Jewish Statistics

The results of the 2001 census made some interesting reading. For the first time in Scotland, England and Wales people were asked what religion they belonged to. Unlike other questions in the census, this was a voluntary question, so there was no penalty for not answering this question. This fact alone may have made the results seem inaccurate because there is a certain amount of courage required to make the declaration ‘I am a Jew’. In the Bible, Jonah says to his fellow sailors, ‘Ivi anochi’, I am a Hebrew and was promptly cast into the sea. So the fact that 6580 people in Scotland ticked the Jewish box suggests that the actual number of Jews in Scotland may in fact be considerably higher.

The distribution of Jews in Scotland shows that there are Jews in every single local authority and Health Board Area in Scotland unlike England. The fact that that there were only 1097 Jews in the City of Glasgow came as a shock to the leaders of the Jewish Community, where in my lifetime the estimated number was thought to be in the region of 15,000. In Edinburgh, the reverse was true: the Orthodox Community has about 300 members, the Reform Community 40 and yet 762 people ticked the Jewish box. The census shows that in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen there were 174, in Dundee, Angus and Fife 229 while in Argyll & Bute 45. Of course the majority of the Jews in Scotland reside in East Renfrewshire where they form 3.5% of the population (3125). Regarding the rest of Scotland, the Rev Malcolm Wiseman who looks after the spiritual needs of the smaller communities in Great Britain maintains that wherever you are in Scotland, you are never more that 10 minutes drive from a Jewish house. He maintains that although the Board of Deputies reckons that British Jewish population is 280,000, the actual number is in excess of one million. On this basis, Ephraim Borowski’s contention that there are 10,000 Jews in Scotland is probably not far off the mark.

Of course much depends upon how you define a Jew. The question “who is a Jew?” has concerned, agonised and ultimately divided Jews for thousands of years. Hitler had no such worries. Perhaps as Scots we ought to “see ourselves as others see us”. But as far as the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities is concerned, we are happy to accept as Jews all those who “tick the box”.

John A Cosgrove, Chairman

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

LOUIS COHEN, ABERDEEN

On 2 April 2004, the oldest member of the Aberdeen Hebrew Congregation, Louis Cohen, died at the age of 91. Louis was born in Glasgow, and came to Aberdeen after finishing his military service, to marry an Aberdeen girl. He had been in Aberdeen almost 60 years, which is longer than most of the rest of us have been alive! He was a barber by trade, but his real love was music, especially playing the piano. His wife died 15 years ago and while at first it looked like he might follow her, he recovered and continued playing the piano professionally in local pubs until just a few years ago, and at shul events and parties.

One of my most vivid memories of Louis from a Chanukah party 3-4 years ago, taking turns with and out-shining the other pianist who was a quarter of his age. Louis was buried in the Jewish section of Aberdeen’s Grove Cemetery. He had one son, who is now a successful barrister in London. He will be missed.

Ehud Reiter

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS & THE BNP

The European Elections on 10th June will use proportional representation to elect 7 members to represent the whole of Scotland. The far-right British Nationalist Party are fielding a full list of candidates, and there are concerns that a low turnout could work in their favour under this system, so it is important that as many people as possible vote on June 10th.

Every vote anywhere in Scotland for ANY other candidate will help keep them out. They need to get fewest first votes and be knocked out first.

For similar reasons, you should not just use your first vote, but rank all the candidates, with BNP last. You should certainly rank at least half the candidates on your ballot, because if your first choice is elected, any surplus votes are redistributed according to second preferences, and so on.

Please don’t say there’s no fascist activity in your area, so it isn’t your problem. Scotland is a single constituency - your vote can make a difference.

Ephraim Borowski
Coming soon: Glasgow from the inside out!

Edinburgh and Glasgow Communities shared a wonderfully sunny afternoon at Beechairs for a BBQ on Lag B’Omer. New friends were made in the smoky atmosphere which promised mouth-watering treats. The inspiration of Irving Hyman, the event attracted Rabbis Moshe Klein from Giffnock and Pinchas Ezrachi from Newton Mearns, and successfully brought together parents and friends were made in the smoky atmosphere which promised mouth-watering treats. The inspiration of Irving Hyman, the event attracted Rabbis Moshe Klein from Giffnock and Pinchas Ezrachi from Newton Mearns, and successfully brought together parents and friends from a number of different communities.

Beechairs Country Park, a half way point between Glasgow and Edinburgh, offered such pleasant surroundings for everyone, it was an ideal venue. This social gathering could be the first of many, hopefully involving more folk from the Northern Communities too.

JUDY GILBERT

Edinburgh and Glasgow Communities in Scotland

Jewish Settlement and Development in Scotland 1879-2004
A Symposium
SUNDAY 17 OCTOBER, 2004
GARNETHILL SYNAGOGUE

Professor Aubrey Newman will be the keynote speaker at a major symposium planned by the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre in Glasgow in October, in conjunction with Aberdeen University's AHRB Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies.

Professor Newman is one of the most eminent historians of British Jewry, and one of the few knowledgeable on both England and Scotland. Taking place in Garnethill Synagogue, and celebrating the synagogue’s 125th anniversary, the symposium will feature a programme of lectures on the history of the Jewish Community in Scotland since the synagogue opened in 1879.

Applications before the 1st September are priced at £10 per person, and £15 per person after that date. Registration includes a buffet lunch. Please send cheques, made payable to Scottish Jewish Archives, to:
MRS E. SACHARIN, SYMPOSIUM REGISTRATION, THE SCOTTISH JEWISH ARCHIVES CENTRE, CARNETHILL SYNAGOGUE, 129 HILL STREET, GLASGOW G3 6UB
TEL: 0141 352 4911 FAX: 0141 352 4911
EMAIL: ARCHIVES@SJAC.FSBUSINESS.CO.UK

A full seminar programme will be announced in June, following a call for academic papers by the Research Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies. Meanwhile, non-academic individuals and organisations have an opportunity to make short presentations during the lunch time interval and coffee breaks. This provides an opportunity for local researchers and organisations to show their work to a wider audience. The organisers expect youth and cultural organisations to take part.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THIS FACILITY, CONTACT HARVEY KAPLAN ON HARVEY@HKAPLAN.FREESEVE.CO.UK

THE CORNERS OF SCOTLAND
CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:
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Ehud Reiter: 01224 485 601
Argyll & Highlands
Frank House: 01445 712151
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Dan Roebuck 07951 070 730

JNAH SEDER
JOHN FREEMAN
Why is this night different?

Well for once we had more than just four answers to this Passover question, tonight Seder night was different because it was our first in our new home in the Highlands, and also it was different because a small group of friends from the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands were gathering with us to celebrate Passover in the land that Marks and Spencers doesn’t reach.

Everyone came bearing food and drink, and we gathered together in the gathering gloom. The sounds of sheep bleating in the background added an authenticity that taxi cab horns and police sirens never did. We all shared the service and the assortment of different haggadah only added to the flavour. The evening was a resounding success and we determined not only to have another next year but to also have a Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur service. If you’re around Loch Shen-Pudding as we now call Loch Fecahan (its also known in some quarters as Loch Imnopp) and you fancy some very gentle prayer this Rosh HaShana why not give us a call. We would love to have you join us, whether your Jewish connections are strong or tenuous - all varieties of Judaism are very welcome.

01631 770243 Braeside.Guesthouse@virgin.net
At times, when I walk towards my log cabin home, I pause and take in the view: Gruniard Bay, cliffs and hills, the Summer Isles in the distance, and the meandering river below me. I stand there and wonder - how did I get here? What brought these thoughts going through my mind when I see yet another cold, rainy day through the window? 

So how? I can't ascribe it to any particular taste for remote, isolated spots, untamed landscapes or a cooler climate. If anything is to blame, it can only be my fondness for travelling. I thought that backpacking the world, and living in several places in Israel got it out of my system, but in 2001, after a 5-year cycle of working, studying and working, the bug started nudging once more. It's not only to see new places, but also learn more about the world, people and about myself. It develops an open-minded approach, maturity and a fresh, positive point of view. I packed and got a ticket to New-Zealand for a 3-4 month trip. But like the best of plans, it was destined to change and I stayed a year, leaving the usual travellers' routes for less touristy spots. I saw different life styles, experienced other cultures and met interesting people from all nations. One was Graeme, my partner, who is Scottish. I had no idea then what are such things as game keepers, bags or the difference between stags and hinds, and I agreed to come and see what life is like in the Highlands.

After a short stay in Islay, and reassuring my family and friends that no, I was not embarking on a pioneer's lifestyle in the middle of nowhere (little did I know then!), I arrived in Little Gruniard, near Poolewe, on the west coast. I knew very little about the place before I arrived, and it takes some getting used to - so many things are different: the landscape, the weather (rain after April?), the community, people, the way of life, food... just about everything! Who has ever heard of a place that has so many ways to describe rain, or uses a nickname for their potatoes?! I am still getting to know the place, and to fit in with its ways. If the travel bug brought me here in the first place, the experience and qualities gained through it assisted me in staying.

However, slowly I came to see that this might be the only place where being born and raised on a kibbutz comes in handy. It's a small rural community with its own well established norms, like a kibbutz. Also, it is a secluded place and life has a slower, relaxed pace. Everybody knows each other - they are a little cautious of strangers, but at the same time glad to see new faces and make you feel welcome. People's manner is gentle and humble, nearly timid, but frank and straightforward. These similarities helped me to gain some understanding of the place.

GRUNIARD BAY, WESTER ROSS, AT LOW TIDE

There with her new stuff too. It's closer than I thought, but it still needed cleaned, as it was an old disgusting fridge which I'd rejected and put outside also needed cleaned, as it was the only place where being born and raised on a kibbutz comes in handy. It's a small rural community with its own well established norms, like a kibbutz. Also, it is a secluded place and life has a slower, relaxed pace. Everybody knows each other - they are a little cautious of strangers, but at the same time glad to see new faces and make you feel welcome. People's manner is gentle and humble, nearly timid, but frank and straightforward. These similarities helped me to gain some understanding of the place.

It's traditional to start 'doing' Pesach on the night of Purim. Pesach itself is a doddle after the first few nights of Seder. It's a time of cooking and cleaning, and the Seder itself is a life of action more than lofty thoughts and prayers. This is what we must do to be free? Judaism is a life of action more than lofty thoughts and prayers. This is what we must do to be free? Judaism is a life of action more than lofty thoughts and prayers.

It was the first "proper" Seder I have been to - reading the whole hagada and performing the customs - very different from Seder in the kibbutz. It was strange to read parts of the hagada, and a great deal is done by singing and even dancing. Every way brings a different atmosphere and it was interesting to be part of it. It made me think again how varied people are. There might be others like me that do not contact the community because they consider themselves to be Jew in other ways to be rather than observing religion (cultural, social) and it's a shame, because I think both sides can benefit from it. So this is how an Israeli came to live in Scotland on the one hand, and became closer to the Jewish world on the other. Now I have been here for a while and can work, meet more people, enjoy hobbie such as gardening which is not so common back home. I fought to live, but now I have settled. And at times it doesn't even seem that cold.
Shavuot is the commemoration and celebration of the receipt of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

...Other holidays have unique Mitzvot associate with them —from Matzah on Passover, to the Sukkah, Lulav and Etrog on Sukkot. On Rosh HaShanah we hear the Shofar, and Yom Kippur, we fast. The various external symbols help to focus our attention, and enhance our excitement and happiness. Each year, when we sit in a sukkah, or in front of a seder plate, we feel a special joy. But on Shavuot, we have no ‘externals’ — only Torah.

It is customary to spend extra time learning Torah on Shavuot, many do so throughout the night. But that mitzvah is hardly unique to the holiday — “you shall study it day and night” applies every day! Shavuot is also called “Chag Ha’Atzeret” — usually translated “festival of the gathering” but “atzeret” is a cessation, a stopping — and thus the name is appropriate. This is a holiday not for adding new observances, but for stopping, reflecting upon what we have. Our joy at the holiday of Shavuot comes from contemplating the Torah which we study and live by all year long.

There is a universal tradition of eating dairy foods on Shavuot. The reasons have been offered by many scholars, and we offer a selection:

◆ The Biblical book Song of Songs (4:11) refers to the sweet nourishing value of Torah by saying: “It drips from your lips, like honey and milk under your tongue.”

◆ The verse in Exodus 23:19 juxtaposes the holiday of iavuot with the prohibition of mixing milk and meat. On Shavuot, we therefore eat separate meals — one of milk and one of meat.

◆ Upon receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Jews immediately became obligated in the laws of Sh’chita — slaughter of animals. Sometimes I feel like a fish out of water, but maybe that was before and here I’m back in my natural element... even so it’s a big adjustment process even just physically and emotionally. Each festival brings new challenges, my reluctance can be termed “Chugophobia” but the syndrome disappears once the Chag starts. After Pesach came Yom Ha’atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) with a myriad of opinions on how to celebrate a secular Chag with emotive implications, but a Tuyl and a nosh are fairly standard. And before the grass of Sacher Park had a chance to recover from the scorches marks of a 1000+ BBQ’s, the sky was lit up with bonfires on Lag B’Omer night. I visited 3 worlds in a walk of about 2 miles on foot to a massive dark cave filled with bats. Even by Argyl standards it was quite rough terrain but what amazed me was all the religious families slipping and sliding with children and grandparents over the rocks - and in their holiday outfits too! The first Chomtsh ‘toughie’ managed to make a fool of herself by getting stuck on a cliff-face above the path, through bloody-minded independence and impatience with the swarming families. The gradients were steeper than anticipated and I was guided down by moral support from below.

The holiday feeling continued throughout Pesach. There was time to be sociable and relax, and at the end a mini ‘Ymima’ - a Moroccan custom with dancing and singing. We just ate the traditional pancakes, stretched dough cooked in a very special way, eaten with butter and honey. The first Chomtsh we’ve had for a week and another festival all of its own.

So even as Pesach ends we wish each other ‘Chag Sameach’ Happy Festival and I learn again that Jews really know how to have fun... Other holidays have unique Mitzvot associate with them — from Matzah on Passover, to the Sukkah, Lulav and Etrog on Sukkot. On Rosh HaShanah we hear the Shofar, and Yom Kippur, we fast. The various external symbols help to focus our attention, and enhance our excitement and happiness. Each year, when we sit in a sukkah, or in front of a seder plate, we feel a special joy. But on Shavuot, we have no ‘externals’ — only Torah.

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◆ Upon receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Jews immediately became obligated in the laws of Sh’chita — slaughter of animals. Since they did not have time to prepare kosher meat, they ate dairy instead.

Shavuot Cheesecake

¾ packet digestive biscuits
4 eggs, separated
1lb cream cheese
½ pint soured cream
5 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons plain flour
Vanilla essence

Pour mixture onto crushed biscuits in tin
Deep 9” loose-bottomed baking tin, greased
Crush the biscuits and cover the base of the tin.
Beet the egg yolks with the sugar until thick and pale yellow. Add the cream cheese with the soured cream, flour and vanilla and beat well.
Whip the egg whites until stiff and fold into the cream cheese mixture.
Pour mixture onto crushed biscuits in tin (it should come no more then ¾ up the sides as it will rise a lot during baking).
Bake gas 4 for 1¼ hours, leave in tin until cool

This year Shavuot falls on
Wed 26 May, and is celebrated from sunset Tues till sunset Thurs

Pesach marks our birth as a nation, separating us physically & geographically from others. But at the time of the Exodus we weren’t ready to have a mission. The 49 days of the Omer counts up the stages of improvement necessary till Shavuot: the spiritual birth of our nation and the gift of our assignment.
SCoJeC Initiatives of the last 6 months

**In the Jewish Community**

- We held the first two in a series of briefing evenings, one about Charity Law reform, and the other about new Scottish Executive proposals for improving the position of women in Scotland. Future briefings are being planned for other specialist groups including teachers, lawyers and health professionals.
- We have kept the relevant Jewish organisations – such as Jewish Care, Cosgrove Care, the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, and the Association of Jewish Teachers - up to date with new information from, amongst others, the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Museums’ Council, Social Work Organisations.
- We maintain a regular dialogue with the Board of Deputies, the Office of the Chief Rabbi, the London Beth Din, the National Council of Shechitan Boards and Shechita UK on matters of concern to the Scottish Jewish community.
- And of course we’ve produced two editions of Four Corners!

**In the Scottish Political Arena**

- We have responded to Scottish Executive consultations on the subjects of Civil Partnership Registration, Hospital Post-Mortem Examinations, Retention of Organs at Post-Mortem, the Anatomy Act, the Sexual Health and Relationships Strategy and Hate Crime.
- We are currently preparing responses to Scottish Executive consultations about the Farm Animals Welfare Council report, (which could affect shechita), Family Law Reform, organ donation and transplantation, and the proposed Commission for Equality and Human Rights.
- We have attended conferences about race and religion, anti-sectarianism, Human Rights, equality legislation and discrimination.
- We participate in the Scottish Equalities and Human Rights Coalition and the Scottish Equalities and Human Rights Reference Group, both of which relate to the proposed new Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

**SCoJeC Consultations**

Over the last few months the Scottish Executive has issued four consultation papers around very similar medical issues – and it seems likely that there’s a fifth yet to come. The consultations on hospital post-mortem examinations, the retention of organs at post-mortem and the Anatomy Act are now closed. We are currently preparing a response to the consultation on organ and tissue donation and transplantation, and we anticipate another consultation on the Human Tissue Act.

All of the issues covered in these consultations have a Jewish angle. For example, because a Jewish burial takes place as quickly as possible after someone has died, in most circumstances every effort would be made to avoid a post-mortem. On the other hand, saving a life takes priority over other mitzvot, and, as long as rabbinic guidelines are followed, some forms of organ donation are not only permitted but regarded as praiseworthy.

The Scottish Executive has accepted in principle the FAWC view that shechitan is cruel, despite the lack of any evidence to that effect, and, as a result, have wholly or partially accepted several FAWC recommendations. Our response will point out that electric stunning, gassing and captive bolt stunning all subject the animal to more pain than shechita, and that the last also presents a risk to human health due to the possibility of transferring new variant CJD between animals.

England and Wales have recently introduced Family Law legislation that enables courts to link civil divorce with religious divorce (get) in order to minimise the number of agunot (chained women) who, despite being divorced in civil law remain married in Jewish Law due to the refusal of their husbands to give a get. This link has backing from the rabbinic authorities and from the civil courts. Although there is no mention of it in the Family Matters consultation paper, the Scottish Executive has approached SCoJeC to discuss the possibility of introducing a similar provision into the forthcoming Family Law Bill.

We hope, by responding to these consultations, and by informing the Scottish Executive of ‘the Jewish view’, to help influence future legislation in a way that minimises any conflict with Halachah, (Jewish Law).

If you would like any more information or would like to have input into any of the above, contact Leah Granat on 07887 488 100 or email leah.granat@onetel.net
LEARNING CURVES OF A SCOT NOW ISRAELI

...at the shops
It’s hard to buy 4 toilet rolls - easy if you want 48 or 72, and eggs come in 25’s.

A grocery store may not sell milk, but will stock at least 10 varieties of white candles.

Just because you can get screws doesn’t mean you can get drill-bits too.

Asking for what you want may evoke a loud “tut” and vigorous shake of the head, or the assertion that “it does not exist.”

...in business:
Rents are always quoted in dollars, even if it’s double what you’d expect, that does not mean it’s shekels.

Be prepared to give blank cheques to be filled in later by the recipient with that day’s exchange rate.

Your bank charges you for each transaction, and for things you never thought of too. Some of the charges are fixed in dollars so the shekel amount on your statement is not the same each time.

It’s possible to loose your temper if you’re not happy with the business deal being discussed, and end the conversation with big grins, a continental style hand-slap and all goodwill.

...and with people:
Be prepared to be subject to amazing kindnesses and effusive welcomes.

Beware that new acquaintances might be better acquainted with your ancestors than you are yourself.

Everyone has outside doors of layered steel with multiple locks implying a high crime rate... but twice in my first week a shop-owner sauntered out saying “if anyone comes say I’ll be back soon.”

My lost wallet was returned to me, still full.

Hanging a carpet over your wall for more than a day is more likely to prompt an enquiry as to why you’re so lazy than theft.

Shalom from a Scottish Corner transplanted to London

Aye, it’s a far cry frae Stranraer. Well, it was a council exchange that brought me there – and being Jewish – well! I just hid it…. It was a stray article in the Jewish Chronicle sent to me that sent me in turn to Campbell Country and Deepest Argyll. To the Argyll and Bute Jewish Community (later renamed Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands) and a friendship at Cowan’s Croft.

So being Jewish wasn’t dietary – who is going 3 hours each way to Glasgow for a chook? I’ve never been religious. So what made me feel Jewish again? What made even those married out, assimilated, feel Jewish? In my case it was ancestors, reverence for my family who died in the Holocaust, and finally a belief in Hashem and wanting to be part of Achad Ha’am – my people.

This led to my monthly exodus sometimes 2½ bleary hours to shul in Newton Means and onward to Glasgow and the coach up to Inverary youth hostel – and the onward Sunday journey to Lochgilphead and the Argyll and Bute- with Galloway-community. Hopefully a stay over at Cowan’s Sunday and then back to Galloway. Sometimes just going to synagogue and back to Stranraer – 2½ hours there 2½ back. Spending the High Holy days of Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah in Edinburgh, staying at the youth hostel. Pesach at Cowan’s. Matzoh from Glasgow and not eating treife for a week, glad I like vegetarian food…!!

Now I live in London because Dad became terminally ill and I developed MS and Mum is so frail that once again I am unable to observe the High Holy days in a synagogue as she needs to be cared for. Friday night is a gentle stroll through the urban Belsize village to the German Jewish founded synagogue, except the first Friday of the month, which is another tale……

Keeping kosher is a doddle – Golders Green a mere bus away and Mum’s got a Deli or two near where she lives. And yet, although I live in a Jewish Sheltered Housing place, and go to shul Friday – and WIZO now and then, I’m still isolated as I care for Mum Saturday and Sunday when the shul prays and studies. The living is easy, but intellectually the challenge is missing: the sense of overcoming difficulties and the travel in order to remain Jewish.

Jax went to find her Spiritual Destiny in Jerusalem – I yet have to make sense of my Judaism to find a spiritual and learning curve, not just a culinary kosher one.

THOUGHTS OF A JEWISH BUDDHIST

Wherever you go, there you are. Your luggage is another story.

Be aware of your body. Be aware of your perceptions. Keep in mind that not every physical sensation is a symptom of a terminal illness. If there is no self, whose arthritis is this?

Breathe in. Breathe out. Forget this and attaining enlightenment will be the least of your problems.

Drink tea and nourish life. With the first sip, joy. With the second, satisfaction. With the third, Danish.

Be patient and achieve all things. Be impatient and achieve all things faster.

The Tao has no expectations. The Tao demands nothing of others. The Tao does not speak. The Tao does not blame. The Tao does not take sides. The Tao is not Jewish.

To Find the Buddha, look within. Deep inside you are ten thousand flowers. Each flower blossoms ten thousand times. Each blossom has ten thousand petals. You might want to see a specialist.

Be here now. Be someplace else later. Is that so complicated?