

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, "ivri 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 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 than 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 SCOJeC



Welcome...

... to the second issue of the newsletter for the scattered Jews of Scotland! As a user group this comprises an enormous range of life-styles and individual tastes – we hope that there's something for everyone. Your feedback is important for us to ensure this is so, and if you have comments, questions or opinions on the contents please write, and we can establish a letters column to add to the reports on events, photos, stories, poems, mazeltovs, history... all these and more can be shared in this meeting point between all our corners.

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FOUR CORNERS IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON THE WEB

www.j-scot.org



A Scottish Spiritual Education

An atheist was spending a quiet day fishing in Loch Ness when suddenly his boat was attacked by Nessie. She tossed man and boat high into the air, and opened her mouth to swallow both. As the man flew through the air he cried out, "G-d, help me!" The attack froze instantly and a booming voice came down from the clouds, "I thought you didn't believe in Me!" The suspended atheist responded "Please G-d, give me a break, two minutes ago I didn't believe in Nessie either."

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



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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 the 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



Following the success of previous years, the annual **B'nei Akiva** Family Lag b'Omer Barbecue was held on Sunday May 9th, only this time it was bigger and better than ever!

Hosted once again at the Angell's house, the delicious food and the fun and games attracted a record number of 56 people! This year we were lucky enough to have the added attraction of Bongo Drum lessons courtesy of Asaf Soudry. Thankfully, despite the morning's rainclouds, the sun shone brightly all afternoon which created the perfect atmosphere for the event, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

RALPH ANGELL: ROSH, B'NEI AKIVA, GLASGOW

Lag B'Omer in Scotland

Edinburgh and Glasgow Communities shared a wonderfully sunny afternoon at Beecraigs 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 Rubin from Giffnock and Pinchas Hackenbroch from Newton Mearns, and successfully brought together parents and children from a number of different communities.

Beecraigs 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



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ECLIPSE

CAROLINE FLETCHER

I peered through minutely
calibrated multifocals

She gazed past a blur of short sight,
disdaining her glasses.

Together we watched the full moon
eclipsed

A third obscured but for wisps of light,
then half missing, the wisps still there.

The path we walked on suddenly A
fragment of astronomy,

Linking
the unseen sun
with the passive moon.

On one side ancient hills,
sleeping Beduin beside their sheep

Opposite, lighted streets and homes
of Jewish children.

We walked between,

My daughter, beginning to focus and
I, beginning to judge perspective.

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:

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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.FREESERVE.CO.UK



Scottish Jewish Archives Centre

The first Jews came to Scotland in the 18th century, but no Jewish communities existed until the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation was founded in 1816. Next was Glasgow in 1823, Dundee in the 1870s and Aberdeen in the 1890s. These four communities still exist, but at one time there were also small communities in Ayr, Dunfermline, Falkirk, Greenock and Inverness. Although all of these had synagogue premises, and sometimes also a minister or rabbi, none of them has survived into the 21st century.

The Scottish Jewish Archives Centre was established in 1987 to collect and catalogue material relating to the history of Jews in Scotland, display some of this material, and make the collection available for research. It is based in Garnethill Synagogue - Glasgow's showpiece Victorian synagogue. Opened in 1879, it is Scotland's oldest, and the only one to be purpose-built in the nineteenth century.

For details, see our website: www.sjac.org.uk or email us on archives@sjac.fsbusiness.co.uk.

HARVEY L KAPLAN, DIRECTOR

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 haggadot 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 Feochan (its also known in some quarters as Loch Inkopf) 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.

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An Israeli Closer to the Jewish World in Scotland

TAMAR SAAR

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? (Mind you, similar thoughts go 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, bogs 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 Israel, 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 too.

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 straight forward. These similarities helped me to gain some understanding of the place.

GRUINARD BAY, WESTER ROSS, AT LOW TIDE



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



SACHER PARK, JERUSALEM, ON YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Olah Chadasha, Chola v'Chagophobic

[a new immigrant is ill and gets grumpy about all these festivals]

JACQUELINE SPEYER

It's traditional to start 'doing' Pesach on the night of Purim. Pesach itself is a doddle after a month of preparation, the sound of vacuum cleaners and carpets being beaten, the smell of bleach and the Shuk being full of strange plastic things and even more crowded than usual.

The Halacha (law) is not to possess Chametz (leaven products) as well as not eating it - ok fine... This house was unoccupied before I came here 2 months ago, don't cook, eat a pitta a day and I know where I've eaten it. Dust is not Chametz, nor is "anything that a dog wouldn't eat," and crumbs are nullified. So why do I want to dismantle the old kitchen units and check out what may be underneath? If I don't join the frenzy and do the physical slog will I be left behind in Egypt? Ok, so it's a good opportunity for spring cleaning and settling-in. A salesman illustrated a problem: a finger drawn across his throat and the words "not before Pesach." I did my best with a makeshift unit for my new cooking apparatus and a skirting of recycled plastic and silicon in front of the old units which at least prevents the slugs from prancing across the kitchen at night.

A friend swapped sharing Yoga lessons for help: I was picturing a native shepherd who would guide me through the process, but no, she came, worked like stink for a few hours and finito. I learned how Israelis use bleach: with a generous hand and the

statement that it "burns everything up" without scrubbing. Another begged storage space, saw me at the DIY and asked "why are you always building, not cleaning?" Cleaning is compulsory and she wanted to put her entire wardrobe through my new washing machine prior to storage...

Then I got flu. Realised I shouldn't have left the cleaning and shopping till last, and that old disgusting fridge which I'd rejected and put outside also needed cleaned, as it was still in my possession. Every normal food, utensil and dish has been in contact with Chametz, and can't be used on Pesach. I'd got by till then without Toivelling (dipping new utensils) by using disposables, reluctant for yet another job to do. My neighbour showed me to the nearest Mikva and left me there with her new stuff too. It's closer than the skip I take my rubbish to, but the queue made up for that convenience.

This is what we must do to be free? Judaism is a life of action more than lofty thoughts and I joined in the traditional last minute panic and the Bedika (search) late at night. Every piece of 'hidden' Chametz found next-door was accompanied by jubilant cries,

However, we do not live in a village but a single house and I couldn't get a job during my first year, so I didn't meet many people and spent a lot of time surfing the web - my lifeline to the outside world. One time I came across a website about Jewish communities and I thought about contacting the Scottish one. If you weren't born in Israel it might sound like the most natural thing to do, but it is not necessarily so, especially considering my background. My kibbutz in the north of Israel was amongst the first to be established so it was based on the principles of communism and had little to do with religion. In Israel there is nearly a complete separation between the two worlds, secular and religious.

I found that there is a small, active group in the Highlands area (UNAH) having a meeting a few weeks later. I had my concerns and reservations as to how I would fit in with it, but these dissipated through e-mails with Jacqueline. The meeting was one of the most enjoyable evenings I had since I got here. There is something about Jewish nature that helps create an open, comfortable atmosphere, which up till then I associated only with Israeli mentality. I met a diverse group and got to learn more about the ways different people relate to being Jewish.

This Pesach Graeme and I went over to Valerie and Frank's family Seder sheni in Strath-Gairloch. 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 where you read only 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 Jews in other ways rather than observing religion (cultural, social) and it's a shame, because I think both sides can benefit from it.

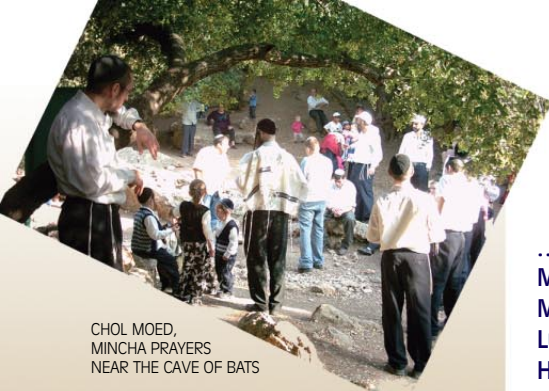
So this is how an Israeli came to live in Scotland on the one hand, and became closer to the Jewish world on the other. Now I have been here for a while and can work, meet more people, enjoy hobbies such as gardening which are not as common back home, I feel more settled. And at times it doesn't even seem that cold.

drumming and blowing on whistles, bringing in the festive atmosphere to my spotless quiet home.

I arrived at my brother's 6hrs before Pesach and hear that their Bedika was not so symbolic... with 10 kids it's not hard to miss a pastry amongst the laundry. I wanted to help, they pointed out the silverware and appropriate chemicals and I set to: 19 Kiddush cups, plus all the candlesticks (one extra per child) while brother carefully weighed the Matzah. He was exhausted and worried we wouldn't finish in time, but if such details were the matters at stake then surely it couldn't be so bad? Sister-in-law was nursing the baby and said calmly "by the way, I haven't cooked yet." It wasn't her British sense of humour - 2hrs before Pesach we started roasting chicken and making potato kugel and salads. Jerusalem is given a "go" at the start of Shabbat and festivals 20 minutes in advance and we used every minute of the leeway....

Pesach arrived at last. After Mariv (evening prayers) we assembled at the festive table with cushions (to recline at near 90 degrees while chomping matzah,) young children between older ones to keep them awake and prevent fighting. Somehow my brother's serious fatigue had been replaced by radiant patience, and I began to realise the priorities in operation here. The polished silver reflected respect for the Seder. The weighing ensured that everyone ate the legally ordained amount at each bracha (blessing)-machined matzah has a uniform weight over area, but they bake their own (with unique flavour and 'masticatability') and there was none to spare. 'Bouncers' were unnecessary: the children concentrated 100% on all proceedings - unlike usual behaviour. Every child was given equal opportunity to participate - Ma Nishtana was said many times, unsolicited questions encouraged, and rewarded with answers tailor-made for the supplicant's age and understanding, with chocolate... My own insistent 'whys' at strange goings-on were fully handled by my most learned nephew. The hastily prepared meal was eaten in about 10 minutes flat to honour the tradition to finish it and the Afikoman before midnight. We only just made it, so the lack of chocolate mousse was not an issue... The many songs had been practised by many nephews in their various schools, and we continued at a relaxed pace, winding up at around 2am.

CONTD BACK PAGE



CHOL MOED,
MINCHA PRAYERS
NEAR THE CAVE OF BATS

OLAH CHADASHA - CONTD FROM PAGE 3

On Chol Moed (the 'ordinary' days of the festival) a Tiyul (excursion) into the Teva (nature) is a national hobby. A minibus took the same 19 of us (the wee boys still singing) to a park outside Jerusalem to eat a home-cooked 'picnic' feast, then further into mountainous country, where we ventured about 2 miles on foot to a massive dark cave full of bats. Even by Argyll 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! This Scots '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 Chametz 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 - and without a hangover the next day. The many celebrations for the Barmitzvah of my nephew the same week proved to me that Simcha (happiness) does not depend on how you're feeling, nor consumption of food on whether you're hungry, but on the importance of the occasion and the commandment being honoured. Besides the special message of the festival or event, the continuation of Judaism and our freedom to be together and share it is source of Simcha.

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 integration feels slow. Some things seem strange, even crazy and occasionally abhorrent. Each festival brings new challenges, my reluctance can be termed "Chagophobia" 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 Tiyul and a nosh are fairly standard. And before the grass of Sacher Park had a chance to recover from the scorch 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 15mins from home... Chassidim (big black hats and long earlocks,) Chilonim (secular folk,) and Dati (religious) Hippies - each group so different, their music also, but fires and roasting meat featured throughout... The more religious the more exuberant their celebration. Then "Jerusalem Day" parades filled the streets with flags and singing.

Now I'm just trying to lie low, recover from the latest dip in my health and pursue "normality" till Shavuot...

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.

I picked up a modern book called "Life 101" once, and found this statement in the introduction: "we are all travelling on a big blue spaceship, and none of us has the instruction manual." That's not the true picture.

Firstly, it isn't the blue spaceship which concerns us, but the bodies we pilot as individuals — we are less concerned with steering the planet than in finding our own courses through life. And concerning the manual, the Torah is called "Torat Chayim," instructions for life. We want to grow spiritually, we want to come closer to our Source, and G-d provided us with His ultimate handbook! That is what we hold in our hands — "the meaning of life!" The Torah doesn't just tell us how to find some ethereal "spiritual peace;" it imbues daily life with meaning and purpose.

Let us use this holiday to step back, to feel the wonder of Torah, to experience a joy still deeper and more profound than that which we feel at each year's Pesach Seder...

ADAPTED FROM RABBI YAAKOV MENKEN



WHY THE TORAH WAS NOT GIVEN IN SCOTLAND

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 Shavuot 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. Since they did not have time to prepare kosher meat, they ate dairy instead.



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

Deep 9" loose-bottomed baking tin, greased

Crush the biscuits and cover the base of the tin.

Beat 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 than ¾ up the sides as it will rise a lot during baking)

Bake gas 4 for 1¼ hours, leave in tin until cool

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 Shechita 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



◆ We have had discussions with the Home Secretary, David Blunkett; the Deputy First Minister, Jim Wallace; the Justice Minister, Cathy Jamieson; the new Moderator, Dr Alison Elliot, with MSPs, Mps and MEPs, with the Association of Chief Police Officers of Scotland (ACPOS), the Scottish Centre for Human Bioethics, the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office, representatives of other faiths and minority communities, and a posse of civil servants – to name but a few!

◆ We sit on several NHS Board steering groups for developing and implementing Spiritual Care policies



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.

Another current consultation, based on the Scottish Executive's response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) report, could have a major impact on shechita – possibly even to the extent of banning it. Jewish law states that, if meat is to be eaten, animals must be slaughtered in a prescribed humane way. Shechita is the only method that enables Jews to eat meat. It consists of a rapid and expert transverse incision with an instrument of surgical sharpness (a chalafl), which severs the major structures and vessels at the neck. This causes an instant drop in blood pressure in the brain and immediately results in the irreversible cessation of consciousness. Thus shechita humanely incorporates stunning as an integral part of its process, which renders the animal insensible to pain, dispatches and drains with one swift action.

The Scottish Executive have accepted in principle the FAWC view that shechita 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 lose 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

JUDITH LIPMAN

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 Meanrs 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.



How You Ask A Question...

Sol and Moshe are discussing whether it would be alright to smoke while praying. Moshe replies, "Why don't you ask Rabbi Schwartz?" So Sol goes up to Rabbi Schwartz and asks, "Rabbi, may I smoke while I pray?" But Rabbi says, "No, you may not. That's utter disrespect to G-d." Sol goes back to his friend and tells him what the good Rabbi told him. Moshe says, "I'm not surprised. You asked the wrong question. Let me try." And so Moshe goes up to Rabbi Schwartz and asks, "Rabbi, may I pray while I smoke?" To which Rabbi Schwartz eagerly replies, "By all means, Moshe, by all means."

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. 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?