time blackball everyone who expresses an opinion we don't like. Our opinions are not really what will count anyway: in the end, it's for the people of Israel and Palestine to reach their own peaceful solutions. What we can do is to support organisations like WfP and so help promote the discussion and eventual reconciliation that need to take place for these solutions to be found.

Second, Avery believes that the Kol Nidre appeal should be for the poor and destitute, particularly within Israel. Again he has a good point, but one reason why I proposed a coexistence organisation for our support was to avoid that very point. Who are the most poor and destitute in Israel today? That, of course, depends on how you define "Israel" – and that's a question that we *really* shouldn't be trying to decide for our Kol Nidre appeal! The Zionist Organisation of America, which Avery quotes with approval, opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state – meaning that Israel would go on, as at present, controlling the West Bank and Gaza. The deprivation in these areas is awful: the World Bank estimates that 60% of the population are subsisting at or below a poverty level of \$2 per day. When we think about helping the poor and destitute of Israel, can we really just turn our gaze aside from the terrible suffering that this figure represents?

Having disagreed with Avery so far, I'm happy to say that I think the idea of an appeal around Tisha B'Av is interesting and thought-provoking (though from a practical viewpoint I wish Tisha B'Av wasn't in the middle of the summer holidays!) I would support thinking about this some more.

**Maurice Naftalin**