

Etrøg

Summer 5786



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A Word from the Revolving Chair

Han Smith

What would it mean to live
in a city whose people were changing
each other's despair into hope? –
You yourself must change it. –
what would it feel like to know
your country was changing? –
You yourself must change it. –
Though your life felt arduous
new and unmapped and strange
what would it mean to stand on the first
page of the end of despair?

Adrienne Rich, *Dreams Before Waking* (1983)

As June fades to July, I am honoured to write to each of you as the rotating chair for the Summer 5786 edition of *Etrog*. June is Pride month, and this Pride feels different to recent ones. I notice fewer flags and banners across Edinburgh, fewer shops, cafes and businesses signalling that they welcome LGBTQ+ individuals.

Simultaneously, there is a seeming increase in transphobic rhetoric displayed in the form of stickers on streetlamps or comments on posts. The other

day, a friend said to me, “it must be difficult to have an identity that is hyper visible, and one which everyone expects you to speak loudly on.”

I laughed; queerness is not the only identity I have which demands this. In fact, as Jews, I suspect many of you readers may also resonate with my friend's statement. When I thought more about what it means to hold identities so heavily discussed, politicised, and scrutinised in present life, I considered the vulnerability,

despair and confusion that (at least for me) can accompany it. I find it difficult to be asked to act as a spokesperson; in fact, I've even started to write this piece, deleted it and begun again numerous times. When hope is difficult to find, it can be paralyzing.

To make matters worse, in the age of social media, many issues are presented as simplistic and binary: "Are you pro-transgender rights or are you pro-protecting women and girls (cisgender ones, they mean)?" and "Are you pro-Israel or are you pro-Palestine?" What these questions fail to acknowledge is that the answer does not need to be a binary. Instead, we can choose to value each human life, to uphold the right to autonomy and healthcare, to do the hard work to build a more peaceful and just world.

Pride reminds me of the importance of asking these questions. Yet, perhaps even more, it reminds me to strive for a future in which one person's safety and wellbeing is not pitted against another's.

This work can be isolating. I feel heartbroken when I come across a news article that refers

to a transgender person in a dehumanizing, objectifying way. I feel scared when I see issues impacting human lives treated like a sports match with winning and losing sides.

But, when I look closely, I also feel hopeful. I see brave, empathetic individuals doing the careful, community-based work to bridge the divide. Occasionally, I'll even get to be part of such work. More than once, someone who has never met a transgender person has asked me about my experiences, listened closely, and understood something they once did not.

This Pride month, the world feels extra messy, extra scary and extra uncertain. At times, I'm frightened for what is unfolding in the present and what the future will bring. However, when I turn towards my communities, queer and Jewish, I am struck with hope for what, together, hand-in-hand, we can build. Adrienne Rich, a Jewish lesbian writer and poet, captured it when she asked, "Though your life felt arduous, new and unmapped and strange, what would it mean to stand on the first page of the end of despair?"

Festivals
Shavuot
6th-7th Sivan 5786
21st-22nd May 2026

Sue Bard



“Honey and milk are under
your tongue.”

Song of Songs 4:11.

One of the many beautiful aspects of Liberal Judaism is its innovative liturgy. This Shavuot we unearthed our Haggadot shel Shavuot to hold a Shavuot Seder, led by Rabbi Mark. The first Shavuot

haggadah was written by Liberal Judaism’s great liturgist Rabbi John Rayner over sixty years ago, inspired by both the Pesach Haggadah and by the medieval, kabbalistic custom of Tikkun Leyl, the spending of Shavuot night studying biblical and rabbinic passages.

These new haggadot bring

together the texts about the agrarian origins of the holiday and its associations with the Revelation at Mount Sinai. As a celebration without much festive ritual, Shavuot invites creativity. A striking example of this is the Shavuot Seder plate that presents the five symbols to which the Torah is compared: water, wine, honey, milk and oil.

This May, around sixty Sukkat Shalom members, friends and visitors gathered to read the haggadah together and to share a customary dairy-rich meal (the reasons for this are not clear, though the results are delicious).



One of our visitors, a US student called Yoni Perla (pictured above at the awe-inspiring Forcan Ridge in the Northwest Highlands), took a break from backpacking around Scotland to join us:

“Thank you for reaching out, but more importantly thank you for welcoming me into the Sukkat Shalom community. I truly enjoyed your Shavuot gathering. The intergenerational

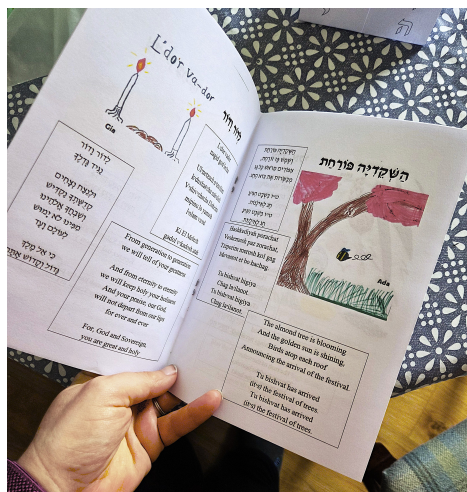


makeup of your community really struck me. Our one table spanned all generations and yet did not feel segmented in any manner to me. I loved that. And I found the Seder quite interesting, especially since I had never taken part in a Shavuot Seder. I found some of the text we explored quite compelling, particularly the Midrash as I had not

encountered many of them before and plan to return to some of them for further study. Studying Torah, as we learned, is a personal, reflective, but most importantly endlessly evolving process. The Shavuot Seder, to me, was a new and engaging rung in that evolutionary ladder.”

Festivals

Cheder's Tu B'shvat Project



At our Shabbat morning service on May 23rd, our youngest members (our Cheder students) presented their very own songbook, *Tikkun Olam*.

They were accompanied by Sukkat Shalom member Rachel Smith, a violinist with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and mother of Elise and Nora. The songbook was created by the students, each one having chosen their favorite Jewish

song and beautifully illustrated a page for it. The words of each song were printed in Hebrew, its transliteration, and English. To make the morning even more special, each child individually dedicated the song on their page to a community member who was attending the service.

Thank you Cheder for this wonderful and unique gift. We will all cherish it.

Bat Mitzvah Tamara Kandlik Eltanani



Our community was delighted to join the Kandlik Eltanani family, Yakir, Mor, Tamara and Danielle in celebrating Tamara's bat mitzvah. Tamara's maternal grandparents and aunt, Eyal, Yael and Carmel were with us from Israel, and her paternal grandparents and aunt, Shlomo, Shoshana and Hedva joined us on Zoom from Ashdod

in Israel. The service and the party that followed were joyous, exuberant and filled with music, much of it supplied by Tamara and Danielle.

Tamara delivered a compelling D'var Torah on Numbers 22: 21 - 35 (featuring Balak the Moabite king, his hired soothsayer Balaam and his talking ass) which you can read [here](#).

Shabbat shalom everyone.
First of all, I would like to thank you all for coming today, whether it is from Edinburgh, somewhere else in Scotland, or Israel. I would like to specially thank Rabbi Mark for teaching me, it has been amazing. I would also like to especially thank my parents and sister, for supporting me this entire time.

Today I will be reading from the book of numbers, chapter 22 verses 21-35. This story is about Bilaam, a famous soothsayer, who was hired by the Moabite king Balak to curse the Israelites. In the end he did not manage to curse them, instead he had to bless them against the Moabite king's wishes. His blessings included the famous passage that we read at the start of every morning service:

מִה טֹבֹו אֹהֲלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכָּנֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

How good are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel!

The part I will be reading today happens a bit after the

beginning of the story, in which Bilaam is on his journey to curse the Israelites.

While Bilaam is riding his donkey, God sends an angel. The angel stands in front of Bilaam, with a sword drawn in their hand. The donkey then turns from the angel. Bilaam, not seeing the angel, beats the donkey. The donkey objects loudly. God opens Bilaam's eyes, and he sees the angel for the first time, and only then does Bilaam understand why the donkey turned from the path. Bilaam bows down to the angel. The angel tells him that he can keep going, but he must only say what God tells him. For some context, before Bilaam agrees to try to curse the Israelites, Balak had to work hard to convince him. He starts off by sending a group of ministers, to ask Bilaam if he would curse the Israelites. Bilaam then asks God, and God refuses. Bilaam sent the ministers back. Afterwards Balak sent even more important ministers, and they ask again. Bilaam asks God again, and this time god says:

“if you must, you may go, but you can only say what I tell you.” This shows that even though Bilaam already knew that he could only say what God told him to say, God sent the angel to humble Bilaam rather than remind him.

This week’s haftarah is Micah chapter 1 verses 1-8. In this passage the prophet asks the question: what do we have to do to please God? Micah asks: should we offer sacrifices? Maybe give God rivers of oil? He answers that what God really requires of us is to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

One thing I think we can learn from this week’s portion, is that no matter whether you are a world leader, or a lowly donkey, everyone is important, regardless of their standing in life. Sometimes even a wise person cannot see the threat standing in front of them, while a simple animal can see it clearly.

An interesting question from

my parasha, is why the donkey moved from the path. From my perspective, there are two ways of thinking about it: either the donkey moved because she thought she was saving herself, or she moved to save Bilaam. I think that she moved to save Bilaam because the sword was pointed at Bilaam, and she has known Bilaam her entire life. This also connects to how we need to listen and respect everyone. Everyone has valuable insights and knowledge, and even a donkey can show empathy to its owner. As Ben Zoma said in the Mishnah: Who is wise? One who learns from every person. No one should discriminate against someone because everyone has worth, even if it might be hidden.

I think that as I get older and take more leadership roles, I should keep in mind how important it is to listen to everyone’s point of view. Thank you for listening to my point of view today.

Introducing...

Darcy Leigh

Leo Kaminski



You've been a member of Sukkat Shalom for about a year now. When we first met, you said you were living between Brighton and Edinburgh. How did you get into that situation?

I moved to Edinburgh when I was 19 for university, and essentially I have never left. That was twenty-one years ago;

in 2016, I got an academic job at the University of Sussex and began commuting. As the years went on, being split between two places became unbearable. All my time and energy was spent travelling or working, and I found it hard to do things I wanted to do, like invest consistently in one Jewish community or deepen my own Jewish knowledge and practice!

I loved my job at Sussex but in 2025 I decided it was time for the next phase of my life and to regroup fully in Edinburgh. I'm now leaving my job at Sussex, 100% in Edinburgh and soon to be unemployed!

***Mazel tov!* What's your field of research, and are you trying to leave academia entirely?**

I worked in a law school, but my background is in international relations. There's a crossover around international human rights law, which is my field. Most of my research is about the limits of human rights as a framework for liberation, and about how British colonialism has shaped rights movements. The legacies of colonialism show up as entrenched prejudices in both right- and left-wing visions of human rights, but there are also lots of activists finding creative ways to subvert or reimagine rights!

I love being an academic. I'm lucky to have had wonderful colleagues and a lot of freedom

to pursue my interests. But I am ready for whatever is next.

What are you going to do next?

I'm still figuring that out, but top of my list is to finish learning Biblical Hebrew, which I've been unable to do for the last ten years because I've been working so hard.

When and where did you start learning Hebrew?

I've done the same beginner's Hebrew course that every synagogue seems to run many times! I have more experience with the sorts of Hebrew and Aramaic in the Talmud from queer Talmud studies: I studied with Queer Yeshiva, and spent one year teaching with them. They have this incredible teaching method developed by an organisation called SVARA, which empowers pretty much anyone with their alef-bet to develop their own interpretation of the original text. It's also really fun.

However, because you dig so deep into every word (every word is thrilling!), I need to do some more work on quicker general comprehension, and on reading Torah especially...

How else are you going to spend your hard-won free time?

Another part of my life is to do with DIY cultural production, like zines. I co-run a tiny press, called Easter Road Press, from my living room with my girlfriend. A lot of what we do is sharing information and stories related to trans health. We're committed to old-school zine aesthetics and principles: we like to make things with our hands, we don't like to overprice or professionally print them, we don't make them feel too shiny. A few years ago we ran a big fundraiser, raising £30,000 for trans healthcare.

Do you combine zine-making with your Jewish practice?

There are inevitably little bits of Jewishness in everything I do. For example, when I made a zine called *boi tits*, one thing it dealt with was the BRCA gene mutation that is common in Ashkenazi families and how that intersected for me with both Jewish womanhood and transmasculine feelings. My zine about archiving butch history traces one history of butchness through Jewish writing and culture. In the last year I've been making zines that focus more centrally on Judaism, mostly for myself. One is titled *Is Hashem Stone?*. I've also made some to mark Jewish holidays.

What else does Jewish cultural life in Edinburgh look like for you?

One of my tasks while reorienting my life to Edinburgh was to also reorient my Jewish life here. I really love Sukkat Shalom: joining has been a favourite part of my return. What an incredible community! I feel very lucky to

have had the opportunity to experience and join Sukkat Shalom. But I also knew I was going to miss just how many more Jewish spaces there are in the south, like community groups that aren't affiliated with a shul, and Jewish activist groups of different kinds. So I started praying with a bunch of other Jews in Waverley station once a month.

This is a regular action you take part in called the station shul, where people have been coming together to do a Shabbat *shacharit* service and stand in opposition to the genocide in Palestine. Where did the inspiration for this come from?

There's a long tradition of political actions in train stations. Most recently there have been Jewish actions in London in train stations, and much bigger Palestinian-led actions, around resisting the genocide. Through Queer Yeshiva, I had learned to pray

and write liturgy with Jews from lots of different backgrounds. That kind of public and interdenominational ritual was something I wanted to bring to my Jewish life in Edinburgh. That motivated me personally. On a practical level, the train station is a convenient space! It's wheelchair accessible, there's toilets, there are seats, it's covered. You can grab a cheeky loaf from M&S if nobody's made challah. It sounds silly, but we just want to gather, pray, and stand in solidarity with Palestine; it's a place where we can do that.

What kind of reactions have you been getting from other people?

It's a mix. Some people have been very happy to see us. That includes quite a lot of Jews who felt very alienated from Judaism but have found a way back in through station shul. We also get the odd thumbs up or cheer. Then there's quite a bit of confusion, like, "oh, these people are Jews, but they

support Palestinian liberation, what is happening here?” The police always come and monitor us, which is a bit scary.

What sort of motivations does the group have? What kind of political language do you use for yourselves?

It’s explicitly anti-Zionist. That might not be the word that everyone would necessarily choose to describe themselves, but it’s the word we chose as a group to describe our service.

As with regular shul, people have very different motivations for why they’re there. Some people simply want to show solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for liberation. Some want to change public perceptions that Judaism and Palestinian liberation are somehow opposed or incompatible. Some want to

undermine the legitimizing of Israeli state genocide in the name of Jews. Some of us are members of different synagogues; others aren’t members of any. People wear *kufiyyat*, and *tallitot*, and have placards that say things like “settler states: unholy & treyf” or “Jews against genocide.”

For me, praying with this ragtag bunch of Jews has been an amazing experience. We all bring our different *minhagim*. It’s just really beautiful to pray together in a train station.

Darcy's zines etc can be found on Instagram @easterroadpress.

People can learn more about Station Shul by joining the announcements-only WhatsApp group:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/Lo7QCijdZz97eg041XhMzc>

Organisation

Meet the Council

Your Council — consisting of founder members, newer members, born Jews, converts, and other proudly diverse identities — helps to steer the ship that is Sukkat Shalom. These are the profiles of the members elected at the most recent AGM.

Jen Andreacchi (she/her)



I've been on Sukkat Shalom Council since 2024. Originally from New Jersey in the US, I moved to Scotland in 2020 to attend a masters programme in Women, Writing and Gender at the University of St Andrews, and I now work for local independent book publisher, Birlinn Ltd. I am passionate

about the arts, Jewish history, and ensuring that Sukkat Shalom is an inclusive and welcoming space for Jews of all backgrounds.

Sue Bard (she/her)



I am originally from London and very happy to be living here in Edinburgh. I've been a member of Sukkat Shalom for almost twelve years and a Council member for most of them. I enjoy being part of this DIY community whose members have arrived by so many different routes.

Jonathan Broadie (he/him)



I was raised and educated in Edinburgh, and became an economist and a chartered accountant. I'm a founder member of Sukkat Shalom, and a former treasurer amongst other roles. I love the great outdoors, travelling and reading, and have been a provider of support to several voluntary bodies.

Marjory Broadie (she/her)

I was born in Malawi, and lived there and in Tanzania. Educated in Edinburgh and Dundee, I became a school teacher. I'm a founder member of Sukat Shalom. I am a parent and grandparent. My

pleasurable pursuits include travel, cooking, reading, walking and get-togethers with family and friends.



Olly Davidson-Richards (he/him)

I grew up in Kent and came to Edinburgh in 2008 for university. I live with my dog Betty and work as a solicitor.

Helen Ford (she/her)

I grew up on the Morayshire coast and now volunteer for the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland at Edinburgh Zoo. I am Autistic and an ambulant wheelchair user due to Symptomatic Hypermobility.

Samara Leibner (she/her)



I moved to Glasgow from Montreal in 2015, and joined Sukkat Shalom in 2023. In addition to being on Council, I help our community with burials and funerals. My background is in art and history, and I worked in art galleries and as an illustrator before becoming a funeral arranger, which I did for several years. I now work for Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief, a third-sector organisation which aims to improve experiences and understanding of death, dying, caring and bereavement in Scotland.

Barrie Levine (he/him)



I was brought up in an Orthodox family in Glasgow and bar mitzvahed at Giffnock shul. After a year in Israel in 1973/4, I studied social science at Aberdeen University, then qualified as a social worker from Bristol University. I worked in social work in Glasgow for over twenty years before moving to teach social work at Glasgow Caledonian University for thirteen years. Now semi-retired, I still live in Glasgow, have been a member of Sukkat Shalom for eight years and can sometimes be found walking (my daughter's) dogs.

Leo Kaminski (he/him)



I grew up in London and moved to Glasgow to start my PhD in Maths in 2020 after a stint in the Midlands. I joined Sukkat Shalom in 2022, and became a council member this year as my way of contributing to the life of our shul. In my free time, I can usually be found in my garden, or making frivolous things out of fabric, paper, or code.

Maurice Naftalin (he/him)

I've been involved with Jewish communal life since the 1990s, first with Glasgow Reform Synagogue and then with Sukkat Shalom, which I helped to set up twenty years ago. I still do some of the IT administration and treasury work for the community, and,

together with Nick Silk, I help organise and lead services. I have four sons; the youngest is in a residential community near Dunkeld for people with learning disabilities (I'm a trustee of this community).



Gillian Raab (she/her)



I was part of the group who, after initially meeting in each others' houses, went on to

create Sukkat Shalom. I retired as professor of Applied Statistics at Edinburgh Napier in 2008 and since then have worked part-time on various projects and spend time looking after our garden, studying geology and other interests.

Lizzie Robertson (she/her)



I'm new to the council and have been part of Sukkat Shalom since moving to Edinburgh with my husband and two daughters in 2020. We got involved through Cheder and I soon took on a teaching role, reflecting my keenness to pass on Progressive Judaism and its values to our young people. For

my day job I am a psychiatrist, a role I find challenging and rewarding.

Helen Searle (she/her)



I am a mature (aka perpetual) student living in Edinburgh with a very small dog. I joined Sukkat Shalom as an associate member in 2024 and became a full member in 2025. I'm looking forward to using my position as a council member to support and advocate for fellow congregants and amplify the voices of people who sometimes don't feel heard, so that every member of our community is happy to be here.

Nick Silk (he/him)



I've been an active member of Sukkat Shalom since we were founded some twenty years ago. I'm married to Kate, and we have two sons and three grandchildren, all of whom are members of ELJC. Outside of shul life, I enjoy playing table tennis and watching Livingston football club.

Han Smith (they/them)

I am honoured to be part of Sukkat Shalom's Council for a

third, consecutive year. I am involved in communications and social media, membership and security, and keen to explore and support mental healthcare in the community. I work as a psychotherapist in Edinburgh and live with my wife and fellow Council Member, Jennifer Andreacchi.



You can learn more about the running of our shul at www.eljc.org/organisation.

Council can be contacted at council@eljc.org.

Progressive Judaism

Hineinu Conference

Paul Ginsberg

What do you get when 350 Jews all try singing two different prayers at the same time? Whilst I'm a huge fan of the new Jewish Progressive conference, bringing together Liberal and Reform traditions, I couldn't claim it to be elegant. But it was brilliant! For the Shabbos morning service, there were so many surprising similarities and differences, all of which were honoured. Sometimes we took one tradition, sometimes another, and quite frankly I would not be surprised if one of the many cantors present slipped in some completely new tunes. It was chaos, but fun! Rabbi Mark Solomon seemed to be enjoying himself at any rate.

During this four-day festival there was everything from a selection of services, to sessions on leading through crisis and defending democracy, to encounters with God in poetry, *mezuzah* making and the art of disagreement. There was, of course, as you would expect, a

bouncy castle for the adults as well as some sort of rodeo thing for the kids! Reports that I went back for multiple ice creams cannot be verified as someone ate all the evidence.

Hineinu brings together Jews from 77 synagogues, all on the same page, if occasionally a different tune, and it was a joy to behold. I loved chatting to people from other small communities, hanging out with rabbis (plural!) in the hotel/conference centre bar, and taking a step back from the day-to-day hustle and bustle, to work out what is meaningful for me.

The next Hineinu will be a northern-UK specific affair next year (the big one is every two years), probably in Hull, and details will be published nearer the time. Heartily recommended!

Paul Ginsberg is the Convenor of Glasgow's West End Project, an opportunity for younger Jews to meet informally and to engage with their Judaism.
westendproject.org.uk

LGBTQ+

Six LGBTQ+ Jews Who Made History

Jen Andreacchi



In different parts of the world, across multiple languages and throughout time, queer history has been shaped and forever changed by the work of queer Jews. This Pride Month, we remember the LGBTQ+ Jewish activists and trailblazers who came before us, and honour those who are

continuing to fight our rights today.

Magnus Hirschfeld

A German-Jewish doctor and researcher of what was then known as “sexology,” Magnus Hirschfeld was a pioneering medical professional who was

the first to posit the idea that homosexuality and transgender identity were not defects to be corrected, but perfectly natural parts of the human experience. He became prominent in the field of sexuality studies, even opening his own Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin, where he shared his ideas and treated his gay and transgender patients with dignity and respect. The Nazis very much opposed Hirschfeld's work, and in 1933, they destroyed his institute, burning all of his books and irreplaceable clinical records. Hirschfeld was forced to live in exile, though his impact on LGBTQ+ visibility and social acceptance can never be erased.

Harvey Milk

As one of the first openly-gay politicians elected to public office in the US, Harvey Milk was a devoted civil rights activist and public servant. Born to a Jewish family in New York, Milk moved to San

Francisco in 1972 and opened his own camera shop, Castro Camera, which soon became a central hub for the local queer community to gather. As he became more involved in grassroots activism, Milk realised that he wanted to make a difference by representing the community in mainstream politics, and eventually won his seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977. Running on a platform of elevating gay rights as well as improving housing, childcare, and police reform, Milk was a strong progressive voice.

Milk was tragically assassinated in 1978 by a fellow Supervisor, Dan White, who violently opposed the change Milk sought. Harvey Milk's work profoundly revolutionised the American LGBTQ+ rights movement.

Leslie Feinberg

Leslie Feinberg was an American butch lesbian, transgender

activist who helped largely shape our contemporary language and understanding of gender and sexuality. Feinberg's 1993 novel, *Stone Butch Blues*, is considered a quintessential, genre-defining work of lesbian fiction. Feinberg's later popular history book, *Transgender Warriors*, explores the lives of those who have transitioned across gender and sex boundaries. It was one of the first books to articulate an understanding of transgender identity across time and geographical location, and uplift the stories of transgender people throughout history.

Alon-Lee Green

Born and raised in Tel Aviv, Alon-Lee Green is a lifelong gay progressive activist and founding member of joint Israeli-Palestinian advocacy movement, Standing Together. Green began his career in political activism from a young age. During his final year of high school, he initiated the country's first workers union in

the restaurant industry in response to violations of workers' rights at the coffee shop chain where he was employed at the time. Emboldened by the success of his campaign, Green went on to work as a political advisor to a progressive politician, where he advocated for improved LGBTQ+ rights and economic equality in Israel. In 2015, he co-founded Standing Together, an organisation he continues to co-lead today. Since 7th October 2023, he has traveled around the world sharing the organisation's message of co-resistance and radical empathy, promoting Israeli-Palestinian solidarity. In 2024, Alon Lee Green was included on the *TIME* 100 Most Influential People list, and just this year, he helped to launch a new Arab-Jewish political party in Israel.

Rabbi Abby Chava Stein

Abby Chava Stein is an Israeli-American transgender author, activist, and progressive rabbi

originally from the Satmar Hasidic tradition. Her story reached international audiences when she came out as transgender in 2015, making her the first out trans person from a Hasidic background. Abby Chava Stein is a tenth-generation descendent of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic movement. She was ultimately ostracised from her family and community in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and so she decided to tell her own story in the critically acclaimed autobiography, *Becoming Eve: My Journey from Ultra-Orthodox Rabbi to Transgender Woman* (2019). Stein was named one of the ‘36 Under 36’ by *The Jewish Week* and one of the “Forward 50” most influential American Jews.

Rabbi Mark Solomon

A list of queer Jews who made history would not be complete without our very own Rabbi Mark Solomon. Born and

raised in Sydney, Australia, Mark Solomon came to the UK in 1988 to study at Jews’ College (now London School of Jewish Studies), where he was later ordained as a Modern Orthodox rabbi in 1991. That same year, he became the first Orthodox rabbi in British history to come out as gay. Soon after, Solomon joined Liberal Judaism, completing an MA in Jewish Studies at Leo Baeck College, where he continues to teach today. In 2005, he edited *Covenant of Love: Service of Commitment for Same-Sex Couples*, published just as civil partnerships were introduced into British Law. This was a groundbreaking liturgy, the first of its kind published by any Jewish movement. Rabbi Mark Solomon continues to be a leader for LGBTQ+ Jews, with a deep commitment to advancing equality and supporting his queer congregants both in Leicester and Edinburgh.

Palestine

A Conversation with Carol Morton

Sue Bard



At the west end of Edinburgh's George Street, there is a piece of Palestine. It's a shop called Hadeel, which is Arabic for the cooing of a dove; a calm and beautiful space filled with crafts, books and food. It's the trading arm of the Scottish charity Palcrafts that exists to bring about poverty relief through the sale of fairly traded goods from Palestinian sources, particularly from West Bank- and Gaza-based producers and particularly from groups that benefit people with special

needs, and those that benefit the community as a whole. I've volunteered at Hadeel since 2024, having responded to a call from Yasmina Ferrigan, the shop's manager, for Jewish volunteers. I volunteered because of the generosity of her request and because I wanted to do at least one thing that was of direct practical benefit to Palestinians.

For me, Hadeel opened a second window (the first was Edinburgh's one-week Festival of Palestine in 2021 and the

third has been Edinburgh's Palestine Museum) onto the significance and beauty of the culture of Palestine at a time when the long-term suppression and erasure of that culture had accelerated to unprecedented levels of violence. I became aware of the shop's unique character and deep ethical roots and was curious to know how it had begun. The name "Carol Morton" cropped up frequently and that was how, on a windy, sunny May morning, I found myself in Kirkcaldy where Carol now lives.

Carol, who's from Massachusetts, met Colin, her husband-to-be, when she was a student on her junior year abroad at the University of Edinburgh and when he was a Church of Scotland minister serving in Port Glasgow. They married in Massachusetts, returning to Scotland and to Colin's own first ministry in Linwood, Renfrewshire, which was about to become home to the new Hillman Imp-producing car plant. Carol was in a state of shock at what met her – the

eight-room manse, each room with its own coal fire and no other form of heating, and the assumptions about ministers' wives then: "you were expected to be President of the Guild and all that sort of thing."

During their time at Linwood, the Mortons' four children were born. When their youngest child was about to start school, they moved to Colin's next ministry, which was another working-class community, this time in the coalmining area of Prestonpans in East Lothian. Carol got her teaching qualification at Moray House and taught in Prestonpans for the next ten years, and it was here that Colin was persuaded to stand for and was elected to what was then the Lothian Regional Council for Labour. Once all the children had finished secondary school there was the opportunity for another move. St. Andrew's Memorial Church in Jerusalem needed a minister and Carol encouraged Colin to apply, saying: "Why don't you? Church and politics, you're

involved in both, and you can't go wrong going to Jerusalem, you know."

During his training for the ministry, Colin had joined the Iona Community, an ecumenical Christian movement that works for peace and justice and believes that faith is grounded in action. The Mortons had put these values into practice in Linwood and Prestonpans—both communities that suffered from the causes and effects of entrenched industrial disputes. This they continued to do on a sharply different level in Jerusalem, arriving there in the summer of 1988, six months into the First Intifada. This grassroots Palestinian uprising against twenty years of military occupation was to last five years, beginning as a nonviolent campaign of civil disobedience.

During her time in Prestonpans, Carol got involved with the Fair Trade movement, she and Colin marking their 20th wedding anniversary with a Fair Trade study tour to Bangladesh. Carol volunteered with the

pioneering fair-trade organisation, Traidcraft, and with local people started a shop in Prestonpans that continued to trade until a few years ago. She was eventually employed by Traidcraft as a part-time regional advisor but by the time they offered her the post full-time, she was on her way to Jerusalem, where her fair-trade experience and commitment to its values were to stand her in good stead.

In Jerusalem, Carol "had to find something useful to do." Though her circumstances constrained her choices, a chance encounter soon after she and Colin arrived led to contacts with two cooperatives, one a Women's Cooperative in Qalandia, a 1949 Palestinian refugee camp, the other the Holy Land Handicraft Cooperative Society at Beit Sahour in the West Bank. Carol was given permission to use what had been a toilet block next to the office within the Church of Scotland premises and to adapt it as a retail space.

During the First Intifada,

Palestinian men were being imprisoned, deported, disabled and killed and women had to become the breadwinners in the family. Many women's groups, charities and churches were starting income-generating projects and "it just gradually built up as soon as it got credibility that we weren't just in there to exploit people."

Carol was starting from scratch, in that, until then, there had been little or no connection between St. Andrew's and the Palestinian Christian churches or other organisations in East Jerusalem, the West Bank or Gaza. She and her husband saw the physical location of St. Andrew's in Jerusalem – across the Hinnom Valley from the Old City walls, on the border of East Jerusalem – as an asset in that it was a place where different people could safely meet.

Carol involved local Christians, mainly women, in a committee "to start whatever it was going to be, we didn't know." In the meantime, the retail space in the former toilet

block thrived, taking over a space previously used as an in-house library, until eventually "it" became an *amuta* – a charity in Israeli law, named "Sunbula," meaning grain of wheat. Sunbula flourishes today as a non-profit fair-trade association that empowers marginalised communities in Palestine through traditional artisanal crafts.

In 1998, after almost ten years in Jerusalem, Colin retired and the couple returned to Edinburgh, maintaining strong connections with Israel/Palestine and helping to start the Scottish Palestinian Forum. Carol was continually being asked about bringing things from Palestine to sell and, for the next five years, did just this, storing goods at her home in Currie and developing a network of local and UK-wide supporters and contacts to raise awareness of Palestine and sell Palestinian goods at specific events.

It became clear that a legal structure was needed and a determined group of supporters

became founding members of two companies: the charity Palcrafts UK and its subsidiary Fair Trade shop, Hadeel.

One selling event occurred at St. George's West Church in Shandwick Place in Edinburgh in 2003, after which the minister, the Rev. Peter Macdonald, who knew the Mortons well, said to Carol: "you know, we've got a room that needs a shop and you've got a shop that needs a room." It was this that determined the first proper home of the charity Palcrafts and its income-generating trading arm, Hadeel. The companies were based there until 2013, when St George's West Church was sold and the shop moved to its current Church of Scotland premises in George Street.

The charity Palcrafts and its trading arm Hadeel are the enduring results of Carol Morton's unshakeable belief in the pursuit of justice and

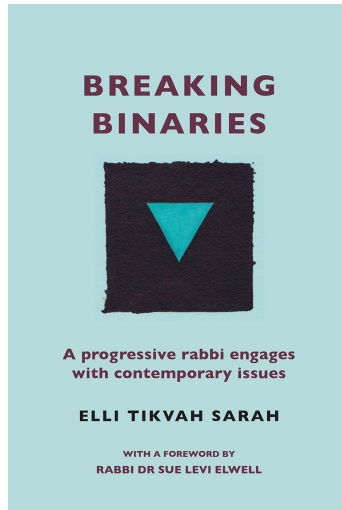
transformative fair trade, accompanied by her persistence, commitment to collective working, and faith in the importance of relationships that can translate belief into effective practical action. She is adamant that Hadeel and Palcrafts would not have been birthed nor would it have thrived without the support and vision of her late husband Colin and a dedicated team of volunteers. The idea of Hadeel was forged almost forty years ago during the First Intifada in Jerusalem; here and now, in Edinburgh, Hadeel is a vital resource and a beacon of hope for the producers, operating—if they are able to at all—in these infinitely more difficult times of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

You can visit Hadeel at 123 George Street EH2 4JN, Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, or online at www.hadeel.org/shop.

Books

Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah's *Breaking Binaries* (2026)

Elen Galford



Out in the literary mainstream, book reviews are often written by people who know the author. Sometimes, this is an act of literary mischief on the part of an editor who knows there's some kind of professional rivalry between them. More often it's because we live in a relatively small country, where authors and their potential readers often belong to the same academic, political or cultural communities. And given that most *Etrog* readers

(and writers) have connections with Sukkat Shalom, it would be surprising if we didn't know – or at least know of – Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah, who, though based in the deep south of England, has become a familiar face on our Edinburgh *bimah*, leading High Holyday services.

For full disclosure, I should say that Rabbi Elli and I have a slender shred of shared history that goes back a fair bit longer. We first met in the early 1980s, working as

volunteers on a lesbian helpline in London. During a meeting of the collective on various routine matters, Elli announced their intention to apply to Leo Baeck College and become a rabbi.

The rest of us – Jewish or not – were, to say the least, stunned. That revelation was far more fascinating than the question of who would be available to answer the phones next Tuesday. It was not something any of us would have expected to hear in our particular corner of the feminist counterculture.

Everyone in the room, whatever our backgrounds, had grown up in the shadow of what we then called “compulsory heterosexuality.” (Now there’s a Binary if ever there was one). Going back to the religions that had denied our right to exist would mean going back into the closet. Why would somebody as intelligent as Elli walk straight back into the belly of the patriarchal beast?

Even contemplating such a life choice felt like a world-changing act. But, as explained in the book’s introduction, changing both the Jewish world and the wider world around us has been one of

Rabbi Elli’s lifelong aspirations: “I was born and brought up as a Jew, but it is only when I began to learn about Judaism that I became confronted with the extent to which Jewish teaching from the creation narratives in Torah through rabbinic texts is rooted in binary assumptions that not only determine the framework of Jewish life, but render it restrictive. *Breaking Binaries* is my response to the experience of living as a genderqueer lesbian feminist progressive Jew and rabbi in a society dominated by binary impositions and oppositions...My purpose is to make Jewish sources and practices speak to contemporary issues. My approach invites the reader to wrestle with Jewish texts and wrest out of them radical new interpretations and practices. Judaism is not a given that Jews receive and practise. It comes to life for Jews as they engage with it.”

So what are these new ways of engaging with our ancient, complicated, problematic and constantly evolving faith? As a starting point, Rabbi Elli proposes that we do something as basic as looking at certain

aspects of our sacred texts and traditions from a slightly different angle. Their first suggestion, as the book's title indicates, is to notice how big a part binary concepts play in the world. Dualities and dichotomies are everywhere. We don't have to go further than the first chapter of Genesis to find examples of what one might call Jewish Binary thinking: Creator/Creation, Heaven/Earth, darkness/light, day/night, waters/dry land, divine/human, male/female. Clearly there's nothing uniquely Jewish about a propensity to divide things, ideas and people into contrasting and sometimes hostile halves. The process of drawing rigid lines of demarcation between the Good and the Bad, the Insider and the Outsider, the Right and the Wrong, is at least as old as being human. And ours is certainly not the only long-memoried human tribe to embrace the power of Two. Google the Chinese concept of *Ying* and *Yang*, for instance, and you'll find origin theories placing it as far back in time, or even further, than King

Solomon's Temple.

So how do we find a way to move beyond these inclinations, and open our minds and our spirits to the possibility of change? *Breaking Binaries* doesn't claim to provide all the answers, but it's a wonderfully inspiring and enlightening starting point. In a sequence of ten essays, it explores these possibilities in a way that might be described as a journey from the inside out, starting with a deep dive into the spiritual and scriptural worlds and moving out into the social and political worlds we live in, and to the imperilled planet where our lives are lived.

It's a fascinating and compelling read. Drawing on the *Tanakh* and the liturgy as key reference points, taking a critical and creative look at topics both spiritual and highly political, embracing both the timeless and the urgently here-and-now. The chapter titles themselves give a flavour of what's to come. Rather than provide you with a prosy synopsis of the contents, I'm going to let some of their titles and subtitles speak for themselves:

- The Three Verbs of Jewish Life

- Encountering the Eternal: The Mediation of the Reader with the God of the Text
- Transcending the Gender Binary
- Beyond the Jew/Non-Jew Binary
- Beyond Israel versus Palestine
- Becoming an Earthling: Domination, Guardianship, and Coexistence

Each of these sections lead us into new and sometimes very unexpected ways of thinking. And in addition to the serious scholarship that underpins them, each one is a lively, challenging and often very moving read. As well as breaking binaries, the text breaks the boundaries between many different genres and styles. It speaks in many voices, interweaving theological exegesis and eisegesis, personal and family narratives, folklore, history, political rallying cries,

and many generations of rabbinical and philosophical wisdom, ranging from Reb Nachman of Bratzlav to Martin Buber to Lionel Blue. And, unusually for books of this depth and breadth, even the footnotes have a lot to tell us.

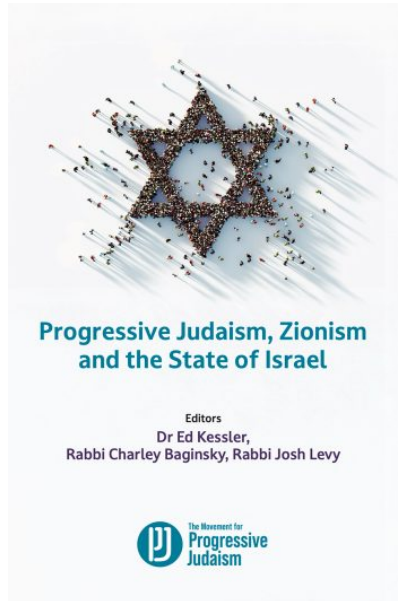
Whether your primary interest lies in Torah study, activist politics, the poetics of prayer or the history of problematic ideas, I would certainly recommend *Breaking Binaries* to feed your mind , sharpen your arguments and nourish your soul.

Breaking Binaries: A Progressive Rabbi Engages with Contemporary Issues by Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah, (2026) is published by Unusual Books.

Books

Progressive Judaism, Zionism and the State of Israel

Maurice Naftalin



It's telling that of all the urgent issues that press on the Movement for Progressive Judaism (MPJ) the one chosen as the subject of the first major publication should be the relationship with Israel and Zionism. Equally telling is the form of the book: 40 essays, three-quarters of them written by Movement rabbis and the rest by prominent lay people,

exploring different aspects of the relationship from a variety of political and ethical positions.

The claim of the book is that this diversity of perspectives is a defining strength of Progressive Judaism. Various responses to this are possible: certainly, in a movement containing widely divergent viewpoints, it would be foolish

to try to pretend to a unified opinion. But some dialogue, even of a limited kind covering partial topics and selected authors, would have made for a more readable experience than these 40 unconnected and uncoordinated reflections.

More fundamental, however, is the basic question: how diverse, really, are these expressions of the movement's opinions? The framing assumption of the book—and of the Movement—is set out at the start: in the Preface, Trevor and Simon Chinn write that “The State of Israel belongs to the entire Jewish people, as does the task of completing the Zionist project.” And in case this leaves any doubt, the joint CEOs spoke at the launch meeting of the three objectives of the book, as outlined in the Introduction: to explain the diversity of Jewish thought to the wider community, to explain Zionism more religiously and morally to Zionists, and to explain Zionism to non- and anti-Zionists within the Movement.

The much-praised diversity of opinion, then, has its limits; it must remain confined within a clear Zionist boundary, crossed by only one essay in the entire collection.

This is not always a problem: some authors have chosen different, less explicitly political aspects of the topic, and the results are among the most interesting essays in the book. For a non-exhaustive list:

- Robyn Ashworth-Steen thinks that confronting the multiple violences of the Exodus narrative would enable us to lament fully the harm we both inflict and suffer through “the never-ending cycle of oppression and revenge”.
- Elli Sarah draws lessons from the histories of Judah Magnes and Martin Buber in their advocacy of a bi-nationalist form for the new Jewish state.
- Sybil Sheridan makes a very interesting argument for the influence of American Christian fundamentalist thinking on extreme religious

Zionism in Israel.

- Hannah Weisfeld clearly traces the developing divisions within Progressive communities.
- Andrea Zanardo writes about assumptions of ‘Ashkenormativity’, the assumption that Ashkenazi Jewishness is the norm, and other histories and practices are optional ‘add-ons’.

But these are the exceptions. The great majority of essays in this book have one major theme in common: the devastating disappointment that is the Zionist dream gone sour. There is a wide range of perspectives on this theme, ranging from Gershon Silins, who thinks that “the real solution would be for the Arab world finally to accept that there will always be a Jewish state in the Middle East” to René Pfertzel, for whom “the presence of the Palestinian Other is ... a moral demand that shapes the very meaning of Jewish sovereignty”. But their unifying assumption is that the present

character of the Israeli state is a temporary aberration, one that we must resist and strive to change, but never accept as a fixed feature. One of the clearest descriptions of this state of mind comes from Arie Miller: “The Israel of my Zionism ... sanctifies the rights of all its residents, guarantees the safety of its own citizens, protects the safety of its neighbours and upholds the rights of everyone within its borders.”

This imagined “Israel of my Zionism” is an image infinitely precious to almost everyone writing in this volume. Reading these essays, I couldn’t help thinking of Walter Lippmann’s aphorism: “We are all captives of the picture in our head—our belief that the world we have experienced is the world that really exists”. Perhaps he had been brought up in Habonim. Putting it more incisively, Herbert Spencer defined tragedy as “the murder of a beautiful theory by a gang of brutal facts”. The actual

existing Israel is indisputably in the process of murdering the beautiful theory of the Jewish democratic state. But the murder never actually happens; the knife perpetually inches towards the heart of the dream but can never be seen to actually penetrate it, even as the Israeli right triumphantly claim to have killed the idea of a Palestinian state for ever. In researching this review, I found an essay by Jonathan Freedland, a prominent and articulate liberal Zionist, entitled “Liberal Zionism after Gaza”. He concludes with these words: “For if there is no prospect of two states, then liberal Zionists will have to do something they resist with all their might. They will have to decide which of their political identities matters more, whether they are first a liberal or first a Zionist. And that is a choice they don’t want to make.” The kicker? The article is dated July 2014!

This cognitive dissonance is everywhere in the book. Some of the book authors state it

clearly; Jonathan Romain, in a perceptive essay, notes that “the slogan [of a Palestinian state] is still paraded ... but simply because there is nothing else with which to replace it.” But he does not himself renounce it. Even more explicitly Irit Shillor describes herself without irony as “a great believer in the two-state solution ... although I have to admit it no longer seems feasible”.

Of all the essays in the book, only one grasps the nettle. Joseph Finlay uses the evolution of the prayer *Oseh Shalom* to examine the changing balance between particularism and universalism in Progressive Jewish prayer. He concludes “the fate of the Jewish People is now utterly intertwined with that of the Palestinian people. If we cannot stand in solidarity with Palestinians in their moment of need, nobody will take Progressive Judaism’s claims to ethical monotheism seriously ever again. ... my view is that the movement

should not identify as Zionist.” The representation of this viewpoint in the book by one single essay out of 40 may reflect the views of the clergy and the leadership of Progressive Judaism, but it is difficult to see it as truly representative of the membership.

Finally, speaking on a personal note, the emotion that I missed the most from the book was anger. Anger is there, of course (anger that I share): at the attacks of October 7th, at the rising tide of antisemitism, at the consequences for diaspora Jews of the actions of the Israeli state. We do hear a lot about the anguish of the authors over what the Palestinians are suffering, and I don’t doubt the authenticity of this. But for three years there has been a sustained campaign of collective punishment against the Gazan people. The Strip, home to two million people, has been entirely destroyed; tens of thousands are dead, most of them women, children, and the

elderly; more than forty thousand children wounded, many with amputations and other life-changing injuries; thousands of the dead still lie unburied under the rubble; the entire surviving population of Gaza is displaced into a tent city with only the basic means of survival. And the killing continues. Where is the anger at these enormous crimes? Rebecca Birk edges a little closer to a proportionate reaction, at second hand, when she reports that Ismar Schorsch, an eminent Jewish historian has talked of *Hillul HaShem*, the desecration of God’s name, in the West Bank and Gaza, and has drawn the parallel of the religious institutions who remained silent in the time of the Nazis. There are many ordinary members of MPJ who long to hear such an expression of outrage from any of our leaders.

The last thought should be given to Howard Cooper, who wonders whether we are at a Sabbatean moment in Jewish

history—a schism so deep that it takes the Jewish world a century to recover. There are signs: increasingly, younger Jews are refusing to accept the dream of an idealised Israel if the price of the dream is to weaken rejection of the crimes of the real Israel. The same question also threatens, everywhere in the world, to tear existing communities apart. Amongst the many serious and thought-provoking essays in this book, none confront this question head-on.

Is it possible that, in a few years, we'll look back at this book and wonder how we could have missed the biggest question of all those that face us?

Progressive Judaism, Zionism and the State of Israel edited by Dr. Ed Kessler, Rabbi Charley Baginsky and Rabbi Josh Levy (2026) is published by the Movement for Progressive Judaism.

Food

The Yeast from the East

Stef Lyons



I want to talk about challah. Yes, I know. It's quite an obvious thing to think about when you picture Jewish cuisine. But no. Really. This is what I want to spend the next few hundred words talking about.

Firstly, it goes without saying that one cannot simply surmise that 'Jewish Cuisine' is ever one thing. This is a community that became a diaspora. One that has moved from country to country through its own history, made homes in a myriad of places and adapted to life as they

found it. Therefore, challah is not a universal bread eaten at Shabbat. For some it is *berches*, or *dabo*, *bejma* or *khubz'adi*. But challah is most universally understood to be a Jewish bread, made for Friday nights and honestly, is one of the main reasons I first considered converting.

That may sound flippant, but it's actually not far from the truth. I grew up in West London, and lived in a very Jewish area. Many of my school friends are Jewish. The first time I was invited over for

a Friday Night Dinner I knew I was hanging out with my true people. The plaited bread that was ripped and given to me with a sprinkling of salt changed me. And only for the better. I had it a few times in my youth; once I left home for university I thought about it regularly but never believed it would be something that I too would get to make.

But then came my first child. I wanted to do what countless other people, mainly women, had done. I wanted to make, prove and plait my two challot each week and give thanks that the working week was done. In order to make that happen I asked a number of my closest friends, one of whom is a Rebbetzin, how to begin. I hope they didn't mind that I was taking part of their culture and beliefs to use them for my own. However, they only seemed joyous that I wanted to partake in it too. Of course, one of the first tips they gave me was to buy my own copy of the infinitely brilliant *The Complete International Jewish Cookbook* by none other than the incomparable Evelyn Rose. They told me I couldn't fail

with any recipe by her. And, by George, they were right. As an aside, I've only ever made things from that book that were absolute fool-proof triumphs, whether it's her *Izmir Kofte*, or (my personal favourite) pistachio and *halva* ice-cream. Yum. It was no different when it came to her challah recipe. Genuinely, she has never failed me on that front. So, in around 2016, I started making my own according to Evelyn.

One of the first, and in my opinion most beautiful, aspects I discovered about the baking of challot is just how holy a time it is. Traditionally the purview of women (I'm non-binary), it is customary to pray while making and kneading the dough. When I am doing just that I have prayed for friends and family, and thanked The Eternal One for the gift of rest being brought to my home. I poured love and heart into the dough and hoped that would be felt and tasted by those for whom it was being made. Of course what came next on my journey was lighting and blessing candles too, soon followed by blessing wine.

The thing that I love most, what I find truly inspirational about the making and baking of challah each week, is that the tradition of it goes back thousands of years. The Israelites left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness. They gathered a double portion of manna. And over time came the weekly tradition of baking and blessing bread. Gradually, for many Jews, that bread became challah. And I can't argue with that. Challah is a superior loaf; like cake and bread had a baby. 'Tis a thing of beauty. Sometimes, when I'm kneading or plaiting my dough, I like to imagine all the people throughout history doing this with me. That their spirit is somehow helping me on, joining me in this process, becoming part of the finished product itself. I love knowing that this has been done every week by so many over millennia and that I am joining that tradition. I feel privileged that I am being welcomed in and breaking bread with a community I have wanted to enter for years. I renew my decision each week as I light the candles and bless my challot.

Bread is a universal food, one that almost every culture in the world has their own version of. It is a simple way of sustaining people and is vital in many places. So it is no surprise to me that making and eating challah sustains me and my children, bringing us closer together every Friday and Saturday. We dip it in chicken soup, we scoop up gravy with it. In the morning on Saturday it is adorned with chocolate spread, or slathered in butter. If there's any left by Sunday (a very rare occurrence here), we make French Toast with it as well.

I'm finishing this piece on a Thursday. I know that tomorrow I will once again eat the same thing that inspired me as a child. In addition, I am passing that tradition onto my own children who will carry on with theirs. Or so I hope. This isn't just any bread, this is challah. And it's a bread with history and soul. Most importantly though, it is delicious as heck and I can't think of a better way to bring in Shabbat for the rest of my life.

Folk Stories

Eliyahu HaNavi

Introduced and illustrated by Samara Leibner

אֵלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא



You know Eliyahu - thirsty invisible guy, comes to your house on Pesach, you put out a cup of wine for him at the seder, maybe your parents used to make a big show of opening the door for him every year. Who is that guy, and why do we let him into the house?

Eliyahu is a prophet (hence the nickname HaNavi) who first appears in Sefer Melachim in the Tanach. The character is a country bumpkin from Tishbeh and a stern, fiery

opponent to the king Ahab and queen Jezebel, who had begun encouraging worship of Ba'al. He hears G-d as a "still, small voice" and loudly and constantly challenges both powerful people and public apathy.

Eliyahu is one of only two people who are described in the Tanach as having gone to the next world directly, i.e. without having died. Perhaps because of his no-longer-quite-human nature, perhaps just because

he's a compelling nudnik, he has come to feature prominently in Jewish tradition and folklore. His characterisation changes: Miriam Anzovin describes his transformation from "righteous menace" in the Tanach to the "cross-dressing, shape-shifting, heavenly avuncular figure" of folklore. He often appears as a wandering stranger or in some sort of disguise, speaking the truth to those who need to hear it, accepting hospitality from those willing to give it, and helping those who need it, though sometimes in indirect or annoying ways. Because of the belief that Eliyahu will announce the arrival of Moshiach, he has himself become a bit of a folk pre-Moshiach: part revered wise man, part supernatural pain in the ass.

Eliyahu is the subject of a beautiful hymn traditionally sung at Havdalah every week, yearning for Moshiach's arrival "bim'heirah b'yameinu" ("speedily in our days"). He is also credited with having struck the bargain with Lilith,

the queen of sheydim, that gives amulets the power to ward her off from birthing parents and new babies, her traditional victims. It is even said that when dogs are happy for no reason, it's because Eliyahu is nearby.

At a bris, there is a chair set aside for Eliyahu. Sometimes this chair is purpose-built and heavily decorated, and sometimes it's just a plain chair. This is more than just symbolic hospitality: following an incident in Tanach where Eliyahu falsely accused the people of Israel of having forsaken their covenant, tradition holds that Eliyahu must witness every bris to make up for this slander.

The seder tradition of Eliyahu's cup comes from a practice of the sages to put off a truly impossible decision "until Eliyahu comes", meaning until the age of Moshiach. The debate about whether there should be four or five cups of wine at the seder was one of these unresolvable questions. To resolve the uncertainty

temporarily “until Eliyahu comes”, the fifth cup of wine is not drunk at the seder, but it is present, and remains associated with Eliyahu. The practice then became connected to the older tradition of opening the door to welcome hungry strangers and lonely people to join the seder. Eliyahu’s cup is now often seen as a symbol of hospitality, and as a promise of the world to come in the age of Moshiach.

There are many, many Aggadah and folkloric stories about Eliyahu. Here is a short one from Lewis Ginzberg’s *Legends of the Bible*, in which a powerful rabbi is put in his place:

*Rabbi Eliezer
Meets a Stranger*

Once, when walking on a beach, Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, came upon a hideously ugly man—the prophet Eliyahu in disguise. The man greeted him courteously, “Peace be with thee, Rabbi.”

Instead of returning the greeting, the rabbi could not resist an insult, “How ugly you are! Is there anyone as ugly as you in your town?”

Elijah responded with, “I don’t know. Perhaps you should tell the Master Architect how ugly is this, His construction.”

The rabbi realised his wrongdoing and asked for pardon. But Elijah would not give it until the entire city had asked for forgiveness for the rabbi, and the rabbi had promised to mend his ways.

For more:

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah#In_Jewish_folklore

www.myjewishlearning.com/article/elijah-the-prophet/

Miriam Anzovin’s video “Daf Reactions: Chullin 5 - Ravenous”: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPuz-FiYxE0

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Did you notice?

The dog on the right of Samara's folklore illustration is "Labzik the Labour Pup" from the stories of Chaver-Paver.

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