

SUKKAT SHALOM

EDINBURGH LIBERAL JEWISH COMMUNITY

OCTOBER 2004



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www.ssedin.org

Shanah Tovah!

Best wishes to all for a happy and a sweet year. We have had a busy month – the siyyum was followed by our general meeting, with the big news of our decision to affiliate to Liberal Judaism, and then the High Holy Day services. By the time you read this, we will be in the midst of Sukkot, and after Simchat Torah we will have a chance to draw breath.

The time ahead is still exciting and challenging, though. The community has got off to a tremendous start in the six months since we decided for independence. Many of the elements of a living community have been put in place. Now the challenge is to build on those foundations and sustain our warmth and cohesion in a more routine period.

It's not entirely routine, though. One decision that we have already informally taken is to start holding regular monthly Shabbat services, halfway between our existing Erev Shabbat services.. This really does feel like a heartbeat speeding up – truly something is coming to life. In the past I would have been concerned as to whether we could sustain regular Shabbat services, but after the wonderful attendances at the High Holy Day services I have no doubts. We are hoping that Rabbi Aaron Goldstein, who provided such inspiration then, will be able to join us for many of these services.

As you can gather from the lateness of this newsletter – apologies! – it's not been Hannah or Ricky doing it this month. Normal service will resume next month. In the meantime, let me take the opportunity of thanking everyone who has been involved in organising for this amazing month. It's been a truly exceptional effort, with truly exceptional results! We go forward with high hopes.

Best regards
Maurice

Events

FRI 1 OCT, 6pm (Sukkah building from 4pm)
Sukkot Service
St Columba's Church Hall, Johnston Terrace

Sukkah construction begins at 4pm, service begins at 6pm. Bring along foliage and fruit!

WED 6 OCT, 7pm
Simchat Torah Service
Quaker Meeting House, Victoria Terrace

Bring along flags, noisemakers, and sweets! (and the RSGB Pilgrim Festival machzor, if you have one)

THURS 7 OCT, 7.30pm
Council
5 Derby Street, Edinburgh

This is the first meeting of our newly-elected council which will now take over the community's day-to-day business. Please note that **all** community members are entitled to attend and speak. The agenda will be on the website beforehand: www.ssedin.org

FRI 5 NOV, 7pm
Erev Shabbat Service
Venue: to be announced

SAT 20 NOV, 11am
Shabbat Service
Venue: to be announced

*The world is sustained by three things:
By justice, by truth, and by peace.*

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel

Reports

Siyyum

The siyyum was a great success, with more than 100 people witnessing the completion of scroll, which will now take centre stage in our services. The audience included our community and our friends, representatives from other religions, and council and Parliament members. We got a clear and engaging explanation of the ceremony from Marc, the *sofer* (scribe), who had repaired the scroll, and afterwards gave a thoughtful and entertaining *d'var torah*.

Music was an important part of the day: the scroll was piped in, Rabbi Nancy Morris chanted the Torah portion, and after kiddush we enjoyed our afternoon tea to the accompaniment of Celtica Schmeltica.

Afterwards we were delighted by our excellent press coverage in the Evening News, the Herald, the Jewish Chronicle and the Jewish Telegraph. There is a page on our website with links to the press coverage, and lots of pictures and articles, including Marc's *d'var torah*.

Lindsay Levy writes:

After months of wondering if just one more meeting or one more Word document I couldn't open would finally push me over the edge into apostasy or homicide, the great day arrived, and it was wonderful!

What a warm and welcoming community we are! I think the scroll will be very happy with us. Many congratulations to everyone who worked so hard to make the day so memorable for us and for our guests.

Clare Hogg writes

Arriving at the Friends Meeting House on a beautiful autumn afternoon and seeing members of the community there preparing for 'the big day' it struck me what a well oiled machine this community seemed to be. Sure, there was some frantic ordering of duties heard and some logistical issues to attend to but do you know what - there was such a good buzz and feeling of anticipation that it added to the excitement and the sense that there was no other place to be at that point in time than there.

Retreating to the back of the room to keep the children out the way and let people get on with their jobs, I enjoyed watching people come in with smiles on their faces, the preparations

being made, photographs being taken and the room fill up to bursting point. With Jason by my side and Hannah on my knee, they proudly watched their Daddy hold a pole for the chuppah while both trying to be on 'best' behaviours. Thank goodness all other parents with small children gravitated to same area as us so I didn't feel too bad when Hannah wanted to walk around scattering raisins everywhere and Jason wanted to stand on a chair to see Daniel write on the scroll.

The food, the atmosphere, the hospitality and sense of occasion will be with me for a while yet. Good luck Sukkat Shalom!

General Meeting

A week after the siyyum we met again to make some of the decisions we had postponed from the AGM. A long and serious meeting (broken by supper, of course!) got through a lot of work:

Burial ground: We chose the Dean cemetery.

Affiliation: This was a very thoughtful discussion, which covered a lot of ground (notes of the meeting will be on the website soon, or available on paper). In the end the discussion centred on issues of identity and inclusion, and on that basis we resolved to affiliate to Liberal Judaism, 21 people voting in favour with 5 abstentions.

Membership fees: We agreed to £65 as the full rate for the second half-year (July – Dec 2004).

English name: Sukkat Shalom Edinburgh is now also the **Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community**.

Constitution: The most important amendments passed were to forbid non-members (of the community) being co-opted to the Council and to reinforce the rights of all members to attend Council meetings. We also cleared the way to creating an associate status for non-members, but any scheme will need the approval of a General Meeting.

Elections:

Chairman: Maurice Naftalin
Secretary: Ricky Hogg
Treasurer: Jonathan Broadie
Council (12): Gordon Barclay, Josh Brickman, Marjory Broadie, Liz Goring, Stewart Green, Rebekah Gronowski, Colette Lamb, Stephanie Noblett, Gillian Raab, Rachel Savage, Nick Silk, Phil Wadler

Reports (continued)

High Holy Days

Our first High Holy Day services were a great success. They were led beautifully by Rabbi Aaron Goldstein assisted at many points by lay readers from the congregation. We are extremely grateful to Rabbi Aaron for all his help and to all our members who worked so hard to make the services run smoothly. We even got compliments on our singing!

The attendance for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur was excellent – more than fifty people on each occasion. Taschlich after the Rosh Hashanah service and a communal meal after Yom Kippur gave a lighter social aspect in contrast to the solemnity of the services.

Notices

Lost property

A red necklace, found after the siyyum.

Welfare

If you are interested in helping to get a welfare function started, please contact Sue Lieberman (through our secretary Ricky)

Membership and Donations

Membership letters are going out for the second half of the year. If you are not a member, please consider contributing to our expenses.

Edinburgh WIZO

Sylvia Donne has asked us to let readers know about Edinburgh WIZO (Women's Zionist Organisation) which has a busy programme of activity, the first event being a ladies' lunch on 13th October. More details of the programme are on the website, or from Sylvia on 447 2947.

White velvet on the net

Between the siyyum, when we acquired our new scroll, and the first day of Rosh Hashanah there were a mere eleven days. The scroll is fine, but its mantle was not in the greatest shape and a bit too long. Besides, doesn't every self-respecting scroll need a white outfit for High Holydays? About six of the eleven days had passed before it dawned on me I should do something about this. So with five days to go the search for a suitable length of white velvet to make the new torah mantle began.

First a trip round all the Edinburgh outlets for furnishing fabrics – 'Sorry, no demand'. An order would take ten days to three weeks. Next stop was the Internet. A Google search for 'white velvet' yielded lots of interesting things: miniature poodles sired by a stud called Aladyn of White Velvet Dreams, white velvet paper, white velvet vodka. There were even white velvet yarmulka's to be had from the world's largest yarmulka store (www.skullcap.com). But the only white velvet outlet was a manufacturer in Bradford who might have supplied us had they not decided to give up making white velvet, in favour of cream, this last year!

So our scroll has had to be content with a less luxurious fabric, offset by some very fancy satin lining. But the search did produce something good. Enjoy this recipe!

Small white velvet cakes

Ingredients:

4 egg whites, at room temperature; 1 cup caster sugar; grated rind one orange; 175grams butter, softened; 3 cups self rising flour, sifted; 1 cup white chocolate chips; 1 cup milk

juice 2 oranges; $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar

250 grams chopped white chocolate; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cream

Method

1. Beat the egg whites and sugar together until thick and the consistency of thickened cream. Beat in the butter and orange rind.
2. Carefully fold in the flour, chocolate chips and milk. Spoon into 8 well-greased small cake tins.
3. Bake at 180°C for approximately 25 minutes until the cake is cooked. Allow to stand in the tins for 10 minutes before pouring 2 tablespoons of orange syrup (see below) over each cake. Cool and then store in an airtight container. Decorate with the white chocolate ganache and sugar syrup soaked slices of orange.

Orange Syrup

1. Stir over a low heat until dissolved.

White Chocolate Ganache

2. Place 250 grams chopped white chocolate in a bowl with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cream and microwave for 1-2 minutes on high power until the chocolate has almost melted. Stir until smooth. Allow to cool to a spreading consistency before using.

Gillian

Letter

Dear Nick and Maurice

I'm writing to express my disappointment over the proposed charities decided upon by the Steering Group for this year's Kol Nidre appeal. While all are likely worthy causes, conspicuous by its absence is any charity offering assistance to the needy within Israel. The 'Windows' organisation I don't regard as a suitable substitute. I feel the priority for a Kol Nidre appeal should be to help the poor and destitute. To draw a parallel, I would be unhappy if a politically-oriented group within the UK, for instance one seeking reconciliation between religious groups in Northern Ireland (worthy as the cause is), were chosen instead of one that helps to alleviate the daily suffering of the unfortunate or disadvantaged, as does an organisation like Capability Scotland. Israel has many such charities. These charities can hope to receive little assistance from outside Israel except from Jewish communities like ours. For this reason I believe that some such charity, or group of charities, should be an essential part of any Jewish community's Kol Nidre appeal.

A further concern I have over choosing a political organisation like 'Windows' is that I believe it sets a poor precedent for a Kol Nidre appeal. Political organisations always run the risk of being controversial. It may seem difficult to understand how there could be any controversy over an organisation like 'Windows.' I believe it very likely, and hope, that every member of Sukkat Shalom would recognise the bringing together of Israeli and Palestinian teenagers in the name of peace as a worthy cause. The achievements of 'Windows' indeed appear encouraging. But knowing very little about the organisation, it's difficult to judge. For instance, are there any political messages -- other than the search for peace -- being delivered to the teenagers who participate? That 'Windows' is affiliated with the New Israel Fund (NIF) I do not regard as a good sign. Originally conceived as an umbrella organisation to seek funding for charities promoting peace and reconciliation within Israel and with its neighbours, NIF today supports several organisations that are detrimental to these goals. For instance, the Zionist Organization of America reports (24 August 2004) that the director of the youth division of "School of Peace," an affiliate of the NIF, recently stated in an interview to Ha'aretz, on the topic of allowing the entry of millions of Palestinian refugees into

Israel, "I don't know who will want to return, but whoever wants to -- let them return -- and if the result is that there will not be a Jewish state, then there won't." The anti-Israel nature of several of the NIF affiliates has prompted concern within Israel, and has even led to the resignation of several of its members. While the achievements of 'Windows' may be entirely constructive, I am concerned that they maintain their affiliation with NIF.

I can well understand the desire to support an organisation that promotes Mideast peace. I personally feel the frustration of the turmoil, as I have many family members living in Israel. May I suggest as an alternative to using the Kol Nidre appeal for seeking support for political causes, to institute a Tisha B'Av appeal? This traditional memorial day normally is of little interest to the non-Orthodox, as it commemorates the fall of the Temple attributed to the sins of our ancestors (as emphasized by Jeremiah and Ezekiel). But the destruction of the Temple only concluded a process begun with the civil war between Israel and Judah and the political corruption and blunders that followed. Before Jeremiah was Hosea, who warned Israel (Ephraim), when caught between the wars of Egypt and Assyria, against putting faith in ill-considered political strategies instead of the Torah: "Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, Calling to Egypt, going to Assyria... They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, Because they have refused to return to Me." (Hosea 7:11, 11:5). Jeremiah and Ezekiel similarly warned Judah after the fall of Israel against following delusory policies. (Particularly poignant is Ezekiel 23.) In the spirit of opposing political forces that show disregard for justice and morality, I believe a Tisha B'Av drive or event could provide a valued forum for members of our community to voice their concerns over Israeli politics (or indeed world politics) and advocate the causes of particular political NGOs.

I hope that next year's Kol Nidre appeal will give priority to the needs of the most unfortunate. I believe the Sudan appeal was especially a good choice. I'm sorry for not being able to voice these views at the EGM or prior to Yom Kippur. I would also like to add that I thought the Kol Nidre ceremony itself was well done, and one I found personally meaningful.

Avery Meiksin

[Editor's note: read about "Windows for Peace" on www.win-peace.org. Discussion on Avery's letter would be welcome]